

HBCUs Waging War for Climate Justice

Dr. Beverly Wright, executive director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) and Dr. Robert Bullard, distinguished professor, Texas Southern University co-convened the 6th Annual HBCU Climate Change Conference in New Orleans, September 18 – 23, 2018. President, Dr. Reynold Verret, welcomed conference participants to the beautiful Xavier University of Louisiana Campus and Mayor LaToya Cantrell took time out of her busy schedule to welcome conference participants to the City of New Orleans. This year's theme was, *Fighting for our Lives.*" Over three hundred students, faculty, staff, faith, environmental justice and community leaders gathered to participate in the discussion about equity, inclusion, sustainability, and adaptation in the face of climate change. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) in attendance included: Alcorn State University, Alabama A & M University, Bethune Cookman University, Dillard University, Fisk University, Florida A & M University, Grambling State University, Howard University, Jackson State University, Kentucky State University, Lincoln University, North Carolina A & M University, South Carolina State University, Southern University A & M, Spelman College, Tennessee State University, Texas Southern University, Virginia State University, and Xavier University of Louisiana. Other university participants included the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources & Environment, University of Massachusetts Boston, Emory University – Rollins School of Public Health, Chatham University, Humboldt State University, Carnegie Mellon University-Heinz College. Four students from De La Salle High School, were also in attendance. The four-day conference included the *Plantation to Plant Tour* (Cancer Alley), expert panels, student panels, a student poster session, a career fair, two keynote speakers, two interactive workshops and the 2018 Damu Smith Award.

From Plantation to Plant Tour

Conference participants visited the Whitney Plantation, a landmark built by slaves and their descendants. Participants were also given a tour of fence-line communities along the Louisiana Mississippi River Chemical Corridor (Cancer Alley) where they learned the history of the transition from slave plantations to chemical plants along the corridor. The political climate that evolved out of a plantation structure created a hierarchy that once empowered plantation owners and that continues to empower petrochemical industries as an elite class that controls government and finances. The cooperative agreement written to support the growth of the industry in Louisiana guaranteed low taxes, low wages, a non-union labor force and the lack of industry regulation, this began the emergence of the Louisiana Mississippi River Chemical Corridor. This dirty extractive industry has relegated many of the state's residents to a life of poverty and poor health, as well as the destruction of the natural environment.

Faith Panel

This year, the Consortium added the faith community to the program. Reverend Brooks Berndt with the United Church of Christ gave opening remarks about the importance of faith organizations being engaged in the climate change discussion. Rev. Lennox Yearwood,

president of the Hip Hop Caucus gave an inspiring message about “The Righteous Fight: Climate Justice and Faith Communities. Yearwood said,” Love and respect attracts people to this movement. You can’t do this work if you are jaded.” The *Organizing the Faith Communities Panel* discussed the importance of ensuring that the conversation about climate change is relevant to the faith community and how to engage individuals to make living green an equitable and sustainable way of life.

2018 Damu Smith Power of One Award Winners

Dr. Ben Chavis **Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.** is presently the CEO & President of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and the President of Education Online Services Corporation (EOServe Corp), the world’s leading provider of online higher education for Historically Black Colleges and Universities across America, as well as other academic institutions of higher learning throughout the world. Additionally, Dr. Chavis is the President and CEO of the Hip-Hop Summit Action Network (HSAN). Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., has authored books and other publications including: *An American Political Prisoner Appeals for Human Rights*, *Psalms from Prison*, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States of America: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites*, *Report of Fact Finding Mission of African American Church and Community Leaders to the Republic of Angola*, *Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism and the Role of the Church*, and *The National Agenda: Public Policy Issues, Analyses, And Programmatic Plans of Action (2000-2008)* side of Business Mogul Russell Simmons, co-founded HSAN, the world’s largest coalition of hip-hop artists and recording industry executives. Dr. Chavis also travels around the world giving lectures on varies topics, helping to uplift, transform, and sculpt ideals.

