

This Land is Our Land:
Raising Awareness of Contemporary U.S.
Environmental and Social Justice Issues through Folksong

by

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Introduction

The purpose of this project is to increase awareness of the current environmental and social injustices occurring in the United States. Through music and grassroots storytelling, the histories and struggles of communities and individuals who are living directly under such unjust conditions will be shared with various constituencies of the public who has little or no knowledge of, or is not in direct relationship to, these conditions. This transference of information and exchange of ideas will occur through the following: the production of an audio recording of song-stories and first-person narratives from the participants, a folk music performance tour including information sessions, as well as a website to document the project and provide supplemental information and links.

By raising consciousness of these environmental justice issues within a larger portion of the population, the chance for social change through action is increased. The use of music as a tool for conveying ideas of protest and change, both transferring and transforming culture, can be seen in all of the major movements of American history; including the Civil Rights movement, the Anti-War movement, the Populist Farmer's movement, the rise of the American Unions, the American Student movement, and the Feminist movement. This project aims to utilize the proven successes of social justice through grassroots organizing and musical activism towards our future social and environmental equality.

Commercial News Versus Independent News

When we consider the daily transference of newsworthy events, two distinct networks come to mind: that of the mass media clearinghouses propagating news through corporate media giants, and that of independent networks of people sharing news on a much smaller scale. Both utilize similar formats of news reporting through print, radio, audio, video, and the internet, and both have specific agendas in the news they wish to convey. Yet whereas corporate media seems to mask their political agenda, independent media embraces it. Independent media often exists as a counter-weight or protest to the biased reporting propaganda, or lack of reporting, on important issues or events by corporate media.

Corporate media outlets are playing a significant part in the recent rise of environmentalism and green industry in popular culture. Through print and television and most especially within the commercial advertising embedded in between these media forms, the population who utilizes these outlets as their primary (or only) information sources is developing an understanding of our environment and its relationship to our culture that is skewed in a particular way. Commercial news, as with all commercial ventures, is primarily focused on making a profit, through increased ratings bringing increased revenue from advertising premiums. As a result, commercial news hardly reports on issues in a holistic way, often avoiding issues that would frighten its viewers or change their relationships from the status quo.

Independent media exists on a smaller scale, by and large created or promoted by groups who feel misrepresented or ignored by commercial media; it can be thought of as

folk media. Through independent media, publications of alternative newsworthy information circulate within society, creating discourse on popularly held beliefs. Through this discourse and subsequent reevaluation of our ideals and ideologies, news can be responsible for transforming our popular cultural understanding. A change in the way we think results in a change in the way we act.

Environmentalism versus Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is quite different than the general umbrella of Environmentalism under which it falls. Environmentalism pertains to the advocacy for protection of the natural environment. John Muir (1838-1914) is probably one of earliest popular American environmentalists, advocating for wilderness preservation and stewardship and founding the Sierra Club. In 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* helped popularize the environmental movement in the U.S. With the recent propagation of green industry in the media and commercial sector, environmentalism has now entered the popular American consciousness.

Issues of Environmental Justice, however, seem to be left out of our current environmental awareness. Environmental Justice (EJ) issues are issues of oppression stemming from the unequal distribution of hazardous living conditions and occupations forced upon poorer communities and communities of color in the United States. According to the 17 principles of Environmental Justice established by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, environmental injustices are "a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide". EJ is concerned with the health and well-

being of our citizens that has been compromised as a direct result of industry's environmental pollution, resulting in direct and indirect personal health hazards. EJ calls for government to take responsibility and make reparations for the damages it has sanctioned by allowing industry to unleash chemical, air, waste and biohazard pollutants upon our citizens. The inadequate living conditions that result from these toxic industrial practices coupled with lack of health care for individuals subjected to such conditions disproportionately subjects poor people and people of color to a poorer quality of life and a significantly higher risk of health problems (Westra and Lawson).

Solving issues of environmental injustice does not seem to be high on the priority lists of state or federal government. One reason may be that there are too many companies in violation and it would be impossible to police them all. Another reason is that government gets a lot of money from these industries, or that the politicians and the lobbyists don't live in the same neighborhoods where the pollution lies. Regardless of the reason, EJ issues are seldom represented in popular media, and therefore remain outside of the consciousness of the vast American people. Since commercial corporate media will not be embracing the tenants of EJ and indicting major American industries and government for their past and present practices, it is up to independent media outlets to try and raise awareness of the devastating conditions people are still currently being subjected to in this country.

Background

The Power of Music

And, when a man allows music to play upon him and to pour into his soul through the funnel of his ears...and his whole life is passed in warbling and the delights of song; in the first stage of the process the passion or spirit which is in him is tempered like iron, and made useful, instead of brittle and useless.

-Plato, *The Republic*, Book 3

Song has had the power to move people since ancient times. It is an intrinsic quality of the art form. Music and art are cultural artifacts: made by the people, using art. These forms reflect the culture in which they are created but also offer some sort of opinionated commentary on that culture by the creator or performer. Music and art can dualistically serve as cultural representations or offer aesthetic ideas of alternate realities to the present. "Music, like art generally, opens experience to the potentialities of life" (Eyerman, 46).

Inherent in the process of listening to music is employing the imagination to define the sound in one's mind, and yet also to re-define one's thoughts in response to the music. People have employed and exploited this aspect of music in all cultures through all time: for disseminating propaganda, in declaring protest, for teaching, and for preserving culture. There is not a government without an anthem, nor a church without a choir.

Roots of American Folksong

Our American history is intertwined with song. What would become our American folksong seems to have ancestry in both English and African lineages. In John Greenway's *American Folksongs of Protest*, he traces the roots of the English folksong to the 7th century and an Abbot named Adhelm of Malmesbury. Adhelm would stand by a

bridge entering the town and sing original secular songs to passers-by. Once he had captivated their attention, he would interject religious lyrics and songs (13). Many centuries later American secular groups would be doing just the opposite. The British colonists brought with them the music of their churches, which was imposed on African slaves. During the 18th and 19th centuries songs would be written and sung to recount battles and other newsworthy events in the tradition of the British broadside ballads - disseminated both orally and on printed broadside sheets for a penny (SFCD 40096).

The other lineage of American folksong, and moreover that of American protest songs, seems to have traveled not from Britain, but from Africa. African slaves of the new American nation sung and shared songs and dances of their native communities to each other, and even drew a significant following from white audiences at that time.

There were two types of slave music in the United States: a secular music that consisted of field hollers, shouts, and moans that used folk tales and folk motifs, and there was also a spiritual music (that) remains, in many circles, as the most highly regarded black musical expression ever invented in the United States. Whites found black musical performances on the plantation fascinating and often went to the slave quarters to watch slaves sing and dance (Early).

African-American field songs and spirituals united an enslaved people during their oppressed daily lives and provided strength and community building that would create a unified anti-slavery movement in the decades to come. In this pre-Civil War period songs such as *Steal Away* were sung for both its religious content, but likely also its double-meaning as a subversive protest of slavery and plan or desire for escape (Johnson, Early, Denisoff):

Steal away, steal away,
Steal away to Jesus!
Steal away, steal away home,
I ain't got long to stay here.

This private gathering and shared singing of subversive lyrics is the likely foundation for future political protest music and subsequent development of the folk

music style. “Music had long been a part of American movements including the antislavery movement in the nineteenth century and the labor movement in the twentieth century, among others” (Reed, 2). Although it was hardly touched upon by any of the scholarly folksong texts I’ve come across in my research, I feel it is also important to note that music has always been a major part of Native American culture, with song accompanying many customs and rituals. Throughout the birth of this nation and before the genocide and displacement of Native American tribes, there were cultural exchanges between the colonists and the tribes people that included music and song (Densmore).

Shortly after the United States was formed our first decidedly American protest songs were written. Songs were written and sung to protest the new American aristocracy, sung in opposition of life-term political tenure, to protest imprisonment for debt, the dissolution of the land-holding aristocracy, the anti-rent war, and other injustices of the common people (Greenway, 22-38). Songs advocating for a shorter workday and later recounting protest strikes would set the tone for union songs in the decades to come. Often these songs would also take the tune of an existing religious or secular song. For instance, the anti-rent song *The End of Big Bill Snyder* was sung to the tune of *Old Dan Tucker* (30). This tradition still continues in our folk songs today, though writing a song in the style of an older song seems to be an acceptable derivation.

By the late 19th century, folk songs were already becoming a conscious ingredient of social movement activity. “The Farmer is the Man,” was used as an anthem for the 1880’s agrarian populist movement (Eyerman, 52). The International Workers of the World was “a singing movement,” writing songs, producing *Little Red Songbooks*, and holding singing demonstrations (57). The folksong technique of borrowing old lyrics or

melody to fit a new song was well established in America at this time, exemplified in some of the songs of the first *Little Red Songbook*. Joe Hill's *John Golden and the Lawrence Strike* was written to the tune of the African-American spiritual *A Little Talk with Jesus* (IWW). Joe Hill and his songs inspired future social and cultural movements of the 20th century. Hill's tradition can be heard through Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, and others. "Joe Hill's songs, and the songs of the other Wobbly songwriters, sought to educate and empower at one and the same time" (Eyerman, 59). In Hill's own words:

A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read but once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over; and I maintain that if a person can put a few cold common sense facts in a song, and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers who are to unintelligent or indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial on economic science.

(as told to the editor of *Solidarity*, December 1914, quoted in Reagon: 54)

In Hill's tradition, the labor movement borrowed tunes from the worker movement.

"Labor has used established songs from the earliest times to carry its protest" (Greenway, 13). Pete Seeger explained, "We could make a singing labor movement, take up where Joe Hill left off, and carry the tradition on...taking old tunes and putting new words to them" (Lieberman, 62). This technique would come to be referred to as "zipper-ing" songs and would be indispensable to folk music in all of the movements to come.

"Picket-line songs from the South are likely to be zippered adaptations of gospel hymns" (Greenway, 16-17). The hymn *Roll the Chariot on* became *Roll the Union on* and was used to unite the mixed race constituency of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union; *I Shall Not be Moved* became the anthemic *We Shall Not be Moved*. The American populist movement used folksongs as well, and in similar ways to the labor movement; substituting "the people" for "the workers" (Eyerman, 64).

