

Climate of Opportunity

**GENDER AND MOVEMENT BUILDING AT THE
INTERSECTION OF REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE
AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

**by Surina Khan
November 2009**



the WOMEN'S
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INTRODUCTION

Rosenda Mataka remembers a time when pesticides were used less frequently. Now, in the small California Central Valley town of Westley, where Rosenda lives and works as a community activist, planes regularly fly overhead, spraying pesticides on blossoming almond orchards that surround this farm town's elementary school. The fungicide being sprayed wards off mildew, making for a good nut crop. But parents worry that as the chemicals drift across the school playground, their kids will get sick – and they do¹. The chemicals make the parents sick too. The spray is visible as it floats through the air, sticking to any surface it lands on. It sticks to swing sets, park benches and car windshields, and it gets into the water supply. The toxins in pesticide drift can cause or contribute to miscarriage and sterility, fetal developmental disabilities and other illnesses and disorders.²

California's Central Valley is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country's most populous state, and it grows and supplies one-quarter of all the food that people in the US eat. In the Valley's 18 counties, pesticide exposure is causing alarm among a growing number of communities, and not just among the millions of farm workers on agriculture's front line.* In many towns across the Central Valley, pesticide drift and other by-products of agribusiness development are causing significant health problems.

California's agricultural heartland offers a bounty of crops, but its industries also contribute to water contamination by nitrates from fertilizer use and mega-dairy waste and pesticide components, such as DBCP – a chemical banned for causing cancer and harming men's reproductive systems that still appears in Central Valley wells.³ A 2007 groundwater sampling in Tulare County found that three out of four homes with private wells have contaminated water that is unsafe to drink.

Community activists say regulators are failing to protect Californians from pesticides linked to cancer, reproductive harm and other illnesses. Susana De Anda of the Community Water Center works on water issues in the Central Valley and brings attention to the fact that when people drink this water,

**The Central Valley of California comprises the Sacramento Valley and the San Joaquin Valley, which together contain the following 18 counties: Kern, Kings, Tulare, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Sacramento, Colusa, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, Butte, Glenn, Tehama, Shasta and Placer.*

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1. J. Ritter (2005) "In California's Central Valley, Pesticide Fights Heat Up," *USA Today*, April 12, 2005. Available online at <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-04-11-pesticides-inside_x.htm> [last viewed 2/19/09].
 2. S. Kegley, Stephan Orme and Lars Neumeister (2000) *Hooked on Poison: Pesticide Use in California 1991 –1998* (San Francisco: Pesticide Action Network and Californians for Pesticide Reform), p.6 . Available online at <<http://www.panna.org/files/hooked.pdf>> [last viewed 8/31/09].
 3. 1,2-Dibromo-3-chloropropane (DBCP) was used in the past as a soil fumigant and nematocide on crops; it is no longer used except as an intermediate in chemical synthesis. Acute (short-term) exposure to DBCP in humans results in moderate depression of the central nervous system (CNS) and pulmonary congestion from inhalation, and gastrointestinal distress and pulmonary edema from oral exposure. Chronic (long-term) exposure to DBCP in humans causes male reproductive effects, such as decreased sperm counts. Testicular effects and decreased sperm counts were observed in animals chronically exposed to DBCP by inhalation. Until 1977, DBCP was used as a soil fumigant and nematocide on over 40 different crops in the United States. From 1977 to 1979, EPA suspended registration for all DBCP-containing products except for use on pineapples in Hawaii. In 1985, EPA issued an intent to cancel all registrations for DBCP, including use on pineapples. Subsequently, the use of existing stocks of DBCP was prohibited. See <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/hlthef/dibromo-.html>.

they consume known carcinogens and acute poisons, such as nitrates, which can kill infants in a matter of days.⁴ In a region where infant mortality exceeds that of the state as a whole, these deaths are often misdiagnosed as sudden infant death syndrome.^{5,6}

Environmental toxins are not limited to pesticides and farming. Communities outside the Central Valley are also making the connection between environmental toxins and impacts on health. Many cosmetics and personal care products are also health hazards. There is very limited regulation and review of the chemicals used in these products. Of the more than 10,000 chemicals used in personal care and nail products, 89 percent have not been tested independently for their safety or impact on human health before entering the marketplace.⁷ Julia Liou of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, Eveline Shen of Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, Martha Dina Argüello

4. L. Firestone and A. Venderwarker (2007) "On Water: California's Real Water War," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 27, 2007, D5. Available online at <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2007/08/27/EDDMRP311.DTL>> [last viewed 8/31/09].

5. First 5 Madera County (2005) *Madera County Report Card, 2004-2005, Part V*, p. 64. Available online at <http://www.first5madera.net/pdf/Report_card_V.pdf> [last viewed 8/31/09].

6. Firestone and Venderwarker (2007).

7. California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (2009) *Health & Safety*. Online at <<http://cahealthynailsalons.org/history/>> [last viewed 8/31/09].



Photo: Nader Khouri

of Physicians for Social Responsibility—Los Angeles and Bonnie Chan of the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum, along with many others, have been calling attention to toxins in cosmetics and personal care products for some time.

Although many consumers are at risk from using cosmetics and personal care products, nail salon workers are exposed to particularly high volumes of toxins. In 2008 there were an estimated 115,000 manicurists in California, the majority of whom are women of color (three to four out of every five workers are believed to be Vietnamese immigrants), and more than half are of reproductive age.⁸ The California cosmetology industry consists of the largest professional licensee population in the nation. On a daily basis, and often for long hours at a stretch, nail salon technicians handle solvents, glues and other nail care products containing a multitude of chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, respiratory or reproductive harm. Given their occupational exposures, history of immigration, obstacles to awareness of health risks, language and translation issues and limited access to health care, the nail salon workers have complex health profiles that place them at risk for occupational-related illness.

There are a growing number of coordinated efforts across California and the US advocating for better regulation and increased awareness about the multifaceted health, safety and labor issues related to environmental toxins. For example:

- The California Safe Cosmetics Act of 2005 was passed to a large extent through the efforts of California community-based organizations with the leadership of fellows in the Women’s Policy Institute, a hands-on policy training program of the Women’s Foundation of California that helps community leaders build their capacity to navigate the public policy process. The law requires the disclosure of cosmetics ingredients that have been shown to cause cancer and reproductive harm.
- Changes in regulatory processes relating to toxins in nail salons that cause reproductive harm were advocated and testified for by members of the Environmental Justice/Reproductive Justice Collaborative of the Women’s Foundation of California. These regulations ensure that owners will receive information and education about safety regulations first, rather than immediately suffer punitive measures, so that they can improve their practices, instead of having their shops – and livelihood – shut down.
- Other policy changes and ongoing actions highlight linkages and opportunities for collaborations across the environmental justice and reproductive justice movements’ agendas.

Community leaders like Mataka, De Anda, Argüello, Shen and Liou are among the leading advocates on these issues. They are also among 12 community leaders who the Women’s Foundation of California has convened for two years, beginning in 2008, to address the environmental impacts on health and the specific connections between environmental health and justice and reproductive health and justice. (These leaders’ organizations are highlighted in sidebars throughout this report.)

8. See California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative (2008) *Workforce Demographics and Context Setting*, a presentation by Julia Liou at the Research Convening, April 2008. Available online at <http://saloncollaborative.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/workforcedemographics_liou.pdf> [last viewed 9/25/09].

This report presents the process and recommendations of the Environmental Justice/Reproductive Justice Collaborative of the Women's Foundation of California to date. It was written as a companion report to the Movement Strategy Center's report, *Fertile Ground: Women Organizing at the Intersection of Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice* (henceforward referred to as *Fertile Ground*), which was commissioned by the Ford Foundation as a national scan of organizations working at the intersection of environmental health and justice and reproductive justice.

The Women's Foundation of California and Cross-Issue Work

The current political and economic climate presents opportunities and challenges. Social change organizations and funders are poised to make meaningful changes to improve conditions for communities. There is significant opportunity for foundations to nurture community-based change when we go beyond traditional grantmaking strategies by supporting organizations' infrastructures and facilitating the ability of their leaders and constituents to share ideas and resources and combine efforts. As we seriously consider our role in building coalitions and the capacity of community-based organizations, we see that we can act in a way that is both conducive to long-term change and cost-effective.

Since 1979, the Women's Foundation of California (the Foundation) has invested in women and girls to build a more just and equitable society for all. We envision a California that is increasingly healthy, safe and economically prosperous. We achieve this vision by focusing on women and girls as agents of change because of their central role in families and communities. We simultaneously invest in the strategies of grantmaking, strengthening organizations, policy advocacy and movement building in order to accelerate systemic change.

Our theory of change rests on a key belief and value that by focusing our work on marginalized communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color, we will increase the well-being of all women and girls and ultimately their families and communities. Because low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by health and economic disparities, the Foundation has always prioritized supporting organizations in these communities, understanding that those most impacted by problems also hold solutions to those issues because of their proximity to and experience with the problem.

An analysis of our grantmaking shows that since 2005, approximately 97 percent of the Foundation's funding supported programs that work with or are led by women of color. Our investments in women of color-led organizations in the areas of reproductive justice, environmental health and justice, economic justice and youth leadership have led to key policy victories in the state. Often these wins were in part due to the multi-issue, intersectional approach our grant partners take, working across issues and regions to form coalitions and alliances.

The Foundation has extensive experience and history in bringing leaders together across multiple issues. In 2005 and 2007 we held two statewide convenings which brought together close to 100 community leaders across the state. A third statewide convening is planned for January 2010. We have hosted several women's environmental health summits throughout the state. We served as an adviser and presenter at the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment's summit on environmental threats to fertility and reproductive health in 2007 and on the planning committee

for the Los Angeles women's health and policy summit, also in 2007. In 2006 we convened an environmental justice/transportation justice cohort. That process helped inform the Environmental Justice/Reproductive Justice Collaborative.

We also have conducted and disseminated research and held numerous presentations, funder briefings, convenings and public advocacy events highlighting the linkages between environmental health and justice issues and a woman's right to live free from illness caused by toxic chemicals and to raise healthy families if and when she chooses. We have published research including the 2003 report, *Confronting Toxic Contamination in our Communities: Women's Health and California's Future* and the 2005 reports *Gasping for Air* and *In the Shadow of Pollution: Southern California Women on the Frontlines*. In 2008 we published *Ports of Opportunity: Gender and Movement Building at the Intersection of Environmental and Transportation Justice*.

Work positioned at the intersections of social justice sectors generates stronger movements and social change outcomes. This work:

- Generates a shared vision and framework that can lead to deeper change in policy, communications, messaging and public thought.
- Unifies and aligns segments of the social justice movement for greater impact.
- Connects constituents across movements and builds a broader base.
- Supports linkages across movements and builds leadership.
- Creates campaigns and outcomes that better reflect communities lived experiences.
- Allows for collaborative funding streams which are more agile and break out of single-issue agendas.

