

A DIFFERENT SHADE OF GREEN: DOCUMENTING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND JUSTICE

STEPHEN C. STURGEON

ABSTRACT: For the past twenty years archivists have been attempting to diversify their collections to include historically excluded groups such as minorities. The environmental justice movement, an attempt by people of color to combat toxic pollution in their neighborhoods, presents a unique opportunity for archivists to achieve this goal by documenting the efforts of these community-based coalitions. This opportunity also offers archivists a chance to reexamine the use and usefulness of “documentation strategies” for filling gaps in collections. This essay argues that instead of “documentation strategies,” the profession needs to engage in “documentation advocacy” to secure diverse collections.

One of the most significant social forces of the twentieth century has been the environmental movement. This movement, which began developing late in the nineteenth century, was led by John Muir, who preached that wilderness had a value to humans independent of the market value of its component parts. Muir, whose philosophy was an extension of Thoreau and nineteenth century romanticism, called for the permanent preservation of wilderness areas so that future generations would not be robbed of their natural legacy.¹

The environmental movement arose, in part, as a response to the development of the modern city. As more and more people became concentrated in increasingly congested and polluted cities some residents, particularly of the middle and upper classes, began to view wilderness as an escape hatch, and they assigned to nature an almost mystical value. This fixation on wilderness often puzzled the residents of these so-called “wilderness areas.” As one Eskimo remarked during the debate over the 1980 Alaskan Land Act (which led to the permanent preservation of 104 million acres in the state of Alaska), “[white people] think there’s nothing out there. They are only vaguely aware that our people are already there, using the land for hunting and fishing and trapping, as we have for 15,000 years...”²

Just as this wilderness mysticism has sometimes led environmentalists to oversimplify the wilderness reality, this same vision has caused environmental groups to sometimes ignore problems in their own backyards. While the definition of environmental-

ism did expand during the 1970s and 1980s to include such issues as pollution, population control, ozone depletion, and even nuclear disarmament, these issues reflected primarily the concerns of white, middle and upper class environmentalists.³ Largely excluded from debate and action were the emerging environmental concerns of minorities and the poor.

The first campaign for environmental civil rights occurred in 1982 when the state of North Carolina announced plans to place a dump for PCB-contaminated soil in predominantly poor and black rural Warren County. The United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, under the leadership of then deputy director Rev. Benjamin Chavis (who later served a short, controversial term as executive director of the NAACP), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized protests against the planned dump, which ended with the arrest of nearly 500 people. While the protests failed to block the construction of the PCB facility, activists did prevent the state from placing another landfill and incinerator in the county.⁴

Following up on the protests in Warren County, Representative Walter Fauntroy (D.C.) requested that the General Accounting Office investigate the racial and socioeconomic profiles of the communities surrounding the four major hazardous waste landfills in the South. The GAO report, released in 1983, showed that three out of the four landfills were located in communities that were primarily black. This despite the fact that African Americans made up only 20 percent of the region's population.⁵

In a follow-up to the GAO report, the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice in 1987 released a landmark study entitled *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, which examined the placement of hazardous waste facilities on a nationwide basis. Among the startling findings of the report were the following: Race proved to be the most significant variable in the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities. Three out of the five largest commercial hazardous waste landfills in the U.S. were located in predominantly Black or Hispanic communities. Three out of every five African Americans and Latinos lived in communities with uncontrolled toxic waste sites. In an attempt to summarize the report's findings, Rev. Chavis described the location of hazardous waste facilities as clear evidence of "environmental racism."⁶

Minority neighborhoods not only suffer from having a disproportionate number of hazardous waste facilities in their communities, they also suffer from unequal enforcement of environmental laws. The *National Law Journal* did a study four years ago which found, among other things, that "penalties against pollution law violators in minority areas are lower than those imposed for violations in largely white areas..., the government takes longer to address hazards in minority communities, and it accepts solutions less stringent than those recommended by the scientific community."⁷ The effort to secure equal pollution prevention for all has led to the development of the environmental justice movement. This movement is primarily composed of community-based, issue-oriented, people of color coalitions. Oftentimes the groups arise in response to an effort to place a hazardous waste facility in a particular community. Other times they emerge to address a community health problem.