In the 1930's there was a rise in popular education and labor colleges. These schools taught organizing skills to people and union representatives; chief among their toolkits were folk songs. The Highlander Folk School in Tennessee served to train union organizers to build a "new people's movement in the rural section of the south" (Winston, 20). At Highlander, Musical Director Zilphia Horton collected and compiled over 1,300 songs from unions, leftists, and black and white southern traditions. The most famous song to come out of Highlander is her revision - along with Pete Seeger and Guy Carawan - of *We Shall Overcome* (Denisoff, 1971, 33-35). African American Preacher Claude Williams influenced Commonwealth Labor College in Louisiana to borrow traditional folk spirituals to communicate themes of social protest (28). The college issued the songbook *Six Labor Songs*. Fellow Almanac Lee Hays was quoted in the *People's Songs Bulletin* that "a good number of the Almanac union songs and certainly the spirit of all of them derived largely from Claude's work in this field" (29). "Sis" Cunningham, folk singer, brief Almanac singer, and editor of *Broadside* magazine was an instructor at Commonwealth. Tom Tippet did similar work at the Brookwood Labor College near New York City. He would record and bring southern tunes up north and then bring the northern songbooks down to the south (30-32).

Folksongs were also increasing in their popularity outside of the labor schools and finding their way onto the pages of national publications. In the mid-30's, Ella May Wiggins wrote and sung political folk songs of protest in support of the Gastonia textile strike in North Carolina. A number of her songs were published in the *Nation* and *New Masses* publications. The Publisher, Margaret Larkins, described Ella May's talent: "the artist has the power to move people and thus to accelerate the forward movement of

history itself” (21). At this period in American history, the folk song idiom solidified as a form of art and culture to address contemporary issues (Eyerman, 68). Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Leadbelly played a major part in popularizing this type of topical folksong, making “a conscious effort to infuse meaning into the popular culture, and to give voices to the trials and tribulations of the common people during the hard times of the depression years” (71). The Almanac Singers developed “the notion of using song as a weapon, with an emphasis on the folk, the people, the workers” (Lieberman, 59).

In the decade to come, the second Red Scare would force folk music, and singers like Pete Seeger, underground. Until the 1950’s folk music seemed to be mostly restricted to bohemian circles and colleges. Folk music would again resurface more popularly during the Civil Rights movement. Civil Rights songs, or “Freedom Songs” were based on the old African-American field songs and gospel songs, many of the same songs that had been used in the 1930’s Labor movement, transformed once again to address the contemporary issues at hand (Denisoff, 1983, 109). Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Singer and activist Bernice Johnson Reagon defines the value of these old folksongs to the Civil Rights movement: “the songs of the slaves represented a body of data that remained present in the Black community to be used in future crisis situations. Music supplied the cohesiveness to the masses...it conveyed the essence and unity of the movement” (Reagon 38, 93). SNCC member Mary King writes in her memoir *Freedom Song*:

the Civil Rights movement was “fueled by the singing of black people,” and that the “freedom songs had an unparalleled ability to evoke the moral power of the movement’s goals, to arouse the spirit, comfort the afflicted, instill courage and commitment, and unite disparate strangers into a “band of brothers and sisters” and a “circle of trust” (22).

These folk songs served as emotional and spiritual unifiers, but also and equally as importantly, practical organizing tools toward change. “Songs formed the communication network of the movement, and they also expressed the soul of the movement, linking its spirit to centuries of resistance to slavery and oppression” (Reed, 2). Folk songs were used not only during sit-ins and meetings, but also to spread the messages of Civil Rights across the nation. The SNCC *Freedom Singers* “carefully crafted their music and performance to deliver the Movement’s message to audiences far removed from the struggle” (SFCD 40084, 26).

The Civil Rights Movement brought the underground artists out of the coffee shops and back into the public eye; it was largely responsible for the American folk music revival. Musicians sang in solidarity with each other, with performers like Peter, Paul & Mary, Josh White, Joan Baez and Bob Dylan performing at the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington. In the same year, the SNCC freedom singers performed at the Newport Folk Festival. This convergence is evident in Bob Dylan’s “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll” based on a true story about the murder of an African-American maid by her white employer, and the song “Oxford Town:”

“Oxford Town around the bend
He come in to the door, he couldn’t get in
All because of the color of his skin
What do you think about that, my frien’?”

-Bob Dylan, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, Columbia Records 1963

Folk music became commercialized in the years succeeding the Civil Rights movement. Major record labels signed some of the more popular singers like Dylan and Peter, Paul & Mary, and commercial interests began to influence the artists’ songwriting more than social politics. Some singers like Pete Seeger and Lee Hays remained true to their political ideals, but never achieved widespread commercial fame or financial

success like the others. This dissolution of the political message in folk music may have caused the decline in its popularity in recent decades.

Although not necessarily in the same musical genre as traditional American folk music, musical activists writing in other genres may be considered the folk musicians of modern times. Politically and socially conscious Rap groups like *Arrested Development*, *Public Enemy*, or *The Black Eyed Peas*, and punk rock groups like *Rage Against the Machine* or *Fugazi* were and/or are trying to spread the same kinds of political protest messages through their music and performance. Ani DiFranco is probably one of the most well known contemporary singer-songwriter in the folk tradition, with much of her early work addressing topics of sexism and opposition to violence and war.

Though folk songs may not be commercially popular in contemporary American culture, the folk music tradition is alive and well outside of the mainstream. There are regularly held folk music performances with audiences of all ages in many if not all of the United States. From church “coffeehouses” to legitimate venues folk songs continue to spread the same messages of thoughtful dissent. Old “cover” songs, zippered songs, and new tunes written in the folk style are performed every day; the power of the old songs lives on. To illustrate: I was born in 1977, after the Civil Rights movement, not hearing freedom songs for the first 20 years of my life; yet, these songs still affect me deeply. The songs create a lineage, or perspective between my life and the lives of the people who have sung them through time. The songs of the Civil Rights movement have become songs of our collective identity formation (Eyerman, 120). One cannot hear “We Shall Overcome” or “This Little Light of Mine” without conjuring up images of struggle and unity for equality. It is this quality intrinsic to folk music that has drawn me to becoming an avid listener and performer of folk music in the first place.

Songs and Movements

Song is a fantastic medium for conveying information to individuals who may be otherwise unaware of important newsworthy events. It also has the ability to connect people who may be illiterate, or speak different languages. If “individuals act the way they do because of their state of awareness or consciousness,” than song has amazing the ability to change peoples’ actions (Max Weber in Denisoff, 1973, 7). As

noted above, song is a strong tool for organizing and unifying in social movements, a key component in influencing change. Both music and song are instrumental- pun intended- in the formation and remembrance of a wide range of social movements (Eyerman, 2).

Social movements utilize the media of artistic expression for communicating with the larger society and, by so doing, often serve to (re)politicize popular culture and entertainment. In more general terms, social movement led to a reconstruction of processes of social interaction and collective identity formation (10).

Art and music – culture – are forms of both knowledge and action, part of the frameworks of interpretation and representation produced within social movements and through which they influence the broader societal culture. As such they are much more than functional devices for recruitment or resources to be mobilized (23).

Ethnomusicologist Charles Seeger described song as “one of the cultural forms through which the work of humanization and preparation operates...a weapon of class struggle” (Denisoff, 1971, 14).

A Protest song takes this inherent ability of a song and purposefully manipulates it to persuade or propagate a countercultural message or idea. In his book, *Sing a Song of Social Significance*, Serge Denisoff defines a protest song as a “socio-political statement designed to create an awareness of social problems and which offers or infers a solution which is viewed as deviant in nature” (26). He begins his book with the goals of a protest song or song of persuasion:

1. The song attempts to solicit and arouse outside support and sympathy for a social or political movement.
2. The song reinforces the value structure of individuals who are active supporters of the social movement or ideology.
3. The song creates and promotes cohesion, solidarity, and high morale in an organization or movement supporting its worldview.
4. The song is an attempt to recruit individuals for a specific social movement.
5. The song invokes solutions to real or imagined social phenomena in terms of action to achieve a desired goal.
6. The points to some problem or discontent in the society, usually in emotional terms.

By creating and performing these types of songs one can organize people, inform them, and offer a starting point of unity towards future problem solving. Music performance reunites and reminds participants of their place in a movement and also contextualizes the participants within a long-standing tradition of struggle and protest (Eyerman, 35).

Choosing Folksong as the Media for Activism

Music becomes more deeply ingrained in memory than mere talk, and this quality made it a valuable organizing tool. It is one thing to hear a political speech and remember an idea or two. It is quite another to sing a song and have its politically charged verses become emblazoned on your memory. In singing you take on a deeper level of commitment to an idea than if you only hear it spoken of.

-T.V. Reed, *The Art of Protest*, p.28

The American folk song genre seems especially fitting for a musical activism project to raise awareness of contemporary American environmental and social justice issues. As described above, the songs have the ability to call upon the spirit and knowledge of past movements and struggles and use that collective identity towards future objectives. In his book *When We Were Good*, Robert Cantwell describes the transformative properties of folk music:

An intricate circulatory system of cultural ideas, often entangled with but essentially independent of the official and visible system, works through informal networks of people and communities to shape the collective experience in ways that are significantly more than a simple reiteration of social power. Above all, it is a cultural process, one in which the imagination proves more powerful than either the sword or the dollar, and in its moment capable of a permanent in-fight course correction (19).

He describes folk as an idea that can be promoted and supported by all without regard for birthright or fortune, finding the beauty in what is considered lowly or least favored and thereby validated at the deepest levels (38). Folk songs are the “reflection of people’s thinking”; they are “outbursts of bitterness, of hatred for the oppressor, of determination to endure hardships together and fight for a better life...imbued with the feeling of communality, or togetherness.” (Greenway, 3,10). Alan Lomax eloquently describes the folk art form:

...which lives upon the lips of the multitude and is transmitted by the grapevine, surviving sometimes for centuries because it reflects so well the deepest emotional convictions of the common man. This is a truly democratic art, painting a portrait of the people (Lomax, viii).