The Foundation's experience with the formation of a cohort of leaders utilizing a gender analysis to explore the intersection of reproductive justice and environmental justice illustrates the strength of the cross-issue approach.

The Environmental Justice/Reproductive Justice Collaborative

Through our support of intersectional dialogue and community-driven research that highlights linkages across issues, we began to see an emergent trend of environmental justice and reproductive justice leaders seeking opportunities to come together in a more deliberate way, and we saw how funders could facilitate that process. In response, the Foundation engaged in a process lasting several months that included surveys and key informant interviews with our grant partners and other key organizations and leaders to identify opportunities and barriers for collaborative work across the environmental justice and reproductive justice issue areas.

We convened our reproductive health and justice and environmental health and justice grant partners in late 2006 to assess interest in the development of a joint Environmental Justice/Reproductive Justice (EJ/RJ) Collaborative.* Following that, in the summer of 2007, we convened three roundtable luncheons of leaders and activists working at the intersection of environmental health and justice and reproductive health and justice in Bakersfield, Los Angeles and San Francisco. At these meetings,

community leaders affirmed the need for bringing together a group of environmental justice and reproductive justice leaders across the state.

With funding from the Ford Foundation and the Catalyst Fund at Tides Foundation, the Foundation convened leaders from 12 leading environmental justice and reproductive justice organizations throughout California to discuss their work at this intersection. Invitations for participation in the EJ/RJ Collaborative were extended to organizations identified through the roundtable process as being engaged in or poised to implement a cross-issue agenda.

The Foundation covered the costs of EJ/RJ Collaborative members' travel and accommodations and awarded \$5,000 general operating grants to support their time in the Collaborative. In the second year, we will make grants available to EJ/RJ Collaborative members for collaborative projects that address the intersection of environmental justice and reproductive justice.

There is an inherent grassroots element to the cross-issue agenda among organizations in the Collaborative. Similar to the findings of the authors of the Movement Strategy Center's companion report, *Fertile Ground*, all of the organizations using or interested in using the intersectional approach in their work did so because "it reflects the lived experience of their communities and it provides the greatest opportunity for impacted communities to take leadership on issues that matter to them."⁹ By bringing these leaders together through in-person convenings, webinars and conference calls, the Foundation coordinated a facilitated dialogue in an effort to forge a broader social justice movement – one that would connect multiple issues in California and across the country and position movement leaders to collaborate on lasting policy change.*

We had two overarching objectives in forming the EJ/RJ Collaborative:

- To support broad-based, multi-issue movement building that improves environmental public health and reproductive health options of communities throughout the state.

**We use EJ/RJ because the Collaborative began to refer to themselves that way, not because environmental justice issues are seen as a priority over reproductive justice issues.*

9. K. Zimmerman and V. Miao (2009) *Fertile Ground: Women Organizing at the Intersection of Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice* (Oakland, CA: Movement Strategy Center).

The Community Water Center (CWC) seeks to ensure that all communities have access to safe, clean and affordable water. CWC's mission is to create community-driven water solutions in California's San Joaquin Valley. The Center employs three primary strategies in order to accomplish its goals: Educate, organize and provide legal assistance to low-income communities of color facing local water challenges; advocate for systemic change to address the root causes of unsafe drinking water in the San Joaquin Valley; and serve as a resource for information and expertise on community water challenges.

The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative was created in 2005 out of growing concern for the health and safety of nail salon and other cosmetology workers, owners and consumers. The Collaborative uses policy advocacy, research, industry advocacy outreach and education strategies to address health and safety concerns facing salon workers. Its mission is to advance a preventative environmental health agenda for the nail salon sector in California. Collaborative members include nail salon workers and owners, nonprofit and community organizations focused on environmental and reproductive health and justice, labor and Asian American community health, educational institutions and government agency allies.

- To increase the number of organizations across California that are working cross-sector, cross-issue and cross-region in order to effect sustainable, long-term change at the community level.

The development of an EJ/RJ Collaborative is one step in building a deeper, stronger movement for social justice that will serve as a model for social justice activists beyond state lines. This cross-issue movement-building work is creating new alliances, political opportunities and key wins on the community and policy level. *Increasingly, social justice organizations are realizing the strategic value of utilizing an intersectional approach to their work which underscores the value and importance of nurturing a linked movement that has the potential to serve as a major catalyst for advancing cross-issue work – not only within California, but nationally.*

The EJ/RJ Collaborative created opportunities for community leaders to identify allies in other areas of the state; deepen existing relationships; and learn from each other by sharing lessons and comparing strategies for policy advocacy, public education, community organizing and coalition-building. The convenings also provided members with a structured format for examining the significance of external factors that impact their work and are unique to different regions of the state.

Our specific goals for the EJ/RJ Collaborative are to:

- Create a learning environment that strengthens relationships and builds trust between environmental justice and reproductive justice leaders in order to foster long-term movement building and deepen the impact of these respective movements.
- Develop a shared understanding of the intersection of the two movements by exploring tensions between and within the movements and identifying opportunities for collaboration.
- Build the group's capacity for collaboration, joint messaging, a coordinated platform and strategy development.
- Educate funders in order to bring more resources to community-based efforts at the intersection of environmental justice and reproductive justice.

**For a definition of intersectional analysis and organizing and cross-sector movement building related to environmental justice and reproductive justice, see the Movement Strategy Center's "Fertile Ground" report.*

The Foundation partnered with the Movement Strategy Center and GoldRio Consulting to help plan and facilitate the convenings, which took place at the Green Gulch Conference and Retreat Center in May 2008 and at the Asilomar Conference Center in January 2009. A third convening is scheduled for January 2010 at the Chaminade Conference Center in Santa Cruz.

Based on the evaluations from our previous cross-issue cohort (linking the environmental justice and transportation justice movements) we adjusted our strategy for the EJ/RJ Collaborative to improve the process. For example, we extended the Collaborative to two years from one year and we changed the convenings to overnight two-day retreats instead of day-long sessions. This format supported relationship-building and provided an opportunity to continue fostering the momentum created during the first year.

The resulting EJ/RJ Collaborative has strengthened the bridge between the environmental and reproductive justice movements in California and created opportunities for multiple collaborations leading to policy wins. While this Collaborative was focused on environmental justice and reproductive justice issues, it also serves as a broader example of the value of bringing different social justice movements together to explore intersections and opportunities for engaging in cross-issue work.

The Pages Ahead

This report showcases the potential that exists for doing multi-issue work and outlines key themes, recommendations and lessons that have emerged from the EJ/RJ Collaborative. We highlight discussions related to organizing and movement building that draws from the dialogue of Collaborative members, and we draw parallels to other current research and reports on the intersectional movement of environmental justice and reproductive justice.

We begin by defining environmental justice and reproductive justice and pointing to the linkages between the two movements. We outline the rise in chemical production and its connection to declining reproductive health. We describe the EJ/RJ Collaborative process and summarize key discussions including challenges to intersectional work, tensions between the two movements and opportunities for combining strategies and linking community leaders across movements. We point to concrete

Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) is a grassroots community-based organization that works with communities and organizations to advance reproductive justice on a local, state and national level. ACRJ's two core strategies are community organizing and movement building. They work to build and strengthen the reproductive justice movement; develop tools, models and resources for reproductive justice groups across the country; organize campaigns to address issues of reproductive justice and build the power of Asian women and girls to create change in their communities. ACRJ's POLISH program is a member of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative.

examples of collaborations that have emerged from the EJ/RJ Collaborative process, as well as victories and successes that have resulted from cross-movement collaborations – a strategy that addresses the reality that no human right exists in isolation and that comes from seeing how joint advocacy can lead to more inclusive movements and more sustainable and strategic outcomes for communities.

In the final sections of the report we examine the roles of funders and community-based organizations in policy and advocacy efforts and outline recommendations for philanthropy, as well as key learnings from convening the EJ/RJ Collaborative. Throughout, we provide examples of the participating organizations' work. We look at how movement-building efforts can leverage foundation resources and impact systems to effect long-term change, and explore the strategic value of providing additional philanthropic support – beyond grant dollars – to effectively advance community-based efforts for policy change.

Our hope is that by sharing the work of the EJ/RJ Collaborative, we will assist funders, policymakers, organizations and others to work at this intersection and on movement-building efforts more broadly. As mentioned earlier, this report was conceptualized and produced in coordination with the Movement Strategy Center, which published *Fertile Ground: Women Organizing at the Intersection of Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice*. Through our coordinated work on these reports, we hope to encourage colleagues in the field of philanthropy to make investments in EJ/RJ work and other cross-issue, movement-building work.



DEFINING THE EJ/RJ INTERSECTION

The movements for reproductive justice and environmental justice are often seen as two distinct, sometimes distant efforts. While both sectors share a social justice framework, one has typically been concerned with women's bodies, gender and sexuality; the other with the environments where we live, work, learn, play and worship. For the most part, these movements have operated on parallel tracks with separate policy and organizing strategies and different messaging and communications approaches, regulatory agencies and funding streams.

The reproductive justice movement organizes women, girls and their communities to challenge structural power inequities. It complements reproductive health and reproductive rights frameworks and yet operates from a distinct framework and set of values. As defined by community leaders, reproductive justice encompasses the complete physical, mental, spiritual, political, economic and social well-being of women and girls.¹⁰ It expands the reproductive rights framework from one focused predominantly on abortion rights to one that promotes policies that are shaped by and responsive to women's needs; addresses the right to bear and parent children; ensures access to safe and legal abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, universal health care and bodily integrity and secures the right to express one's sexuality, sexual orientation/identity and gender identity/expression. It also strengthens ties with other social justice efforts by examining the reproductive health impacts of environmental pollution, affordable health care and economic security.

Much like the reproductive justice framework, an environmental justice approach also focuses on organizing people and communities to challenge structural power inequities. It encompasses the right to a decent quality of life for all people where they live, work, learn and play. The movement seeks to address the inequitable burden of health-compromising or even fatal environmental harm borne by communities of color, women and low-income communities, while increasing access in those communities to environmental goods such as safe food, clean air and water and other factors that contribute

10. See Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (2005) *A New Vision: For Advancing Our Movement for Reproductive Health, Reproductive Rights, and Reproductive Justice*. Available online at <http://www.reproductivejustice.org/download/ACRJ_A_New_Vision.pdf> [last viewed 9/28/09].

Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles (PSR-LA) is a physician and health advocate-based membership organization, working for policy and systems change to protect public health and the environment. PSR-LA combines its commitment to science, public health and social justice to create healthier communities. It educates, engages and mobilizes communities in Southern California for effective policy advocacy. PSR-LA's early work was guided by a singular mission to reduce threats to public health related to war. In 1989, PSR-LA began to address environmental health threats. Since then, PSR-LA has grown to be the largest chapter in the nation and has played a leading role in national, state and local education and policy efforts.

to healthy communities. In this framework, environmental problems faced by communities are connected to multiple issues that affect people's lives and to social justice and human rights efforts.

