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BLACK HISTORY HERSTORY THEIRSTORY MONTH EDITION

FEBRUARY 2018

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Welcome to ECJ News! You can sign up for our bimonthly newsletter by emailing us ecjp@naacpnet.org. In this section, we feature NAACP branches and state conferences who are doing great work for environmental and climate justice in their communities. Want your events included? Email us!

**Florida State Area Conference President, Adora Obi Nweze, trains Florida branches on CERT**

**Congratulations** to NAACP Florida Area State Conference President, Adora Obi Nweze, for partnering with FEMA to train 57 representatives from 25 Florida branches to not only be Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members but also to be trained in NAACP’s Human and Civil Rights in Emergency Management Monitoring!

**Richard Mabion, KCK Branch NAACP President, to Speak at EPA’s National Brownfields Training**

Richard, Mabion, along with several other field experts, will be speaking at a workshop entitled, “Moving Justice into Communities: Activating Brownfields to Healthfields with Communities Impacted by Goods Movement.” The workshop announced the US EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice’s initiative, Brownfields to Healthfields (B2H) and their launch in 10 environmental justice communities across the nation.

**Danny Chiotos helps Charles Town Council Adopt Renewable-Energy Resolution**

Danny Chiotos, ECJ Chair for the Jefferson County, WV chapter of the NAACP helped to pass a resolution in the Charles Town City Council to incorporate renewable-energy concepts into the city’s operations, construction projects and planning decisions. Chiotos says there’s more work to see the project to fruition but that this is a step in the right direction for this community.

**Tiffany Mishe’ Creates and Performs Clean Energy Spoken Word Poem for the NAACP Environmental Climate Justice Campaign in Memphis, TN.**

Watch as Tiffany Mishe’ spreads truth and light via her articulate and beautiful spoken word poem!

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**Top Photo**
Pres. Nweze with Florida State Area Conference CERT attendees.

**Bottom Photo**
Pamela Ellis, President of Harambee Conference, a local research and public-outreach organization (W.Va); Charles Town (W.Va.) Mayor Scott Rogers; and Danny Chiotos, Environmental & Climate Justice Chair for the Jefferson County (W.Va.) chapter of the NAACP.
The Indiana State Area Conference held a press conference to release their Just Energy Policies Report and hosted an Energy Justice Symposium

The Indiana State Conference hosted an Energy Justice Symposium that covered the NAACP ECJ Energy policies and projects across the nation and globe, as well as the Midwest Region and the state of Indiana. The State Area Conference also released their Just Energy Policies Report in February with a press conference that was well attended.

Jefferson County NAACP Branch Hosted Solar Workshop & Community Clean-Up Efforts

The Jefferson County NAACP Branch hosted a “Solar 101 Workshop Webinar” with Midwest/Plain States ECJ Field Fellow and Autumn Long, Program Director from Solar United Neighbors. The branch also hosted a community clean-up project!

Colorado NAACP Works on Carbon Pricing and President Lytle guest presents for our Just Energy Policies & Practices ACTION Toolkit Webinar


Anchorage NAACP Branch Hosts Energy Family Fun Night

Jan Bronson, Anchorage NAACP President, branch members, and volunteers hosted an educational and interactive energy event that gathered well over 40 participants from their community to discuss energy justice. Every family received two LED light bulbs to replace two incandescent bulbs in their homes along with helpful information and good tidings.

National ECJ Presence at the EPA Public Hearing on the Repeal of the Clean Power Plan

NAACP branch members from across the country organized a presence in West Virginia to provide testimony and fight Scott Pruitt’s repeal of the Clean Power Plan:
- Illinois State Conference President Haley and ECJ Chairperson Gregory Norris
- Jefferson County ECJ Committee Chairperson David Brock
- Denver Branch ECJ Committee Chairpersons Mercedes Whitman and 2nd Vice-President Regina Jones
- St. Paul, Minnesota ECJ Committee member

President Haley and the Illinois State Conference ECJ Plan for Future of Clean Power

Illinois State Conference ECJ participated in the City, Water, Light, and Power (CWLP) with Mayor Langfelder and created a wish list for their community. They plan to hold promised public meetings on CWLP (5 per year with 30 days notice), more transparency at CWLP, proper coal ash clean-up & removal, and long range planning for the utility.

Jeremy Orr accepted to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council and featured in Civil Rights & ECJ Event at Wayne State University Law School

Michigan State Conference ECJ Chair, Jeremy Orr was formally invited to the NEJAC with the ambition to lift up the environmental and climate justice issues of people of color and vulnerable communities. He also hosted a “Environmental Justice in Practice” event with the ABA Civil Rights & Social Justice-Environmental Justice Committee at Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, MI.
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

NAACP’S ECJ BLACK HISTORY EVENTS ACROSS THE NATION

FEBRUARY 2018
Black Environmental History

History. Herstory. Thelistory.

African-American history, herstory, and theirstory has a long and rich connection with the land and the environmental movement. From the days of slavery to Jim Crow and even now, African-American women, men, and non-binary people have deep ties to the sacred earth and the relationship between the earth’s health and community wellbeing.