Folk songs in particular have the additional connotations of simplicity, accessibility and commonality. They can be passed along orally, understood by both literate and illiterate people. The folk musical form is purposefully simplistic in nature and repetitive in its structure to make it easier to learn, sing, and share (Eyerma, 52).

Looking at the format of folk festivals we can see how this prescription of “by the people for the people” is actualized throughout the event. Festivals are purposefully set up as participatory and culture-building (121). They are informal and family-friendly,

with a variety of cultural workshops and kids events. There are usually handmade arts and crafts offered as well as songbooks and various kinds of folk-cultural information. They are set up to gather everyone on common grounds usually in a relaxed picnic-type atmosphere, with camping offered for multi-day festivals. You will most always find smaller congregations of musicians and singers sharing songs on the periphery of the grounds. In smaller folk shows taking place in churches and coffeehouses, you'll find the same aspects of community building and skill sharing. It is my intention to call upon and continue this tradition of folk song and performance in my capstone project.

Project Description

The goal of this project is to use grassroots musical storytelling, a medium of independent media, to raise consciousness of some environmental and social injustices occurring in the United States. The primary focus of the project is to co-author narrative song-stories with the folks who are directly experiencing injustices and perform them in other areas where the population is not in direct contact or informed about these issues.

Other secondary activities of the project are:

1. The creation of an audio CD that includes audio recordings of the songs as well as narrative interviews by some participants.
2. An information booklet printed to accompany the CD and available in large-print form that offers more specific details about the project, the participants' background and EJ issues.
3. A website which includes all audio and text from the above plus photographs of the participants' sites, also allowing user feedback.
4. An information session occurring after each live performance where audience members can ask questions, offer feedback and suggestions, as well as find out more information to become involved in local, EJ and/or social justice issues.

Procedure

This project was begun in January of 2007, and will be completed by the fall of 2008. The unexpected amount of necessary research involved for each case study, as well as the recent receipt of grant funding and the granting organization's stipulated time frame, has shaped the project's new scope and schedule. At present, the procedure is as follows:

January 2007-September 2007

1. Identify participating groups through word of mouth, cursory research, the internet, independent news sources, and personal interest in representing diversity amongst populations and issues.
2. Engage in a preliminary contact with organizations, groups and individuals to see if the project is a good fit from both of our perspectives, and establish a key contact person for the group, if need be.
3. Conduct detailed research of the past and present issues of the participants and the areas in which they live. Whenever possible, communicate with other members of the groups, read all research materials they direct my attention to.

4. Communicate over the phone about any questions that arise in the research. Conduct a phone interview, or interviews, to develop more of a relationship and gain some insight through personal connection.
5. Transcribe interview and send to contact, along with points to highlight from my research. Allow for comment and revision.

October 2007-December 2007

6. Conduct site visits and meet with as many folks who are interested in the project as possible. Take photographs to be used later for the website. Record audio interviews for potential use in audio CD.
7. Draft preliminary song lyrics that will then be sent to the key contact for further editing. The key contact of the group will share the drafts with other folks at each organization for additional input.
8. Begin music composition of songs. Draft sketch recordings on home recording equipment.

January 2008-March 2008

9. Conduct all remaining site visits. Again, meet with as many folks who are interested in the project as possible. Take photographs to be used later for the website.
10. Refine the song compositions and begin the audio recording process. Secure studio time to mix and master the recording.
11. Compile and edit the information booklet for the project and ready it for publication.
12. Send out the Audio CD and information booklet to be published. Publish 1,000 CDs and booklets.
13. Book shows and info sessions in a variety of settings to ensure diversity in audience.
14. Set up a preliminary website for the project including: purpose, procedure, participants and background information.

April 2008-June 2008

15. Refine and build project website including: booklet text, site visit photos, song and interview audio and links for further action. Online CD purchasing and internet feedback will be possible
16. Advertise and garner press for the project through various media outlets.
17. Embark on a regional performance tour to promote the project and raise awareness of environmental justice issues. Performances will be followed by an information session with time allotted for Q & A and audience feedback.

July 2008-September 2008

18. Compile audience feedback and summarize my own observations and produce useful report for future projects.
19. Add additional content to the website including: video from the tour, audience feedback, or any other relevant information that may result from the tour.

20. Develop a musical activism action plan and facilitation tool based on the success of this project.
21. Assess and determine the financial sustainability of the project. Develop ways to support future performance tours, additional publication, or subsequent recordings

Overview of Participating Groups:

At present there are seven community groups or individuals participating in the project. The goal is to work with ten groups in total, though the number may vary more or less. Ten songs can address a variety of the numerous environmental and social issues at hand, as well as will ensure that a whole performance can be built around these songs. Ten songs also would create a substantial full-length CD, which will be a good fundraising agent for the participants. Below are abbreviated overviews from the research I have conducted under the direction of the participants.

1. Love Canal

This song will be composed to highlight the success of the Love Canal Homeowner's Association (LCHA) in ensuring the federal relocation of over 900 families as a result of toxic chemical contaminant exposure. The Love Canal disaster is one of the more widely known relocation cases and was the reason the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, better known as the Superfund Act, was created. Lois Gibbs, the leading advocate for the LCHA has spent the subsequent three decades lobbying for the same environmental human rights for communities all over the U.S. and the world. She has created the Center for Health, the Environment & Justice to further her crusade. This song will also touch upon the work of her organization. A more detailed case study follows this section, including with phone conversation transcriptions, sample lyrics, and a draft recording of the song.

2. Citizens Against Toxic Exposure

The Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE) is a community action group located in Pensacola, Florida. Founded in 1992, their primary focus is to ensure the safety and public health of residents living near the Escambia Treating Company waste site, commonly referred to as "Mt. Dioxin." Escambia operated on the site from 1943-

1982 in the business of chemically treating wood for construction and utility use. Toxic wastes from this treatment, most notably dioxins, furans, creosote, arsenic, dieldrin, naphthalene, and benzene were disposed of in unlined landfills and ponds, and in unlabeled drums. Flooding and erosion caused contaminants to rise above ground and into surrounding area and water. The site was originally classified by the EPA in 1991 and designated an “emergency removal” action site. This differs from Superfund designation in that it gives the EPA a chance to quickly remediate a situation without citizen input and participation and is not concerned with any matters of public health. The EPA removed some soil from the site, yet left the majority unearthed in a mound on site. “Mt. Dioxin” is this mound of over 250,000 cubic yard of contaminated soil that was not transported away, simply covered with a 5-year plastic liner and left in this industrial and residential center of greater Pensacola.

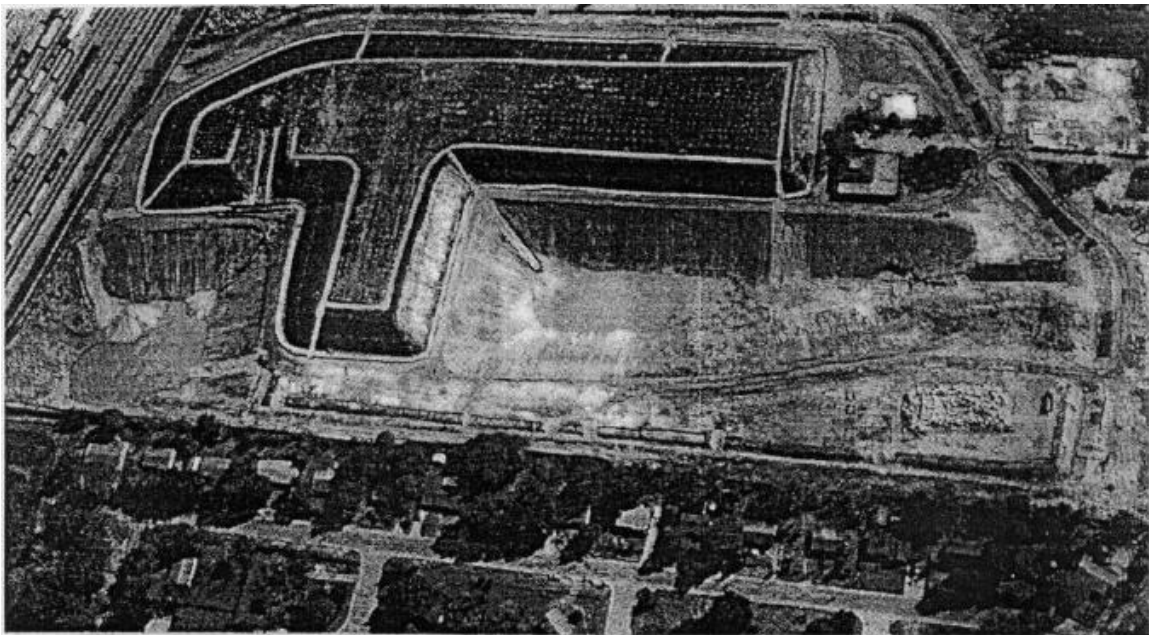


Figure 2. “Mt. Dioxin.” Rosewood Terrace, an African-American residential community, can be seen at bottom of photo

“Mt. Dioxin”

(available at: <http://onlineethics.org/cms/17464.aspx>)

The Escambia Treating site is situated on top of the groundwater aquifer for the county’s drinking water. A plume of underground contamination is seeping into the aquifer and also discharging into the nearby recreational fishing waters of Bayou Texar. In 1996, the EPA yielded to CATE’s pressure and reclassified the site as a Superfund. In the past decade 408 families have been successfully relocated, making this the third

largest relocation site in our country's history. CATE is still advocating for thorough cleanup of the area and containment of Mt. Dioxin. The organization seeks health care for all in the area, especially those that have health conditions as a result of the contamination. CATE has made it an issue to protect the larger Pensacola community-not just CATE members (Dunham).

3. River Contamination in Saginaw County Michigan & Dow Industrial Corporation

Dioxins and furans are some of the most toxic chemicals known to man, dioxin being a known carcinogen in both animals and humans (<http://www.ejnet.org/dioxin/>). Dioxins and furans are a byproduct of several industrial processes involving chlorine, including waste incineration, chemical manufacturing and paper bleaching. Dioxins and furans were byproducts from the manufacture of chlorine-based products by Dow Chemical. Past waste disposal practices, fugitive emissions and incineration at Dow have resulted in on and off site dioxin and furan contamination (EPA Region 5).

