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Environmental Justice: Issues, Policies, and Solutions, edited by Bunyan Bryant. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995.

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In the 1980s, the United Church of Christ (1987) and others argued provocatively that minority and low income communities were bearing a disproportionate share of environmental contamination. Academics and activists began documenting incidents of environmental injustice. Bryant's new edited collection, *Environmental Justice: Issues, Policies, and Solutions*, marks a move away from documentation and toward formulation of possible responses to environmental inequities. Articles by several prominent figures in the environmental justice movement are included in this collection, but Bryant also secured new work from writers outside this circle. Widening the range of voices talking about environmental justice is one of the strengths of this book. Perspectives on industrial and economic policy, sustainable agriculture practices, and international treaty mechanisms all contribute to a deeper understanding of sources of and possible responses to environmental injustice.

Unfortunately, the wide range of voices also contributes to the weakness of the book as well. Innovative ideas and recommendations are not successfully linked or synthesized with more traditional thinking about environmental justice. Authors unfamiliar with issues of environmental justice were not pressed to move beyond policy platitudes that ring hollow in the face of the structural racism and classism supporting environmental injustice. Contradictions within and between articles could, at least, have been highlighted as current tensions within (and between) the environmental justice movement activists and researchers. A strong editorial voice was needed to provide the substantive connections necessary to make this a successful and important book about environmental justice. Instead, this reader was left to wonder why the authors and editor failed to capture more fully the complexity of the systems they hope to change and in which environmental injustice exists.

Bryant introduces the collection with an overview of current environmental justice concerns coupled with brief suggestions about how existing policies can be changed to address those concerns. He discusses the political economy of environmental justice research, for example, clearly laying out the economics of university research programs that create exclusive and

corporate-focused results. He then proposes the development (and state funding) of Regional Environmental Justice Centers to be located in universities. This is an intriguing and eminently plausible, but ultimately unsatisfying argument. Bryant provides no evidence that such university-based centers could balance the structural forces in the university and create a safe haven for environmental justice research that is likely to challenge the dominant economic development and industrial profit paradigms.

In a companion chapter, Wright contributes a fuller discussion about "Environmental Equity Justice Centers." This piece suffers from the similar inability to justify creating such centers at universities that consistently demonstrate an inability to handle interdisciplinary and methodologically innovative approaches to social problems. This apparent contradiction between problem analysis and proposed solutions runs throughout the book.

Bailey, Alley, Faupel, and Solheim review potential roles for agency, university, and nonprofit organizational professionals in facilitating community activism around environmental justice issues. They conclude that one role for professionals is to provide technical assistance to communities. Just how the role advocated by Bailey and colleagues can advance the needs of communities is suggested in two other articles. West, Fly, Marans, Larkin, and Rosenblatt report results of their research suggesting that methods currently being used in the state of Michigan undercalculate the amount of (potentially toxic) fish consumed by minorities and low income populations. The chapter by Head provides an introduction to health-based risk assessments, another area in which professionals can contribute their expertise to communities in need. This chapter provides a basic description of risk assessment and a listing of the inherent difficulties in current risk-assessment techniques. All three of these articles would benefit from a serious analysis of the consequences of professionally supported community efforts, for both the community and the professional.

Ferris and Hahn-Baker recount the struggles between mainstream environmental groups and environmental justice activists. They urge mainstream environmental groups to refocus their strategies to include the needs of contaminated communities. Once again, after a promising problem analysis, the authors provide no compelling reason why environmental justice activists should align with these groups, beyond the initial appeal of what appear to be the munificent resources of mainstream groups.

Environmental justice may be a rallying cry enabling mainstream groups to raise funds this year. One needs to be mindful, however, that as critical an issue as it will be for communities in years to come, communities may be bumped from environmentalists' agendas by the reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act or some equally pressing legislative or regulatory concern. The authors have not convincingly described how environmental justice activists would benefit from becoming just one of a number of concerns for mainstream environmental groups rather than continuing to emphasize building local structures that mobilize community members.