Enslaved Africans brought vast ecological knowledge to American plantations, teaching their captors rice cultivation, herbal medicine, and more. After emancipation and the plantation economy shifted to a sharecropping economy, the fate of African Americans remained tied to the land as former slaves rented small plots of land from white landowners in exchange for some of their crops. It wasn't until the Great Migration of African Americans to the North, which reached a peak between 1916 and 1970 that Black communities transitioned from being agricultural and land-based to urban and industrialized communities. Before then, 90% of African Americans lived in the rural South.

As Jim Crow laws were spreading like fire throughout the South, African Americans went from being bound to the land to being segregated from it. All over the country, segregation laws separated Black people from local, state, and federal public beaches and parks. Popular federal parks like Shenendoah and the Great Smoky Mountains were segregated by race, with separate entrances, camping grounds, rest rooms, cabins, and picnic ground facilities. And, public work programs like the Civilian Conservation Camps—which planted three billion trees and served more than 800 parks—forced African American members to live in segregated camps with less resources than their white counterparts. As a lasting result of these discriminatory Jim Crow laws, Black people are less likely to visit national parks. According to National Park Service data, to this day less than 10% of visitors to national parks are African-American.

Despite this blatant exclusion, our national park system would not have survived without African Americans, specifically because of the protection of Buffalo Soldiers. The all-Black regiments, formed after the Civil War, were some of the first American park rangers. According to National Park Service data, approximately 500 Buffalo Soldiers served in Yosemite National Park and nearby Sequoia National Park, doing everything from evicting poachers to extinguishing forest fires. Their contributions to protecting and preserving the land paved the way for generations of future Americans.

Throughout Black herstory, African American women like Harriet Tubman utilized their knowledge of the earth to fight for liberation. While Tubman was deliberately not taught how to read and write, her sophisticated reading of the stars, land, and waterways of the Chesapeake region allowed her to free thousands of enslaved people from captivity. And she wasn't the only Black American who used natural knowledge to fight for liberation: The Underground Railroad, which ran from the deep South into Canada, was led by hundreds of brave survivalists like Tubman who shared their knowledge of the land to evade slave catchers, travel often inhospitable terrain at night, and survive in the American wilderness.

In addition to the many Black women and men who fought for environmental and climate justice, nonbinary and/or transgender people also contributed a vital chapter to our Black environmental history. Unfortunately, our historical records of Black transgender and/or nonbinary environmental activists is lacking. We know that trans and nonbinary Black people have been engaged in environmental and climate justice from the beginning but their story (hence, theirstory) has yet to be fully documented. We are committed to including Black trans and nonbinary environmentalists in our work because race and gender—all genders—are inextricably linked. As black history, herstory, and theirstory month comes to a close and we reinvent ourselves for this coming year, we ask you to think about the black nonbinary and/or transgender people in your life, and how their contributions are adding to a legacy of activists, leaders, and revolutionaries whose contributions may have been silenced, but not forgotten.

As we celebrate Black history, herstory, and theirstory, we remember that being an environmentalist is not and was not exclusively for white people. Whether it was bringing agricultural expertise from Africa, preserving natural beauty on national parks, or leading enslaved people to freedom, African American history is inseparable from American environmental history.

By: Liz Kennedy, NAACP's ECJ Research & Policy Fellow
Check out these Black History month events that some of our ECJ Leaders attended and/or hosted in February!

**Jeremy Orr, ECJ Chair for the Michigan State Area Conference**

Jeremy hosted a guest lecture on The History on Environmental Justice at the Abrams Environmental Law Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School on February 27th. He also led a discussion around the NAACP report *Fumes Across the Fence-Line* and related Michigan NAACP ECJ plans on February 13th at Abrams Environmental Law Clinic again.

Jeremy wrote an op-ed that was posted on Alternet.org entitled, “How MLK Inspires Today’s Battle to Provide Clean Air, Water and Energy to Poor Communities of Color”

**NAACP Missouri Environmental and Climate Justice Committee Members: Vanessa Frazier, Portageville Branch; Marlon Graves, Springfield Branch; Rev. Elston McCowan, St. Louis City Branch; Bruce Morrison, St. Louis County Branch; Diane Perry, St. Louis County Branch**

On February 15, 2018, these NAACP leaders attended and displayed NAACP materials at the annual Washington University Environmental Justice Internship event. And on February 21, 2018, they attended and offered testimony at an EPA Clean Power Plan listening session in Kansas City, Missouri as well as attended a green jobs panel discussion scheduled to be held shortly before the EPA session.

**NAACP West Virginia ECJ Committee to attend open house and soul food tasting**

Jefferson County Branch, Saturday, February 10, 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Will see solar in person and view Harpers Ferry Solar Open House- Solar Homes of Jennifer Wilkerson and Diane Blust. They will also be hosting the Environmental Justice and Black History & Soul Food Tasting, Sunday, February 25th, 3 PM.
Environmental Justice Act of 2017

Senator Cory Booker proposed the Environmental Justice Act of 2017, which requires federal agencies to strengthen legal protections against environmental injustice for communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income communities. The bill has a low support rating and probably won’t make it to the Congress floor. However, this is a milestone in the legislative history of environmental justice; while Representative John Lewis has been trying to pass an EJ bill since 1992, the only federal institution that protects frontline communities from environmental racism and injustice is the EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice, initially designated as the Office of Environmental Equity under George H. W. Bush’s administration.