Between them, the environmental justice and reproductive justice movements are connected to a range of issues including neglect of communities living in conditions of poverty; public health; access to health care and family planning services; the environmental and health impacts that result from the movement of consumer goods from air and sea ports, community development and growth; access to clean air, water and consumer products; housing and community organizing and connections to broader social justice movements. Both movements share the value that their goals will be achieved when the communities that are most impacted by problems have the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions in all areas of their lives. Community involvement and organizing at this intersection are motivated by individuals who are concerned about issues that affect their daily lives and the health and well-being of their families.

What Are the Linkages?

Women's reproductive health and rights are inextricably linked to environmental health and justice issues. In the past three decades, women's reproductive rights have been diminishing at a consistent rate. Family planning and abortion services are all but inaccessible in countless communities throughout the country. Policies that create barriers to reproductive health care and the ability to raise children in environments where they can thrive disproportionately impact women of color, low-income and uninsured women and young, rural and immigrant women in California and across the country.



In addition to these restrictive policies, a key reason for the inequity among communities is the location of industry and transportation routes that dump toxins into the water, air and food where women and their families live, work, learn, play and worship. Women's bodies and reproductive health are often the markers of environmental contamination through diminished fertility, fetal developmental disabilities, increased rates of cancers and other increasingly pervasive forms of environmental illness. Poor outcomes in reproductive health have risen sharply in the US at the same time that chemical production has increased dramatically.¹¹ And race remains the single greatest predictor of where hazardous waste sites are located – a situation which has only grown more pronounced over the past two decades.¹²



Women and children are the most vulnerable to the adverse impacts of exposure to toxins, putting them on the frontline of environmental hazards of all kinds. Because women have a higher proportion of body fat than men, they carry higher amounts of toxins in their bodies. Women pass these toxins on to their children through pregnancy and breastfeeding.¹³ Environmental toxins are present in a pregnant woman's womb and even a mother's milk – pesticides, flame retardants, toilet deodorizers, termite poisons, dry-cleaning fluids, PCBs and dioxins are all common contaminants of breast milk in the US and

11. R. Rushing (2009), *Reproductive Roulette: Declining Reproductive Health, Dangerous Chemicals, and New Way Forward*, Center for American Progress, July 21, 2009. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/reproductive_roulette.html> [last viewed 9/28/09].

12. R. D. Bullard, et al. (2007) *Toxic Waste and Race at Twenty, 1987-2007*, United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries. Available online < <http://www.ucc.org/justice/environmental-justice/pdfs/toxic-wastes-and-race-at-twenty-1987-2007.pdf>> [last viewed 8/31/09].

13. For further discussion of environmental health impacts of toxins on women see two reports published by the Women's Foundation of California in 2005: *In the Shadow of Pollution: Southern California Women on the Frontlines and Gasping For Air: Why We Must Cultivate a Healthier Central Valley*. Available online at <<http://www.womensfoundca.org/site/c.aqKGLROAlrH/b.982223/k.A4F3/Publications.htm>>.

Making Our Milk Safe (MOMS) was founded in spring 2005 by four nursing mothers after they discovered that the chemical perchlorate – a component of rocket fuel – is now present in breast milk. MOMS' mission is to protect the health of all babies by eliminating the growing threat of toxic chemicals and industrial pollutants in human breast milk. MOMS promotes precaution, supports progressive legislation, changes corporate behavior through direct action and educates consumers to inform them of the health effects to children from exposure to chemicals before, during and after pregnancy.

California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) is a statewide policy and advocacy organization that works to advance California Latinas' reproductive health and rights within a social justice and human rights framework. CLRJ strives to ensure that policy developments reflect Latinas' priority needs, as well as those of their families and their communities. Through policy advocacy, community mobilization and alliance building, movement building, CLRJ promotes Reproductive Justice for Latinas, communities of color and social justice allies. CLRJ is a leading organization in local, state and national reproductive justice coalitions and initiatives and builds strategic alliances with a range of reproductive justice and social justice organizations.



other industrialized countries.¹⁴ EJ/RJ Collaborative member Mary Brune, co-founder and director of Making Our Milk Safe (MOMS), works to eliminate the growing threat of toxic chemicals and industrial pollutants in human breast milk. MOMS was founded by nursing mothers after they discovered that the chemical perchlorate – a component of rocket fuel – is now present in breast milk.

MOMS and other community-based groups are attempting to address a number of alarming trends in reproductive health:¹⁵

- Women report an increasing number of fertility problems. Female fertility problems increased almost two percent between 1982 and 2009.¹⁶

14. D. Hopey (2001), "Ecology Summit Brings Female Scientists, Activists Together at Chatham," *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, November 7, 2001. Available online at <<http://www.postgazette.com/lifestyle/20011107waste1107fnp3.asp>> [last viewed 5/6/2007]. See also, S. Steingraber (2001) *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood* (New York: Perseus Publishing).

15. Center for American Progress (2009) *Fact Sheet: Dangerous Chemicals and Declining Reproductive Health* Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/reproductive_health.html> [last viewed 8/31/09].

16. A. Chandra and E. Stephen (1998), "Impaired Fecundity in the United States: 1982 – 1995," *Family Planning Perspectives* 30 (1) (1998), pp. 34-42 and Chandra et al., "Fertility, Family Planning, and Reproductive Health of US Women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth," *National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Health Stat* 23 (25) (2005). Reported in R. Rushing (2009), *Reproductive Roulette, Part I: Declining Reproductive Health* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 5. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_partI.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

- The annual number of miscarriages and stillbirths jumped above 16 per 1,000 pregnancies in the 1990s and 2000s, compared to 14 per 1,000 during the 1980s.¹⁷
- Women exposed to air pollution from freeways and congested roads are much more likely to give birth to premature babies and suffer from preeclampsia, according to a 2009 study by California scientists.¹⁸
- Premature births have increased significantly in recent years, from 11 percent of live births in 1995 to 12.5 percent in 2004.¹⁹
- Premature births cost the country some \$26 billion in 2005, according to the US Institute of Medicine.²⁰
- In spite of extensive technology and expense, roughly 30,000 American babies under age one die each year. They die at a rate three times as high as in Singapore, which has the world's best infant survival – long considered a key indicator of a nation's overall level of health. In fact, the US – ranked number 30 in infant mortality in 2005 – lags behind almost every other industrialized nation, behind Cuba, Hungary and Poland.²¹
- The number of infants born with low birth weight increased almost one percent in just 10 years from 1994 to 2004.²² Low and very low birth weights are rising among all racial and ethnic groups but are rising faster and remain significantly higher among African Americans.²³

17. Sources: Stephanie J. Ventura et al. (2008) "Estimated Pregnancy Rates by Outcome for the United States, 1990–2004," National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports* 56 (15) (April 14, 2008); Stephanie J. Ventura et al. (2000) "Trends in Pregnancies and Pregnancy Rates by Outcome: Estimates for the United States, 1976–96," National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital and Health Statistics* 21 (56) (January 2000). Reported in R. Rushing (2009), *Reproductive Roulette, Part I: Declining Reproductive Health* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 7. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_part1.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

18. See M. Cone, "More Preemies Born in Neighborhoods with Heavy Pollution, Trucks," *Environmental Health News*, June 25, 2009. Online at <<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/preemies-and-air-pollution>> [last viewed 9/28/09].

19. US Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (2006), "Preterm Birth: Causes, Consequences, and Prevention," *Institute of Medicine Report Brief (July 2006)*. Available online at <<http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2006/Preterm-Birth-Causes-Consequences-and-Prevention/pretermbirth.ashx>> last viewed 10/19/09].

20. Ibid.

21. L. Blue (2009) "Preventing Preemies," *Time Magazine*, July 29, 2009. Available online at <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1912201_1912244,00.html> [last viewed 9/28/09].

22. Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data; National Center for Health Statistics, final mortality data, 1990–1994, and period-linked birth/infant death data, 1995–present; March of Dimes, Peristats, "Perinatal Data Snapshots: United States Maternal and Infant Health Overview" (April 2007). Reported in R. Rushing (2005), *Reproductive Roulette, Part I: Declining Reproductive Health* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 11. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_part1.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

23. Sources: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Birth File; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Pediatric and Pregnancy Nutrition Surveillance System. Reported in R. Rushing (2005), *Reproductive Roulette, Part I: Declining Reproductive Health* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 12. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_part1.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) is a multi-issue Asian Pacific American women's organization with chapters around the country. NAPAWF's mission is to build a movement to advance social justice and human rights for Asian Pacific American women and girls. NAPAWF's California chapters are actively engaged in the local and state political arena on legislative priorities such as protection for nail salon workers and opposing restrictions on youth access to reproductive health services.

- Sperm counts have decreased by 50 percent in the last 50 years.²⁴
- Compared with 30 years ago, 26 percent more women get breast cancer, 46 percent more men get testicular cancer and 76 percent more men get prostate cancer.²⁵
- Although cervical cancer rates have declined overall in the past 50 years, cervical cancer incidence rates are highest among Latinas, and mortality from the disease is twice as high for African American women as for white women.²⁶
- Developmental disabilities, such as hypospadias, are on the rise. Cases of hypospadias, a condition in which the male urethra does not develop properly, have doubled since the 1970s.²⁷
- Reported cases of autism have increased 10-fold since the early 1990s.²⁸

Meanwhile, the number of chemicals registered for commercial use now stands at 80,000 – a 30 percent increase since 1979.²⁹ The rise in chemical exposure is having a dangerous effect on communities.

24. J. M. Schwartz and T. J. Woodruff (2008) *Shaping Our Legacy: Reproductive Health and the Environment* (San Francisco: UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment), p. 1. Available online at <http://www.prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pubs/shapingourlegacy.pdf> [last viewed 9/28/09]. See also C. Diskin, "Slew of Pollutants Found in Babies," *North Jersey Record*, July 13, 2005. Available online at <http://www.ewg.org/node/17691> [last viewed 9/28/09].

25. J. M. Schwartz and T. J. Woodruff (2008) *Shaping Our Legacy: Reproductive Health and the Environment* (San Francisco: UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment), p. 1. Available online at <http://www.prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pubs/shapingourlegacy.pdf> [last viewed 9/28/09].

26. National Cancer Institute (2008) *A Snapshot of Cervical Cancer: Incidence and Mortality Rate Trends*, National Cancer Institute (Bethesda, MD: US National Institutes of Health). Available online at <http://www.cancer.gov/aboutnci/servingpeople/cervical-snapshot.pdf> [last viewed 10/20/2009].

27. J. M. Schwartz and T. J. Woodruff (2008) *Shaping Our Legacy: Reproductive Health and the Environment* (San Francisco: UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment), p. 22. Available online at <http://www.prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pubs/shapingourlegacy.pdf> [last viewed 9/28/09].

