

7th Annual Environmental Health and Justice Summit
Plastic Pollution, Human Health, and Vulnerable Populations: Uncovering Critical Issues
October 18, 2024

Featured Speakers

Nikki Baker



Nikki Baker joined the New Jersey Work Environment Council as the Healthy Schools Now Organizer in April 2022 after more than 20 years in education with the Paterson Public Schools District. She last worked at Dale Avenue Academy as a Special Education Instructional Assistant in the K-2 Autism Program. Nikki was an active member of her union and served on the Paterson Education Association (PEA) Executive Board as Education Support Professionals (ESP) Co-Chair and Passaic County Education Association (PCEA) Executive Board- ESP Chairperson and Delegate Assembly where she organized members against privatization and encouraged member engagement.

Most recently, Nikki sat on Paterson EA Professional Rights and Responsibilities and NJEA ESP Committees, Members of Color Network (MOC,) the Racial Equity Affirmation & Literacy (R.E.A.L.) Member Advisory Council, and was a PCEA Equity Seekers Co-founder. She was also a Passaic County Co-Captain for New Jersey's Education Support Professionals Action Network (ESPAN).

Nikki is an outspoken advocate for safe working and learning conditions in her former school district. Prior to her position at WEC, Nikki previously worked with WEC on a number of workshops for members on economic justice and received the WEC 2021 Adrienne Rosner-Markowitz Rising Star award.

X Braithwaite



X, the NJ Environmental Justice Organizer for Clean Water Action, is a recent graduate of Guilford College in Greensboro, NC, with degrees in Community & Justice Studies and African & African American Studies. With a strong background in community service, including their involvement as a Bonner Scholar, they have developed a deep understanding of restorative justice practices and collaborative justice campaigns. Hailing from Newark, NJ, X has a unique passion for social justice.

X has experience in social media management and enjoys engaging in creative pursuits such as writing poetry and crocheting. They are eager to make a meaningful impact in their new role, fostering inclusive communities and driving positive change.

Dr. Matt Campen



Dr. Campen is a Distinguished Professor in the University of New Mexico College of Pharmacy and co-Director of the UNM Clinical and Translational Science Center. He is broadly interested in mechanisms underlying the systemic and neurovascular impacts of environmental toxicants, including wildfire smoke, nanoplastics, metals, ozone, and e-cigarette aerosols. He currently leads the University of New Mexico Center for Metals in Biology and Medicine, which has established a new core for integrative analytical chemistry that emphasizes single cell and spatial platforms for analysis. This core has also developed innovative methods around assessing nanoplastics in clinical/pathological specimens. Dr. Campen received his PhD from the UNC School of Public Health in Environmental Science and Engineering before conducting a postdoctoral fellowship in pulmonary physiology at Johns Hopkins.

Dr. Phil Demokritou



Dr. Demokritou's fundamental research focuses on understanding how nanoparticles interact with biological and environmental systems. His pioneer research on particle health effects sheds light on how the physicochemical and morphological properties and structure of both environmental nanoparticles and engineered nanomaterials (ENMs) define their bioactivity and toxicological footprint in general and their impact on human health. Additionally, his nanoscience research goes beyond assessing the nano-bio interactions and focuses on understanding, manipulating, and applying nanoscale materials and phenomena to address major environmental and public health challenges of the 21st century in food safety and security, agrichemical delivery, airborne infectious diseases, obesity, climate change and sustainability. Dr. Demokritou is the founding Director of two interdisciplinary research Centers at Harvard University: 1) Harvard-NIEHS Nanosafety Research Center and; 2) Center for Nanotechnology and Nanotoxicology (www.hsph.harvard.edu/nano). He is also the founding Program Director of the Harvard-Nanyang Technological University/Singapore Sustainable Nanotechnology Initiative (2016-2022). He is also the founder of the Rutgers Nanoscience and Advanced Materials Research Center at Rutgers University. In the past, he served as a co-PI of the Harvard-EPA PM Health Effect Center (1999-2010, US EPA star grant) and the Director of the Harvard-Cyprus International Institute for the Environment and Public Health from 2005-2008. He served as PI, co-PI, or co-investigator on several grants funded by NIH, EPA, NIOSH, NSF, USDA/NIFA, CPSC, and EU research framework (FP7). He holds more than a dozen international/US patents and inventions and is a co-founder of DIETRICS. He is a co-author of two books, numerous book chapters, and more than

