

# Environmental JUSTICE VOICE



MID-YEAR MAGAZINE  
JULY 2025

## Rooted in Hope, Rising in Power

Championing  
communities from  
the fencelines to  
the frontlines.

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Program](#)

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Engagement](#)

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**“This program  
completely  
changed my life!”**

**CLASS OF 2025 GRADUATE**

## **LOOKING FOR A LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE?**

DSCEJ has been helping the residents in Greater New Orleans obtain gainful employment since 1994 through this FREE program.

### **Environmental Career Worker Training Program**

#### **WE PROVIDE:**

- Six weeks of basic skills training including job readiness and life skills training
- Tailored wrap-around services plus mental health support with our on-staff counselor
- Six weeks of technical training with certification
- Quality hands-on instruction in fields such as hazardous waste remediation, disaster response, OSHA, construction and weatherization to name a few.
- Job placement upon completion of training

**Applications for the Class of 2026 open later this year. To learn more or express interest now, click the button on your right. Feel free to share with anyone who might benefit!**



**COMPLETE INTEREST FORM**



National Institute of  
Environmental Health Sciences



# COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

In **January**, Dr. Beverly Wright had the honor of speaking and participating in multiple panel discussions at the **American Meteorological Society's 105th Annual Meeting** in New Orleans, LA.

Addressing the pressing challenges of climate change, Dr. Wright emphasized the critical need for communities to raise awareness about the disproportionate impact these issues have on vulnerable populations. She further highlighted the enduring consequences of climate events, such as Hurricane Katrina, which have exacerbated the wealth gap between racial groups.



ENERGY &  
HOUSING  
JUSTICE



## Power to the People Coalition Empowers Communities to Advocate for Climate-Ready Housing

In 2024, DSCEJ activated the **Power to the People Coalition** (funded in part by the [David and Lucile Packard Foundation](#), [Erol Foundation](#), and the [United States Energy Foundation](#)) to build communities' capacity and understanding of transmission planning, renewable energy options, and climate ready housing. To do this, the coalition conducted educational workshops and training sessions for **community-based organizations (CBOs)**. By focusing these topics, the coalition aims to **empower communities to develop projects that address their specific needs and to pursue funding opportunities that will bring these projects to life.**

The Coalition partners with [Alliance for Affordable Energy](#) & [HousingLOUISIANA](#) to conduct educational workshops and support the development of community engagement strategies with coordinated programming around **climate ready housing, renewable energy, and transmission system planning**. It also assists CBOs in advocating for **sustainable funding for energy efficiency, clean-distributed energy, and fortified homes.**



**Logan Burke**  
Executive Director  
Alliance for Affordable Energy



**Andreanecia Morris**  
Executive Director  
HousingLOUISIANA

## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

DSCEJ Energy & Housing Justice work continued>>

Continuing efforts that began in 2024, this spring, DSCEJ held two workshops for CBO leaders - **Staying Power: Generating Resilient Communities Workshop I** on **March 5, 2025** in **New Orleans** and a second **Virtual Workshop** on **April 21, 2025**.

Participants discussed **preparing homes for extreme weather** by improving home energy efficiency, weatherization, and home fortification. They learned how improving homes in this way can increase community resilience to extreme weather and can potentially reduce home insurance premiums across an entire state. Participants also learned about **renewable energy opportunities, transmission planning implications, and the who, how, and where to advocate for community needs related to housing and energy issues.**



**Our Staying Power: Generating Resilient Communities workshops impacted approximately 40 CBOS representing Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Michigan, Mississippi, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.** These workshops have led to the development of advocacy tools that prioritize communities' needs and connect them directly to the benefits that emerge from community-directed initiatives. These tools include policy guides, educational materials, and advocacy training, all tailored to address pressing housing and energy challenges. **The series will continue this fall with a workshop to develop community action plans and roadmaps for energy and housing initiatives.**

## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### DSCEJ Energy Justice work continued>>

On **July 15**, members of DSCEJ staff attended the **Light is Your Right Energy Independence: Hurricane Prep Workshop** hosted by the [Institute of Utopian Hospitality](#) in **New Orleans**. The purpose of the event was to share insights on building energy resilience in your home. Topics discussed included using renewable power to ensure lights and critical items, like medical devices, stay on during times of emergency, as well as how our communities can build a more reliable, equitable grid for everyone.

The **Light is Your Right** campaign is the brainchild of the [Energy Future New Orleans Coalition \(EFNO\)](#), an organization committed to **community-centered energy justice**. The campaign's mission is to raise awareness, educate, and empower the community to call on local leaders to recognize **utility access as a human right**, and **to adopt policies that protect New Orleans' most vulnerable residents**.