28. Environmental Working Group (2005) *Body Burden, Part III: Human Health Problems on the Rise*. Available online at <http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/part3.php> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

29. J. M. Schwartz and T. J. Woodruff (2008) *Shaping Our Legacy: Reproductive Health and the Environment* (San Francisco: UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment), pp. 1-2. Available online at <http://www.prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pubs/shapingourlegacy.pdf> [last viewed 9/28/09].

- Polluters released a reported 4.1 billion pounds in toxic chemicals into the air, water and soil in 2007 alone.³⁰
- Testing by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveals that most Americans' bodies contain a multitude of chemicals in their blood,³¹ the Center for American Progress dubs a "chemical soup."³²
- Not even the mother's placenta can keep environmental contaminants from crossing into her child. In 2005 a study conducted by the Environmental Working Group tested 10 newborn umbilical cords and detected a total of 287 industrial chemicals.³³
- Low-income communities and communities of color are exposed to lead and other dangerous chemicals at the highest levels. About 310,000 US children between ages of one and five have blood lead levels above the CDC's "safe level."³⁴ Studies conducted between 1995 and 2000 found that children of color account for 94 percent of reports of lead poisoning.³⁵
- Chemicals contaminate the environment and the food chain. In 2006, there were a total of 3,852 state advisories against eating fish because of chemical contamination.³⁶
- Consumer products are a major source of exposure. Adolescents are widely exposed to hormone-disrupting chemicals found in cosmetics as their reproductive systems mature. These chemicals are a potential factor in the increasingly early age of onset of puberty for girls over the past century. The trend of early puberty is most marked among African American and Mexican American girls.³⁷

30. US Environmental Protection Agency (2007) *2007 TRI Public Data Release*, Toxic Release Inventory Program (Washington, DC: US Environmental Protection Agency). Available online at <<http://www.epa.gov/TRI/tridata/tri07/index.htm>> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

31. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2005) *Third National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals* (Atlanta, GA: CDC). Available online at <<http://www.cdc.gov/exposurereport/report.htm>> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

32. R. Rushing (2009), *Reproductive Roulette, Part II: Dangerous Chemical Exposures* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 22. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_partII.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

33. Environmental Working Group (2005) *Body Burden: The Pollution in Newborns*. Available online at <<http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/execsumm.php>> [last viewed 9/28/09].

34. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2005) "Blood Lead Levels: United States, 1999 – 2002," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 2005* (54) (Atlanta, GA: CDC), pp. 513-515. Available online at <<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5420a5.htm>> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

35. G. LeBlanc (2009) *EPA Takes Steps to Protect Children from Lead Poisoning*, EcoFactory, August 26, 2009. Available online at <<http://www.ecofactory.com/news/epa-takes-new-steps-protect-american-children-lead-poisoning-082609>> [last viewed 8/31/09].

36. Environmental Protection Agency (2007), National Listing of Fish Advisories, *Technical Fact Sheet: 2005/06* (July 2007). Reported in R. Rushing (2009), *Reproductive Roulette, Part II: Dangerous Chemical Exposures* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 26. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_partII.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

37. S. Steingraber, PhD (2007) *The Falling Age of Puberty in US Girls: What We Know, What We Need to Know*, Breast Cancer Action. Available online at <http://www.breastcancerfund.org/atf/cf/%7BDE68F7B2-5F6A-4B57-9794-AFE5D27A3CFF%7D/The%20Falling%20Age%20of%20Puberty%20report.pdf>> [last viewed 8/31/09].

UCSF National Center of Excellence (CoE) in Women's Health was founded to correct historical imbalances in health care while acting as a catalyst for change in women's health. Two programs of the CoE are involved in the EJ/RJ Collaborative: Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH) and the Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment (PRHE). ANSIRH's mission is to ensure that reproductive health care (especially abortion) and policy are grounded in evidence. PRHE's mission is to create a healthier environment for human reproduction and development through advancing scientific inquiry, clinical care and health policies that prevent exposures to harmful chemicals in our environment.

- Workers are often exposed to high levels of dangerous chemicals. One study found women working with plastics more frequently sought treatment for infertility than the general population.³⁸
- Exposure to toxins can have trans-generational effects. For instance, daughters of women who took diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic form of estrogen, while pregnant are at increased risk of infertility, poor pregnancy outcomes and rare forms of vaginal and cervical cancer over their peers who did not take DES.³⁹ A recent study suggests a possible increased risk of ovarian cancer in the granddaughters of these women.⁴⁰

These connections between environmental and reproductive health create opportunities for organizations to collaborate with, learn from and strategize with one another. A 2007 article in the *Guttmacher Policy Review* notes that by incorporating environmental justice issues into their work, pro-choice organizations would demonstrate their commitment to a comprehensive vision of reproductive rights that goes beyond family planning and abortion rights to include the rights of all women to bear and raise healthy children.⁴¹ Reproductive justice activists have long pointed out that frameworks emphasizing choice and privacy – an individual-oriented framework – ignore the political and economic realities of many entire communities.⁴² With an increase in available scientific data

38. K. Hougaard, et al., "Increased Incidence of Infertility Treatment Among Women Working in the Plastics Industry," *Reproductive Toxicology* 27 (Jan. 21, 2009), p. 186 – 189. Reported in R. Rushing (2009), *Reproductive Roulette, Part II: Dangerous Chemical Exposures* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress), p. 29. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/07/pdf/reproductive_roulette_partII.pdf> [last viewed 10/19/2009].

39. National Cancer Institute (2009) *DES Questions and Answers*. Available online at <<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/DES#r6>> [last viewed 8/31/09].

40. Reuters UK (2008) "Ovarian Cancer Risks Seen in DES Daughters," *Reuters UK*, March 28, 2008. Available online at <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKCOL86374020080318>> [last viewed 8/31/09].

41. C. Turner Richardson (2006), "Environmental Justice Campaigns Provide Fertile Grounds for Joint Efforts with Reproductive Rights Activists," *Guttmacher Policy Review*, Winter 2006. Available online at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/09/1/gpr090114.html> [last viewed 9/28/09]. See also J. Arons (2006) *More Than a Choice: A Progressive Vision for Reproductive Health and Rights*, Center for American Progress. Available online at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/09/more_than_a_choice.html> [last viewed 9/28/09].

42. See M. Bowman (2008) *Winning Reproductive Justice: Contributions to Policy Change From the Reproductive Justice Movement*, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice. Available online at http://www.reproductivejustice.org/ACRJ_Winning_RJ.pdf [last viewed 9/29/09].



and growing interest in mainstream media highlighting the linkages between the environment, health and, specifically, reproductive health, community-based organizations increasingly come to understand the intersectionality of these issues and are eager to work across issue areas.

Working at the intersection of environmental justice and reproductive justice, activists are able to transcend “the limitations of more mainstream approaches and make surprising, nontraditional connections,” in the words of Movement Strategy Center’s *Fertile Ground* report.⁴³ At the same time, we at the Foundation know that it is often difficult for organizations to see beyond the parameters of a specific set of issues. The Foundation, acting as grantmaker, convener, policy advocate and capacity-builder, is using its expertise and credibility among leaders in both the reproductive and environmental justice movements to facilitate a serious investigation of the potential benefits and challenges of unifying activists across these two movements. As the *Fertile Ground* report points out, many grassroots organizations are coming to refuse “issue silos and single-issue politics as ineffective for their lived realities.” By supporting cross-issue alliances and work, the Foundation is fostering a movement initiated by grassroots communities throughout the state.

43. K. Zimmerman and V. Miao (2009) *Fertile Ground: Women Organizing at the Intersection of Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice* (Oakland, CA: Movement Strategy Center).

DEVELOPING A COMMON FRAMEWORK: Strengthening Two Movements for Health and Justice

Both the environmental justice and reproductive justice movements are vibrant movements that have had major impacts on the well-being of California's diverse communities. They share the goal of improving the health and well-being of community members. Some leaders of these movements have come together in recent years with the understanding that joint advocacy can lead to more sustainable and strategic outcomes for communities and the environment – cross-issue work enables policymakers to address interrelated community concerns on a larger scale than they could otherwise. A more broadly-connected movement allows policymakers to address reproductive health, rights and justice in the context of the environment and to address the environment in the context of gender, race and class.

Early in the process, EJ/RJ Collaborative members expressed an interest in developing a common social justice framework. Developing a common framework allowed the Collaborative to identify shared values and goals, enabling them to better communicate to allies across the issue spectrum and to weave together environmental and reproductive justice issues and agendas.

Collaborative members identified the following social justice and movement- building principles:

- The leadership of people most impacted should be at the center of efforts to craft solutions.
- A grassroots approach that builds from the local to the national level should be a priority.
- An analysis and understanding of structural power is critical.
- The root causes of inequity and discrimination need to be addressed.
- Building collective power and advancement for those most impacted is a priority.
- Underlying principles of fairness, equity and dignity for all are core.

Environmental justice and reproductive justice are connected both by the issues and problems that each movement confronts as well as an orientation toward building community power, leadership

Breast Cancer Action advocates for policy changes in three priority areas: reforming treatment by shifting the balance of power at the Federal Drug Administration away from the pharmaceutical industry and towards the public interest while advocating for more effective and less toxic treatments, promoting environmental health by decreasing involuntary environmental exposures that put people at risk for breast cancer and ending inequities by creating awareness that it is not just about genes, but social injustices – political, economic and racial inequities – that lead to disparities in breast cancer outcomes.

development and grassroots organizing. In California the environmental justice movement also shares with the reproductive justice movement a focus on women and girls and women of color – much of the leadership and constituency of environmental justice groups in the state consist of women and, specifically, mothers. A recent analysis by SisterSong's Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective notes, "Both movements feature the leadership of women of color, indigenous communities and intergenerational leadership. Base building, community organizing and a race/class/gender analysis underpin both movements."⁴⁴

Through the EJ/RJ Collaborative, members came to understand that a justice framework – one that supports women and their ability to choose not only whether to have a child but also the conditions under which she will raise her child with dignity and free from toxic environmental and occupational exposures – is at the core of what both movements have in common.

As the EJ/RJ Collaborative members began exploring tensions and opportunities, they identified a range of overlapping issues in urban and rural areas including:

- breast health
- pesticide exposure
- the pharmaceutical industry
- cosmetic and personal care products
- Federal Drug Administration policies
- weapons testing
- food safety
- farm worker health

Priorities

Members discussed the issue of language and whether it isolates more than unites the two movements. However, EJ/RJ Collaborative members were not interested in spending time at in-person retreats to develop a common language. Rather, they were interested in creating tools to explore practically what the intersection means, what it takes and where it can lead.

EJ/RJ Collaborative members strongly believe that to build power and effectiveness they need to increase the number of allies able to work across movements toward shared goals. They understand that community advocates must get to a sense of shared values, including a belief in human rights for all, and building power of community members using a social justice framework and valuing motherhood, family and children.