220 articles in leading journals in nanoscience, particle health effect, and aerosol engineering fields. Dr. Demokritou's innovative research was highlighted in major mainstream media and online magazines, including articles published in the Economist, NanoWerk, Chemistry world, The Scientist, ACS C&EN News, MIT News, Harvard Gazette, and NPR news. Dr. Demokritou is currently the Henry Rutgers Chair and Professor in Nanoscience and Environmental Bioengineering at Rutgers School of Public Health, Division Head at the Environmental Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI) and Vice Chair in the Department of Environmental Occupational Health and Justice at Rutgers School of Public Health. Before joining Rutgers in 2021, he was a Professor at TH Chan School of Public Health at Harvard University for 25 years. He is also a founding co-editor in chief of NanoImpact (Elsevier).

Serpil Guran



Serpil is a dedicated clean energy and environmental professional in New Jersey with more than 25 years of public service. She currently serves as the Director of Rutgers EcoComplex "Clean Energy Innovation Center."

She teaches sustainability-focused classes at Rutgers University which emphasize Environmental and Economic Sustainability along with Social Justice. Her research promotes "Circular Carbon Economy and Zero Waste" with the focus of mitigating climate change. Serpil is a chemical engineer with further degrees in Fuel and Energy Engineering. Prior to her current position at Rutgers EcoComplex, she served as Senior Research Scientist at New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. She also served as a researcher at Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department of Princeton University and also National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, CO. She has numerous publications including peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference presentations.

Oriana Holmes-Price



Oriana Holmes-Price (she/her) joined the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance as the Director of Organizing, prioritizing community engagement, public education, and statewide and national coalition management pertinent to our waste justice, energy, and ports campaigns. A New Jersey native passionate about transformative and restorative social and environmental justice, Oriana brings extensive experience from her time in corporate, nonprofit and government spaces working to advance equitable and community driven programming. Working most recently as the External Affairs Coordinator for an offshore wind developer, Oriana has sharpened her skills in strategic stakeholder engagement and public affairs, building successful statewide relationships and partnerships.

Oriana has previously served as a student activist, leading the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group (NJPIRG Students) as the State Board Chair, State Board Vice Chair, and two times as the Rutgers-Camden Chapter Chair advocating for social and environmental change. She also brings experience from her time working on a Congressional campaign and interning in the Office of New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy. Oriana obtained her B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Legal Studies and a certification in National Security as well as her M.S. in Public Affairs and Community Development from Rutgers-University Camden.

Paula Rogovin



Paula Rogovin is a resident of Teaneck, NJ, taught elementary school in New York City for 44 years before her retirement in 2018. She and her kindergarten students initiated an effort to pass a law that bans toxic pesticides in New York City parks and playgrounds (passed unanimously in 2021). She is the author of *Classroom Interviews - A World of Learning*, *The Research Workshop - Bringing the World into Your Classroom* (both Heinemann publications), and *Apartheid is Wrong, a Curriculum for Young People* (with support from the UN Centre Against Apartheid). Paula has been deeply involved in efforts to stop gas power plants and other fossil fuel projects in New Jersey. She co-founded the Coalition to Ban Unsafe Oil Trains, Don't Gas the Meadowlands, Educators Against Racism and Apartheid, and the Teaneck Peace and Justice Vigil (which marked its 1000th consecutive vigil Oct. 16).

Paula is the co-chair of Food and Water Watch, North Jersey Volunteer Team. Her arrests include actions working with others to: fight for the release of child care funds in NYC the 1970's (successful), press for an end to apartheid in South Africa in the 1980's, attempt to stop construction of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline compressor in West Milford, NJ in 2023 (on-going), and to expose Formosa Plastics harm to people and the environment by blocking entrances to Formosa Plastics headquarters in Livingston, NJ in August, 2024 (on-going).

Senator Bob Smith



Senator Smith was born in Scranton, Pa. He earned a degree in history from the University of Scranton in 1969, an M.S. in chemistry there in 1970, and an M.S. in environmental science from Rutgers University in 1973. He graduated from Seton Hall Law School in 1981 and was admitted to the bar that year. He is owner of the Piscataway law firm of Bob Smith and Associates.

Senator Smith was elected to the Senate in 2001 and re-elected five times. He served in the Assembly from 1986 to 2002. He sponsored legislation reforming the Garden State Open Space Acquisition Program to focus on

water resource protection, preservation of the Highlands, providing a continuing source of revenue for New Jersey state parks, and setting in place measures to improve water quality in the Barnegat Bay, including comprehensive fertilizer controls. He also sponsored two constitutional amendments, approved by voters, to provide stable funding for open space, farmland and historic preservation and to dedicate natural resource damage litigation awards to restore the environment.