Although most environmental justice work is occurring on a local basis, there recently have been some attempts to advance the issue to the national level. In January

of 1990, the University of Michigan sponsored a conference entitled "Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards." Twelve scholar-activists delivered papers and participated on panels with representatives from EPA and several Michigan state agencies. Many activists, however, consider the true birth of the national campaign to have been the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., in October of 1991, which drew hundreds of participants from all 50 states as well as representatives from the mainstream environmental movement.⁸

The "Big 10" environmental groups⁹ are relative latecomers to the issue of environmental racism. Many environmental justice activists claim this lack of action is due to the fact that the mainstream environmental organizations are overwhelmingly white and upper middle-class. Early in 1990, the Gulf Coast Tenant Leadership Development Project, an African American organization based in New Orleans, and the Southwest Organizing Project, a Latino organization in Albuquerque, both sent the nation's major environmental groups letters accusing them of having racist hiring practices and ignoring environmental issues of concern to minority communities.¹⁰

There is an obvious lack of diversity in the leadership of the top environmental organizations. A 1991 article in *Audubon* reviewed the statistics for various environmental groups. Only one of the Sierra Club's fifteen directors, two of the National Audubon Society's thirty-three directors, and three of the National Wildlife Federation's twenty-nine directors were members of a minority group, while none of the Wilderness Society's directors were. In addition to a greater ethnic diversity existing in the environmental justice movement, there are also more prominent women leaders than in the mainstream organizations. There are signs, however, that the major environmental organizations are slowly beginning to act on the issue of environmental racism, both inside and outside the movement.¹¹

The need for the mainstream environmental movement to accept and embrace diversity is part of a larger change that all of America's institutions are going to go through as this country moves towards a more multicultural society. This process of change has been particularly challenging for the nation's cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, and universities, as they seek to redefine their roles in this new environment. A 1993 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* examined the problems currently confronting museums. While the article's sole focus was on museums, many of the authors' arguments and criticisms are applicable to archives as well. According to the authors, the essence of the crisis is that "[a]s repositories of knowledge and forums for the expression of central values, museums have claimed to play a critical role in the transmission of culture....Increasingly, however, museums are hoist on the petard of their own boasts. Because they profess to be central cultural institutions, what they keep and what they display is increasingly subject to dispute."

The authors argue that cultural institutions can no longer claim to be neutral in the debate over cultural values. These values, which museums (and archives) help to shape, and are in turn shaped by, are reflected in the type and nature of the artifacts they collect, artifacts which are given the cultural blessing of being deemed "significant" and hence worthy of preservation. Therefore, the authors conclude, if cultural institutions are to avoid being deemed irrelevant, then they must begin to address a broader constituency.¹²

Archives in particular seem vulnerable to the charge of irrelevancy, since historically the common archival practice has been to collect the papers of the “great leaders” and governing agencies. Recognition of this bias is not a recent development, however, since archivists and historians have been warning about it for over twenty years. In a 1970 address to the Society of American Archivists, historian Howard Zinn explicitly challenged the notion that the archival profession was inherently neutral in its work.

“The archivist...tends to be scrupulous about his neutrality, and to see his job as a technical job, free from the nasty world of political interest: a job of collecting, sorting, preserving, making available, the records of the society. But I will stick by what I have said about other scholars, and argue that the archivist, in subtle ways, tends to perpetuate the political and economic status quo simply by going about his ordinary business...Our choice is not between being political or not. Our choice is to follow the politics of the going order, that is, to do our job within the priorities and directions set by the dominant forces of society, or else to promote those human values of peace, equality, and justice, which our present society denies.”¹³

Zinn warned of the dangers to the archival profession, and society as a whole, of these unstated biases: “What is the net effect of the kind of archival biases I have just described? [T]o glorify important people, powerful people, military, political, and business leaders, to keep obscure the lives of ordinary people in the society. To maintain such archival biases requires no malfeasance on the part of archivists, only passivity, only falling into the lines already set by the dominant trends of the profession.” He concluded by challenging archivists to “take the trouble to compile a whole new world of documentary material, about the lives, desires, needs, of ordinary people.”¹⁴

Archivist Gould Colman, in a 1973 essay, echoed Zinn’s concerns about the scope and nature of archival collecting policies. Colman claimed that the vast amount of government records in most archives presented a grave danger of skewing the historical record, particularly with regards to cultural matters. “Cultural aspects which don’t make records are likely to be as lost to history as is the Roanoke Island Colony. The WPA Writers Project, which recorded the reminiscences of former slaves, should be recognized for what it is, an aberration in documentation.” Colman fully appreciated the difficulty of the archivist’s task because “the archivist and manuscript curator are faced with documenting all segments of the past associated with written records in order that they meet the needs of researchers in an open-ended future.” But he felt it was vital for the profession to rise to the challenge.¹⁵

In his 1974 presidential address to the Society of American Archivists, Gerald Ham expressed his concerns about whether or not the holdings of archival repositories accurately reflected the scope of human activity. Ham not only agreed with the warnings issued by both Zinn and Colman about biased records, but was more troubled by the lack of concern expressed by fellow archivists about the problem. Far too many archivists, Ham warned, are comfortable in their role as custodians of documents. Instead, he urged archivists to become proactive in their collecting and acquisitions, particularly of those records that are most vulnerable to disappearing. “At my own institution, for instance, the collections which deal with the major 1960’s movements on the left—civil rights, student activism, and the anti-Vietnam War protest—probably

would not exist today if we had not initiated contacts before many of the organizations quietly dissolved." In order to better capture the full complexity of society, Ham called upon archivists to "become the research community's Renaissance man."¹⁶