To do this kind of work, movement activists will need to address the challenges which include tensions among social justice sectors as well as build their capacity to take on intersectional work. Major capacity constraints identified by EJ/RJ Collaborative members include time, financial resources, staff resources and a need to build knowledge about the issues.

44. L. Ross (2009) "Bridging the Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice Movements," *SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective: Collective Voices (Summer 2009)*, pp. 10-11.

The Dolores Huerta Foundation (DHF) is a statewide organization that works to train and develop the leadership of people. DHF works to organize sustainable communities to attain political and social justice. It works in the farm working communities of Lamont, Arvin and Weedpatch to establish neighborhood organizations, Vecinos Unidos, in low/no-income and working class areas to develop indigenous leadership to address issues of economic disparities in housing, education, environmental and reproductive health and employment through collective volunteer civic action.

Tensions

Those in the two movements tend to hold differing views on how science can inform policy. For example, activists in the environmental health and justice movement advocate for the use of a precautionary principle. The precautionary principle states that if an action or policy might cause severe or irreversible harm to the public or to the environment, in the absence of a scientific consensus that harm would not ensue, the burden of proof falls on those who would advocate taking the potentially harmful action.

For reproductive justice (RJ) advocates, the precautionary principle is a challenging framework. If proponents of products and services bear responsibility for the safety of those products and services, should those who provide abortions bear the costs of determining safety? Ideologically – produced studies show an “association” between abortion and suicide, depression and substance use. While these studies are methodologically problematic, abortion opponents argue that this uncertainty justifies restrictions on the rights to abortion, such as waiting periods and mandatory information. Addressing the inconclusiveness of their studies would require that abortion providers (the industry, in this case) conduct research to show that abortion does not cause mental health harm to women. It would be unrealistic to assume that such a burden could be met by those who provide abortion care.

In two even more clearly cross-issue examples, some anti-contraception activists argue that the urine of women taking oral contraceptives contains hormones that pollute watersheds,⁴⁵ and Christian environmentalists in Pennsylvania and Illinois sport bumper stickers that say, “If you’re pro-life, be anti-coal!”⁴⁶

With examples like these in mind, Collaborative members explored the tensions related to using the precautionary principle in a webinar and conference call led by two EJ/RJ Collaborative members: Tracy Weitz, PhD of the UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health and Brenda Salgado, formerly of Breast Cancer Action. The EJ/RJ Collaborative identified it as a topic to remain alert to as members move forward with their work together.

45. L. Ross (2009) “Bridging the Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice Movements,” *SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective: Collective Voices (Summer 2009)*, p. 11.

46. Email from Matthew Anderson-Stembridge of Christian environmentalist organization, Creation Care Fund, September 23, 2009.

Another tension that surfaced is the focus on fetal health and in utero exposures of toxins. While both movements are concerned with fetal health, the reproductive justice movement has had to respond to the efforts of anti-abortion advocates seeking to establish fetal "personhood." Abortion opponents advocate for the establishment of the rights of the fetus at the moment of conception, often as distinct from the rights of the pregnant woman. This separate fetus is thus guaranteed special protection from the state. They seek to set the stage to ban abortion and, often, contraception.

How both movements use the issue of fetal health to advance movement goals reveals challenges. A 2002 cover story in *Time* magazine titled "Inside the Womb: The Latest Science on How Healthy Babies are Born,"⁴⁷ addressed issues of fetal health and environmental toxins. The cover showed a fetus and the article was hailed by environmental justice activists as a milestone, because it pointed to connections between environmental toxins and fetal health. But for reproductive justice activists, showing a fetus on the cover of a major weekly without any connection to a woman's body was a set back in challenging fetal personhood efforts by locating the concern about toxin at the level of the fetus rather than the pregnant woman.

In a similar way, highlighting the existence of toxins in nail and beauty salons (a goal of the environmental justice movement) may lead to women no longer partaking of these services, which can leave low-income women who have few options but to work in these salons unable able to provide for their families (a serious concern for the reproductive movement).

For too long, environmental and reproductive justice groups have worked in isolation from one another and, as the above examples illustrate, what can seem like a victory to one may be a disappointment to others. With the EJ/RJ Collaborative process, both movements benefit from leaders discussing these kinds of missed opportunities for coordinating communications strategies. The collaborative process allowed for reframing issues and engaging in greater coordination of communications and messaging strategies that could benefit both movements.

47. J. M. Nash, D. Bierklie, A. Park and D. Cray (2002) "Inside the Womb," *Time Magazine*, November 11, 2002. Available online at <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1003653,00.html>> [last viewed 9/9/09].

Grayson Neighborhood Council (GNC) is a grassroots community organization formed in 1985 by residents of the primarily low-income Spanish-speaking town of Grayson, located on the west side of Stanislaus County. GNC educates and builds the power of the community on issues of immigrant rights, education, environmental health and recreational needs for youth. GNC has expanded its efforts to share its experience with other San Joaquin Valley communities, and was a co-founder of the Central California Environmental Justice Network.

The EJ/RJ Collaborative also explored several issues related to their movements:

- **Individual- and community-based frameworks.** A tension exists between focusing on providing services to individuals and addressing the root causes of health disparities within communities.
- **Reproductive technologies.** There is a rapidly expanding set of questions related to reproductive technologies, many of which cause serious concern within the disability rights movement. Among these are concerns that researchers focus on genetic tendencies toward disease rather than prevention of environmental risk factors, and that there is a widening gap between individuals with the resources to conceive and bear healthy children and those who suffer the biological consequences of environmental impacts without access to advanced technologies.
- **Rights of the disabled.** A related topic was the widespread usage of the term “birth defects” to describe fetal developmental disabilities, especially when raised within the context of new reproductive technologies that might enable those with the greatest resources to engage in selective processes that invalidate the right of the disabled to live.
- **Government and regulation.** Members also discussed the role of government and regulatory agencies in the movements for environmental and reproductive justice. Some members questioned whether more laws will actually help and whether regulations fully address health threats faced by individuals in their communities. For example, recent articles in the *New York Times* and other publications point to widespread violations of existing water safety laws and lax or nonexistent enforcement and consequence by regulatory agencies in response.⁴⁸

Shared Challenges

The EJ/RJ Collaborative identified a number of shared challenges. Many of these echo the challenges identified in the report, *Assessing the State of the Field and Opportunities for Philanthropic Investment in Environmental Health through a Gender Lens*.⁴⁹ Prepared by the Foundation’s Senior Program Adviser Tina Eshaghpour for the Health and Environmental Funders Network (HEFN) in December 2008, this document was designed to inform grantmakers who are interested in bringing a gender lens to their work on health and the environment.

- **The two movements are underfunded.** Issue-specific funding guidelines make it difficult for multi-issue organizations to access diverse sources of funding. In addition, the lack of significant investments in environmental justice or women’s environmental health efforts has meant most groups have not been able to build enough organizational capacity to adequately mobilize their base to achieve their goals.

48. See for instance: C. Duhigg (2009) “Clean water laws are neglected, at a cost in human suffering,” *The New York Times*, September 13, 2009, National, p. 1; J. Dearon (2009) “Mercury still fouls state,” *SF Examiner*, September 18, 2009, p. 16; and G. Burke (2009) “School drinking water contains toxins,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2009, available online at <<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-us-toxic-water-schools,0,2114860.story?page=1>> [last viewed 9/21/09].

49. T. Eshaghpour (2008) *Assessing the State of the Field and Opportunities for Philanthropic Investment in Environmental Health through a Gender Lens* (Bethesda, MD: Health and Environmental Funders Network). Available online at <http://www.hefn.org/resources/files/Scoping%20Projects%202008%20WEH%20Final%20Version.pdf/view> [last viewed 9/28/09].

Generations Ahead works with social justice organizations to expand the public debate on genetic technologies. By looking at the benefits and risks of these technologies for different communities, Generations Ahead promotes policies that ensure full respect and human rights for all people. Working at the intersection of race, reproduction, disability and sexuality, it is increasing the public awareness of the many complex social, ethical and environmental implications of genetics.

- **The movements are fragmented.** While there are multiple communities that are doing work at the intersection of environmental and reproductive justice, there is no coordination of these movements on a national level, nor a national identity that unites them.
- **Capacity is a challenge.** Many of the leading advocates are being asked to get involved in many complementary but different efforts. The demand for community leaders to be involved in multiple efforts is significant, and typically they are not funded to do this work.
- **Language is a barrier.** The cultural context and ways in which people describe their work varies and can become challenging when diverse groups are part of a coalition.
- **There are fundamental tensions between these movements.** Moreover, with rare exception, the environmental and reproductive justice movements have no prior history of working together.
- **There is a lack of information and knowledge across issues.** Advocates do not readily understand linkages between issues.
- **Organizational commitment is a challenge.** Organizational leadership at the board and management level needs to prioritize multi-issue and cross-issue work.
- **Framing the issues for different audiences is difficult.** Communicating the complexities and linkages between the two movements to community members is challenging and complex at times. There is a need to frame things differently for different audiences.
- **Issues relating to chemicals and the impact on health can be overwhelming.** There is a need to provide fact sheets with direct impacts on reproductive health in a way that allows advocates and activists to make connections to families and communities and point to concrete changes people can make in their communities.
- **Work and partnerships are moving faster than available resources.** This work is already happening in communities. In fact, leaders in intersectional work find that they need to reach out to show funders the potential and progress to date of a cross-issue movement encompassing these fields. While there is a long way to go, there are signs of growing funder interest.

Gaps and Needs

As with challenges, many of these gaps and needs are also raised in the HEFN *Assessing the Field* document of December 2008.⁵⁰ These include:

- Create more access to, and translation of, science for lay people, policymakers and media.
- Include community activists and advocates in the process of identifying what research should be conducted in research design (including the development of research questions and methodology) and in the dissemination and use of research findings in policy change efforts.
- Translate research into a movement-building tool that can mobilize people.
- Develop more effective messaging around women's and girls' environmental health policy.
- Define common areas for collaboration, such as breast cancer and fertility.
- Build cohesion toward shared language and values.
- Build leadership and organizational capacity.
- Conduct multi-sectoral outreach to other advocates to deepen relationships and develop alliances.
- Centralize resources and create a listserv of important scientific studies, events, information and speakers.
- Improve connectivity within the current community of activists.
- Expand the network of current activists to include new constituencies such as women's health and occupational health communities.
- Build cohesion through developing a shared language and agreement on common values.

50. Ibid.

EJ/RJ COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Collaboration is a prerequisite for building leadership and power at the regional or statewide level. Yet disparities in resources – dollars, staffing and time – and visibility between mainstream and more grassroots organizations are significant barriers. These ultimately impact the power dynamics and decision-making of any collaborative effort, with more mainstream organizations continuing to serve as the gatekeepers to funders and key decision makers. Investment by funders to support the engagement of grassroots organizations with mainstream groups is critical to building alliances among these disparate groups.