Darryl Malek-Wiley is a veteran environmental activist based in Louisiana. Malek-Wiley has focused his career as an environmental activist on understanding and educating the public on the threats posed by toxins and industrial pollutants in air and water. He is a well-known Field Organizer for the Sierra Club Environmental Justice and Community Partnership Program where he has been employed since 2004. He was the Coordinator of the NOLAREcycles 2010 Committee, leading the reinstating of recycling in the community. In recent years, his work has been centered around environmental rebuilding in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Student Panels

There were eight (8) dynamic student panels which included: Global Dimensions of Climate Change, Living With Water, Global Warming Mitigation and Climate Resiliency, Air Quality, Community Resilience Building Community Awareness, Food Security, Climate Change/Climate Justice, and Adaptation and Mitigation.

Student Poster Session

There were twenty-eight (28) student poster presentations. This year, prizes were given to first, second, and third place undergraduate top poster presentations. The undergraduate winners were: **1st place, Nathaniel Campbell** of Savannah State University (Study of Seasonal Sediment Accretion Rates in Salt Marshes of Savannah, GA); **2nd place, Keana Smith** of Alabama A & M University (The Effect of Lead in Water on Birth Outcomes and Fertility in Flint, Michigan vs. Surrounding Cities); **3rd place, Autumn McNeil** of Howard University (It's What You Know: Lead and Water). The **graduate student winner** was **Latia Jackson** of Virginia State University (Climate Change & How it Relates to the Food Deserts and Food Markets; Community Health in Virginia).

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Benjamin Chavis recounted his early years of protesting in Warren County, North Carolina in 1982 when the community learned of toxic dumping at a nearby landfill. When asked why he joined the protest in the Warren County community, he responded that the dumping of toxic wastes in black communities is “Environmental Racism.” It was during this struggle where Dr. Chavis coined the term, “Environmental Racism.” Dr. Chavis also lead the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice and co-authored the landmark [Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States](#). This study was the first to document environmental racism throughout the country in targeting communities of color in the placement of toxic waste. Dr. Chavis challenged students to continue in the fight for environmental justice and equity in the face of opposition from our current administration.

The host of The Weather Channels', *Weather Geeks*, and Distinguished Professor of Geography and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Georgia, **Dr. J. Marshall Shepherd**, talked about “Extremes, Climate Change, and Us.” The signs of climate change are all around us. Climate change impacts people, ecosystems, and the economy. When it comes to marginalized communities and flooding, African Americans are 44% more likely to reside in areas at risk for flooding than Whites when considering the recent Hurricane Florence storm that swept the Charlotte to Atlanta region. Dr. Shepherd stated, that when it comes to climate change, it's important to ask the right questions. Some may ask the question, “Was the event caused by climate change?” A better question would be; are events of this severity becoming more likely or less likely because of climate change? To what extent was the storm more intense or less intense because of climate change? We must investigate the causes of extreme events to increase understanding of how and why extreme changes have changed over time and inform choices about assessing and managing risks and adaptation strategies.

Interactive Breakout Sessions

Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE)

GLOBE provides grade level-appropriate, interdisciplinary activities and investigations about the

atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, and soil/pedosphere, which have been developed by the scientific community and validated by teachers. Dr. David Padgett, Associate Professor of Geography and Director of Geographic Information Sciences (GISc) Laboratory at Tennessee State University facilitated the GLOBE Surface Temperature Data Collection Workshop. Participants learned how to use the Surface Temperature GPS Data Collection to determine surface temperature in their community. GLOBE connects students, teachers, scientists, and citizens from different parts of the world to conduct real, hands-on science about their local environment and to put this in a global perspective.

Emergency Response Preparedness for Disasters

DSCEJ Technical Trainers, Kim Dunn and Bruce McClue facilitated an emergency response preparedness workshop. This interactive workshop provided participants with an overview of health and safety terminology and procedures. Participants were tested on what they learned through a Jeopardy Game challenge. A demonstration exercise was also given where participants learned how to don Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Career Fair

Conference participants had the opportunity to learn about career and educational opportunities from thirteen (13) vendors including The Climate Reality Project, Duke Nicholas School of the Environment, EarthX, Earthjustice, Sierra Club, 350.org, Gulf Restoration Network, Environmental Defense Fund, Restore the Mississippi River Delta, Texas Southern University, Union of Concerned Scientists, and United Church of Christ.