Linda Henry, in a 1980 article, embraced the argument that Gerald Ham had made in his speech and used it as the basis for her more detailed vision of how archives should pursue a more inclusive collecting policy. Henry's credo was "research follows the records." One way, Henry suggested, to redress the omission of certain groups from the archival record is through the use of oral history. Although she acknowledged there are disadvantages to this approach (mainly cost), one key advantage is that such programs can introduce potential donors to the archives. Henry warned, though, that archivists cannot merely be collectors of papers from the past, but also must collect the present. In particular, she called for the aggressive collecting of papers from voluntary organizations, not only because they are highly vulnerable to being lost, but also because they are a "means of providing information about individual as well as collective experiences." Although the sheer bulk of organizational records can sometimes deter archivists, "few repositories would reject on the grounds of size alone the papers of a congresswoman, and the same volume of records of an organization could provide more information on the experience of a greater number of women."¹⁷

In the summer of 1985, *American Archivist* published an issue that discussed the efforts some repositories were making to establish ethnic collections. The articles discussed various collections, and examined the different strategies used to establish them. One article, using the term "documenting" to describe the process of assembling a collection, focused on the establishment of a Mexican American collection in Houston. The head of the project commented that much of the material they wanted to collect turned out to already be in the repository as part of more traditional collections. "One simply had to be imaginative in the use of already accessioned materials to realize what they had to offer relative to Houston Hispanics."¹⁸

The idea of "documenting" a topic and the use of "documentation strategies" was first explicitly set forth at the 1984 SAA meeting. One of the key participants at this meeting, Helen Samuels, later published an article discussing the theoretical aspects and objectives of documentation strategies. Samuels's argument for documentation strategies, however, represents a complete break with the more activist vision of Colman and Ham, and her article contains no references to the need to develop ethnic collections. Rather than using documentation strategies to include groups whose records have been ignored in the past, Samuels sees the purpose of documentation strategies as filling in the gaps in already existing collection categories. She even explicitly states that "[d]ocumentation strategies do not foster subject collections." For Samuels, the paramount justification for documentation strategies is that they help archives save money by promoting the coordination of collecting objectives with other archives, thus eliminating duplication.¹⁹

A year later Judith Endelman published an article reviewing the collection analysis programs that had occurred at three midwestern archives. Although Endelman cites Ham's speech several times as a motivating factor for collection analysis, and mentioned that the results of the collection surveys revealed that the three repositories (Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Bentley Library) had weak ethnic collections, she does

not identify this as a high priority gap to fill.²⁰ Endelman clearly accepts Samuels's terminology when she writes that a documentation strategy is "a methodology to systematize collecting and ensure the documentation of an on-going *issue, activity, or geographic area*" (emphasis added, note the absence of subject, group, or people). She further adds that documentation strategies should involve multi-institutional planning.²¹

In their 1987 article, Larry Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett set forth a more "nuts and bolts" interpretation of how to develop and implement a documentation strategy. Although the authors do not cite Samuels's article in the body of the paper (they do acknowledge it in the preface about the authors), it is clear from their definition of what constitutes a documentation strategy that this article is meant to be a complement (in both senses of the term) to hers. Hackman's and Warnow-Blewett's model does differ from Endelman when they write that "[a] documentation strategy is a plan to assure the adequate documentation of an ongoing *issue, activity, function, or subject* (emphasis added)," but they agree with her that "[t]he documentation strategy is carried out through the mutual efforts of many institutions...." The article does not make any reference to trying to document ethnic groups, and uses as its model the documentation strategy developed by the American Institute of Physics.²²

In comparison to the optimistic documentation strategy vision of Samuels, et al, Frank Boles takes a more pessimistic view. Boles sees documentation strategies as merely being one of several appraisal tools, the chief one being the institutional collection policy. When these two conflict, Boles argues, the institutional collection policy will always win out over documentation strategies, if for no other reason than sheer institutional inertia. Boles sees little hope for profitable coordination of collecting strategies among different repositories because there is no clear legal or fiscal incentive for archives to do so. The chief criticism that Boles has of the documentation strategy model is that it assumes an abundance of archival funding, which historically has never been the case. Although Boles challenges the specifics of Samuels's model, he does stress the importance of what he refers to as mid-level appraisal policies (his term for documentation strategies). He views them as vital because "[o]pportunities to collect or receive documents are not permanent.... Slowly the people involved move or die. Slowly the records are placed in other archival repositories or are simply lost.... The archivist's ability to return to areas of institutional interest that have been dormant for five, ten, or twenty years in an effort to stimulate new growth is always risky and often fruitless."²³