These alliances and opportunities for joint learning and action are key to a strong movement. EJ/RJ Collaborative members describe the benefits of collaboration in terms of opportunities to learn, form alliances and build a stronger social justice movement. Julia Liou of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative says, "It's given us a chance to consider unique ways of partnering." Bonnie Chan of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum explains that the Collaborative "helps us have a broader view of our social movements and where our individual work falls into those movements. For example, when I learn more about Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice's climate justice work or the Community Water Center's water justice work in the Central Valley, I can see the interconnect-edness of our work and see that we are never working in isolation."

Coalitions can be very successful, although they require a great deal of slow, deliberate work. Coalitions thrive when there is someone providing logistical support, such as coordinating meetings and disseminating information. The EJ/RJ Collaborative and the process of emerging collaborative projects were successful for a number of reasons, including the Foundation's deliberate invitation of grassroots organizations combined with established organizations. The trust that resulted from the careful selection of members and facilitators was key to the openness that led to so much progress by the group. Susana De Anda of the Community Water Center notes that the EJ/RJ Collaborative had a "really healthy combination of facilitators and people in the collaborative. In the discussions we saw that everyone felt comfortable and willing to engage." In addition, the continuity of an external facilitator and foundation staff to keep the momentum going was critical.

The following are brief descriptions of collaborations and achievements that have resulted from the EJ/RJ Collaborative. Since the EJ/RJ Collaborative will continue through spring 2010, we expect more to develop.

Policy Wins at the Environment and Reproductive Justice Intersection

Environmental justice and reproductive justice efforts have been essential to some of the defining victories of the last decade. The justice framework has allowed for groups to build broader coalitions that have led to concrete policy victories. These efforts have resulted in a range of successes across the country including victories related to sexuality education, abortion rights and chemical policy reform in relation to reproductive harm. We highlight two examples from California below.

Nail Salon Workers

POLISH, a project of EJ/RJ Collaborative member Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (a grant partner of the Foundation) collaborated with fellow EJ/RJ Collaborative member, the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative, to convene, testify before and address questions to executive officers of Cal/OSHA* and the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology (BBC) about health and safety issues resulting from working in the salon industry. As a result, the BBC has made salon safety information and regulations available in multiple languages, rather than only English. Additionally, the BBC will now conduct culturally sensitive trainings with their inspectors and implement courtesy inspections, which focus on providing owner workers with the information they need to protect their health and improve workplace safety conditions.



Defeating Parental Notification for Abortion Initiatives

Parental notification for abortion initiatives were on the California ballot in 2005, 2007 and 2008 – and there are efforts underway to include it in the 2010 ballot. Each year, voters rejected the initiatives which would have required physicians to notify a minor’s parent or legal guardian 48 hours before performing an abortion. Those that defeated these measures included traditional advocates for reproductive rights including Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice America, the American Civil Liberties Union and members of the statewide California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom. Reproductive justice organizations were able to join the campaign, prioritizing likely supportive voters and, more importantly, in building capacity for marginalized communities. They made strategic connections and built lasting coalitions across a range of issues which were key to this victory.

In fact, the California parental notification ballot initiative in November 2008 served to heighten the willingness of environmental justice groups and others to join together as they realized the benefits of working in alliance on matters related to families, health and justice. EJ/RJ Collaborative members were integral to the leadership of the campaign efforts and included California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice as well as the Dolores Huerta Foundation, which organized farm workers in the Central Valley and was critical in bringing labor leaders to the campaign. In the 2008 election, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice and Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice built a strategic alliance with the Labor Community Strategy Center, an organization that addresses environmental justice, economic justice and transportation justice issues. These organizations created a unified approach to opposing the parental notification initiative as well as a number of other initiatives on the ballot that had particular significance for low-income communities and communities of color.

*Cal/OSHA is the State of California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, an agency of the California Department of Industrial Relations.

As Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice has documented in its 2008 report, *Winning Reproductive Justice*, the efforts of these organizations and other reproductive justice groups represent a movement-building approach to defensive ballot measure campaigns.⁵¹ In many cases these organizations serve communities that are traditionally ignored by campaigns whose main goal is to achieve a "50 percent plus one" margin of victory on Election Day. Reproductive justice groups engaged marginalized communities who are most likely to feel the negative effects of these public policies, and they built strategic alliances with environmental justice groups and other movements including labor/economic justice and immigrant rights. The efforts to oppose the 2008 ballot initiatives in California included EJ/RJ Collaborative members Physicians for Social Responsibility–Los Angeles and the Dolores Huerta Foundation, as well as non-Collaborative members including the Labor Community Strategy Center and the Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition. The EJ/RJ Collaborative will further the potential for building broad based coalitions for future policy campaigns.

Ongoing Action by Collaborative Members

EJ/RJ Collaborative members have plans to continue building on the work they have started together. Rocio Córdoba of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice notes, "At the conclusion of the second retreat in January 2009, all participants shared a strong desire to continue to build upon the relationships they had developed, peer learning and to continue to explore possible collaborations in specific initiatives and campaigns." For instance, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice has identified issues for further exploration, including "working with groups in the Central Valley who share our constituency on a range of issues, developing collaborations with domestic workers and others around safe cleaning products and [addressing toxins in] cosmetics." The three Central Valley members – Community Water Center, the Dolores Huerta Foundation and Grayson Neighborhood Council – are interested in anchoring work in the Central Valley that involves more EJ/RJ Collaborative members. The UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women's Health reports, "As a result of participating in the EJ/RJ Collaborative, we have taken a much greater interest in the environmental justice issues of the Central Valley and have begun to design new research projects to be conducted in the Central Valley that incorporate some environmental justice elements. We hope to engage other Collaborative members in this work."

Following are some of the projects in which EJ/RJ Collaborative members are currently engaged together:

Chemical Policy Reform

Several EJ/RJ Collaborative members are involved in CHANGE (Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy), a statewide coalition of environmental health and justice, policy, labor groups, interfaith and other organizations working to create a better system for regulating toxic chemicals in California. The EJ/RJ Collaborative work resulted in an intentional and deliberate effort by Collaborative members who participate in CHANGE to ensure that reproductive justice groups are part of the broader

51. See M. Bowman (2008) *Winning Reproductive Justice: Contributions to Policy Change from the Reproductive Justice Movement*, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice. Available online at http://www.reproductivejustice.org/ACRJ_Winning_RJ.pdf [last viewed 9/29/09].

coalition. The focus of the CHANGE coalition is on solvents used in agriculture, steel, car wash and cosmetology industries. Because these solvents are common in low-wage industries and in immigrant, rural and urban communities, participation in the CHANGE platform brings opportunities for EJ/RJ Collaborative members to bridge even more sectors.⁵² In addition, Collaborative members were successful in making sure that discussion of solvents includes pesticides, a topic that was missing from early conversations. The strategic priorities include a focus on worker exposure and elevating the voices of communities that are the most vulnerable. EJ/RJ Collaborative members see their participation in the CHANGE coalition as an opportunity to achieve greater impact by connecting to a larger chemical campaign and ensuring that the campaign includes a gender analysis.

Access to Clean Water

Access to clean water is another issue that surfaced as a potential for collaboration. At the first convening, EJ/RJ Collaborative members prioritized learning about water issues in the Central Valley. While most conversations about water in California center on *quantity*, discussions within the Collaborative

52. See for instance: L. Ross (2009) "Bridging the Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice Movements," *SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective: Collective Voices (Summer 2009)*.



were centered on water *quality*. Collaborative members Susan De Anda of Community Water Center and Rosenda Mataka of Grayson Neighborhood Council facilitated a webinar conversation providing an overview of water contamination issues in the Central Valley. Community Water Center cosponsored AB 1242, the Human Right to Water Act, which would have required that every individual is assured of "clean, affordable and accessible water that is adequate for the health and well-being of the individual and family." Several EJ/RJ Collaborative members supported the bill, which passed both houses but was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger.

Toxins in Baby Products

EJ/RJ Collaborative members California Latinas for Reproductive Justice and Physicians for Social Responsibility–LA worked together in 2009 to support SB 772, a state bill to ban toxins from baby products. As of the writing of this report, the bill was in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Meanwhile, the two organizations have forged a strong alliance that includes California Latinas for Reproductive Justice inviting Physicians for Social Responsibility–LA to be part of a day-long reproductive justice retreat, which included a broad range of allies working on developing a California reproductive justice policy agenda.

Regional Organizing

Others in the Collaborative are interested in exploring opportunities for regional organizing around the environmental justice reproductive justice intersection, and the Central Valley is emerging as a priority location for a number of Collaborative participants. The reasons for this include the need to build the capacity of the region's residents to mobilize for change, since local politicians are not advancing protective policies desired by communities; a growing understanding among advocates of the potential to partner with local organizations on cross-regional issues, such as clean air, clean water supply, climate change, chemical policy reform and health service availability; and the fact that environmental justice and reproductive justice are so clearly related for the region's residents that a linked movement is more easily understood and accepted in the Central Valley than elsewhere in the state.

A BROADER CROSS-ISSUE COALITION

While the EJ/RJ Collaborative in California represents some of the leading organizations working at this intersection, *they are by no means the only groups in California calling attention to the connections between environmental toxins and reproductive health.* A number of our grant partner organizations, including Advocacy Coalition of Tulare County (ACT) for Women and Girls and the California Indian Environmental Alliance, are now working at the intersection of environmental and reproductive justice. This fact highlights a key factor in the success of the Foundation's support of an EJ/RJ Collaborative. **Rather than being the result of a top-down, philanthropy-driven effort, this intersectional movement was the natural outgrowth of community concerns being turned into community action at the grassroots level.**

Nail Salon Workers (before the EJ/RJ Collaborative)

Even before the EJ/RJ Collaborative was in place, the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative along with its coalition members (and now EJ/RJ Collaborative members), Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice and the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, has been working to ensure that nail salon workers and owners are fully engaged as leaders in addressing the challenges they face. The California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative won a key policy victory in 2005 when the California legislature passed the California Safe Cosmetics Act. The bill requires cosmetics manufacturers to disclose to the Department of Health Care Services a list of ingredients in their products that are chemicals identified to cause cancer or reproductive harm. A number of nail salon workers testified to lawmakers about the need for greater disclosure about the chemicals used by cosmetics manufacturers.

As discussed earlier in this report, the Safe Cosmetics Act was also a policy project of the Foundation's highly regarded hands-on policy advocacy training program, the Women's Policy Institute. For each of the six years that the Foundation has been operating this program, we have had a reproductive justice team and an environmental justice team. In the 2007–08 Institute year, the reproductive justice fellows chose to work on two bills that link reproductive and environmental health by affirming a woman's right to bear and raise healthy children. SB 1712 would have prohibited the sale of lipstick contaminated with lead, a potent neurotoxin linked to a variety of health and reproductive issues including learning, language and behavioral problems, infertility and miscarriage. AB 2694 would have banned the manufacture or sale of any children's product containing lead including toys, foods, clothing or any other product intended for children under 12 years old. Although neither bill was signed into law, both of these bills passed through the first house of the legislature and raised awareness about the ongoing danger of lead exposure from everyday products.