**DSCEJ has been an active member of this coalition since its inception in 2016.** Over the spring and summer of 2025, DSCEJ supported several Light is Your Right community meetings and events. We are excited to continue collaborating with this community-centered energy justice coalition.



### GRANT MAKING

## Building CBO Capacity to Address Critical Environmental Issues in the Gulf South

Launched in October 2024, the [Louisiana Gulf Coast Grantmaking Project \(LGCGP\)](#) is dedicated to empowering environmental justice (EJ) community-based organizations (CBOs) across the Gulf South region.



Louisiana Gulf Coast  
Grantmaking Project  
(LGCGP)



DEEPSOUTH  
CENTER FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The DSCEJ will provide **\$1.82M in grant funding to approximately 24 selected EJ-missioned CBOs through a competitive grant application process.** With awards ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000, the grants will assist CBOs to address critical issues such as **water quality, pollution, watershed protection, and climate change mitigation.**

To date, **31 CBOs have obtained technical assistance**, which includes expert-led information sessions, live trainings and one-on-one support with our independent partners. Notably, **over 40 hours of sessions have been completed**, indicating a high demand for assistance.

As the July 31st LGCGP grant application deadline approaches, DSCEJ continues to encourage our partner CBOs to fully utilize the resources and support provided through this program to submit their applications. **Applications will be reviewed in August and award notifications will go out to selected grantees in September.**



## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS



### DSCEJ and EDF Host AirPen Training Workshop to Empower Communities

DSCEJ, in partnership with the [Environmental Defense Fund \(EDF\)](#), hosted an **AirPen Training workshop on March 22, 2025**. Funded by an EDF [Wellcome Trust](#) grant, the event focused on educating community members about the health impacts of air pollution and training them how to use the **AirPen device, a state-of-the-art tool designed to help communities better prepare for and respond to the health impacts of storms and air pollution**. The AirPen collects air quality data which can be used to identify and assess various hazardous chemicals and pollutants in the air. It is an essential tool that will enable communities to take proactive measures to mitigate the impact of air pollution and advocate for cleaner and safer environments.



Community members received hands-on training with the Airpen instrument.



Grace Lewis from the EDF team presented on the different types of air pollution and their effects on health.

Participants were also given detailed instruction on how to operate the AirPen device, change sample tubes, and start and stop sampling, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to monitor air quality effectively. **Teaching community members about air pollution and its health impacts is crucial, as exposure to pollutants can lead to respiratory diseases, heart conditions, and other serious health issues.** By educating residents about environmental hazards and Airpen instrument training, DSCEJ is empowering communities to take an active role in improving their living conditions and advocating for environmental justice.

## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### Airpen Training Workshop continued>>

The following DSCEJ team members were present at the AirPen Training: **Mary Williams, Ragan Collins, Javonda Nix, Simone English, Gerald Jones, and Kennedy Boyd.** Grace Lewis, Stephanie Coates, Daniel Peters, and Alex Adame represented the EDF Team. Emilio Molina Rueda was there on behalf of Colorado State University.

## EPA Air Monitoring Project in St. John the Baptist Parish

Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, DSCEJ is building capacity of local partners [The Descendants Project](#) and [Concerned Citizens of St. John](#) in St. John the Baptist Parish to **monitor the air quality, engage with stakeholders, and become more active and effective in outreach and community engagement.** Our objective is to **provide continuous air quality monitoring sensors that detect PM2.5 and Total Volatile Organic Carbons (TVOCs)**, the pollutants of concern identified by the community as hazardous and threatening to their health. Data for the targeted pollutants will be assessed via a secure online portal. Our work aims to improve the health of the people and communities where this project is being implemented.

## DSCEJ and EDF Host Community Disaster Preparedness & Response Workshop



In **June**, DSCEJ hosted an in-person Community Disaster Preparedness & Response Workshop for five Community-Based Organizations and their members participating in the **EDF Disaster Response Project**. Community Health Center representatives were also in attendance.

Led by our very own **Kim Dunn** and **Bruce McClue**, the workshop aimed to increase health and safety awareness along the Gulf Coast — helping communities better prepare for hurricanes, flooding, and other disasters.





## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS



On **June 17 -18**, Dr. Beverly Wright and members of our team attended the **Speak-Easy, Speak-Free People's Hearing in Greensboro, NC**, a **two-day event to capture the public expression of testimonies, solutions and culture**. The Hearing convened representatives of communities from NC and surrounding regions to testify to the threats to our health, land and work. The two day dialogue on groundwork for policies and movements that will secure a cleaner, healthier, and economically and culturally vibrant future was a great success!