The Fall 1987 *American Archivist* was a special topical issue focusing on documenting New England. The articles this time were quite different from the ones published in the special 1985 documentation issue. Whereas the previous ones had focused on real efforts by individual institutions to develop ethnic collections, the cases presented in the 1987 issue were instead hypothetical, multi-institutional models. Eva Moseley, the special editor for the issue, states in the introduction that the essays in and of themselves are not complete documentation strategies, but instead should be viewed as the type of preliminary background reports that would be necessary to proceed with a full documentation strategy. The authors of the various essays explicitly accept Samuels's definition (perhaps not a surprise since Helen Samuels was one of the authors) of what comprises a documentation strategy.

The articles cover a wide variety of categories: Nancy Schrock discusses architecture, James O'Toole reviews religion, Helen Samuels and Philip Alexander examine the computer industry, Samuel McReynolds explores agriculture, and T.D. Bassett investigates tourism. Several of the authors (Schrock, O'Toole, and Bassett) warn about the inherent elitist bias in the materials they examined, and one article (McReynolds) has a passing reference to the need to document the contribution of women, but none of the articles contained any suggestions about how to broaden these efforts to include minorities. In fact, Eva Moseley wrote in the introduction that efforts to prepare documentation essays on such topics as immigrants, labor, families, and social protest, among others, "fell by the wayside."²⁴

The same year that the New England documentation issue was published, Gould Colman published a documentation review essay in *The Midwestern Archivist*. Colman reviewed the Cornell University Farm Family Decision Making Project, which he had been instrumental in establishing. The program began in 1965, thus predating the formal definition of "documentation strategies," as well as Colman's own 1973 call for archivists to broaden their collecting scope. The essay has a stronger similarity to the articles published in the 1985 special issue of *American Archivist* than to those published in 1987. Unlike Samuels' multi-institutional model, the Cornell Project was done solely on an in-house basis. Although Colman labels the Cornell Project a documentation strategy, the design and implementation of the program does not tend to support this claim. Rather, the Cornell Project seems to more strongly resemble a sociological exercise than an archival one.²⁵

The high water mark of documentation strategies seems to have been reached in the spring of 1989 with the publication of Richard Cox's review of the western New York documentation effort. While Cox readily admits that the "documentation strategy" concept had achieved trendy buzz word status in the archival field, he argues that the concept's popularity derived from archival uneasiness over the adequacy of traditional collecting strategies. Cox then recounts how from 1986 to 1988 he participated in an effort to develop and test a documentation strategy for a six county region in western New York, utilizing the documentation strategy model enunciated by Samuels, Hackman, and Warnow-Blewett. Unfortunately, the venture capsized and sank when it was overwhelmed by the sheer mass of archival material available in the six county area. Given that the project's goal for the region appears to have been to document "life, the universe, and everything,"²⁶ the outcome was perhaps not surprising, a critique which Richard Cox in hindsight appears to accept.²⁷

Since the publication of Cox's article in 1989, American archivists appear to have lost interest in documentation strategies (or at least the theoretical discussion thereof). In the winter of 1991, Terry Abraham publicly enunciated this change in archival attitude when he issued a death certificate for the documentation strategies concept. Abraham's essay contains a detailed survey of the literature on documentation strategies (to which this article owes a big debt of bibliographic gratitude), at the end of which the author declares that documentation strategies are: a) flawed, and b) insufficiently different from normal collection development to warrant further discussion.²⁸

Although discussion appears to have been discontinued in the United States, the debate has continued farther to the north in Canada. In the winter of 1991 Helen Samuels

published an essay in *Archivaria* that reexamined her documentation strategy model. She still maintains that the central goal of a documentation strategy is "to ensure the adequate documentation of an ongoing issue or activity or geographic area," and that it should be multi-institutional in scope, but she also discusses a single institution equivalent to the documentation strategy which she calls an "institutional functional analysis." Samuels contends that documentation strategies should not be used to create artificial collections, but rather to help document existing institutions. Although Samuels quotes from both Ham and Zinn, she ignores their warnings about the need to diversify the stacks. Instead she argues that "[I]ittle can be done...to anticipate future research trends that alter the questions asked or the use of documentation."²⁹ All it seems that archivists can do is to quietly document and wait.³⁰ In a follow-up essay published a few months later, Terry Cook argues for an even less activist approach. He praises Samuels for abandoning her previous emphasis on theme/issue collections in the documentation strategy model and for instead concentrating on records derived from the functional purpose of the creating agency.³¹

It is clear from examining the professional literature that the archival activism that promoted the development of a documentation strategy model in the first place, has long since been forgotten as the model has been refined. The very "passivity" that Howard Zinn and Gerald Ham warned the archival profession about has, at the theoretical level, occurred. Instead of blazing new ground in developing collections focused on ethnic groups and the common people (which the idea of "documenting" originally aimed to address), Helen Samuels's model seems to encourage the reinforcement of old collecting habits. Rather than filling the huge gaps in the stacks, documentation strategies merely paper over hairline cracks. Unfortunately, the full potential for the documentation approach to diversify our records base has not yet been realized.