Disappointingly, Bullard contributes what looks like notes to another, more

well-developed, analysis of urban segregation and toxic contamination. Although potentially interesting and insightful for environmental justice analyses, this article would contribute more to the book's objective if it were expanded and placed within the context of solutions to environmental injustice.

A basic introduction to the economic analysis of environmental contamination and cleanup by Bezdek hints at interesting possibilities for contaminated communities. He suggests ways to link environmental cleanup to community employment. Wolcott, Drayton, and Kadri provide a companion to this chapter in their discussion of the use of taxes and the removal of subsidies that distort energy and materials use. These two chapters form a good introduction to the kinds of sophisticated analyses and solutions to environmental injustice that may become available as the movement matures.

In a classic analysis of the effects of industrial policies on poor urban residents, Hamilton proposes changes in industrial policy that would shift focus to community economic development. The proposed solutions are out of sync with our current political and industrial regime and are unlikely to be considered, much less implemented. There is no evidence, for example, at either the national or international level that, as the author claims, "no longer is it acceptable to sacrifice workers, communities, and their social health for profit" (p. 113). Pretending that individuals or governments are acting in kinder, gentler ways will not help communities under economic and environmental pressure. More useful may be suggestions for thinking about how industrial policy can be made to work for communities, or methods for ameliorating the worst effects of existing industrial policy.

Goldtooth comprehensively summarizes indigenous nations' sovereign powers as they relate to the interaction between treaty regulations and state and federal environmental regulations. The chapter hints at how various tribes are using sovereign powers to manage environmental contamination on tribal lands, but supplies little analysis or discussion of the consequences or implications of sovereignty in containing or combating environmental injustice. Many tribes, for example, are struggling with the tensions created by available economic opportunities for members that also bring contamination to tribal lands.

A pair of chapters focus on agricultural issues, usually short-changed in environmental justice discussions. In an interesting analysis, Ostendorf and Terry examine the environmental consequences of various agricultural policies. Like other economic pursuits, the business of agriculture has externalized the human and environmental costs of a production process that increasingly concentrates not only the petrochemical inputs, but also the economic base. Farm land conservation policies, for example, have been defeated not only by urban development, but also by federal farm-price policies that encourage intensive farming and over production through chemical applications. In a complementary case study, Perfecto describes what happened to Cuba's intensive sugar and citrus export production system after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only did Cuba lose its

main trade partners, but also lost its primary sources of machinery and petroleum-based products including fertilizers and herbicides. Cuba has been forced into "low input" agriculture that may provide important lessons about sustainable agriculture. Both of these articles provide succinct introductions to environmental justice issues related to agriculture and exciting hints about possible approaches to solutions.

In the final chapter, Buttel turns to the international policy arena and reviews available mechanisms for international environmental policy. Buttel warns environmentalists in developing countries that issues of environmental inequities in debtor nations may be driven primarily by the Third World debt crisis, the debt regime, and the world monetary order. Until these issues are resolved, he suggests, the international treaties currently in favor as a way to regulate environmental contamination or deterioration may not provide long term-relief to communities or countries struggling to clean up.

Community activists know that the environmental justice struggle ahead is long and their opponents strong. What they need from experts and professionals is some way to translate available knowledge and expertise into recommendations that can be implemented in their communities. This book gives itself the ambitious agenda of identifying solutions for environmental justice problems that reflect pervasive and endemic social, economic, and environmental inequities in communities and neighborhoods across the country. Bryant had the right impulse in finding new voices to bring fresh analyses to existing problems; but his editorial voice is not strong enough to focus those analyses on developing workable solutions for resolving the range of problems facing community members. Professionals from relevant fields need more than an invitation to participate; they need assistance in translating their expertise into recommendations that community activists, environmental professionals, and academics can pursue. Unfortunately, these ambitions are not realized in this book.

References Cited:

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