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Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism And The Search For Justice In A Southern Town



Synopsis

Association for Humanist Sociology 2007 Book Award co-winner Julian Steward Award 2006

Runner-Up! Over the past two decades, environmental racism has become the rallying cry for many communities as they discover the contaminations of toxic chemicals and industrial waste in their own backyards. Living next door to factories and industrial sites for years, the people in these communities often have record health problems and debilitating medical conditions. Melissa Checker tells the story of one such neighborhood, Hyde Park, in Augusta, Georgia, and the tenacious activism of its two hundred African American families. This community, at one time surrounded by nine polluting industries, is struggling to make their voices heard and their community safe again. Polluted Promises shows that even in the post-civil rights era, race and class are still key factors in determining the politics of pollution.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Polluted Promises" is exactly what Hyde Park residents received. The first inhabitants of the neighborhood saw this as a place to live the "America Dream". Sadly, that dream turned into a nightmare when the industrial neighbors moved in. As Arthur Smith stated, "Hyde Park's tracks aren't going to stop toxic chemicals. They're going to sneak up and bite you too." (189) "Polluted Promises" serves as an example of what happens when a community struggles against discrimination and oppression. Checkers was able to volunteer and work in the Hyde Park community for fourteen months. She was able to gain their trust and provide extensive knowledge of

their struggles and success as an organization and community. The residents of Hyde Park had valid reasons to suspect that the contamination in their community was based on their race. Checker's main purpose of writing this book was to explore the concept of environmental racism. Was this the cause for the contamination in Hyde Park? In the 1950's when the first residents moved into Hyde Park, it was beautiful. They viewed Hyde Park as their gateway to the all American dream. They were able to live out this dream for many years even as their unsightly neighbors moved in. To them, it was all apart of city life. However when the reports of contamination came out, people were shocked and outraged. What caused this, and why their community? This is what led them to assume that environmental racism was the cause. It could be said that this was a class issue. That may also have been a factor but it is not the main factor. The residents of Virginia subdivision, a majority white neighborhood, filed and won a lawsuit against SWP in the 1970's. Not one Hyde Park resident was asked to join even though they were only a few miles away.

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