The choice of previous reproductive justice Women's Policy Institute fellows to work across issues shows the growing awareness among community-based leaders of the inherent linkages between the environmental justice and reproductive movements. In the 2009–10 Institute the Foundation, for the first time, has a combined environmental/reproductive justice team that will support the growing trend among our fellows' organizations, offering new possibilities for policy advocacy at the intersection of environmental and reproductive justice.

Groundwater Contamination

In 2009, many groups across the environmental justice and reproductive justice movements came together to oppose the approval of methyl iodide (iodomethane), a deadly, mutagenic compound commonly used as pesticide.⁵³ Thousands of farm worker supporters wrote to California authorities and advocated against approval of methyl iodide. Community leaders have concerns about groundwater contamination and potential exposure for workers, bystanders and nearby residents – especially children, pregnant women and the elderly. Organizations opposing the approval of methyl iodide include a combination of environmental and reproductive justice groups including Foundation grant partner ACT for Women and Girls and the United Farm Workers. The fact that neither of these groups is a member of the EJ/RJ Collaborative further highlights that this cross-issue orientation comes from the ground up, a process that the Foundation supports.

Impact of Toxic Waste on Infants

In Kettleman City, a small town in southwestern San Joaquin Valley, about 200 residents held a march and rally in July 2009 to protest a cluster of fetal and infant developmental disabilities. The city is next to the I-5 Interstate Highway and is the site of the largest toxic waste dump in the western United States. In a 14-month period from 2007 to 2008, five children out of 20 births were born with cleft palate. Three of them died. Organizations, including Foundation grant partners Greenaction and the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (both of which work closely with EJ/RJ Collaborative members), have joined strategic alliances with residents in rural San Joaquin Valley communities to improve water and air quality, as well as confront problems such as this cluster of fetal and infant developmental disabilities and mortality related to chemical waste.⁵⁴

Children's Products

In response to escalating reports of environmental toxins in children's products and women's cosmetics, then-State Senator Carole Migden introduced SB 1712 and SB 1713 in 2008 to clean up toxic products sold in California. Both bills faced intense opposition by industry and did not pass, though they are a good example of coalition building at the intersection of environmental justice and reproductive justice.

SB 1713, which was co-authored by then-Senate President pro Tem Don Perata, would have expanded the prohibition against phthalates in children's products and would have banned any detectable level of bisphenol A and lead from all toys and child care articles. SB 1712, described earlier, addressed lead in lipstick. A broad coalition of organizations supported these bills including ACCESS/

53. According to the Environmental Protection Agency: Methyl iodide is used as an intermediate in the manufacture of some pharmaceuticals and pesticides, in methylation processes, and in the field of microscopy. In humans, acute (short-term) exposure to methyl iodide by inhalation may depress the central nervous system (CNS), irritate the lungs and skin and affect the kidneys. Massive acute inhalation exposure to methyl iodide has led to pulmonary edema. Acute inhalation exposure of humans to methyl iodide has resulted in nausea, vomiting, vertigo, ataxia, slurred speech, drowsiness, skin blistering and eye irritation. Chronic (long-term) exposure of humans to methyl iodide by inhalation may affect the CNS and cause skin burns. The EPA has not classified methyl iodide for potential carcinogenicity. Methyl iodide is used as an intermediate in the manufacture of some pharmaceuticals and pesticides. See <<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/uatw/hlthef/methylio.html>>.

54. See M. Rhodes (2009) *Environmental Justice Now!* San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center, July 18, 2009. Available online at <<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2009/07/18/18608857.php>> [last viewed 9/28/09].

Women's Health Rights Coalition, Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice, Women's Voices for the Earth, Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California, Environmental Working Group, MomsRising, Environment California, Making Our Milk Safe, American Association of University Women, Physicians for Reproductive Health and Choice and the Sierra Club.⁵⁵ In addition to organizational support, many members of the environmental and reproductive justice groups demonstrated individual support for the bills.

In spite of some short-term policy losses, the long-term value of the EJ/RJ Collaborative's work in terms of raising awareness of policymakers, bringing the topics of the linked environmental and reproductive justice movement onto legislative agendas and informing and mobilizing communities around policy goals cannot be overstated. Moreover, the growing trend toward cross-issue work, as evidenced in the advocacy against methyl iodide (discussed above), and the increasingly common decision of groups traditionally working in one or the other of the two issue areas to incorporate agenda priorities from and form alliances with organizations across these issues, demonstrates the grassroots nature of this joint movement and the timeliness of institutional support for its growth.

55. For a full list of support and opposition to SB 1712 see Bill Analysis, Assembly Committee on Health, June 24, 2008. <http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb_1701-1750/sb_1712_cfa_20080623_111625_asm_comm.html>. For a full list of supporters and opposing organizations to SB 1713 see Senate Health Committee Analysis, April 30, 2008, <http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/sen/sb_1701-1750/sb_1713_cfa_20080430_145743_sen_comm.html>.



STRENGTHENING INTERSECTIONAL WORK

What makes work at this intersection unique, innovative and effective? There is a fundamental need to have leaders who can both articulate a vision for healthy communities and implement that vision through informed decision-making, policy and planning. Balanced planning requires decision-makers to consider the specific needs of women and children in order to build safe, healthy and livable communities.

EJ/RJ Collaborative participants made several recommendations related to analysis, messaging and issue-framing. Several members expressed a need for their staff to receive training on effective strategies for taking on multi-issue work. They cite the following needs:

Support Infrastructure and Collaboration. A key element to movement building is base building and the political education of constituents, yet grassroots organizations struggle to raise funds specifically to support organizing work. The need to invest in building a more comprehensively-organized local base that focuses on specific needs relevant to local context is particularly acute in areas of the state that lack strong nonprofit infrastructures, such as the Central and Inland valleys. EJ/RJ Collaborative members articulated a number of challenges and observations related to effective base building including developing power, maintaining community engagement, integrating organizers who tend to work on their own into a broader coordinated strategy, building the capacity to work in collaboration and finding the time and resources to carry out multi-issue, cross-sector work. As one EJ/RJ Collaborative member points out, "I couldn't find the time to go out and meet these groups and learn about their work on my own."

Emphasize the Essential Role of Vision. Too often, intensive work on a specific campaign can lead to "issue fatigue" where advocates burn out and are less inclined to engage in other issues. Collaborative participants note the challenges of linking an issue-specific campaign with long-term engagement. In the absence of a clear vision for environmental and reproductive justice that acknowledges economic challenges facing low-income communities, organizers run the risk of pitting one issue against another, one family member's interests against another's livelihood.

Build Constituencies for Short- and Long-term Action. A key consideration in mobilizing community members around an issue and building a base of community support is developing an understanding of the differences between short-term, campaign-specific mobilization and long-term constituency development, movement building and base building. Base building involves developing a group of leaders and moving communities to a point where they are leading their own change work. In building a base of support, geography and scale of activity become important considerations. Environmental and reproductive justice issues are not confined to the specific communities we live in or even the immediate geographic surroundings. Rocio Córdoba of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice explains that all the EJ/RJ Collaborative members "agree on the importance of working on parallel short-term and long-term levels. In the short-term, we see the need to seize upon opportunities to make policy change, while in the long-term, we are continuing to build our respective bases of support and alliances to strengthen our movements collectively."

Engage in “Deep” Organizing. When established organizations get involved in a local issue, their underlying purpose should be to work with the community so that, ultimately, the community can do its own work. This kind of “deep organizing” for long-term action and solid base building requires time to build trust and yield results. While short-term goals might include the passage or defeat of a specific piece of legislation, long-term social change goals include nurturing diverse alliances and building community power.

Develop Specific Strategies and Messaging. Mobilizing efforts proactively, with a view toward advance planning, allows organizations to be more strategic and less reactive. Bringing people together to engage in cross-issue work requires strategic thinking about how issues are framed and messages communicated to different audiences. Specific strategies and messages need to be developed, tested and tailored to each priority constituency – whether local, statewide or national – to be effective. At the same time, organizers must understand that cross-constituency organizing requires not pitting one issue against another.



KEY LEARNINGS

Funders can support stronger movements through facilitating and convening leaders working across multiple issues. In convening some of the leading activists and strategic thinkers in environmental and reproductive justice from around California, the Foundation facilitated a process whereby key leaders from two movements were able to engage in deeper conversations, build relationships, broaden their network of allies, learn about conditions faced by communities in other parts of the state – particularly in rural communities – have time for reflection, share resources and strategies, explore opportunities for collaborations and coalition building across movements and talk about frustrations and failures as well as successes and strategies.

Community-based solutions are necessary in policy advocacy efforts. Policy priorities and frameworks that center on the experiences of disenfranchised communities are poised to identify systemic conditions and effective policy solutions. Without the engagement and leadership of these communities, advocates often propose policies that fail to address the priorities of the communities in greatest need or that lack the community involvement needed to ensure implementation.

A focal question or theme can bring potential collaborators together. By focusing on a specific theme like the environmental justice and reproductive justice intersection, potential collaborators are better able to make informed decisions about whether they are interested in participating.⁵⁶

Multiple forms of participation foster longevity. The Foundation was sensitive and flexible to the needs of participating organizations. Participants were able to make choices about their participation throughout the collaboration which allowed them to sustain their participation. The level of participation varied through the course of the collaboration depending on many factors including parental leave, shifting work priorities and staff transitions.

Relationship-building is worth the time. Agendas were developed with ample time for relationship and trust building. When EJ/RJ Collaborative members were able to learn more about each other's interests and strengths they were better able to build on those. In-person retreats were critical in establishing and strengthening these bonds.

A shared vision may shift. The collective vision of what the EJ/RJ Collaborative is trying to achieve together evolves with time. It is important to create space for reflection on the original vision in order to ground people in the objectives and goals of the EJ/RJ Collaborative.

Platforms for collaboration should be open, transparent and accessible. Trying out new methodologies for connecting, sharing and learning together creates the potential for innovation and breakthroughs that can spread through other networks and communities. The EJ/RJ Collaborative used technology including box.net to share articles, participant contact information, agendas, notes,

56. See C. Reinelt (2009) *Collaboration in a New Era*, Leadership Learning Community, August 3, 2009. Available online at <<http://leadershiplearning.org/blog/admin/2009-08-04/collaboration-new-era>>. [last viewed 9/28/09].

ideas and resources for our work together. In addition, the Foundation coordinated conference calls and webinars, overnight retreats and in-person meetings.

Focus on specific outcomes can be counterproductive. An attachment to outcome is often what causes the most stress during collaboration. The EJ/RJ Collaborative has a strong sense of alignment of purpose and values, which allowed the Foundation and Collaborative members to consider innovative ideas for movement building.