On **June 21st**, DSCEJ participated in the vibrant and informative **Community Health Fair** held in **St. Rose, Louisiana**, and hosted by the community-based organization **Refined Community Empowerment**. This event provided vital health information and resources to local residents, while also raising awareness about ongoing environmental injustices. Community members were informed about the long-standing pollution and permit violations by industrial emitter International-Matex Tank Terminals (IMTT), as well as the emerging threat posed by St. Charles Clean Fuels—a company planning to build a new ammonia production facility in St. Rose. Despite branding their efforts as part of a “clean energy” initiative, the proposed project risks further endangering the health of this already overburdened community while benefiting from public tax credits.



**Kimbrelle Kyereh**, Founder and Executive Director of **Refined Community Empowerment**, ensured that attendees were equipped with the tools and information necessary to protect their health, report noxious odors in the area, and advocate to decision-makers about the harmful impacts of industrial activity in their neighborhoods. DSCEJ Staff member **Windy Beck** represented us at this event.



## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS



Dr. Beverly Wright delivers opening remarks at the Environmental Justice Leadership Forum convening in New Orleans.

On **June 25**, DSCEJ was represented at the **Environmental Justice Leadership Forum** convening in New Orleans.

With over **40 organizations across 22 states coming together to protect and advance environmental justice and strengthen grassroots power**, the forum included sessions on working with the media, using data for storytelling, organizing your organization and much more.

Environmental justice leaders **Dr. Beverly Wright**, **WE ACT** cofounders **Peggy Shepard** and **Vernice Miller-Travis**, **Dr. Robert Bullard** of the **Bullard Center for Environmental & Climate Justice** at Texas Southern University, and **Charles Lee**, visiting scholar at **Howard University School of Law** spoke and provided wisdom, humor, and guidance for attendees. Learn more at <https://ejforum.org/take-action/>

### WATER JUSTICE

## Water Justice Training Institute Convenes Gulf South Community Leaders



On **June 17-18**, DSCEJ held a **Water Justice Convening** in **New Orleans** where community leaders from across the Gulf South who are driving **solutions to the interconnected issues of flooding and water contamination** were in attendance. The convening created space for us to honor the immeasurable value of water and celebrate dedicated community leaders who have honed advocacy skills through previous years in the our **Water Justice Training Institute** funded in part by the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#).

## COMMUNITY & PARTNER ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### Water Justice Convening continued >>>



Throughout our two days together, community leaders connected around shared experiences and exchanged strategies for addressing local and regional water challenges. In partnership with the [Claiborne Corridor Cultural Innovation District](#) and [New Corp, Inc](#), we co-hosted tours of community-led green stormwater infrastructure projects making a positive impact in the Seventh Ward of New Orleans.



**Dr. David Padgett** of Tennessee State University demonstrated **how communities can document and map flooding hotspots** and community assets in need of protection, an important tactic that can be used to spread awareness and advocate for investment.

We closed the convening with discussions around **how to stand strong and continue coordinated water and climate policy advocacy**. It is a clear fact that water-related challenges driven by climate change will continue to impact communities across the globe. **DSCEJ is committed to supporting communities as they rise to the challenge.**



On **July 8-11**, members of DSCEJ staff participated in the **One Water Summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, hosted by the [U.S. Water Alliance](#). This event gathered community-based water advocates, water practitioners, utilities, and decision-makers to discuss timely water challenges and solutions. **Dr. Beverly Wright** spoke on the panel ***From SCOTUS to States and Tribes: Water and Environmental Law at a Crossroads***, detailing the impacts of a turbulent water governance landscape on community-driven environmental justice efforts.



# WORKER TRAINING PROGRAM NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS



## Celebrating Over 30 Years of Building Brighter Futures!

We were thrilled to celebrate the graduation of 27 amazing students from our Spring 2025 [Environmental Career Worker Training Program \(ECWTP\)](#) in **New Orleans!** On Saturday, **April 12th**, we honored our program graduates who are now prepared to make an impactful difference on their families and in their communities.

Since 1994, our program has been equipping people with the skills they need for successful environmental careers. We focus on training those who haven't always had access to these opportunities. **Our graduates earn valuable certifications in areas such as construction, weatherization, hazardous waste removal, and mold remediation, as well as important safety credentials.**



ECWTP Program Manager, Iriane McCray and Assistant Director of Training, Rachel Lewis pose with one of our graduates.



