

SOUTHWEST ORGANIZING PROJECT

HARWOOD TRAINING AND SERVICE CENTER

1114 7TH STREET N.W. • ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87102 • (505) 247-8832

March 16, 1990

SAMPLE COPY - See pp. 4-11 for signatures and pg. 12 for list of recipients.

irectors:
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Williams
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Mr. Jay D. Hair, President
National Wildlife Federation
1400 Sixteenth Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036-2266

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Dear Mr. Hair:

We are writing this letter in the belief that through dialogue and mutual strategizing we can create a global environmental movement that protects us all.

We are artists, writers, academics, students, activists, representatives of churches, unions, and community organizations writing you to express our concerns about the role of your organization and other national environmental groups in communities of people of color in the Southwest.

For centuries, people of color in our region have been subjected to racist and genocidal practices including the theft of lands and water, the murder of innocent people, and the degradation of our environment. Mining companies extract minerals leaving economically depressed communities and poisoned soil and water. The U.S. military takes lands for weapons production, testing and storage, contaminating surrounding communities and placing minority workers in the most highly radioactive and toxic worksites. Industrial and municipal dumps are intentionally placed in communities of color, disrupting our cultural lifestyle and threatening our communities' futures. Workers in the fields are dying and babies are born disfigured as a result of pesticide spraying.

Although environmental organizations calling themselves the "Group of Ten" often claim to represent our interests, in observing your activities it has become clear to us that your organizations play an equal role in the disruption of our communities. There is a clear lack of accountability by the Group of Ten environmental organizations towards Third World communities in the Southwest, in the United States as a whole, and internationally.

Your organizations continue to support and promote policies which emphasize the clean-up and preservation of the environment on the backs of working people in general and people of color in particular. In the name of eliminating

environmental hazards at any cost, across the country industrial and other economic activities which employ us are being shut down, curtailed or prevented while our survival needs and cultures are ignored. We suffer from the end results of these actions, but are never full participants in the decision-making which leads to them.

These are a few examples which we have witnessed of the lack of accountability by the Group of Ten:

- * Legislation was passed in December, 1987 to annex lands to form El Malpais National Monument in New Mexico. 13,000 acres were considered to be the ancestral holdings of the Pueblo of Acoma. "Conservation" groups such as the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society supported the bill in complete disregard for the cultural heritage of the Acoma people.
- * Legislation is also being proposed to form the Albuquerque Petroglyph National Monument; 6,500 acres of escarpment that would include rock drawings carved centuries ago by Indian and Chicano peoples. Part of the land is within the boundaries of the Atrisco Land Grant, owned by Chicano heirs. The Atrisco Land Rights Council, an advocacy group for the heirs is opposing complete sale of the lands and is trying to assure that the heirs rights are recognized and preserved. Opposing the interests of the heirs is the Friends of the Albuquerque Petroglyphs. Members of this group also work in conjunction with the Sierra Club. Recently, the Trust for Public Lands, another conservation group, has proposed to buy the lands for the monument.
- * The Nature Conservancy, National Audubon Society, and others are opposing the grazing of sheep on the Humphries and Sargent Wildlife areas by a local, highly successful economic development project run by Chicanos in Northern New Mexico, one of the most economically depressed areas in the United States. Due to the encroachment of major tourism development companies in the area and consequent loss of private pastoral land historically controlled by local Chicanos, this grazing is considered essential to the continued viability of the project. Despite the fact that this grazing is considered by many to be an ecologically sound practice, these environmental organizations have chosen to "shoot from the hip" in their response to this proposed activity and are opposing the reasoned alternative of those who have lived in the region for hundreds of years.
- * Organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation have been involved in exchanges where Third World countries will sign over lands (debt-for-nature swaps) to conservation groups in exchange for creditors agreeing to erase a portion of that country's debt. In other cases the debt is purchased at

reduced rates; the creditors can then write it off. This not only raises the specter of conservation groups now being "creditors" to Third World countries, but legitimizes the debt itself through the further expropriation of Third World Resources. The question arises whether such deals are in the long term economic interests of both the countries involved and of the people living on the land.

