



## Climate Change Solutions: The Imperative Call to Action

[Dr. Beverly Wright](#), founding executive director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) and [Dr. Robert D. Bullard](#), distinguished professor, Texas Southern University co-convoked the **7th Annual HBCU Climate Change Conference** in New Orleans, November 13-16, 2019. This year's conference theme, "Climate Change Solutions: The Imperative to Action," was especially relevant given the severity of environmental and climate challenges facing the people and places in the vulnerable U.S. [Gulf Coast](#) and [Southeast](#) region where the vast majority of HBCUs are [located](#).

Over three hundred youth, students, faculty, staff, faith, environmental and climate justice leaders from twenty-one Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), nine predominately white institutions (PWIs), and a representatives from five [HBCU Gulf Coast Partner Communities](#) (New Orleans, LA, Houston, TX, Gulfport, MS, Mobile, AL, and Pensacola, FL) gathered in New Orleans to participate in discussions about building just, fair and equitable climate solutions to the crisis facing frontline communities. Each year student attendees have an opportunity to present their research as well as interact with community members experiencing environmental exposure and negative impacts of climate change.

The four-day conference included four expert panels, eight student panels, five keynote speakers, two interactive workshops, a student poster session, a career fair, and the 2019 Damu Smith, Power of One Award presented to [Dr. Kenneth Olden](#) for his dedication and critical support for environmental and climate justice and frontline communities over the decades.



L-R: Dr. Beverly Wright, Damu Smith Power of One Award Recipient, Dr. Kenneth Olden, and Dr. Robert Bullard

The event featured a number of nationally known authors, researchers, practitioners and iconic figures in the environmental and climate justice

arena, including experts from Texas Southern University [Dr. Earthea Nance](#), [Dr. Glenn S. Johnson](#), [Dr. Denae King](#), and [Dr. Robert D. Bullard](#), "Father of the Environmental Justice," [Dr. Beverly Wright](#), DSCEJ founder and Heinz Award recipient, University of Michigan environmental justice scholars, [Dr. Paul Mohai](#), Dr. [Dorceta Taylor](#), and Dr. [Tony Reames](#), [Dr. Sacoby Wilson](#), University of Maryland, [Dr. Gregory S. Jenkins](#), Pennsylvania State University, [Dr. David Padgett](#), Tennessee State University, [Dr. Nicky Sheats](#),

Thomas Edison State University, [Dr. Astrid Caldas](#), Union of Concerned Scientists, Attorney Adjoa A. Aiyetoro, University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Rhiana Gunn-Wright, New Consensus, [Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr.](#), Hip Hop Caucus, [Jacqueline Patterson](#), NAACP, [Donele Wilkins](#), Green Door Initiative, [Mustafa Santiago Ali](#), National Wildlife Federation, and [Dr. Calvin Mackie](#), Founder of STEMNOLA.

In keeping with the conference intergenerational tradition, there were twenty (20) grades K through 12 students from New Orleans, LA and Houston TX participated in the “Generation Next: Rising to Climate Change Challenges Workshop” led by two HBCU graduates Joy Semien (currently doctoral student at Texas A&M University) and Simone English (doctoral student at Florida A&M University). High School students from New Orleans, LA and Houston, TX gave a presentation on sea level rise and flooding during the workshop. The youngest participant at the

Arthur Ashe Elementary Student, Tru Dobbins (center), presents her poster to Dr. Robert Wingfield, Fisk University.

conference was Arthur Ashe Elementary School Student, Tru Dobbins, who presented on sea level rise during the poster session.

Altogether, there were fifty-one (51) student poster presentations; the largest number ever at this event.



Student Poster Session

## Student Poster Competition Winners

### 1<sup>st</sup> Place Graduate Student - \$500

**Fantasia Williams** – “Implementation and Evaluation of Water Filter Distribution in Rural Uganda,” University of Michigan School for the Environment and Sustainability

**1<sup>st</sup> Place Undergraduate Student - \$300.**

**Ouname Mhotsha**, “Afroecology: A Tool for Curbing Food Insecurity in Southwest, Mississippi,” Alcorn State University.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place Undergraduate Student - \$200. Kia Smith-** “The St. Bernard Community at Toxic Risk-Oil Refineries Polluting the Air?” Dillard University.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place Undergraduate Student - \$100. Eli Presberg**, “Environmental Justice & Local Knowledge in Africatown (Mobile), Alabama,” Oberlin College.

The conference addressed climate solution strategies using an equity and justice lens related to mitigation, adaptation, community resilience, and other major climate change challenges, transportation, energy sources, carbon emissions, green jobs/green economy, just transition, and community economic development. Student participants said they were honored to have the opportunity to not only share their research but also interact with national environmental, climate justice experts and community leaders. The HBCU Climate Change Consortium would like to thank all of the sponsors and volunteers for their generous support of the event. The conference was funded in part by the Kellogg Foundation, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the National Science Foundation.

Conference PowerPoint presentations are forthcoming. Please check the, “The Latest,” on the DSCEJ website at [www.dscej.org](http://www.dscej.org).



HBCU Climate Change Mentors, Students, and Expert Presenters