

Page

Resolution Number: 9

Financial Implications: None

Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries

1 Revise Resolution number 9 as follows:

2

3 #9 Environmental Racism

4 Theological Background

5 In Isaiah we are given divine insight into our relations with one another "If you do away
6 with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk and if you spend
7 yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed then your light
8 will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noonday" Isaiah 58:9. We
9 are further called both in Leviticus and by our Lord Jesus Christ to love our neighbors as
10 ourselves. When we turn from this divine will, we as a broken people promote systems
11 that are unjust and inequitable. One manifestation of these injustices is the persistent
12 problem of racism.

13

14 Background:

15 The United Methodist Church is committed to understanding and eliminating racism. One
16 generally ignored aspect **of this issue in the United States** is environmental racism.

17 People of color are disproportionately affected by toxic contamination due to the
18 production, storage, treatment, and disposal process of hazardous materials and wastes.

19 African American, Hispanic North American, Asian American, Native American, and
20 citizens of developing nations are usually the least able, politically and economically, to
21 oppose the sitings of these facilities.

22

23 As a result, their communities have become the dumping grounds for waste with
24 devastating economic and health consequences. The pervasive problem of environmental
25 racism within the United States came to light in the early 1980's. The birth of the
26 environmental justice movement can be traced to the historic protest in 1983 in Warren
27 County, North Carolina where over 500 people were arrested for blocking the shipment
28 of toxic waste (PCBs) to a landfill in a predominantly **African American** county. That
29 same year, a General Accounting Office (GAO, now Government Accountability Office)
30 study concluded "blacks make up the majority of the population in three out of four
31 communities where landfills are located."

32

33 In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice issued the landmark
34 report Toxic Wastes and Race. This report, expanding on the GAO findings, established
35 that race—rather than poverty, land value, or home ownership—is the most reliable
36 predictor of proximity to hazardous waste sites in the United States. And in 1992, the
37 National Law Journal study, Unequal Protection, uncovered racial disparities in the
38 enforcement of environmental protection laws. The report highlighted a "racial divide in
39 the way the U.S. government cleans up toxic waste sites and punishes polluters."

40 According to the report, "white communities see faster action, better results and stiffer
41 penalties than communities where blacks, Hispanics and other minorities live. This
42 unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor."

43

44 These and other reports provided strong empirical evidence of environmental racism.

45 Among the findings:

46 ~~1. Race is consistently the most statistically significant variable in the location of~~
47 ~~commercial hazardous waste facilities. Three of the five largest commercial hazardous~~
48 ~~waste landfills in the United States are located in poor minority communities of color;~~
49 ~~communities with commercial hazardous waste facilities have two to three times the~~
50 ~~average minority population of communities without such facilities; and three out of~~
51 ~~every five African Americans and Hispanic North Americans live in communities with~~
52 ~~toxic waste sites. The African American community of Mossville in rural Louisiana is~~
53 ~~home to over thirty petrochemical and industrial plants located within a two-mile area. A~~
54 ~~U.S. government report in 1999 highlighted alarming levels of dioxin in the blood of the~~
55 ~~residents and linked those levels to local exposures.~~

56 ~~2. Communities where hazardous waste incinerators in the United States are sited tend to~~
57 ~~have large minority populations, low incomes and low property values. The minority~~
58 ~~portion of the population in communities with existing incinerators is 98 percent higher~~
59 ~~than the national average. In Houston, Texas, six of eight municipal incinerators are~~
60 ~~located in predominantly African American neighborhoods.~~

61 **1. “The current and future health status of African American, Hispanic and Native**
62 **American children in particular continues to fare poorly compared to the rest of the**
63 **population. Due to the fact that children are so vulnerable to harm, without a**
64 **political voice and not large players within the world economy, they have**
65 **historically been swept under the rug and almost forgotten about when it comes to**
66 **true public health protection.**

67

68 **2. National Disparities: More than nine million people (9,222,000) are estimated to**
69 **live in circular host neighborhoods within 3 kilometers of the nation's 413**
70 **commercial hazardous waste facilities. More than 5.1 million people of color,**
71 **including 2.5 million Hispanics or Latinos, 1.8 million African Americans, 616,000**
72 **Asians/Pacific Islanders and 62,000 Native Americans live in neighborhoods with**
73 **one or more commercial hazardous waste facilities.**

74

75 **Host neighborhoods of commercial hazardous waste facilities are 56% people of**
76 **color whereas non host areas are 30% people of color. Percentages of African**
77 **Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and Asians/Pacific Islanders in host neighborhoods**
78 **are 1.7, 2.3 and 1.8 times greater (20% vs. 12%, 27% vs. 12%, and 6.7% vs. 3.6%),**
79 **respectively. Poverty rates in the host neighborhoods are 1.5 times greater than non**
80 **host areas (18% vs. 12%)”**