- * The lack of people of color in decision-making positions in your organizations such as executive staff and board positions is also reflective of your histories of racist and exclusionary practices. Racism is a root cause of your inaction around addressing environmental problems in our communities.
- * Group of Ten organizations are being supported by corporations such as ARCO, British Petroleum, Chemical Bank, GTE, General Electric, Dupont, Dow Chemical, Exxon, IBM, Coca Cola, and Waste Management, Incorporated. Several of these companies are known polluters whose disregard for the safety and well-being of workers has resulted in the deaths of many people of color. It is impossible for you to represent us in issues of our own survival when you are accountable to these interests. Such accountability leads you to pursue a corporate strategy towards the resolution of the environmental crisis, when what is needed is a people's strategy which fully involves those who have historically been without power in this society.

Comments have been made by representatives of major national environmental organizations to the effect that only in the recent past have people of color begun to realize the impacts of environmental contamination. We have been involved in environmental struggles for many years and we have not needed the Group of Ten environmental organizations to tell us that these problems have existed.

We again call upon you to cease operations in communities of color within 60 days, until you have hired leaders from those communities to the extent that they make up between 35-40 percent of your entire staff. We are asking that Third World leaders be hired at all levels of your operations.

Although some Group of Ten organizations have sent general information on the people of color within their staffs and Boards of Directors, the information has been insufficient. Again we request a comprehensive and specific listing of your staff of non-European descent, their tenure, salary ranges, and classification (clerical, administrative, professional, etc.). Also provide a list of communities of color with whom you provide services or Third World communities in which you have organizing drives or campaigns, and contacts in those communities.

Finally, we call upon your organization to cease fundraising operations in communities of color within 60 days until a meeting is held with you including representatives of our choice. Once your organization responds to these requests you will be invited to confer with other national leaders on the poisoning of United States Third World communities.

Please send all materials and information to:

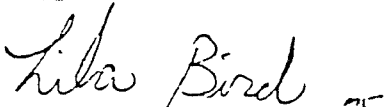
Richard Moore, Co-Director
SouthWest Organizing Project
1114 7th Street NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Phone: (505) 247-8832

It is our sincere hope that we be able to have a frank and open dialogue with your organization and other national environmental organizations. It is our opinion that people of color in the United States and throughout the world are clearly endangered species. Issues of environmental destruction are issues of our immediate and long term survival. We hope that we can soon work with your organization in helping to assure the safety and well-being of all peoples.

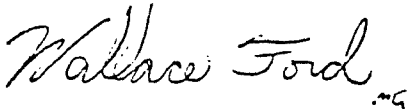
Sincerely,



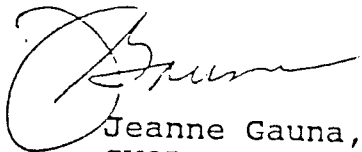
Richard Moore, Co-director
SWOP



Lila Bird, President
Graduate Student Association
University of New Mexico
Member, SW Indian Student Coalition
Albuquerque, New Mexico



The Rev. Wallace Ford
New Mexico Conference of Churches
Albuquerque, New Mexico



Jeanne Gauna, Co-director
SWOP



The Rev. Minerva Garza Carcaño,
District Superintendent
Western District
Rio Grande Conference
United Methodist Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico



Verna J. Williamson, Governor
Isleta Pueblo
Isleta, New Mexico

Eduardo Quintana gmm

Eduardo Quintana,
Community Activist
Tucson, Arizona

Lorraine Granado gmm

Lorraine Granado
* Neighbors for a Toxic
Free Community
Denver, Colorado

Fr. Jack Risley gmm

Fr. Jack Risley
Aquinas Newman Center
Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Rev. Canon Paul Saunders gmm

The Rev. Canon Paul Saunders
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Juan Gonzalez gmm