Reflection and evaluation are integral to the process. Taking time for reflection at the beginning of each meeting enabled the EJ/RJ Collaborative to make course-corrections in real time. Building an evaluation process at the end of each meeting allowed us to make improvements along the way.

Even small grants support participation. The Foundation made modest general operating grants to participating organizations to support their participation and to value their time, thought and energy.

Power dynamics need to be identified and addressed. In bringing the EJ/RJ Collaborative together, it was important for the Foundation to recognize our position as a funder. While EJ/RJ Collaborative members expressed deep trust with Foundation staff, we created space and time for EJ/RJ Collaborative members to meet without us, which they did for part of one meeting. By hiring a professional meeting facilitator, we strategically and intentionally addressed potential areas of tension and fostered trust and accountability, especially between large and small organizations.

The cross-issue collaborative model is replicable in other social justice movements. Bringing reproductive and environmental advocates together for exploration and a series of conversations offered the Foundation an opportunity to understand how such a collaborative can serve as a model for bringing different social justice movements together to identify linkages and shared strategies that support social change and capacity building on a broad scale.

Positive outcomes result from safety and trust in the collaborative process. In considering the value of the EJ/RJ Collaborative experience, nearly everyone notes that there was a surprisingly high degree of comfort and trust in the room from the beginning. They attribute this to the prior relationships that many had – a point which highlights the importance of the Foundation’s careful survey of the field and exploratory roundtable strategy in determining to form the Collaborative and whom to invite – the ease with which new people joined the group, the facilitators’ skill at building trust and a sense of familiarity and the careful consideration of various meeting details. By sharing case studies in a space carefully designed for dialogue, Collaborative members had an opportunity to take the time to discuss topics of importance; learn about tactics, strategies and perspectives of other successful organizations, advocacy and organizing efforts and talk candidly about frustrations and failures as well as successes. There were many positive outcomes to this experience, including broadening the network of potential allies while simultaneously solidifying relationships with leaders they know but rarely see, broadening and deepening their own work by grappling with the cross-over elements of issues and focusing with greater intentionality and clarity on connections between reproductive justice and environmental justice work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHILANTHROPY

The EJ/RJ Collaborative members identified several areas within their movements that require attention and resources in order to work effectively at the intersection of environmental and reproductive justice and to support broad-based, multi-issue movement building for social justice. The Foundation is energized by the innovation of the groups in this collaborative. At the same time, we recognize that the reproductive justice movement is relatively new overall, and explicit intersectional work with environmental justice is only now being formally identified and examined.

The groups, in a relatively short period of time and with limited resources, have exhibited impressive energy and momentum, developed sophisticated analysis and won key victories. The EJ/RJ Collaborative is helping these groups to take stock of and define the intersection, while creating the conditions to have an even bigger impact. However, momentum and innovation are too often cut short by the challenges and realities of forming, resourcing and sustaining organizational infrastructures. The following are recommendations for how funders can support and nurture this promising work. These recommendations are aligned with those in the Movement Strategy Center's companion Fertile Ground report.

- **Map the Landscape.** While there is significant activity within and across environmental and reproductive justice movements, many community activists are unaware of the leaders within and across the movements or what these leaders' roles are within each. Funders should consider support for a mapping project. Making such information easily accessible statewide will enable community leaders to identify effective strategies and strengths as well as gaps and weaknesses, and will allow organizations to identify allies in other parts of the state. The Movement Strategy Center's Fertile Ground report is a first step in implementing this strategy.
- **Develop measures of success for intersectional organizing in collaboration with community-based organizations.** It is premature to identify definitive measures of success for EJ/RJ intersectional efforts as the groups themselves have not developed them. Instead, a scan of their work and how groups talk about their success yields compelling anecdotal information and important information about broad areas to consider when assessing impact. Deeper examination could happen through a separate evaluation study. In addition to the desired outcomes of organizing and advocacy campaigns, EJ/RJ intersectional groups also talk about outcomes that are often not included in traditional notions of success for community organizing and policy advocacy efforts – such as relationship building across sectors – but should be considered in order to best capture the impact of intersectional movement building.
- **Adopt complementary strategies.** The Foundation employs four interlinking strategies to address the need for systemic change: grantmaking, capacity building, policy advocacy and movement building. Combining these strategies allows us to have a greater impact than would be possible with one or two alone. For instance, the EJ/RJ Collaborative members are also grant partners, and some are recipients of technical assistance and graduates of the Women's Policy Institute.

- **Invest in movement building and movement capacity.** Whenever possible, funders should devote a portion of grantmaking dollars to movement-building investments. The most important factor in successful movement building is that it be field-driven and funder-supported, rather than funder-driven. Once an emergent movement is identified, grantmaking should include providing strategic support to networks, intermediaries and “bridge-builder” organizations – although this type of support must be balanced with direct funding to individual organizations doing longer-term work that is community-based. For example, along with other support, EJ/RJ Collaborative members received grants for general operations or project support for their broader work.

The recent Political Economy Research Institute report, *Justice in the Air*, points out that “corporations can be spurred to protect human health and safety” by community mobilization, among other pressures.⁵⁷ To this end, grants to organizations should be larger, multi-year and flexible in the form of general operating support. The Foundation’s Community Action Fund has an explicit intersectional approach that lists all of our issue priorities in its guidelines. Groups apply and program officers in the Foundation work together to make funding decisions. Other funders have established specific collaborations between program officers to share information and do joint grantmaking.

- **Convene organizations working across issues.** Invest in convenings where community-based organizations can come together to engage in more cross-issue organizing and movement-building work. Funders can play a role in convening groups when there is no clear leadership to do this within the field. Many organizations work locally or regionally, while others work statewide or nationally. By first inviting our environment justice and reproductive justice grant partners and others working in those fields to roundtable discussion, the Foundation was able to hear from community-based leaders about what was already being done to link these movements and what organizations were committed or poised to commit to deeper collaborative action. Those organizations that became members of the EJ/RJ Collaborative identified the need for a better understanding of how they could deploy resources to work together on various campaigns in order to leverage collective power.

Coalition building must include conversations that explore the need for balancing organizing around a specific campaign with the need to build a long-term movement for social change. Cross-issue convenings allow participants to build relationships, share local strategies and expertise, decrease a sense of isolation and competition, strengthen strategic partnerships, build power and align strategies across movements. Utilizing intermediary organizations and public foundations to conduct convenings and make sure convening strategies are coordinated among funders so that organizations are not invited to multiple funder-initiated convenings with similar objectives must be considered.

- **Build the capacity of organizations.** Organizations need the capacity and organizational effectiveness to tackle multiple issues. Capacity issues include strengthening organizational

57. M. Ash, J. Boyce, G. Chang, M. Pastor, J. Scoggins, and J. Tran (2009) *Justice in the Air: Tracking Toxic Pollution from America’s Industries and Companies to Our States, Cities, and Neighborhoods*, (Amherst, MA: Political Economy Research Institute and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity), p.18.

infrastructure as well as organizational knowledge on multiple issues. In order to develop a shared agenda and language, organizations will need time to build their own political education on the intersections between multiple issues.

- **Funders can help accelerate the engagement of community leaders across issue areas.** Funder support, in the form of convenings, stipends and capacity-building grants can help activists to explore their shared interests and better understand the challenges and benefits of partnership on linked issues touching their communities.
- **Invest in policy advocacy.** In order for leaders and constituents of the environmental and reproductive justice movements to advocate for healthier and more sustainable policy solutions and outcomes, they and their funders must understand social, cultural and economic impacts of various policy actions and incorporate this understanding into a shared vision, identifiable collaborations and communication strategies. Leaders from both of these movements are needed to work together to build their capacity to engage in policy work and develop a cohesive strategy that recognizes shared goals and objectives for bringing about a more equitable landscape where reproductive and environmental needs are equally met.

Funders should invest in policy advocacy training efforts. Because the rules for such efforts vary depending on whether a grantmaker is public or private, there is strategic value for both kinds of foundations to partner with one another in building the capacity of organizations to educate policy makers on the needs of their communities and the specific policy measures that will bring positive, long-term change. The Women's Policy Institute of the Women's Foundation is one concrete way to build this kind of capacity in California, and funders may want to consider making investments to strengthen and replicate such models throughout the US.

- **Focus strategic support on women of color-led groups that are creating innovative policy solutions.** Women of color-led organizations tend to be underfunded and yet are often the organizations that are winning key policy victories. A survey of grant partners of the Catalyst Fund, an initiative of the Tides Foundation that supports women of color-led organizations engaged in innovative reproductive justice work involving community organizing and advocacy, identifies 30 percent of the 63 funded organizations that are also working in environmental justice. Given the important strategic role of these organizations and the contribution they can make to movement building, funders should make strategic and focused investments in these organizations.
- **Invest in intermediaries.** Increase investments to intermediary organizations and funders that have deep relationships with organizations, expertise in convening and a track record in funding and supporting movement building. Intermediaries, like state-based women's funds, statewide organizations and national networks, have strong relationships with organizations in multiple regions and a deep understanding of the context of the work. Investment by and partnership of larger foundations is a critical need for the continuation and growth of effective movement building.
- **Build the capacity of foundation staff.** Encourage funder colleagues to move beyond traditional issue-specific areas of funding and strengthen communications and relationships with colleagues funding other issues that impact their core funding priorities. Funders do not always

know how to support movement-building work that addresses multiple issues, and it will be important to find ways to build the capacity of foundation staff. Sometimes program officers may not realize they are funding intersectional or multi-issue work because it is called different things by different people.

- **Coordinate across funder affinity groups.** Foundation staff belong to a number of funder affinity groups which also are very focused on their specific issues. Just as funders want to see organizations build alliances across issues, funder affinity groups should seek out natural linkages and intentionally coordinate work, attending one another's meetings when possible. For example, partly as a result of the EJ/RJ Collaborative, the Foundation has taken a lead role in connecting the Health and Environmental Funders Network and the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health & Rights. We have also taken a lead role in coordinating conference sessions on this intersection for the Environmental Grantmakers Association.
- **Keep in mind that California is a large and diverse state.** There are distinct regions with differing kinds of activities and levels of awareness and readiness to act on the intersection of reproductive and environmental justice. For instance, as members of the EJ/RJ Collaborative came to learn, communities in the Central Valley have higher levels of poverty than any other region of the state, while they are much more likely than communities elsewhere in the state to grasp the connection between environmental toxins and reproductive health risks. Funders should respond to each region with the appropriate focus and level of support for organizational and community capacity building.

CONTINUING THE WORK

This report reflects on the first year and a half of the EJ/RJ Collaborative and shares lessons learned with philanthropic colleagues. It is meant to highlight both funding opportunities and gaps that need to be filled. We welcome the involvement of other funders interested in multi-issue movement building and in elevating the voices of women leading both within organizations and in communities throughout California and across the country. We at the Women's Foundation of California are committed to continuing this examination of the intersection of issues we fund as a key strategy in building a movement led by women and girls for social change.

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