In 2007, the Dow Midland Plant's dioxin contamination levels in the Saginaw River and Tittabawassee River Basin were the highest in recorded history (EPA). A sediment sampling at Wickes Park, a centrally located point on the Saginaw River, half-a-mile down stream from the Tittabawassee River, revealed dioxin levels in excess of 1.6 parts per million. The EPA's action level to trigger soil cleanup is 1,000 parts per trillion: these levels are more than 1,000 times higher. State guidelines also require corrective action for dioxin in commercial and industrial area above 1,000ppt, with the residential contact limit set at 90ppt.



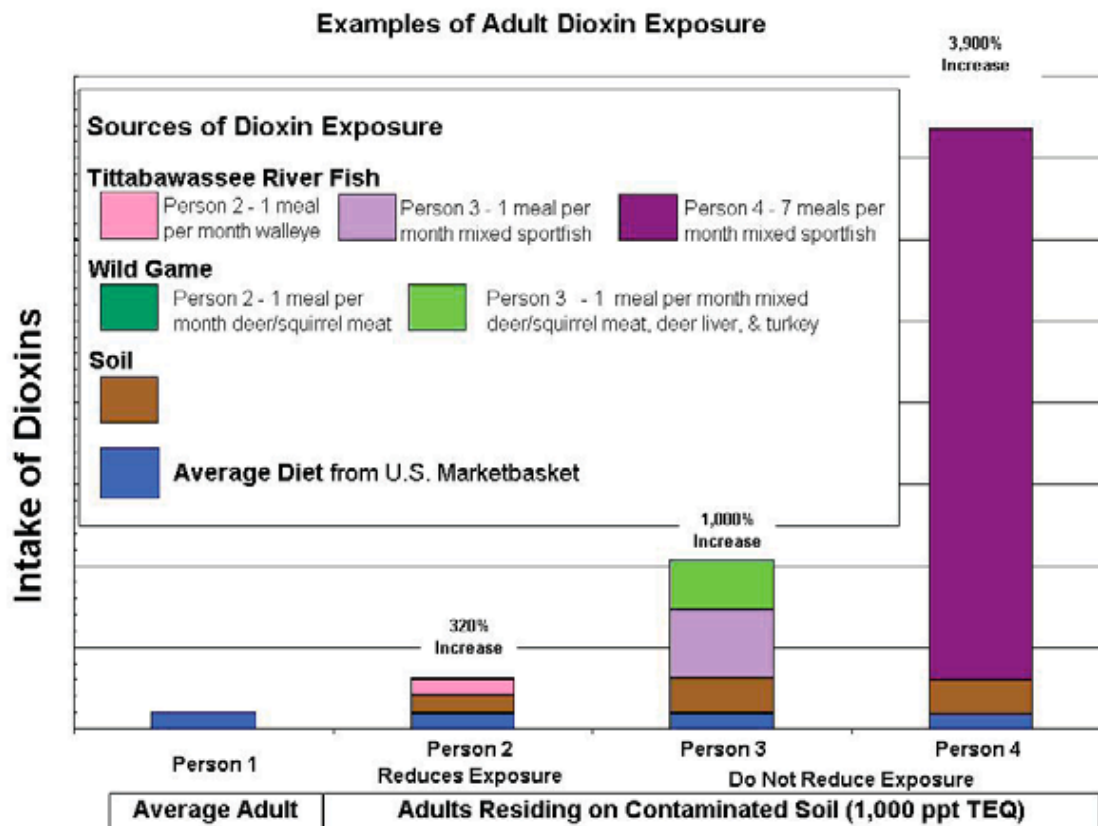
Dow Midland Plant

(available at: <http://www.jamd.com>)

Dow Chemical is a major partner and corporate citizen in adjacent Midland County, Saginaw County, Saginaw City, and the State of Michigan. Yet the company is dodging their responsibility to right the wrongs of their past. Dow admits it discharged dioxins into the river and air from its Midland plant for many years though it says it stopped the practice decades ago (Flesher). Dow also acknowledged it polluted the Tittabawassee floodplain with dioxins for many years. The dioxin has been traced to Dow waste discharges into the river between 1915 and 1937 (TRWNews.net). Dow has acknowledged its responsibility for the contamination, but has done nothing to assess and or ensure the health of the residents.

Besides Dow and the EPA, there are other agencies with some stake in regulating toxic contamination. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) says that the danger “is beyond the realm of debate” (Saginaw News), proclaiming all properties in the 22 miles of frequently flooded Tittabawassee Flood Plain a Hazardous Waste "Facility" (DEQ). The State of Michigan is also involved, but may have different interests in mind; two state agreements, one in 1985 that was the result of an exchange for building a boat launch, and another in 1997, deemed Dow released from all claims and action related to discharge of dioxins into the river. My contact, Pamela Smith, is the Lead Program Manager for the Saginaw County Department of Community Health, now lobbying for citizen rights, a public health fund, compensation, and clean-up of the contaminated areas. In our conversation, Ms. Smith related that what is most troubling is that the contamination is not only found in the river and on its banks, but inland the city as well. “It is not just in the water, it is in the soil and the air” (Smith). Even far away from the riverbanks at the Dow Midland Headquarters building dioxin levels as high as 2,000ppt, with an average of 1,000ppt have been detected.

There are residential properties all along the Tittabawassee river basin. Both the Tittabawassee and Saginaw Rivers are heavily used for recreation, including fishing; a good number of the population eats the fish from the river and the wild game on the nearby soil. According to the State DEQ, eating fish caught in these rivers can increase dioxin exposure up to 3,900% (DEQ).



(available at: <http://www.deq.state.mi.us/documents/deq-whm-hwp-reducing-exposure-home.pdf>)

A lawsuit has been filed since 2002, and as a class-action suit in 2005, whereby more than 126 residents are suing Dow for compensation since their property value has gone down. Because of contamination they are unable to sell their homes and move away. It is estimated that there are as many as 2,000 residents who live in the River floodplain who may also be eligible for compensation from this lawsuit (TRWNews.net). Citizens were also suing for the company to set up a medical trust fund to ensure adequate testing and health-care treatments for affected residents. Unfortunately in 2005, the Michigan State Supreme Court denied this portion of the lawsuit by a ruling of 5 to 2. Here are a few excerpted quotes from the outvoted two judges' dissent opinion in support of the citizens' medical fund:

"This is fabrication at its most unforgivable—refusing to acknowledge that providing these plaintiffs with the opportunity to merely seek an equitable remedy is well within the bounds of judicial discretion and will not devastate the economy or cause sick children to die. ...

"If defendant cannot produce its product without behaving responsibly, then it has no business operating within our state. ...

"Today, our Court has shirked its duty to protect plaintiffs and the people of our state, thereby leaving defendant's practices and interests unassailed. ...

As such, I must respectfully dissent.
Michael F. Cavanaugh
Marilyn Kelly”
(available at TRWNews.net)

As of April 2008, Dow is still appealing the MI Supreme courts decision to allow the class action suit. The floodplain citizens, along with the County Department of Community Health and NGO's The Lone Tree Council and the Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination, continue fighting for citizen rights.

4. Mountain Top Removal in Appalachia

Mountain top removal, or surface mining, is a method of coal extraction that has become much more prevalent in the past two decades. By using massive amounts of explosives, layers of vegetation, soil and rock are blasted off of the mountain until the stratified coal seams are exposed. Huge dragline excavators remove the coal to be processed and fill the mountain rubble and soil into the nearby hollers (or hollows). Coal Sludge, essentially the toxic processing wastes from mining is stored in open-air earthen dams, sometimes in extremely close proximity to communities (see Marsh Fork Elementary below). While it may be true that mountain top removal (MTR) reduces some of the immediate work hazards inherent in traditional underground coal mining, the negative impacts of this practice are numerable and irreversible, posing a great threat to both the landscape and the health and welfare of the surrounding communities.

Along with Wyoming, the Appalachian states of West Virginia and Kentucky account for roughly 60% of the coal production in the United States and use 50% of the country's 3.16 Million tons of explosives to do so by MTR (USGS). Explosive blasts are permitted to occur 24 hours a day up to 300 feet from homes (ILoveMountains.org). Since MTR destroys all vegetation on the mountain, mountain tops are first clear cut for timber. After the coal is extracted, the “fill,” as the destroyed mountain rubble is now called, is deposited into the valleys and streams of the surrounding landscape. Over 1,200 miles of Appalachian rivers have already been buried or polluted by MTR fill. As of 2003, Over 800 square miles of mountain forest have been destroyed (Appvoices.org).

Economically, MTR is more efficient than underground mining; fewer workers can extract more coal. Today 15,000 workers can extract more coal than 150,000 could

only half-a-century ago (NMA.org). Coal production is higher than ever, meaning record profits for mining companies. From 1987 to 1997, mining jobs decreased 29% while coal extraction increased 32% (Appvoices.org). Yet, the areas that are being destroyed reap little benefit from their spoils. In McDowell County, Kentucky, where the most coal in the state is produced, 37% of the people still live below the poverty line. Counties that have coal mining are no better off economically than those where no mining occurs (Appvoices.org).



Mountain Top Removal

(available at: <http://ilovemountains.org/images/FAQimages/Digging.jpg>)

Environmentally, MTR is a nightmare. According to the EPA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Assessment:

The impact of mountaintop removal on nearby communities is devastating. Dynamite blasts needed to splinter rock strata are so strong they crack the foundations and walls of houses. Mining dries up an average of 100 wells a year and contaminates water in others. In many coalfield communities, the purity and availability of drinking water are keen concerns.