Juan Gonzalez, Attorney at Law
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Antonio Carrasco gmm

Antonio Carrasco
Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe
El Paso, Texas
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dorie Bunting gmm

Dorie Bunting, Peace Activist
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Evangeline Quintana gmm

Evangeline Quintana,
Program Specialist
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Roberto Contreras gmm

Roberto Contreras,
Community Activist
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Fr. Luis R. Pena gmm

Fr. Luis R. Pena, Pastor
San Jose Parish
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Cristy Brito gmm

Cristy Brito
Community Activist
Roswell, New Mexico

Ruth Marie Contreras gmm

Ruth Marie Contreras
Labor Activist
Albuquerque, New Mexico

David Lujan gmm

David Lujan, Director
Tonantzin Land Institute
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Rev. Julie Avery gmm

Rev. Julie Avery, Pastora
Iglesia Segunda
Congregacional, UCC

Wm. Paul Robinson gmm

Wm. Paul Robinson
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Jaime Chavez gmm

Jaime Chavez, Director
Atrisco Land Rights Council
Albuquerque, New Mexico

* = Organization listed for identification purposes only

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Nahal at Shalom
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Claudia Isaac

Claudia Isaac, Assistant Professor
Community and Regional Planning
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Lynn Carrillo

Lynn Carrillo, Executive Director
Quote...Unquote, Inc.
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Ninfa Gonzalez

Ninfa Gonzalez
Austin Area Association
for Bilingual Education
Austin, Texas

Tobias Duran

Tobias Duran
Center for Regional Studies
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Henrietta C'de Baca

Henrietta C'de Baca, Church Activist
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Ruben Solis

Ruben Solis, President
Board of Directors
SW Public Workers Union
San Antonio, Texas

Rev. W F Fortune

The Rev. W. F. Fortune
Grant Chapel AME Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Jesse Johnson

Jesse Johnson
Austin Latino Lesbian and
Gay Organization
Austin, Texas

Maria Elena Martinez

Maria Elena Martinez,
Community Activist
Austin, Texas

Joe Sanchez

Joe Sanchez
Native American Community
Activist
Reno, Nevada

Antonio Diaz

Antonio Diaz
* Texas Center for
Policy Studies
Austin, Texas

Jessie Deer In Water

Jessie Deer In Water
Native American Activist
Vian, Oklahoma

Vicky McCallaugh

Vicky McCallaugh
Native Americans for A
Clean Environment
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Graciela I. Sanchez

Graciela I. Sanchez
* Esperanza Peace and Justice
Center
Austin, Texas

Chavel Lopez

Chavel Lopez, Organizing Director
SW Public Workers Union
Hondo, Texas

Charlie Morrissey

Charlie Morrissey,
Mission and Welfare Chair
Grant Chapel AME Church
Albuquerque, New Mexico

John Schoeppner

John Schoeppner, Esq.
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Rudy Acuna

Dr. Rudy Acuna, Professor
Chicano Studies
Cal State, Northridge
Northridge, California

Tupac Enrique

Tupac Enrique
National Chicano Human Rights
Council, Tonatierra Chapter
Phoenix, Arizona

Gustavo Gutierrez

Gustavo Gutierrez
National Chicano Human Rights
Council, Tonatierra Chapter
Phoenix, Arizona

Charles Castillo

Charles Castillo, President
Mexican American Law
Students Association
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Bill Sanchez

The Rev. Bill Sanchez
Archdiocese of Santa Fe
Legislative Review Board
Villanueva, New Mexico

Steve Goldin

Steve Goldin, President
Institute for Regional
Education
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Cynthia Hamilton

Cynthia Hamilton, Ph.D.
Cal State, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