81

82 **3. “EPA: Regional Disparities: Racial disparities for people of color as a whole exist**
83 **in nine out of 10 U.S. EPA regions (all except Region 3). Disparities in people of**
84 **color percentages between host neighborhoods and non host Areas are greatest in:**
85 **Region 1, the Northeast (36% vs. 15%); Region 4, the southeast (54% vs. 30%);**
86 **Region 5, the Midwest (53% vs. 19%); Region 6, the South, (63% vs. 42%); and**
87 **Region 9, the southwest (80% vs. 49%). For Hispanics, African Americans and**
88 **Asians/Pacific Islanders, statistically significant disparities exist in the majority or**

89 **vast majority of EPA regions. The pattern of people of color being especially**
90 **concentrated in areas where facilities are clustered is also geographically**
91 **widespread throughout the country.”**

92

93 ~~3. The asthma rate among African American children is 26% higher than that among~~
94 ~~white children. (US CDC) In 2002, 71 percent of African Americans live in counties that~~
95 ~~violate federal clean air standards compared with 58 percent of whites.~~

96 **4. “African Americans are three times more likely to die from asthma. African**
97 **American women have the highest asthma mortality rate of all groups, more than**
98 **2.5 times higher than Caucasian women. Ethnic differences in asthma prevalence,**
99 **morbidity and mortality are highly correlated with poverty, urban air quality,**
100 **indoor allergens, and lack of patient education and inadequate medical care.”**

101 ~~4. Fifty percent of the children in the United States suffering from lead poisoning are~~
102 ~~African American. At every income level, black children are contaminated with lead at~~
103 ~~twice the rate of white children.~~

104 **5. “Lead poisoning continues to be the number one environmental health threat to**
105 **children in the United States, especially poor children, children of color and**
106 **children living in inner cities. Black children are five times more likely than white**
107 **children to have lead poisoning. One in seven black children living in older housing**
108 **has elevated blood lead levels. About 22 percent of African American children and**
109 **13 percent of Mexican American children living in pre 1946 housing are lead**
110 **poisoned, compared with 6 percent of white children living in comparable types of**

111 **housing. Recent studies suggest that a young person's lead burden is linked to lower**
112 **IQ, lower high school graduation rates and increased delinquency. Lead poisoning**
113 **causes about 2 to 3 points of IQ lost for each 10 ug/dl lead level.”**

114 ~~5. Farm workers' children (mainly Hispanics) in the United States suffer a higher rate of~~
115 ~~birth defects due to their mothers' exposure to pesticides during the early stages of~~
116 ~~pregnancy. In farm worker communities, children with cancer are common. Pesticide~~
117 ~~exposure among farm workers can result in death, birth defects, cancer, nerve disorders,~~
118 ~~skin diseases, and other health complications.~~

119 ~~6. Navajo teenagers have cancer rates seventeen times the national average, due to~~
120 ~~countless uranium spills on Navajo lands that contaminated their water, air, and soil.~~

121 **6. Toxic Wastes and Race describe the extent of environmental racism and the**
122 **consequences of people of color and indigenous communities disproportionately**
123 **affected by polluted environments. Collectively, the two coal plants on the Navajo**
124 **reservation release over 365 million pounds of cancer and lung disease causing**
125 **pollutants every year. The groundwater is also contaminated as the pollutants leach**
126 **into the water banks.**

127 ~~7. The growing trend during the 1980s and 1990s has been to dump toxic wastes in~~
128 ~~several continuous developing countries. Countries such as Liberia have been offered~~
129 ~~much needed foreign capital if they accepted several shipments of toxic wastes in the~~
130 ~~past few years. Globalization has enabled environmental racism around the world, with~~
131 ~~developed countries increasingly looking to developing countries as new dumping~~
132 ~~grounds for unwanted and often toxic wastes. Unfortunately, these countries often lack~~

Page

Resolution Number: 9

Financial Implications: None

Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries

133 ~~the appropriate infrastructure to adequately handle the environmental and health~~

134 ~~problems that accompany these wastes.~~

135

136 ~~As the evidence of environmental racism has grown, so has the number of grassroots~~

137 ~~activists committed to environmental justice. In 1991, the First National People of Color~~

138 ~~Environmental Leadership Summit gathered activists from across the country and around~~

139 ~~the world to share stories, strategies, struggles, and victories. The summit produced~~

140 ~~principles of environmental justice and a challenge to the mainstream, mostly white,~~

141 ~~environmental groups who were found to be exclusionary in both their composition and~~

142 ~~policies. A decade later, hundreds of activists gathered for a second summit to evaluate~~

143 ~~progress and develop strategies for continued work to combat persistent environmental~~