"This is not just an urban issue. It’s also a rural issue. And whether it’s pesticides put on crops affecting farmworkers, or mine runoff, or how they dispose of their toxic materials, we are living in a nation where more and more, we need a vigilant federal government to protect people. But the EPA is now controlled by people who are more in line with industry’s desires than they are with protecting families and communities from these toxins. The environmental justice issues in this country are not going to get better, they will get far worse under a president like this who has shown no desire to hold corporations and powerful interests in our country accountable." Sen. Booker
Repeal of the Clean Power Plan

In November 2017, NAACP members from across the United States traveled to Charleston, WV to provide testimony at the EPA hearing on the proposed Clean Power Plan repeal. The Plan was passed in 2014 under Obama’s administration put on a cap on the amount of carbon dioxide power plants were allowed to emit into the atmosphere. Despite the fact that power plants account for 35% of the United States carbon emissions, this Plan was the first federal legislation to regulate the amount of carbon pollution power plants are emitting.

On March 28, 2017 President Donald Trump signed the Executive Order on Energy Independence, which called for the Plan’s repeal. Thanks to the testimony of our NAACP members and countless other citizen activists dedicated environmental and climate justice, hopefully the Plan will remain intact and continue to protect our atmosphere, hold power plants accountable, and fight climate change.

The EPA will be taking public comments until April 26, 2018.

Learn More:
- Proposed Clean Power Plan Repeal
- Trump’s Executive Order on Energy Independence
- NAACP Members’ Testimony at EPA Hearing

To provide testimony:
Online: Go to https://www.regulations.gov and follow the instructions for submitting comments to EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0355.

Proposed repeal:

Email: Comments may be sent to a-und-r-
Docket@epa.gov. Include Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-
OAR-2017-0355 in the subject line of the message.

Fax: Fax your comments to: (202) 566-9744. Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0355.

Mail: Environmental Protection Agency, EPA
Docket Center (EPA/DC), Mail Code 2822TI,
Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0355,
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20460.

Hand/Courier Delivery: EPA Docket Center,
Room 3334, EPA WJC West Building, 1301
Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004,
Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0355.
Such deliveries are only accepted during the
Docket’s normal hours of operation, and special
arrangements should be made for deliveries of
boxed information.
ECJ TEAM HIGHLIGHTS
February 2018
NAACP Launched the Solar Equity Initiative during MLK National Day of Service Kick-Off Event

On January 13, 2018, in observance of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday and National Day of Service, the NAACP kicked off the Solar Equity Initiative, a year-long civil rights economic and environmental justice initiative committed to providing solar job skills training to 100 individuals, installation of solar panels on 20 households and 10 community centers, and strengthen equity in solar access policies in at least 5 states across the country.

The launch event benefited Jenesse Center, a Los Angeles-based nationally recognized non-profit domestic violence prevention and intervention organization. With the help of clients served through Jenesse, a solar system was installed on transitional housing for domestic violence survivors and clients received hands-on solar installation training from GRID Alternatives, gaining skills to access the growing solar industry, thus providing economic opportunities as part of Jenesse’s core aim of empowering women and fostering financial independence, aims shared by the NAACP.

Partners supporting this national initiative include GRID Alternatives, Solar Energy Industries Association, Sunrun, United Methodist Women, Vote Solar, and others.

Top Photo
NAACP Pres. & CEO Derrick Johnson and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Leon Russell posing with Jenesse Center Advocates and GRID Alternative parnters at the site of the solar installation.

Bottom Photo
NAACP Chairman of the Board of Directors, Leon Russell, helping to install solar panels on the roof of the Jenesse Center.
Just Energy Policies & Practices ACTION TOOLKIT

Have you wanted to do energy justice work but didn’t know where to start? Well, have we got a resource for you! Last month the ECJ Team completed our amazing toolkit, Just Energy Policies and Practices Action Toolkit. In it you’ll find all of the beginning steps you and your NAACP units can take to get energy justice projects off the ground in your area.

Some of the topics include:
How to host a meeting with your legislators on energy justice; starting an ECJ Committee and setting energy justice goals; hosting a weatherization project in your neighborhood; how to start a net metering project; working with your local utility company on your energy justice projects; starting a community-owned clean energy project like a solar garden...

AND MANY MORE!

Download the entire toolkit at once or just download the module that works for you. Each module has worksheets and questions you can work through to get you on your way to a cleaner, healthier environment for your community.

AND WATCH OUR RECORDED WEBINAR!
The team will be posting a recorded a webinar along with a Facilitator’s Guide to the ECJP webpages soon!

Have questions?
Contact the ECJP Team at any time:
ecjp@naacpnet.org

Learn More:
Just Energy Policies & Practices ACTION TOOLKIT and webinar