Mel King

Mel King, Professor
M. I. T.
Boston Rainbow Coalition
Boston, Massachusetts

Manuel Vasquez

Manuel Vasquez
White Eagle Aztec Dancers
Phoenix, Arizona

Francisca Cavazos

Francisca Cavazos
Maricopa County Organizing
Project
Phoenix, Arizona

* = Organization listed for identification purposes only

Historical Letters Sent from the Southwest Network

SOUTHWEST NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

1114 7th Street N.W., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

(505)247-8832

SAMPLE COPY - PLEASE SEE PAGE 5 FOR LIST OF RECIPIENTS

May 20, 1990

Coordinating Council:

Arizona:

Phoenix: Manuel Vasquez
Tucson: Rose Augustine:

California:

Northern: Ernest Witt:
Southern: Cynthia Hamilton:

Colorado:

Michael Maes

Nevada:

Odessa Ramirez

New Mexico:

Fr. Bill Sanchez

Oklahoma:

Vicki McCullough

Texas:

Antonio Diaz

SouthWest Organizing Project

Richard Moore

Peter Bahouth, Executive Director
Greenpeace, USA
1436 U Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Mr. Bahouth:

We are writing you in part to express our gratitude to your organization for the support which you have provided to communities of people of color in the past. Your work has been critical to the struggles of grass-roots organizations fighting against environmental injustice and for working towards a safe environment for all peoples. We would like to express our desire to continue working with your organization in these struggles.

On March 16 of this year a letter was sent to the national leadership of the Group of Ten environmental organizations calling for a dialogue between representatives of those groups and minority leaders in the United States (see attached). Over 100 Third World and other community leaders in the U.S. signed this letter which challenged the Group of Ten for racist and exclusionary hiring practices and for taking political positions detrimental to people of color in the Southwestern United States.

The letter cited examples such as support by Group of Ten organizations to annexation of Acoma Pueblo ancestral lands by the federal government and opposition to sheep grazing rights of a successful economic development project in Northern New Mexico. The letter criticized organizations within the Group for accepting funds from polluting industries, and pointed out the lack of accountability by the these organizations to Third World communities. Debt for nature swaps were also cited as examples of how decisions are made by these groups without input from indigenous communities in other countries. Further, the Group of Ten was called upon to make changes that would allow for greater representation in leadership and decision-making positions for people of color in those corporations.

SOUTHWEST NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE LETTER
May 20, 1990, PG. 2

On April 6 and 7, 1990, the SouthWest Organizing Project held the People of Color Regional Activist Dialogue for Environmental Justice (see attached Statement of Unity); a gathering of Third World political activists from eight Southwestern states, including Indian nations. The purpose of this activity was to begin analyzing the realities of environmental injustice facing Third World communities in the Southwest and to begin to develop regional strategies to combat these problems.

Important links were made between environmental and economic injustices, and it was made clear that environmental issues fit within a much broader context of social and racial justice concerns. For those who attended, the Dialogue destroyed the myth that people of color have historically not been involved in environmental issues. For many years we have struggled in the workplace and community over what we have viewed to be labor and community questions. These struggles have been over points of environmental health, workplace safety, and protection against pesticide poisoning of farmworkers. They are issues of survival and fundamental human rights. It is the environmental movement in this country that has for the most part separated itself from these civil and human rights struggles.

It was also very clear to those who attended the Dialogue that the struggle against toxic poisoning of Third World communities in the United States cannot be separated from the same conflicts occurring in Third World communities beyond U.S. borders. Transnational plants along the U.S.-Mexico border are clearly exploiting Mexican workers and avoiding environmental regulation in the U.S. We will continue to closely monitor the export of polluting industry to Third World countries.

At the Dialogue, the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice was formed. Our new organization will no doubt require a considerable amount of technical assistance and financial resources, and we are asking your organization to provide the network with resources and training.

Planning also began to develop a training and action institute in the Southwest. Environmental organizations have consistently expressed frustration about what they view to be a lack of people of color qualified to fill leadership positions within the environmental movement. We strongly disagree with this opinion and feel that it is a "cop-out" by environmental organizations who choose not to accept leadership from people of color.