144 ~~racism.~~

145

146 ~~In response to the demands of the environmental justice community, the Environmental~~

147 ~~Protection Agency established the Office of Environmental Equity (later changed to~~

148 ~~Office of Environmental Justice) to address inequities in environmental protection. In~~

149 ~~1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 requiring federal agencies to~~

150 ~~develop strategies for ensuring compliance with principles of environmental justice and~~

151 ~~with a commitment that all communities have the right to safe and healthy environments.~~

152

153 ~~Despite the clear evidence and growing awareness our society's attitude toward the~~

154 ~~production and disposal of hazardous products remains one of "out of sight, out of mind."~~

Page

Resolution Number: 9

Financial Implications: None

Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries

155 ~~But "out of sight, out of mind" is most often where the poor and powerless live and work.~~
156 ~~These communities have thus become toxic "sacrifice zones." Hazardous waste is still~~
157 ~~exposed in many communities such as Aniston, Alabama even in the year 2003. The~~
158 ~~work must continue. We must be persistent and consistent in exposing these atrocities~~
159 ~~with a commitment that all communities have a right to safe and healthy environments~~
160
161 ~~Other evidence suggests that the problem is worsening. The findings of the~~
162 ~~Interdenominational Hearings on Toxics and Minorities, held in September 1990, in~~
163 ~~Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the General Board of Church and Society sponsored~~
164 ~~consultation on Responding to Communities Facing Toxic Hazards held in Baton Rouge,~~
165 ~~Louisiana, in October 1990, poignantly demonstrated that communities are still having~~
166 ~~problems related to toxic contamination more than ten years after the media exposed the~~
167 ~~problems.~~

168

169 **The 2007 "Toxic Waste at Twenty" 1987 -2007 Report of the United Church of**
170 **Christ Justice and witness Ministries Conclusions – Most recent report:**
171 **"Twenty years after the release of Toxic Wastes and Race, significant racial and**
172 **socioeconomic disparities persist in the distribution of the nation's commercial**
173 **hazardous waste facilities. Although the current assessment uses newer methods**
174 **that better match where people and hazardous waste facilities are located, the**
175 **conclusions are very much the same as they were in 1987. In fact, people of color are**
176 **found to be more concentrated around hazardous waste facilities than previously**

177 **shown.**

178

179 **Race matters. People of color and persons of low socioeconomic status are still**
180 **disproportionately impacted and are particularly concentrated in neighborhoods**
181 **and communities with the greatest number of facilities. Race continues to be an**
182 **independent predictor of where hazardous wastes are located, and it is a stronger**
183 **predictor than income, education and other socioeconomic indicators. Indeed, a**
184 **watershed moment has occurred in the last decade. People of color now comprise a**
185 **majority in neighborhoods with commercial hazardous waste facilities, and much**
186 **larger (more than two-thirds) majorities can be found in neighborhoods with**
187 **clustered facilities. People of color in 2007 are more concentrated in areas with**
188 **commercial hazardous sites than in 1987. African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos and**
189 **Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders alike are disproportionately burdened by**
190 **hazardous wastes in the U.S.**

191

192 **Unequal protection places communities of color at special risk. Not only are people**
193 **of color differentially impacted by toxic wastes and contamination, they can expect**
194 **different responses from the government when it comes to remediation—as clearly**
195 **seen in the two case studies in Post-Katrina New Orleans and in Dickson County,**
196 **Tennessee. Thus, it does not appear that existing environmental, health, and civil**
197 **rights laws and local land use controls have been adequately applied or adapted to**
198 **reducing health risks or mitigating various adverse impacts to families living in or**

199 **near toxic “hot spots.”**

200

201 **The current environmental protection apparatus is “broken” and needs to be**

202 **“fixed.” The current environmental protection system fails to provide equal**

203 **protection to people of color and low-income communities. Various levels of**

204 **government have been slow to respond to environmental health threats from toxic**

205 **waste in communities of color.”**

206

207 **Despite the clear evidence and growing awareness,** Our society's attitude toward the

208 production and disposal of hazardous products remains one of "out of sight, out of mind."

209 But "out of sight, out of mind" is most often where the poor and powerless live and work.

210 These communities have thus become toxic "sacrifice zones."

211

212 The continued pattern of environmental racism represents a serious challenge to the

213 conscience of all Christians. We therefore ask our local churches, conferences, and

214 general agencies to join with other religious bodies and groups in actions to end this form

215 of racism:

216 1. We request the Council of Bishops to address environmental racism in any formal

217 communication to the denomination concerning racism or the environment.

218 2. We urge annual conferences, districts, local churches, and general agencies to become

219 more involved with community groups working **to** end environmental racism.