The Senator has served on Piscataway's Environmental Commission and Planning Board. He was a councilman from 1977 to 1980, and mayor from 1981 to 1986. His wife is the former Ellen Foster. They have two children and seven grandchildren.

Dr. Phoebe Stapleton



Dr. Stapleton is an Associate Professor in the Pharmacology and Toxicology Department of the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy and a resident member of the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute at Rutgers University. Her laboratory focuses on identifying the mechanisms associated with the development of fetal growth restriction subsequent to maternal exposure to particulate matter during pregnancy. Using *in vivo* and *ex vivo* methodologies, her studies focus on evaluations of maternal, fetal, and offspring health

associated with these exposures. Recently, Dr. Stapleton's studies have included exposures to micro- and nanoplastic particles. Dr. Stapleton is highly active in the Society of Toxicology with emphasis on Nano- and Advanced Materials, Cardiovascular, Reproductive and Developmental, and Women in Toxicology. She completed her graduate work in exercise physiology with a focus on cardiovascular physiology, followed by postdoctoral training focused on inhalation toxicology, both at West Virginia University.

Gary Stevenson



Gary Stevenson is a lifelong resident of Paulsboro, New Jersey. He retired from ExxonMobil after 30 years after working as a Supervisor - Engineer Assistant. He graduated from Paulsboro High School in 1977. He earned a degree in Business from Mercer College. He has been married for 47 years to Raelynn. He has two adult children and two grandchildren who are presently attending the United States Naval Academy. He was a volunteer firefighter for 40 years, of which he served as Chief for 15 years. He is a Licensed Funeral Director in the State of New Jersey. Gary served as the Mayor of Paulsboro from 2016 – 2023 and as a Councilman from 2012- 2015. He served as Site Safety Coordinator for over 200 workers during the 2012 Train Derailment in Paulsboro.

Diane Wilson



Diane Wilson is a fourth-generation shrimper, boat captain, mother of five, author, and an environmental, peace, and social justice advocate. During the last 30 years, she has launched legislative campaigns, demonstrations, hunger strikes, sunk boats, and even climbed chemical towers in her fight to protect her Gulf Coast bay.

She is a co-founder of Code Pink, the women’s anti-war group based in Washington, DC and co-founder of the Texas Jail Project, which advocates for inmates’ rights in Texas county jails. Since 2012, Wilson has been executive director and San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper on the Texas Gulf Coast. In 2016, she and a small group of former workers and whistleblowers from Formosa Plastics started collecting plastic violations over a 20-mile area of Lavaca Bay and surrounding waterways. Within a 4-year period they have collected over 2500 samples of violations and 6000 videos and photos of plastic pollution coming from Formosa Plastic outfalls. In 2017, Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid filed a citizens Clean Water suit on behalf of Wilson and the San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper. In June 2019, a federal judge ruled on their behalf and declared Formosa a serial offender with over 1800 clean water violations. The case was settled in December 2019 with a precedent setting \$50 Million awarded towards local environmental projects. The plaintiffs received no funds. Wilson was featured in the award-winning documentary *Texas Gold*, and in *Americans Who Tell the Truth*, a portrait series by photographer Robert Shetterly. She won the Blue Planet Award in Berlin, Germany for her activist work and in March 2020 Netflix featured the SABE Waterkeeper story in *Dirty Money* series, Point Comfort.

Cindy Zipf



Cindy Zipf uses her passion for science and advocacy to create campaigns and programs to drive public policy and reduce pollution. Since its beginning in 1984, she has been at the helm of COA, the lean, green, ocean pollution fighting machine that is the only full-time ocean advocacy organization dedicated exclusively to the NY and NJ region. She reviews and evaluates regional, state, and federal policies for impacts to marine water quality and, through science, research and education, works toward solutions for issues of concern. Cindy is a graduate of the University of Rhode Island with a B.A. in Geography and Marine Affairs with a special emphasis in marine science. In 1984 the waters off the NY/NJ coasts were known as the “Ocean Dumping Capitol of the World”, and in response, the COAlition was formed and consisted of 20 organizations. As a founder and a staff of one, Cindy has expanded the coalition to over 120 organizations and a professional staff of 10 full-time employees.