This institute will provide training and resources based on the cultural uniqueness of the Southwest to Third World organizers and activists. It will provide us with the tools to be able to continue to advocate on our own behalf on environmental justice

SOUTHWEST NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE LETTER
May 20, 1990, PG. 3

issues, whether they be in rural or urban settings, or on and off reservations and pueblos.

We are aware that representation by Third World peoples within your leadership is also weak. It is our opinion, that your organization must set an example and take responsibility to assure that the environmental movement is multi-racial and that it work side by side with other movements for civil and human rights.

Based on the reality that Third World communities are being poisoned inordinately by agricultural, industrial, municipal and military facilities, we recommend that you act soon in the following ways:

- * Examine the racial breakdown of your own organization. We recommend that within a year people of color compose 50% of your staff and Board of Directors. We strongly urge that this take place so that people of color are not mere token members within your leadership. It is important that these representatives be accountable to the interests of Third World communities.

- * We urge that your organization actively seek people of color for positions on the staff and board of your organization to fulfill its affirmation of Equal Opportunity and that these leaders have the respect, support, and confidence afforded their colleagues.

- * We urge that your organization commit to developing and maintaining a program structure that would assure decision-making by and information sharing with local grassroots organizations composed of people of color regarding program development, employment opportunities, fundraising, technical assistance, etc.

- * We urge that your organization advocate in concert with grassroots communities composed of people of color rather than advocate for those concerns which directly address our needs.

- * We urge that your organization recognize and develop working relations with organizations composed of people of color and that these communities become involved in the discussion and planning of your proposed organization work.

- * We urge that your organization fundraising not compete with the local fundraising necessary to address grassroots concerns in communities composed of people of color.

- * We ask that your organization endorse the Community Environmental Bill of Rights (see attached), and work in concert with organizations composed of people of color to promote these rights.

SOUTHWEST NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE LETTER
May 20, 1990, PG. 4

We are well aware of the diversity of perspectives which exists within the environmental movement. We have worked with your organization in the past and we hope that we can continue to work together towards building a movement that is inclusive of all peoples working for social, racial, and environmental justice.

Please respond as soon as possible in regards to these concerns to the SouthWest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, care of Richard Moore.

Sincerely,

Richard Moore
Richard Moore
Coordinating Council
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Manuel Vasquez
Manuel Vasquez
Coordinating Council
Phoenix, Arizona

Ernest Witt
Ernest Witt
Coordinating Council
Northern California

Michael Maes
Michael Maes
Coordinating Council
Denver, Colorado

Vicki McCullough
Vicki McCullough
Coordinating Council
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

The Rev. Bill Sanchez

The Rev. Bill Sanchez
Coordinating Council
Villanueva, New Mexico

Rose Augustine
Rose Augustine
Coordinating Council
Tucson, Arizona

Cynthia Hamilton
Cynthia Hamilton
Coordinating Council
Southern California

Odessa Ramirez
Odessa Ramirez
Coordinating Council
Carson City, Nevada

Antonio Diaz
Antonio Diaz
Coordinating Council
San Antonio, Texas

SOUTHWEST NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE LETTER
May 20, 1990, PG. 5

This letter was sent to the following:

John O'Connor, Executive Director
National Toxics Campaign
Boston, Massachusetts

Peter Bahouth, Executive Director
Greenpeace, USA
Washington, D.C.

Mary Kelly, Executive Director
Texas Center for Policy Studies
Austin, Texas

Don Hancock, Executive Director
Southwest Research and Information Center
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Doug Meiklejohn, Executive Director
New Mexico Environmental Law Center
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Ruth Caplan, Executive Director
Environmental Action
Washington, D.C.

Marla Painter, Executive Director
Rural Alliance for Military Accountability
Carson City, Nevada

Lois Marie Gibbs, Executive Director
Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste
Arlington, Virginia

Kevin Bean, Environmental Coordinator
New Mexico Public Interest Research Group
Albuquerque, New Mexico