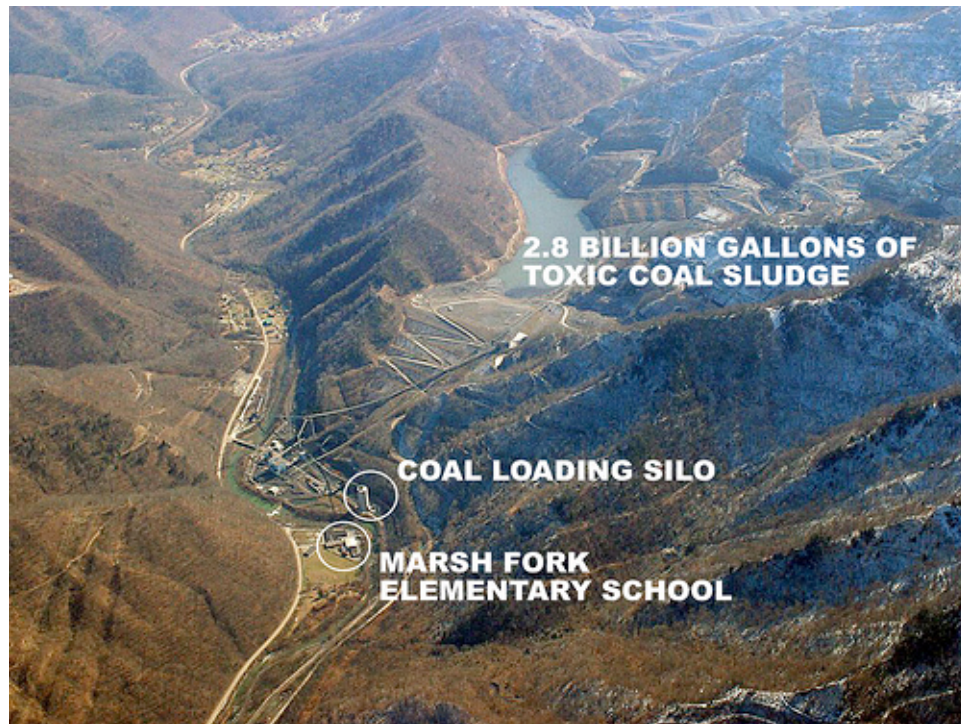
Mountain blasting expels coal dust and fly rock into the air and onto surrounding private property. These sulfuric compounds are health hazards and corrosive to building and plumbing materials (Tzerman). The EPA's Environmental Impact Study of 2003 found

streams near MTR valley fills contained decreased biodiversity and high levels of minerals and heavy metals. In 2001 the EPA urged the Army Corps of Engineers to reconsider a MTR permit they issued arguing “the discharges present an imminent danger of irreparable harm to wildlife and recreational areas” (Commonwealth v. Rivenburgh).

5. Marsh Fork Elementary and Coal Sludge Impoundments

As mentioned above, coal mining companies “store” the toxic liquid wastes from processing and washing the coal, also called sludge or slurry, in open earthen damned impoundments near the processing plants. These plants and impoundments are dangerously close to communities. The impoundments range in size, but are generally massive- containing millions or billions of gallons of toxic sludge. They are unlined, often leaking into the ground and surface water, and are prone to failure. In 1972 an impoundment flood at Buffalo Creek, West Virginia took the lives of 125 people, 1,100 were injured and 4,000 left homeless (Ward). In 2000, an impoundment failure near Inez, Kentucky spilled over 300 million gallons of sludge down two tributaries of the Tug Fork River, polluting hundreds of miles of waterways including the Ohio River. The failure contaminated the water supply for 27,000 people, killing all aquatic life in two creeks, essentially leaving 20 miles of stream dead (Appalshop.org). Although these leaks and failures are in clear violation of the Clean Water Act, the Office of Surface Mining still permits coal companies to impound this toxic waste in such a faulty manner.

The situation of the sludge impoundment above Marsh Fork Elementary School in Sundial, West Virginia is a slowly unfolding tragedy. Less than 400 yards above the school sits a massive, leaking pool containing 2.8 billion gallons of coal sludge (Coal River Mountain Watch). 250 yards away from the school sits a coal processing plant that uses powerful chemical scrubbers to clean the coal. Only 225 feet from the school sits a coal silo where trains load out processed coal. Rail cars come as close as 150 feet to the school grounds. Furthermore, there is a 1,500 foot strip mine beginning operation above the impoundment (Sludge Safety Project)!



Marsh Fork Elementary School

(Available at: <http://understory.ran.org/tag/mtr/>)

In 2005 West Virginia State Governor Manchin refused to conduct a health safety test of the school. On May 31, 2005, 16 people were arrested at Governor Manchin's office for protesting the Governor's refusal to fund the relocation of the school. In 2006, the citizens funded an independent study to test for coal dust in the school. Dr. Scott Simonton, PE, PhD and Dr. Dewey Sanderson, Professor of Geology at Marshall University, found the presence of coal dust in seven of seven dust samples taken within the school in the gymnasium, hallways, and two classrooms of the school.

In short, dust has been and is generated at the Goals Coal facility as a result of material handling activities and this dust migrates to the school property and into the school, where it is respired. This dust has known health hazards, especially in the inhalation exposure route. I believe that the inhalation of this dust must be avoided and prevented. I believe that the occupants of Marsh Fork Elementary School are at risk from exposure to the dust emitted from the Goals Coal facility (Simonton).

At present, the local citizens have started the Pennies of Promise campaign to raise awareness of the situation at Marsh Fork Elementary and raise money to move the school to a safer location.

6. Chester, Pennsylvania and The Waste Management Industry

Chester, Pennsylvania is a textbook example of environmental injustice: the unequal distribution of waste management facilities in an economically disadvantaged community made up predominantly of people of color. Of the 43,000 residents living in Chester, 65% are African-American. 95% of Chester's African-American residents live in neighborhoods closest to the toxic facilities. The poverty rate in Chester lies at 25%, which is three times the national average (Ewall). In Delaware County, where Chester is situated, there is an air polluting facility every 4 miles: 11 times more air pollutant facilities in than anywhere else in Pennsylvania. The county also boasts a superfund site every six miles: more than seven times the state average (Scorecard.org). In Delaware County, there is a 33% greater cancer risk than in other Pennsylvania counties, as well as a 3 to 1 distribution of toxic chemical release to people of color vs. white and approximately a 6 to 1 ratio of air polluting facilities to people of color vs. white (Scorecard.org).

There are over 1 dozen major polluting facilities on the Delaware River in or near Chester. Below is a picture of the Delaware River right behind a Chester waste facility:



(Available at: <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/images/scenery.html>)

Chester itself has the highest percentage of low-weight births in the state, and 60% higher mortality and lung cancer rates that are 60% higher than the rest of Delaware County. It also has the highest children's blood-lead levels in the state, with 60% of the children over the safe limit (ejnet.org). Chester is home to the seventh largest waste incinerator in the nation, and Chester's West-End residents live literally across the street from the toxic company grounds. In the past two decades there has been exposure to radioactive materials, unsanitary medical waste, air pollution, and soil pollution in Chester, with little explanation or remediation offered. In response to the corrupt and unresponsive government in place, the citizens organized themselves and continue to demand reform.

The Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL or "circle") and the Swarthmore College student activist group Campus Coalition Concerning Chester (or C-4) are responsible for unifying the citizens of Chester, exposing and raising awareness of the City's toxic incineration issues, and bringing media attention to force the issue on city government under the scrutiny of the larger public (Cole and Foster, 34-53). Led by Zulene Mayfield, the residents of Chester and their allies stood up to crooked city officials and powerful legal defense corporations and demanded an end to waste treatment proliferation in their neighborhoods (Laid To Waste). Residents physically blocked trucks coming in and out of incineration facilities, marched to state legislature, demanded accountability and cleanup and have forced the government to listen and take action as a result. Chester residents set a precedent in the U.S. by suing the State on the grounds of Environmental Racism (part of the case has been declared moot, part of the case still pending). Currently, the Mayor of Chester has gotten on board, ordering a moratorium on new waste facilities in Chester, refusing to allow the country's largest tire-to-petroleum recovery center (read: tire incinerator) to set up in the city (Ewall).

7. Sheila Holt-Orsted and Environmental Racism in Dickson County, Tennessee

I will be working with Ms. Holt-Orsted to raise awareness of her life story in relation to the blatant Environmental Racism exercised by the Dickson County Government in Tennessee. Pamela Smith, Program Manager of the Saginaw Department of Community Health, initially referred Ms. Holt-Orsted as a possible project participant.

I have not yet begun the in-depth research or interview process with Ms. Holt-Orsted, which will occur this fall to fit both of our schedules.

From our two brief conversations and some internet research, I have learned that Ms. Holt-Orsted used to live on her family's farm in Dickson County where he'd been born and raised. The farm is close to the county landfill, and so she had asked the county government if the well water was safe to drink. Her father has died of prostate cancer, and she has contracted cancer as well. She has been fighting breast cancer since 2002 and has had a mastectomy as a result. Her mother and sister have had cervical polyps. Her aunt next door, and three of her cousins have had cancer. Her other aunt across the street has had chemotherapy for a bone disease, and uncle died of Hodgkin's disease. Her daughter also has a speech defect (Duke). It is hard to imagine these severe health issues are merely a coincidence. The well water is believed to be contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE), a known carcinogen. Ms. Holt-Orsted asserts that the government did not disclose the water quality information to her family because of their race (npr.org). In her research "she found letters and documents indicating that Tennessee environmental and water officials had concerns about the possibility of TCE appearing in the Holt's well water as early as 1988. The Holts' well was left untested for nine years while TCE problems in the wells of white families were tended to with haste, the records showed" (Duke). Yet in 1991, an EPA official wrote, "Use of your well water should not result in any adverse health effects" (Duke).

Case Study: Love Canal

Love Canal was named after William T. Love, who had tried to dredge the canal and develop it to produce hydroelectricity from the Niagara River. His money ran out after only one-mile of the canal was dug and the project was abandoned. In the 1920's the City of Niagara used the canal for chemical waste dumping. Hooker Chemical and Plastics Company purchased the land in 1947, lined it with clay, and began filling it with their chemical wastes. The City of Niagara and the U.S. Army used the canal as a dumping ground as well. Within 5 years, the site was filled to capacity at 22,000 tons of waste. The canal was then capped closed with clay (Brown).

In the 1950's the surrounding area of Niagara Falls was rapidly developing. The city needed to build more schools for the population increase. The school board wanted the canal property from Hooker Chemical. Hooker was reluctant to sell, knowing the extent of the contamination. Hooker warned the school board not to build on the site, and even showed contaminated borings from the canal to the school board (Zeusse). The school board would not relent its pressure on the company, and so Hooker sold the land to the school board for \$1, and included a caveat on the legal agreement that the company cannot be held responsible for any dangers that result from the property (CHEJ).