Generation Next High School Workshop

Twenty students from Bard Early College New Orleans High School and New Harmony High School attended the one-day Generation Next Workshop on Saturday, September 22nd. Dr. Beverly Wright welcomed the students and gave an overview of the environmental justice movement and explained the implications of climate change and its impact on Louisiana. The students viewed the Global Warming AAAS video and participated in an interactive assessment of their carbon footprint. The students discussed how they would take personal responsibility to help reduce their carbon footprint. The second half of the workshop was facilitated by Ms. Frances Roberts-Gregory from Bard Early College New Orleans High School. Ms. Roberts-Gregory led a discussion about environmental justice and showed the students videos that highlighted the history of the environmental justice movement that underscored that vulnerable communities are impacted first and worst by environmental pollution. After the discussion the students participated in an environmental justice timeline activity. Drs. Wright and Bullard answered questions and challenged the students to pick up the torch to fight for environmental justice as their generation would be the ones to solve the problems of climate change and environmental injustices.

Some of the conference evaluation remarks included the following remarks: Great conference! My students and I greatly benefitted from this conference.” “Excellent balance of students, faculty, professionals and grassroot activists. Kudos to the organizers.” The HBCU Climate Change Consortium would like to thank our conference host, Xavier University of Louisiana, conference

fundes: The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Union of Concerned Scientists, and the United Church of Christ for their support. Many thanks to our sponsors: 350.org, Climate Reality Project, David & Lucile Packard Foundation, EarthX Expo, Earth Justice, Environmental Defense Fund, Foundation for Louisiana, Gulf Restoration Network, Nathan Cummings Foundation, PowerShift Network, Restore the Mississippi River Delta, Sierra Club, Surdna Foundation, and Yale University.

Save-the-Date for our 7th Annual HBCU Climate Change Conference, November 13 – 16, 2019 in New Orleans. As we move forward, the HBCU Climate Change Consortium will continue efforts to raise awareness, train, and mobilize the next generation of climate justice leaders to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies as we fight for our lives to combat climate change.

CONFERENCE POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS
Thursday, September 20, 2018
STUDENT PANEL: GLOBAL DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE <u>Regional Climate Change Over Antarctic</u> Anna Carrell, North Carolina A & T <u>Evidence of Climate Change Within the Five Regions in Virginia</u> Darrell Login, Virginia State University <u>The Industrial Canal Lock Expansion Project- the Lower 9th Ward Environmental Concerns the Justice – the Neighborhoods"</u> Danielle Raphael, Dillard University <u>Analysis of Hurricane Noel, 2007</u> Julian Gordan, North Carolina A & T
Friday, September 21, 2018
EXPERT PANEL ROUND 1: ORGANIZING THE FIGHT FROM "TOXIC WASTE AND RACE" TO CLIMATE JUSTICE Dr. Robert Bullard, <u>Fighting for Our Lives: Why Environmental and Climate Justice Matters</u> , Texas Southern University Vernice Miller-Travis, Skeo Solutions Dr. Paul Mohai, <u>Which Came First, People or Pollution?</u> University of Michigan School of Environment and Sustainability
EXPERT PANEL ROUND 2: SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES – THE FIRST NATIONAL PEOPLE OF COLOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Dr. Mildred McClain, Harambee House -
Climate Change, Coastal Communities and Emergency Preparedness

Donele Wilkins, Green Door Initiative -
[*Speaking for Ourselves: The First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit*](#)

Susana Almanza, People Organized in Defense of the Earth and her Resources -
[*Legacy of Austin's Racism*](#)

STUDENT PANEL: LIVING WITH WATER

[*Outrunning Sea Level Rise: A Study of Seasonal Sediment Accretion Rates in Salt Marshes of Savannah, Georgia*](#)

Nathaniel Campbell, Savannah State University

[*A Comparative Analysis of the Genotoxicity along the Shorelines Post the BP and Santa Barbara Oil Spills*](#)

Theodore Johnson, Dillard University

[*Climate Change and Its Effects on Virginia's Wildlife and Water Supplies*](#)

Essence Georges, Virginia State University

[*The Effect of Lead in the Water on Birth Outcomes*](#)

Keana Smith – Alabama A & M University

EXPERT PANEL

ROUND 3: INCREASING RISKS OF CLIMATE CHANGE FACING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES

Dr. Sacoby Wilson, University of Maryland College Park, [*Environmental Justice, Hurricanes, and Community Resiliency*](#)