The failure of documentation strategies to embrace diversity does not mean that archives are not trying to diversify. In fact, there does appear to be a sharp contrast between archival theory and practice when it comes to the issue of collecting ethnic materials. The existence of this gap then raises the question, does archival theory in fact mean anything? If archival theory is meaningless, and if in practice archivists are aggressively striving to achieve ethnic diversity in the historical record, then the profession would be better off to throw archival theory out. But if in fact theory does mean something, and actually influences future archival actions, then we *must* explicitly incorporate the goal of ethnic diversity at the theoretical level. To do otherwise will be to continue treating ethnic diversity as an afterthought, relegated to the realm of special collections. While it may be true that archivists cannot predict the future, they certainly can, and must, try to anticipate future research needs at both the practical and theoretical levels. The alternative is a hands-off approach by archivists, which runs the risk of turning archives into a modern version of Fibber McGee's closet.

One of the chief disadvantages with documentation strategies is the scale of their design. With the heavy emphasis placed on large, multi-institutional efforts, documentation strategies at times seem to resemble little more than archival nonaggression pacts. The fact that very few full-blown documentation strategies have been attempted, much less completed, should not come as a surprise given the large-scale

complexity and coordination involved. The recent recession hit archival institutions particularly hard, leading to a lack of time, staff, and funding to pursue documentation strategies. Yet this most recent fiscal crisis provides a clear incentive for archives to rehabilitate the documentation strategy model and start trying to broaden their base of support, for if an increasingly multicultural society begins to view archives as being largely irrelevant, then our recent fiscal crisis will become a permanent one.

A number of institutions are making the effort to diversify their holdings. One example is at the University of California at Santa Barbara, which in 1985 established the California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives as part of the university's library. The archives collects material reflecting the efforts and activities of Latinos, Native, Asian, and African Americans in the state of California. The university's librarian sees this archives as a vital addition to a research facility. "The records and personal papers that CEMA is acquiring reflect history from the point of view of the outsider looking/coming in. Although not ignored, that point of view is all too frequently downplayed in scholarship. CEMA will make it more difficult for future scholars to ignore minority points of view..."³² In other words, research will follow the records. An examination of the archives' holdings reveals a strong core of collections, with the crown jewel being the papers of the Bay Area Black Panther Party.

Yet, while UCSB is to be commended for having established this archives to preserve various ethnic collections, the fact that a prominent Bay Area collection like the Black Panther Party (as well as the papers of other San Francisco-based, ethnic organizations such as Galeria de la Raza and the Asian American Theater Company) ended up being housed outside the Bay Area suggests a missed opportunity by local archives. Archivists are going to need a little of that old-fashioned "activist" thinking if they are to prevent the further loss of their local heritage, either to outside agencies or altogether.³³

Perhaps what is needed is not a documentation strategy but a *documentation advocacy*: an active effort by archivists to recruit record collections from individuals and groups who lack the institutional connections that normally result in records being donated to archives.³⁴ The concept of documentation advocacy grows out of the reality that, for a significant portion of the population, archives simply do not exist. Large numbers of people are born, live, and die without ever knowing what an archives is or does. Because archives have no effect on their lives, it never dawns on these people that the activities they engage in, and the records they produce, are worthy of being preserved. They do not even know that some people make a living out of preserving the records of our past.

Part of this archival amnesia is cultural, and part of it is institutional. The cultural root derives from the fact that, even though the historical profession has expanded the scope of its research to include excluded groups like women and people of color, the general public still views history as being composed of battles and politicians. The popularity of the PBS Civil War series is a reflection of this mentality. Hence many "ordinary" people do not view themselves as the subjects of history. Often the closest they come to realizing their own historical legacy is to compile a family genealogy.

The institutional part of archival amnesia derives from the fact that archives are part of an institutional elite. Oftentimes archives are affiliated with larger academic and/or

cultural institutions which resemble a strange hybrid of medieval guilds and modern corporations. As is characteristic of large institutions, the main contacts these entities have is with other large establishments: the federal or state governments, other cultural institutions, national organizations, or private corporations. The administration of cultural institutions are typically composed of highly educated, well-paid people. The social and professional contacts these men and women have tends to be with similar types of people from comparable occupations. Hence it is extremely natural that the bulk of the collections housed in archives would come from these same types of institutions and people, because they already are aware of the purpose which archives serve. In these cases documentation strategies are simply playing to, and hence reinforcing, existing collection biases.