The City of Niagara proceeded to build the 99th Street School directly on top of the filled canal. During the construction of the school, the clay capping seal was broken. In 1957, the city installed new sewer lines for the developing communities around the new school. At this point, the clay was penetrated again and chemicals seeped out of the canal into the surrounding ground. Years later, the construction of the LaSalle expressway would restrict groundwater flow from the Love Canal community out to the Niagara River. According to the University at Buffalo:

Unusually heavy rain and snowfalls in 1975 and 1976 provided high groundwater levels in the Love Canal area. Portions of the Hooker landfill subsided, 55-gallon drums surfaced, ponds and other surface water area became contaminated, basements began to ooze an oily residue, and noxious chemical odors permeated the area.

Lois Gibbs, the 27-year-old mother and President of the Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA), questioned that her children's medical problems might have something to do with their exposure to this chemical waste. In the mid-1970's The LCHA began advocating for their health rights and for city investigation. In a study conducted between 1974-1978, the LCHA found that over half the children born in the community had birth defects (EPA). The LCHA then took matters into their own hands to ensure city and federal recognition of the problems at Love Canal. Members of the LCHA dyed the water system that flowed out into the Niagara River with food coloring then alerted the Coast Guard (Gibbs). A stipulation of the Clean Water Act requires the Coast Guard to ensure the safety of navigable waters. By these actions, the LCHA got a federal agency to come and test the water and document the contamination. In another instance, after being told by city officials that the city was waiting for federal intervention, and by the federal government that the feds were waiting on the city to act,

the LCHA marched down the city capitol and demanded they call the federal government on the phone while the LCHA waited for them to figure out a course of action (Gibbs).

By 1978 there was city, state, and federal recognition of the severity of contamination at Love Canal. In August of that year the City Health Commissioner declared a health emergency at the Love Canal. He closed the 99th Street School, and recommended temporary evacuation of pregnant women and young children from the first two rings of houses around the site. Within a week, New York Governor Hugh Carey announced the intent to purchase all houses in the closest proximity to the site. On August 7, 1978, United States President Jimmy Carter declared a federal emergency at Love Canal, and approved federal emergency funds to evacuate and relocate the Love Canal residents. This was the first time emergency funds were approved for something other than a natural disaster (EPA). In 1979, the EPA said Love Canal exhibited a "disturbingly high rate of miscarriages...Love Canal can now be added to a growing list of environmental disasters involving toxics, ranging from industrial workers stricken by nervous disorders and cancers to the discovery of toxic materials in the milk of nursing mothers." The EPA announced the result of blood tests that showed high white blood cell counts, a precursor to leukemia, and chromosome damage in Love Canal residents. (EPA). On, May 21, 1980, President Carter declared a state of emergency at Love Canal and the EPA agreed to temporarily evacuate 700 families. Eventually, the government permanently relocated more than 800 families and reimbursed them for their houses. Congress subsequently passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, or the Superfund Act, giving the EPA authority and responsibility to protect people from toxic waste sites that threaten public health.

According to a subsequent study by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, 421 chemical contaminants were found in the air, water and soil around Love Canal (University of Buffalo). In 1983, over 1300 residents of the Canal area received a settlement for almost \$20 Million dollars from Occidental Petroleum, the parent company of Hooker Chemical. A \$1 Million public health trust fund was also set up (CHEJ). In 1995 the EPA sued Occidental Petroleum. They agreed to pay \$129 Million in restitution for federal cleanup, and \$98 Million to cover state clean-up costs. Although some cleanup has been done on the site, it is by no means fully remediated. A trench has been

dug around the canal, and it has been capped with clay. Discharge sewers to the Niagara River have been sealed off. A chain link fence has been placed around the 99th Street School site. Hundreds of homes have been leveled by the state. Homeowners are entitled to stay in their homes until their death, but the houses are to be deeded back to the state upon their death. Houses that the state deems safe for occupancy can be bought for below-market value if the new owner signs away their right to sue and receives full disclosure of the site contamination. Those homes can then be re-sold, providing the owners give the new tenants full disclosure (Gibbs). In the 1990's, part of Love Canal was renamed Black Creek Village by the Love Canal Revitalization Committee and nine homes on the site were available for sale.

Lois Gibbs started the Center for Health, the Environment & Justice in 1981, to protect people from toxic disasters like that at Love Canal. CHEJ advocates for safe environmental and public health practices and lobbies against the toxic waste industry. CHEJ mentors community groups and individuals, empowering them with the experience and tools they've learned in the past 30 years. CHEJ has expanded their fight against toxic waste from those deposited in the ground to those that are pervading our everyday lives in the products we use. Significant recent victories for CHEJ occurred in 1986, pushing McDonalds to discontinue its use of Styrofoam containers, and in 1996, getting Microsoft to discontinue its use of PVC plastics in computers. CHEJ is currently working on many campaigns, including the removal of toxic PVC packaging in retail products (Wentz).

Interview Transcription

April 4, 2008 Q & A Interview with Lois Gibbs

Lois Gibbs: On 8/2 there will be an anniversary gathering at Love Canal. That would be a good time to visit and meet some of the CHEJ, LCHA, and community folks.

1a. Did the Justice Dept. and the EPA sue Occidental Petroleum instead of the local government because of political interests?

LG: The Justice Dept. and the EPA sued Occidental Petroleum because they believed they were negligent in explaining the contamination to school board. They told the school board there was chemical waste buried there, and they included a few lines in their deed of sale that stated they could not be held liable for the contamination after the deed had been passed. However, they didn't disclose any of the comprehensive data they had showing the extent and severity of the contamination. The argument is that the school board wouldn't have taken the land and built on it if it knew how hazardous the site was. NY State found them guilty and ordered Occidental Petroleum to pay \$197 million in damages.

1b. Why did the Federal Government finally act?

LG: Because we made them. LCHA kept asking the state to get the feds involved and the state said that they had invited the feds. LCHA then went to the feds and asked them to get involved, and they said they needed to be invited by the state. So LCHA went to the state building and made a call to the feds and got them involved. Most likely, the state was concerned about a precedent being set, as well as having the lid taken off of their potentially cheap clean-up.

Using a statute of the Clean Water Act law, LCHA was able to get the Coast Guard involved. If any navigable waterway is contaminated, the Coast Guard must become involved. Love Canal sewer systems drained into the Niagara River, which in turn fed the great lakes. LCHA put colored dye in the sewers, alerting the Coast Guard. The coast guard tested these waters for contamination, and as a result, uncovered the toxic sludge present.

2. What clean-up measures were taken, if any?

LG: The storm sewers were cleaned out and blocked, so they wouldn't discharge into the Niagara River. A trench was dug around the Love Canal, which was capped with clay. Cleaned-up Black Creek and Bergholtz creek. The contamination is contained at best. In August, when the river runs dry, it backfills into the smaller bodies of water and remains hazardous.

3. What is happening right now at Love Canal / Black Creek Village?

LG: The southern end of Love Canal is not habitable. The Northern end 200 or so homes were declared habitable. Around 1988, the homes were sold at below market price: future owners had to sign away their right to sue, and they were handed reams of technical data according to laws of full disclosure. The homeowners had to live in their homes for at least 5 years according to the homesteading act, and had to fully disclose information about the contamination to future homeowners. The southern end homes

were destroyed and crushed into their basements and covered. There were 67 households who decided to stay. Upon leaving or family deaths, the homes must be sold to the government.

LG: There is a 10-foot green chain link fence around the actual canal. There used to be hazard signs all over the fence, but they were taken down a few years ago, CHEJ thinks this is probably to convince folks that the site has been cleaned up.

5. Can you describe what it felt like to be living in LC and be ignored by the government? What about after the first relocation?

LG: Living in hell. I had two children, both were very sick. Every day I felt as if another drop of poison was going into their bodies. It was inescapable, impending doom at the doorstep. Suffocating. As an individual and a mother, I found myself feeling these thoughts, but as a leader, I couldn't express myself this way. Its like I had to have two opposite personalities. There is what I felt, and what I had to project to inspire people to action.

After the first relocation there was relief that some neighbors were going to be moved out. I don't think there was any animosity between residents. IT seemed like just a matter of time before we all got moved. Hopefulness. If we could just provide the evidence, we would all be moved. A number of folks who had been moved came back to try and get everyone else out. We worked together.

9. Can you clarify "detained (held hostage)" two EPA reps in May 1978?

LG: We detained them, yes, but also for their own health and safety. The EPA had come down to the LCHA headquarters (a house in the community) to explain the new study that had come out saying residents had chromosome damage. Chromosome damage not only leads to higher rates of cancer and birth defects, but also could be passed on to future generations. Around 500 angry citizens surrounded the house, and we held the EPA inside for five hours, to protect them and to call the white house and demand action. We gave the white house till the following Wednesday at noon to relocate the residents. They did.

I believe things only happened because it was an election year. If you look at the history of Love Canal, all of the government intervention happened during an election year.

7. What are the most important points you want to get across through this song/ project?

LG: People can do things. We have the power of the people. When we speak in unison, things happen. Democracy works if you make it happen. It's a participatory democracy. It's really quite simple.