220 3. We urge all general program agencies and the General Commission on Religion and

Page

Resolution Number: 9

Financial Implications: None

Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries

- 221 Race to:
- 222 a. disseminate the "stories" of people and communities affected by environmental racism;
- 223 b. find expertise, build leadership, and develop networks that can help empower people
- 224 within communities in crisis; and ~~develop programs that help annual conferences,~~
- 225 ~~districts, and local churches respond to these concerns.~~
- 226 4. We call upon the General Board of Church and Society to:
- 227 ~~a. advocate a moratorium on the siting of hazardous waste treatment, storage, and~~
- 228 ~~disposal facilities in low income/ people of color communities;~~
- 229 ~~b.~~ **a.** advocate comprehensive legislation that remedies these injustices and adequately
- 230 protects all citizens and the environment;
- 231 ~~c. advocate compliance with international agreements including the Basel Convention~~
- 232 ~~and Stockholm Convention to prevent the dumping of toxic wastes in developing~~
- 233 ~~countries; and~~
- 234 ~~d.~~ **b.** develop **educational resource** programs that help annual conferences, districts, and
- 235 local churches respond to these concerns.
- 236 **c. urge industry to develop industry-wide standards for environmental accounting**
- 237 **and auditing procedures similar to those required for financial accounting.**
- 238 ~~5. We request the General Council on Ministries to assist the General Board of Church~~
- 239 ~~and Society in conducting research in this area.~~
- 240 ~~6. We call upon the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits and other church~~
- 241 ~~investors to advocate in dialogue and shareholder resolutions with corporations on~~
- 242 ~~environmental racism issues and to urge companies to adopt environmental codes of~~

Page

Resolution Number: 9

Financial Implications: None

Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries

243 ~~conduct (such as the CERES Principles and to engage in greater transparency and public~~
244 ~~reporting modeled after the Global Reporting Initiative).~~

245 ~~7. We urge individual United Methodists to:~~

246 ~~a. become aware of how and where their community's wastes are disposed and who in~~
247 ~~their community is adversely affected by the production and disposal of industrial~~
248 ~~chemicals; and~~

249 ~~b. make a personal commitment to reduce their use of hazardous chemicals by one each~~
250 ~~day;~~

251 ~~8. We call upon the U.S. federal government to:~~

252 ~~a. institute comprehensive risk assessment and health tracking studies of communities at~~
253 ~~risk and their affected populations;~~

254 ~~b. enable these communities to participate in clean-up decisions that affect them directly;~~

255 ~~c. fully fund the Office of Environmental Justice in the Environmental Protection Agency~~
256 ~~and pursue vigorous enforcement of environmental protection, civil rights and equal~~
257 ~~protection laws to end racial disparities in environmental protection;~~

258 ~~d. give these communities priority in receiving Superfund funding to clean up existing~~
259 ~~sites; and~~

260 ~~e. prohibit hazardous waste exports and imports.~~

261 ~~9. We urge industry to:~~

262 ~~a. assess the adverse impacts of their production and disposal processes on workers and~~
263 ~~surrounding communities;~~

264 ~~b. implement comprehensive Toxics Use Reduction (TUR) programs;~~

Page

Resolution Number: 9

Financial Implications: None

Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries

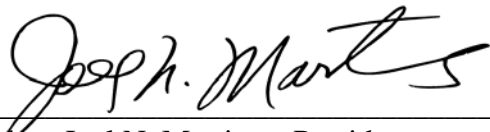
- 265 ~~e. develop nontoxic alternatives to commonly used hazardous materials;~~
266 ~~d. comply with local, state, and federal environmental and safety laws;~~
267 ~~e. respond to community concerns and grievances;~~
268 ~~f. sign comprehensive environmental guidelines developed with public input, such as the~~
269 ~~CERES (Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies) Principles; and~~
270 ~~g. develop industry wide standards for environmental accounting and auditing procedures~~
271 ~~similar to those required for financial accounting.~~

272 ADOPTED 1992, AMENDED AND READOPTED 2004

273 See **Social Principles, ¶160 2004**, Discipline; Resolution 7, "Environmental Justice for a
274 Sustainable Future"; and Resolution #161, "A Charter for Racial Justice Policies in an
275 Interdependent Global Community."

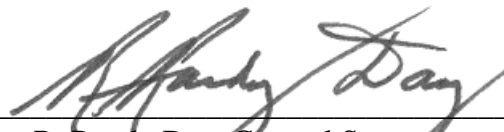
276

277



278

279 Bishop Joel N. Martinez, President
280 General Board of Global Ministries
281 475 Riverside Drive, Room 350
282 New York, NY 10115
283 (210) 408.4500
284 E-Mail: bishop@umcswtx.org
285



Rev. R. Randy Day, General Secretary
General Board of Global Ministries
475 Riverside Drive, Room 350
New York, NY 10115
(212) 870.3606
E-Mail: rday@gbgm-um.org