This is not to say that archivists are deliberately ignoring or excluding other groups of people, but too often they are simply following the comfortable path of least resistance. What documentation advocacy is designed to do is bridge the chasm between archives and the general public. The first thing that archivists need to do is address the mistrust that many people have of academic and cultural institutions. There are two sources of this mistrust: political and social. The political mistrust comes from those on the left who view institutions such as archives, museums, and universities with suspicion as agents of the "repressive" establishment and those on the right who often see the various branches of academia as hotbeds of radicalism. The social mistrust element comes from the fact that, to those who are on the outside, academic and cultural institutions seem like very foreign and intimidating places. The first priority of documentation advocacy must be to eliminate this mistrust.

Fortunately archivists can take advantage of two types of linkages that typically exist at most academic or cultural institutions (particularly universities). The first one is that there are usually a number of faculty members who are actively involved in, or have connections to, community movements and organizations. These people can serve as a bridge between archivists and community leaders, and help ease the perception of "outsiders" barging in to take papers away. The second linkage is through an institution's foundation or fund-raising office. Frequently, organizations which give money to cultural or academic institutions also support other groups or causes, which are often perceived as being ignored by archives.

There are a wide variety of "community issues" and associations which documentation advocacy could be used to target for collection, among them AIDS related efforts, homeless projects, neighborhood coalitions, and local cultural groups.³⁵ The goal of documentation advocacy is to channel collections into archives which would otherwise be missed, and to build bridges with groups of people who exist outside the normal archival domain. One way for archivists to begin building bridges with local people of color would be to document the efforts of the community-based, environmental justice organizations discussed earlier in this essay. Just as this movement challenges the mainstream environmental movement to diversify, so too it challenges archivists to expand the scope of their efforts. An added bonus to acquiring such collections is that they fit a variety of subject categories: local, political, and environmental, as well as racial, and are a logical counterpart to existing corporate archives.³⁶ What follows is

not an attempt to provide a full blown, multi-institutional documentation strategy, but is rather a preliminary example of documentation advocacy for the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Bay Area has its share of environmental racism. In 1989 the organization Citizens for a Better Environment released a report entitled *Richmond at Risk*, which documented the environmental ills in that local community. The city has more than 350 industrial facilities and 210 toxic substances are routinely released into the air or water, or are stored in local industrial facilities as solid wastes. Over half of Richmond's neighborhoods are black and it is in these neighborhoods "where the highest concentration of petrochemical facilities are also located."³⁷ In response to findings such as these, numerous environmental justice groups have arisen to combat problems—not just in Richmond, but throughout the Bay Area. Among the groups are People United for a Better Oakland, Environmentalists Against Racism, West (Contra Costa) County Toxic Coalition, Asian-Pacific Islanders Environmental Network, Coalition for Better Parks and Recreation in Chinatown, Three Circles, and the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning in San Francisco.

One such group is the Clean Air Alternative Coalition, which was formed in March 1993 to block the construction of the new Cypress freeway through the Phoenix and South Phoenix communities in Oakland, where the population is 75% African American. Coalition president Chappell Hayes thinks the placement of the new freeway was deliberate. "Caltrans [the California Department of Transportation] is expert at finding the path of least resistance." That "path" typically being through poor, minority neighborhoods. "They take our land and our health, and leave us with nothing." Hayes cites the presence of a sewage treatment plant and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) tracks in these two neighborhoods as further evidence of environmental racism. By way of comparison, Hayes notes the careful planning that is going into the building of the new Embarcadero freeway in San Francisco. "There's no lack of creativity when they're in an affluent area. But when you come into West Oakland, they're in a big hurry." The coalition, in conjunction with the Church of the Living God Tabernacle, has filed a lawsuit to block the project on the grounds that under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no federal money (in this instance federal highway funds) can be used in a project if its impact would be discriminatory.³⁸

In response to these new activist organizations, the Regional Oral History Office at UC Berkeley is establishing a project to document the environmental justice movement in the Bay Area. The following are excerpts from the program description: "The project will utilize both professional and student interviews and will explore national issues, with a focus on their manifestation in the San Francisco Bay Area....The project will begin with an in-depth oral history...with Benjamin Chavis....The Chavis interview will provide a model for and help to define the issues to be explored in a series of 10 to 15 oral histories with Bay Area activists who are engaged in a wide range of environmental justice concerns. Interviewees will be chosen primarily from local grassroots organizations from the minority communities of the Bay Area. Also included will be 2 or 3 activists from traditional environmental groups who have made significant contributions to issues of environmental justice. These interviews...will be conducted by UC Berkeley students chosen primarily from the departments of con-

servation of natural resources, sociology, ethnic studies, peace and conflict studies, and history. [T]his project will serve a broader social and educational mission. It will introduce college students of color to environmental issues in general and to the study of racial and socio-economic patterns associated with environmental pollution. It will provide students in the Department of Conservation of Natural Resources, many of them future resource managers or soon-to-be employees of major environmental organizations, with direct experience with representatives of communities of color who are fighting environmental racism."³⁹

The Bancroft Library is a logical partner for this project. Collecting the papers of the local environmental justice movements would be a clear asset for the library, since not only would these papers help diversify the holdings of the Bancroft, but they would also compliment the library's large Sierra Club collection. Involvement in this project can also serve as a means to establish a working relationship with various local ethnic communities, which in turn might facilitate future donations of other collections.