Sample Lyrics

Love Canal Draft Lyrics 6/15/08

(phrases in parentheses might be substituted in a subsequent revision)

22,000 tons of chemicals buried at the Love Canal
and that's not accounting for the city or the army and all that they hid down
then the company sold the land for only \$1 down
and a few lines of warning to the folks at the school board, warning them to not break
ground

and when the ground was broke the chemicals seeped right out
and when it rained and poured (in their back yards) the barrels floated out
still the children were sent to school in the middle of that very mound
and it flooded the basements, then the milk of the mothers, and the people gave a shout

REFRAIN

that something must be done, we gave over our trust, look what it's gotten us
so now it's up to us to bring forth justice, we cannot be silenced, we will not back down

the families and the folks of the homeowner's association firmly stood their ground
and informed the press, still the city neglected to move the families out
so they took their own direct action and poured food coloring down
in the sewers that led to navigable waters got the federal coast guard out

yes something must be done, we gave over our trust, look what it's gotten us (see how
they've poisoned us)
so now it's up to us to bring forth justice, we cannot be silenced, we will not back down

in '78 the state agreed to move some people out
but they stayed in solidarity with the remaining majority for justice to be handed down
and right before the election the President declared Love Canal
was a state of emergency, move all 900 families, its how Superfund came about

and though the feds stepped in the people didn't win back their health, their homes, their
chromosomes were damaged
one out of two babies were born with birth defects there were 421 chemicals found in the
air, the water and the ground

and in the last 30 years we've seen how Superfund has played out
the idea of government regulating industry is just not working out
and so it's up to you and me to call the culprits out
still after 30 years some residents are fighting to stop another Love Canal
(after 30 years Lois Gibbs is fighting to stop the world's Love Canals)
(her Center for Health, the Environment & Justice fights to stop another Love Canal)

yes something must be done, we gave over our trust, look what it's gotten us
so now it's up to us to bring forth justice, we cannot be silenced, we will not back down

yes something must be done, we give over our trust, look what it's gotten us
and now it's up to us to bring forth justice, we cannot be silenced, we will not back down

Next Steps

In the coming months I'll be engaged in finalizing the list of participants in this project. I'm hoping to work with groups representing the following EJ problems: migrant farming issues, Native American environmental and social rights, the ongoing environmental and public health issues in New Orleans and surrounding areas in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Secondary on my list of topics are food security issues, asbestos and lead in urban areas and/or the selling of public recreational areas by government to corporations.

In the winter of 2008, I'll be refining all of my research and embark on site visits to further inform my work and interview some of the folks directly involved with these issues. In 2009, I'll be recording and producing the CD and informational booklet, as well as a website for the project. By this time next year I will have completed the performance tour for the project and will be making evaluations based on the tour and audience feedback. I look forward to all the various activities that I will be engaged throughout this project year.

Future Implications

Based on the success of this project I hope to engage in future musical activism work. I'm hoping that through the project I meet a network of people who are interested in collaborating on similar work in the years ahead. Possible projects could range from collecting and compiling existing topical folk protest songs to organizing music and art exchanges between people in different geographic locations and/or of different social demographics to share their experiences and perspectives. I will also attempt to develop a model framework for future endeavors based on the experiences learned from this capstone project. I would be excited to facilitate workshops on musical activism and in both academic and community settings.

Conclusion

Through this project it is my goal to raise awareness of some of the unbelievable conditions that U.S citizens are still being forced to live in. This project aims to relate these environmental and social life struggles to people who are otherwise unaware of the despicable treatment our governing bodies and industries are subjecting a significant portion of the population to. By educating more people on these issues, I will help promote a unified social movement to action for equal social and environmental justice in America. To facilitate this work, I will am employing the time-tested movement-building media of folk song.

From the research I have conducted for this project, and the experience I have had as a folk music fan and performer over the past decade, I have come to understand the history and power of folksong and the unifying spirit of musical performance and social engagement. I will be utilizing this movement-building musical tradition of the past, embedded with its cultural history of protest, to inform my present song writing towards shaping a more socially and environmentally equitable future for all.

The participating groups and myself will be co-authoring song-stories to convey accurate information about their histories, struggles and successes to other folks across the country. Through performance and information sessions, as well as audio recordings, an information booklet, and a website, I will act as a representative of these groups and spread their news and messages to a wider, more varied audience. Through these media, songs, performances and information sessions I hope to inspire more people to action towards advocating for environmental and social justice the way that I myself have been inspired to activism by other people's music, art and actions.

Appendix A: Draft Recording of Love Canal Song

CD Included in Packet, Track 1.

Appendix B: Second Grant Revision for Wild Gift Organization Project Funding

**This Land is Our Land:
Songs of Contemporary U.S. Environmental Justice Struggle & Triumph**

WILD GIFT Leadership Action Contract
October 1, 2008- September 30, 2009

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This document describes the terms of the Wild Gift Leadership Action Contract between Joshua M. Greenberg (the “Grantee”) and the Wild Gift (the “Grantor”). It is understood that the “Contract” represents an educational opportunity. The “Grantee” is not an agent of the Wild Gift. The “Grantee” acts independently of The Wild Gift in fulfilling the terms of the Contract.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the project is to use grassroots musical storytelling to raise awareness of current environmental and social injustices in the United States and highlight community organizing successes in overcoming these issues. This will be accomplished through the composition and live performance of song-stories, the national distribution of audio recordings and accompanying informational booklets, and the publication of internet media content.

THE SHORT TERM GOALS OF THIS LAND IS OUR LAND ARE:

1. Compose and co-author relevant and accurate narrative song-stories
 - Song is an easily accessible and effective medium for sharing newsworthy events and histories. Creating, performing and recording these songs will offer a critical, yet creative and inspiring news and information outlet to raise awareness of these important environmental and social justice issues.
2. Produce and distribute a CD recording and information booklet
 - CD and information packages will be produced, advertised and distributed nationally to allow the project to reach as many people as possible. Through the CD it will be possible to raise the consciousness of a greater number of people in the United States who may otherwise be unaware of these important issues, who may not have a computer or the internet, or who may not be able to attend the live performances and information sessions. CD sales will raise money for the community action groups and help to sustain the project or its future installments.

I feel an audio CD is essential to this project in its ability to allow the listener to listen repeatedly to the rich quality of the music and testimony of individuals and to create meaningful associations between the songs, narrative, and their own lives. An audio CD is different than streaming the music and interviews through the computer for several reasons:

1. *The sound quality of computer streaming and audio download is still inferior to CD quality both in its sampling rate (sound quality) and its output (speaker quality). It is hard to create a meaningful personal experience with any art that is distorted or not properly represented.*
2. *Besides speaker limitations, computers assign a visual accompaniment to one's listening experience. Even if you are not actively engaged in looking onscreen, the sound is emanating from a particular device that we have been conditioned to engage in audio-visual experiences with. This results in a lack of imagination or personal reflection during the listening process.*

3. Book and hold performance and information sessions to promote the project

- Live performances and information session will reach many individuals who do not live in direct contact with any of the participating groups or injustice issues. Question and answer sessions will follow performances and offer additional information as well as ways for the audience to become more involved.

The transference of news and history through oration is a time-tested way of communication and education. I feel personal interaction of histories, ideas and skill sharing is the most important activity of humanity. It is how we learn and

evolve as a people. It is foundational to this project to reach out to various communities, ages, races and constituencies, to explain some of the terrible conditions people in this country are suffering from. One does not need to own a computer, have internet connection, or even literacy skills to benefit from these live performances and information sessions. Furthermore, the information and feedback sessions provide a great way for discourse and community building.

4. Create a website for this project

- Millions of people use the internet as their primary news source. Creating a website will improve accessibility of the project and allow people from all over the world to listen and learn about these issues. The website will provide information on how to become more involved to support the work of the groups and/ or engage in their own local environmental or social justice efforts. The website will include where applicable: photos from my site visits, audio recordings of interviews, transcribed interviews, audio recordings of songs and/or song drafts and a journal of my thoughts as the project progresses. The website will also provide the opportunity for users to comment on the project. Project participants and other individuals from their community group will also be able to comment and/or participate.

THE LONG TERM GOALS OF THIS LAND IS OUR LAND ARE:

Number and underscore your long-term goals. Behavioral and societal outcomes will probably dominate this list.

1. Raise public awareness of important environmental justice issues that are directly and indirectly affecting everyone in the United States
2. To recognize and support the efforts of the participating groups, providing them with the completed song to use as a tool for further promotion and outreach
3. Build long-term partnerships with participants and engaged audience members to increase the awareness and visibility of these issues
4. Develop creative solutions towards solving and preventing Environmental justice problems in the future
5. Explore other ways to use music, art, concerts and information seminars to expose the general public to complex issues in easily accessible ways
6. Support the work of a diverse array of activists through grass-roots art making, teaching and workshop facilitation

ACTION PLAN

“Between October 1, 2008 - September 30, 2009, Joshua M. Greenberg commits to perform the following”:

Quarter 1 : October 1 – Dec 31st

1. I will identify all participants for the proposed environmental justice recording project: *This Land is Our Land*.
 - Determine four additional participating groups through preliminary research, creating a partnership with ten groups in total
 - Establish key contact partners within those through phone and email contact
2. I will conduct in-depth research of each group’s history and present issues as well as interview key contacts and community members.
 - Compile information from internet & library archives of news media
 - Record and transcribe first person accounts and experiences from in-person interviews and phone conversations with key contacts and community members
3. I will travel and conduct all time-sensitive site visits, documenting interviews and collecting relevant visual aids.
 - Record interviews as well as photograph sites to be used for the CD, booklet and website.

It is important to conduct these interviews as soon as possible for two reasons: to ensure that the CD and performances are completed by the end of the subsequent quarters, and to honor my commitment to visit and work with the participants in a timely and not burdensome manner. Since I have started most of these project relationships in January of this year, I feel it would be too long to wait over another year to conduct site visits. Furthermore, since the struggles of the groups could potentially change within a short time span, information we have already discussed to be included in the project could also change significantly. While this is inevitably bound to happen over the course of time, I am trying to gather all past and present information within the span of one year, to be delivered soon thereafter to ensure their accuracy and timeliness.