Dr. Earthea Nance, Texas Southern University, [*Promoting Equity in Flood Buyouts*](#)

Kate Cell, Union of Concerned Scientists, [*Underwater: Rising Seas and Chronic Floods*](#)

STUDENT PANEL: GLOBAL WARMING MITIGATION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY

[*Trees, Traffic and Health: An Analysis of Aerial Particulate Matter on Four Streets in Washington DC*](#)

Elijah Catalan, Howard University

[*Protecting Pittsburgh's Urban Forests Is Vital to Improve Climate Resilience*](#)

Tiffany Taulton, Heinz College of Carnegie Mellon University

[*The Role of Solar Energy Water Boiler in Global Warming Mitigation*](#)

John Bosco Namwamba, Southern University A & M College

WORKSHOP

[*Emergency Response Preparedness for Disasters*](#)

Kim Dunn, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

Bruce McClue, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

Saturday, September 22, 2018

EXPERT PANEL

ROUND 5: KEEPING OUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

Mustafa Ali, Hip Hop Caucus, [Still Moving Toward Environmental Justice](#)

Jacqueline Patterson, NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program,

Monique Harden – Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, [What is Energy Democracy and Why We Need It in Louisiana?](#)

Tina Johnson – Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

EXPERT PANEL

ROUND 6: Living With the Impacts of Climate Change

Bill Walsh, Healthy Building Network, [Increasing Energy Efficiency/Decreasing Toxics in Homes and Communities](#)

Dr. Juan Declet-Barreto – Union of Concerned Scientists,

STUDENT PANEL: AIR QUALITY

[Carbon Dioxide Emissions: A Waste Management Paradigm](#)

Evvan Morton, Arizona State University

[The Climate and Environmental Justice Implications of Reducing Diesel Truck Black Carbon Emissions](#)

Regan Patterson, University of California at Berkeley

[Environmental Justice, Public Health and Landfills: Using a Spatial & Statistical Analysis to Examine Type 1 Landfills in Houston, Texas](#)

Omolade Ergunaiye, Texas Southern University

[An Overview of Hand Held Sun Photometer Measurements of Atmospheric Aerosols at Xavier University of Louisiana](#)

Maryssa Bradley, Xavier University of Louisiana

Living and Working Towards a Green Environment

Dr. John Warford, [How to Live an Environmentally Just Life](#), Florida A & M University

Dr. Calvin Mackie, STEM NOLA

EXPERT PANEL

ROUND 7: SURVIVING HURRICANE HARVEY

Sharon Beard, [NIEHS WTP Hurricane Harvey Response](#), National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences

Rev. James Caldwell, Coalition of Community Organizations (COCO)

Marianela Acuna Arreaza, Fe y Justicia Worker Center

Juan Parras – [Houston Ship Channel Video](#), Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (TEJAS)

STUDENT PANEL: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: BUILDING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

[It's What You Know: Water & Lead](#)

Autumn McNeill, Howard University

Humidity in the Hood: The Relationship Between Climate and Crime in the Urban South

Keishelle Jones, Jackson State University

[*U.S. Household Energy Vulnerability*](#)

Dominic Bednar, University of Michigan

Sunday, September 23, 2018

STUDENT PANEL: FOOD SECURITY

[*Beware: What's Growing on Your Produce? Pathogenic Contaminants?*](#)

Mikanna Adkins, Dillard University

[*Climate Change and How It Relates to Food Deserts & Food Markets*](#)

Latia Jackson, Virginia State University

[*Using Adaptation Measures to Mitigate the Effects of Climate Change on Food Security*](#)

Courvoisier Lewis, Alabama A & M University

[*United Nations Regional Centres of Expertise Greater Atlanta*](#)

Iesha Baldwin, Spelman College

STUDENT PANEL: CLIMATE CHANGE/CLIMATE JUSTICE OR ADAPTATION & MITIGATION

[*Urbanization and Urban Sprawl: An EJ Examination of Carbon Footprints*](#)

Olaniyi Olaleye, Texas Southern University

[*Evaluation of New Urbanism in Mississippi*](#)

Lucie Khachan Choufani, Jackson State University

[*The Importance of Green Infrastructure in EJ Communities*](#)

Kareem Heshmat – Texas Southern University