This effort to document the Bay Area environmental justice movement utilizes the "proactive" approach that Gerald Ham advocated in his 1974 speech, and also incorporates Linda Henry's 1980 suggestion to use oral history as an introduction for the general public to archives. This type of project represents the essence of what documentation advocacy should be. But the more important lesson to be drawn from this example is a recognition of how large, complex, and potentially important the environmental justice movement appears to be. Regardless of the method used, this movement needs to be captured in the historical record.

Projects such as this one represent an approach that archives can, and must, embrace if they are to fully serve our diverse society. Archival institutions need to begin systematically collecting the papers of those groups left out of America's historical legacy. They also need to engage in documentation advocacy to insure that these excluded groups will view archives as being relevant to their lives. Filling historical gaps should be the central goal of all archival endeavors because, as Gerald Ham stated in his 1974 speech, "if we are not helping people understand the world they live in, and if this is not what archives is all about, then I do not know what it is we are doing that is all that important."⁴⁰

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Stephen C. Sturgeon received a B.A. in history from Grinnell College, and an M.A. in American history from the University of Colorado at Boulder. He also holds an M.L.I.S. degree with an archival administration concentration from the University of California at Berkeley, where he worked at the Bancroft Library. He is currently finishing his doctorate at the University of Colorado at Boulder, specializing in Western American and environmental history. His dissertation is entitled "God's Dams: Wayne Aspinall and the Politics of Western Water." The author would like to thank Ann Lage for her help on this project, and Bonnie Hardwick, Doug Holtzman, and Mary Jo Pugh for their comments on earlier portions and drafts of this article.

NOTES

1. For a more detailed-examination of the political and philosophical origins of the environmental movement see Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).
2. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 277.
3. Fox, *American Conservation Movement*, chapters 9, 10.
4. Buyand Bryant and Paul Mohai, eds, *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), 12.
5. US. General Accounting Office, *Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983).
6. United Church of Christ, Commission for Racial Justice, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* (Public Data Access, Inc, 1987), xiii–xiv.
7. Marianne Lavelle and Marcia Coyle, “A Special Investigation: Unequal Protection; The Racial Divide in Environmental Law,” *National Law Journal* 15 (September 21, 1992): S1.
8. Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai, “The Michigan Conference: A Turning Point,” *EPA Journal* 18 (March/April 1992): 9; Lavelle and Coyle, “When Movements Coalesce,” S10.
9. The members of the “Big 10” are the Izaak Walton League, the National Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, the National Wildlife Federation, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Friends of the Earth, and the National Parks and Conservation Association.
10. “A Place at the Table,” *Sierra* (May/June 1993): 54; Claudia Maclachlan, “Tension Underlies Rapport With Grassroots Groups: The Big 10: A Wake-Up Call,” *National Law Journal* 15 (September 21, 1992): S10.
11. John H Adams, “The Mainstream Environmental Movement: Predominately White Memberships Are Not Defensible,” *EPA Journal* 18 (March/April 1992): 25; Joyce A. Baugh, “African Americans and the Environment: A Review Essay,” *Policy Studies Journal* 19 (Spring 1991): 183; Peter Steinhart, “What Can We Do About Environmental Racism?” *Audubon* (May 1991): 20.
12. Ivan Kelp and Steven D Lavine, “Museums Must Take On New Roles in This Multicultural Society,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 14, 1993): B3.
13. Howard Zinn, “Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest,” *Midwestern Archivist* 2:2 (1977): 20
14. Zinn, “Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest, 25.
15. Gould P Colman, “The Forum: Communication From Members,” *American Archivist* 36 (July 1973): 485, 486.
16. F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 10, 13. The two speeches by Zinn and Ham, as well as the essay by Colman, all now over twenty years old, are remarkable for their foresight and relevance to the challenges confronting archivists today. Ham’s speech in particular is regularly quoted, though the honor seems too often to be limited to quoting his vision rather than implementing it.
17. Linda J Henry, “Collecting Policies of Special-Subject Repositories,” *American Archivist* 43 (Winter 1980): 62.
18. R. Joseph Anderson, “Managing Change and Chance: Collecting Policies in Social History Archives”; John J. Grabowski, “Fragments or Components: Theme Collections in a Local Setting”; Thomas H. Kreneck, “Documenting a Mexican American Community: The Houston Example,” 274; all in *American Archivist* 48 (Summer 1985).
19. Helen Willa Samuels, “Who Controls the Past,” *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 117.
20. A follow-up article does state that the Bentley Library, as a result of this collection analysis, has since targeted the records of Detroit’s African American churches as an acquisition priority Christine Weideman, “A New Map for Field Work: Impact of Collections Analysis on the Bentley Historical Library,” *American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991): 58.
21. Judith E Endelman, “Looking Backward to Plan for the Future: Collection Analysis for Manuscript Repositories,” *American Archivist* 50 (Summer 1987): 351.
22. Larry J Hackman and Joan Warnow–Blewett, “The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study,” *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 14.