4. I will begin composing the song lyrics and music to be recorded for the CD and eventually performed on the regional tour.
 - Distill and edit the lyrics to the song-stories with participants’ help through phone and email
 - Compose songs in the folk ballad tradition; request help from musical composers or accompanists if necessary

Quarter 2: January 1 – March 31st

1. I will conduct all remaining site visits, documenting interviews and collecting relevant visual aids.
 - Travel to any remaining project sites, record interviews as well as photograph sites for use in the CD, booklet and website

2. I will refine the song compositions and begin recording the audio CD for *This Land is Our Land*.
 - Complete songs and record for CD production
 - Have the CD professionally mastered
3. I will compile and edit the information booklet for *This Land is Our Land* and ready it for publication.
 - Edit the info booklet with the help of participants and provide first person narrative paragraphs and quotes to be included
4. I will send out the audio CD and information booklet to be published.
 - Contract an suitable production company for the project
 - Produce 1,000 CDs with 24 page booklet in advance of the spring/summer performances and information sessions
 - The booklet will also be published other formats independent of the CD. It will be published on the web as well as in a larger format print version for folks with visual impairment or who do not wish to purchase the CD but would like more background information about the project and participants.
5. I will book shows and information sessions for performances a variety of venues and locations.
 - Book venues for all ages of people and in various settings to reach as diverse an audience as possible (i.e. senior centers, all-age venues, civic meeting halls, coffeehouses, bars, colleges, etc.)
 - I will book events at venues in places where I have a following and at some new venues.
6. I will set up a preliminary website explaining the project's purpose, goals, news, and relevant contact information.
 - Design and publish a website which would serve to explain the project and to publicize the CD and performances
 - Provide background information and links to the participating groups

I have moved the website set-up to the second quarter so that participating individuals, the public, and the Wild Gift network could begin tracking the project's successes more quickly. This also leaves more time for project suggestions in the second half of the project year.

Quarter 3: April 1 – June 31st

1. I will refine the website and include documentation from my site visits.
 - Include audio and photo images from the site visits
 - Develop ways for effective web participation
 - Set-up online purchasing of the CD

I will try to upload info about the site visits periodically so that all of the content is not loaded at once. This will make it easier on myself, and more engaging for web visitors to repeatedly engage in the project site. By offering a little more new information at a time,

participants may not feel as overwhelmed and may be more likely to have a deeper understanding of each subject matter.

2. I will advertise and garner press for the project through several media outlets.
 - Solicit various press and publications for in-kind donations, or purchase advertising, in any or all of the following: sound recording publications, magazines, newspapers, radio spots, etc.

If the website development is not donated in-kind, or at a reduced rate, as I am hoping it might be, the advertising budget and possibly the personal stipend will be adjusted to pay for the web development.

3. I will embark on a regional performance tour to promote the project and raise awareness of environmental justice issues.
 - Hold public performances at various types of venues on the U.S. along northern, southern, and westward routes from my home base in Philadelphia
 - Follow performances with formal and informal information sessions, including Q & A and audience feedback.

Quarter 4: July 1 - September 30th

1. I will compile the audience feedback from the performances and summarize my findings in a useful report.
 - document audience feedback through questionnaires and/ or conversations to inform my development of this and future projects
 - Share feedback with any individuals interested in conducting a similar arts activism project
 - Report feedback results back to the board or any interested members of the Wild Gift Organization
2. I will add additional content to the website from the performances and information sessions.
 - Include performance videos, audience testimonials and personal reflections from the performances
3. I will develop a musical activism action plan and facilitation tool based on the successes of this project.
 - Use all participant, audience and partner feedback toward action plan development
4. I will assess and determine how to provide long-term sustainability for the project
 - Evaluate financial stability of the project
 - Develop ways to support future performance tours, additional publication, or subsequent recordings

PARTNERS

Below are the major and key partners for my project. I consider the first six persons listed my key partners because they are my direct contacts representing each community or group. It is with these individuals I have had the most dialogue and collaboration with thus far concerning their group's song-story. There will be at least four more key partners involved at a later date, to be named as I develop the final list of participants. The remaining contacts (7-11) are academic or musical affiliates of mine, who have a general working knowledge of the project, and will be able to offer assistance in their specialized areas of expertise. This second half of my partners list is also incomplete at this time, as I hope to develop relationships with more individuals who have interest and experience to lend to the project, including a Wild Gift Mentor.

1. Dianna Wentz: Dianna is the Media Officer for the Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ), Dianna works in the central office of CHEJ in Falls Church, Virginia. She working with me on developing the song-story to commemorate the anniversary of the Love Canal relocation and current outreach work of her organization. (703) 237-2249, ext. 19. dianna@chej.org.

2. Lois Gibbs: Lois is the founding member of CHEJ. She was the leader of the Love Canal Homeowners Association, whose community activism eventually led to President Carter's creation of the Superfund Act. She is providing insightful experiences on the Love Canal and being a community and environmental justice leader. Ms. Gibbs is in contact with me through CHEJ, I do not have her direct contact information. (703) 237-2249. chej@chej.org.

3. Frances Dunham: Frances is a biologist who has worked with the Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE) since it began. She has been providing first-hand accounts of the groundwater toxicity issues in Pensacola, Florida. (850) 478-5794. francesdunham@mchsi.com.

4. Jen Osha: Jen is the producer of the CD *Moving Mountains: Voices of Appalachia Rise Up Against Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining*. She is currently working on her PhD Dissertation pertaining to using music for social activism. She is helping me with the information and lyrics for the songs dealing with mountaintop removal and coal sludge impoundments. (304) 698-5160. lobayero@gmail.com.

5. Mike Ewall: Mike is the Director of Action PA, A Pennsylvania based research, organizing and networking center for the grassroots environmental justice movement. He is also a member of the Delco Alliance for Environmental Justice. Mike is my partner in developing the song lyrics and information dealing with the EJ issues in Chester, PA. (215) 743-4884. catalyst@actionpa.org.

6. Pamela Smith: Pamela is the Lead Program Manager of Saginaw County, MI Department of Public Health. She is assisting me in researching and writing a song-story about the contamination of the Saginaw River and the Tittabawassee river basin by Dow Chemical. (989) 992-6353. psmith@saginawcounty.com.

7. Yvette Bordeaux: Yvette is the Director of Professional Programs in Earth and Environmental Science at the University of Pennsylvania. Yvette has assisted me in the development of this project from its inception, beginning in her Research Methods course. She has a good working knowledge of the project and is helpful in directing me towards the appropriate Environmental Science or University personnel for my needs. (215) 898-9191. bordeaux@sas.upenn.edu.

8. Janet Theophano: Janet is the Associate Director of the College of General Studies and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania. Janet is the faculty reader for my graduate capstone thesis and historical research portion this project. Janet is a published scholar in the field of folklore and will be both reading and guiding the academic paper to accompany this project. She will be able to help me contextualize this project within the history of folk ballads, grassroots story telling, and justice movements. (215) 898-5389. theopha@sas.upenn.edu.

9. Ben Schulman: Ben is the head of Contraphonic Records, the Chicago record label that puts out my musical CDs. Ben will assist me in producing and publicizing *This Land is Our Land* in the U.S., especially in the Midwest. (312) 451-3767. ben@contraphonic.com.

10. Daniel Pietrowski: Daniel is the head of High Two Records, the Philadelphia record label that puts out my musical CDs and records. Daniel will assist me in producing and publicizing *This Land is Our Land* in the U.S., especially on the east coast. (312) 451-3767. Daniel@hightwo.com.

11. Jack Ohly: Jack is a musician and composer who has collaborated with me on several songs and artistic projects over the years. Jack will be available to assist me with any musical or compositional questions that may arise during this project. (203) 687-6448. jackohly@yahoo.com.

12. Sheila Holt-Orsted: Sheila is a victim of blatant environmental racism on the part of the town government where she lived in Dickson County, Tennessee. She will be working with me to tell her family's story. (703) 897-9532.

BUDGET/ Expenses:

Expenses:

Quarter 1: October – December 31

1. Site visits	.....\$ 750
2. Personal stipend	.....\$ 1,500

Quarter 1 Total **\$2,250**

Quarter 2: January 1 – March 31

1. Site visits	.....\$ 750
2. Audio production	.....\$ 800
3. CD & booklet publication	.....\$ 3,000
4. Personal stipend	.....\$ 1,500

Quarter 2 Total **\$6,050**

Quarter 3: April 1 – June 31

1. Website	.....\$ 200
2. Advertising	.....\$ 2,000
3. Performance expenses	.....\$ 1,500
4. Personal stipend	.....\$ 1,500

Quarter 3 Total **\$5,200**

Advertising budget and personal stipend may be adjusted to meet website design needs.

Quarter 4: July 1 - September 30

1. Personal stipend\$ 1,500
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Quarter 4 Total **\$1,500**

Grand Total Expenses /Year **\$15,000**

BUDGET/ Income:

Quarter 1: October1 – December 31

1. The Wild Gift Grant	.... \$2,250
• Basic grant.....\$2,250	
Quarter 1 Total	<u>\$2,250</u>

Quarter 2: January 1 – March 30

1. The Wild Gift Grant	.....\$6,050
• Basic grant.....\$6,050	
Quarter 2 Total	<u>\$6,050</u>

Quarter 3: April 1 – June 31

1. The Wild Gift Grant	.... \$3,200
• Basic grant.....\$1,200	
• Matching grant.....\$2,000	
2. Contributions	
• Fundraising.....\$2,000	
Quarter 3 Total	<u>\$5,200</u>

Quarter 4: July 1 - September 30

1. The Wild Gift Grant	.... \$1,500
• Basic grant.....\$500	
• Matching grant.....\$500	
2. Contributions	
• Fundraising.....\$500	
Quarter 4 Total	<u>\$1,500</u>

<u>Grand Total Income/Year</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>
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FUTURE OF THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

By the end of the fourth quarter, this project will already have been successful in raising awareness of current environmental justice issues in the U.S. as well as offering ways for citizens to become more involved in solving these issues. Using feedback from the performances and information sessions, CD listener feedback and website trafficking, I will be developing a modified project action plan for the future.

By year three, *This Land is Our Land* will be in its second printing. As a result of the success and interest in the project, subsequent environmental or social justice themed CD volumes will be in the planning stages. In future volumes, I will share the musicianship with other like-minded artists and activists, serving as a creative director on a more collaborative installment of the series. Increased awareness and sponsorship of the project will have led to a greater operating budget. The annual budget of future projects will vary based on the size and scope of the project but will be entirely funded from the combination of fundraising, and past CD sales. At this time, I will also be researching and experimenting with a more effective means of activism through music and art and facilitating responsibility through awareness, possibly in conjunction with an environmental or cultural studies PhD program.

By year five, we will have reprinted the *This Land is Our Land* CD several times, and as well as completed a future community activism recording project. As a result of this project and my educational experience, I will be teaching college and adult-level courses on environmental responsibility as well as on the history of music and activism. Through teaching I hope to inspire and lead folks toward creating meaningful and critical art or music in the same tradition that has inspired me to do so.

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