23. Frank Boles, "Mix Two Parts Interest to One Part Information and Appraise Until Done: Understanding Contemporary Record Selection Processes," *American Archivist* 50 (Summer 1987): 363.
24. Eva Moseley, "Introduction,": 469; Nancy Carlson Schrock, "Images of New England: Documenting the Built Environment,": 488; James O'Toole, "Things of the Spirit: Documenting Religion in New England,": 510; Philip Alexander and Helen W Samuels, "The Roots of 128: A Hypothetical Documentation Strategy"; Samuel A. McReynolds, "Rural Life in New England,": 546; T.D. Seymour Bassett, "Documenting Recreation and Tourism in New England,": 568; all in *American Archivist* 50 (Fall 1987).
25. Gould P Colman, "Documenting Agriculture and Rural Life," *Midwestern Archivist* 12:1 (1987).
26. Apologies to Douglas Adams.
27. Richard J Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist* 52 (Spring 1989).
28. Terry Abraham, "Collection Policy or Documentation Strategy: Theory and Practice," *American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991).
29. Helen W Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 126, 127, 133.
30. While Samuels would undoubtedly disagree with my analysis of her argument, it is nonetheless a logical conclusion based on this essay While some archivists claim that it is impossible to anticipate future research interests and needs (or that it is not worth the bother to try), others argue that a more aggressive approach is vital to keeping archives relevant in a changing society. For a critique of the passive approach and a history of the activist approach, see Roy C. Schaeffer, "Transcendent Concepts: Power, Appraisal, and the Archivist as 'Social Outcast'," *American Archivist* 55 (Fall 1992).
31. Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992).
32. Connie V Dowell, "Collecting Primary Materials of Major Ethnic Groups," *College and Research Library News* (March 1992): 159.
33. This is not to say that Bay Area archives have failed to make any effort in this area The Bancroft Library, for instance, has the papers of local black activist Eldridge Cleaver.
34. Several months after first using the phrase "documentation advocacy," I read a speech by Martin Melosi in which he discusses the concept of advocacy with regards to environmental and public historians Melosi clearly is uncomfortable with the idea of advocacy, yet he calls for historians to "preach the gospel" to the public, a distinction that eludes this author. See Martin V. Melosi, "Public History and the Environment," *Public Historian* 15 (Fall 1993). In a subsequent speech, Melosi expressed stronger, though qualified, support for the goals of the environmental justice movement and the attempts by historians to examine the movement. See Melosi, "Equity, Eco-Racism, and Environmental History," *Environmental History Review* 19 (Fall 1995).
35. An extremely challenging, and potentially controversial, group to target for collection would be the "patriot" organizations which have gained national attention recently Clearly this movement will be the focus of historical inquiry in the future, yet these groups will definitely not be documented through the normal archival channels.
36. I am not the only one to see a larger value in preserving environmental records, and the necessity of pursuing a more aggressive and expansive approach to collection development After writing an earlier version of this article, I read Candace Loewen's "Human Neglect" essay. Whereas I view the collecting of environmental justice records as an opportunity to diversify the stacks, Loewen argues that the preservation of environmental records is vital to saving our planet. See Candace Loewen, "From Human Neglect to Planetary Survival: New Approaches to the Appraisal of Environmental Records," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92). A useful overview of the current state of environmental documentation is provided in James Corsaro's unpublished essay "Forever Wild: Documenting Environmentalism." Corsaro's essay reveals that environmental groups typically welcome the possibility of donating their records to an archival repository, and puts the onus on archives for having failed to approach these groups.
37. Jane Kay, "Toxic Racism," *San Francisco Examiner* (April 9, 1991): A-8; Dick Russell, "Environmental Racism," *Amicus Journal* (Spring 1989): 25
38. Bill O'Brien, "New Cypress Freeway Hit by Novel Civil Rights Suit," *East Bay Express* 15 (March 12, 1993): 3.
39. Recent budget cuts at the University of California at Berkeley have, unfortunately, led to a delay in the implementation of this project.
40. Ham, "The Archival Edge," 13.