Over 12 weeks, our **expert instructors and trainers** provided **hands-on learning and support**. We covered everything from **technical skills to job readiness and personal development**. The program also offered **counseling and social services** to help students reach their goals. The best part – we assist our graduates in finding jobs! **With a 98% placement rate and average starting pay of \$17-20 per hour, our program opens doors to a brighter future.**

**We're proud to help build a skilled workforce and support communities that have been disproportionately impacted by environmental issues.**

[\*\*VIEW THE 2025 GRADUATION PHOTO GALLERY\*\*](#)

## Featured Worker Training Program Partner

The [RISE \(Resistance Involvement Solidarity Empowerment\) Collective](#) builds an empowered community of families and loved ones impacted by incarceration. RISE guides them in their fight for freedom through holistic and collaborative re-entry services, legal strategies, and community resources. RISE Collective believes that when given the necessary tools and resources, those most directly impacted by the criminal punishment system are best positioned to create a new community-centered model of accountability. Their approach is rooted in holistic, collaborative, asset-driven and regenerative struggles.

RISE Collective holds a bi-weekly community circle every other Sunday, at the John Thompson Legacy Center located at 1212 St. Bernard Ave. New Orleans, LA, located in the 7th Ward, 5pm-7pm.



We are very excited to spotlight Ms. **Nziki Wiltz**, one of the co-founders of this organization. She is also a member of the Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP) advisory board. Nziki is a native New Orleanian, mother, educator, and community advocate. Nziki taught in the New Orleans Public School System for over 25 years.

Her own personal experience of fighting the criminal justice system led her to community organizations that were invested in fighting for the rights of directly impacted people and their families. Nziki was successful in winning her own legal battle and this experience changed the trajectory of her life forever. Nziki fights zealously to get men and women out of prisons across Louisiana.



## Ready to Change Your Life?

If you are interested in learning more about our Worker Training Program, please fill out our interest form, or share it with someone who might benefit from being a part of this program.

[FILL OUT OUR INTEREST FORM](#)



## HBCU Environmental & Climate Justice Corps

### HBCU Interns Advancing CBO Advocacy through Research and Training

We are pleased to introduce you our DSCEJ 2025 **HBCU Environmental Justice and Climate Corps Interns**. These talented students are **helping to build the capacity of DSCEJ CBO partners throughout the Gulf Coast Region** spanning **Pensacola, FL, Mobile, AL, Columbus, MS, New Orleans, LA, and Baton Rouge**.

*The ever-increasing severe weather events as a direct result of climate change has increased the need to support the survival of disproportionately vulnerable communities.*

Due to the legacy of systemic racism, **these communities are located in highly polluted areas that are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of severe weather events.**

These injustices are compounded by poverty and the lack of services and equal protection by regulatory agencies from pollution and government policies. **Our partner communities are where our HBCU students live and study.**



The **HBCU ECJC internship is providing students with financial support while they gain experiential learning** through research and advocacy work with our partner communities. **Students visit the communities in person to see firsthand what the people are experiencing.** They learn about the CBO's history, discuss how to address priority concerns and develop and strategize implementing a **research-to-action plan** with the CBO and other community leaders.



## 2025 HBCU Environmental Justice and Climate Corps Interns



### ARLENCIA BARNES

Jackson State University  
MAJOR: Environmental Science PhD Candidate

Arlencia is working with the **Memphis Community Action Group (CAG)** our CBO partner located in **Columbus, MS**.



### PARIS BRYE

Alabama A&M University  
MAJOR: Physical Therapy

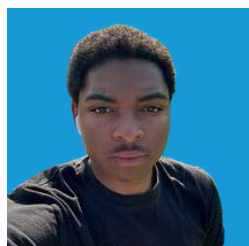
Paris is working with **Unity in the Family Ministry**, our partner CBO located in **Pensacola, FL**.



### MARCUS ENGLISH

Bishop State Community College  
MAJOR: General Studies

Marcus is interning with **Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe, and Sustainable (CHESS)**, our CBO partner located in **Africatown, AL**.



### MICHAEL MUSE

Xavier University of Louisiana  
MAJOR: Political Science

Michael is working with **Sankofa Community Development Corporation (CDC)**, our CBO partner located in the **Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans**.



### KAILYNN WILLIAMS

Southern University A&M  
MAJOR: Urban Forestry, Environment & Resources, Master of Science

Kailynn is interning with **Alsen/St. Irma Lee Community Village**, our CBO partner in **Alsen, LA**.

**All interns will present their research and internship experiences at the 11th Annual HBCU Climate Change Conference to be held in New Orleans, LA in 2026. Dates and details will be announced soon, so please stay tuned!**



## Louisiana HBCU students harness the power of social media to drive change for healthy and sustainable communities

In the fall of 2024 and spring of 2025, nine HBCU students from Louisiana took part in a transformative **Energy Justice Media Internship** focused on advocacy in **Cancer Alley**.

The interns worked to elevate the voices of **five frontline communities across Louisiana that face harmful air quality, industrial pollution, and other environmental threats**.

Through **hands-on training**, the students learned to harness the power of social media to drive change and promote healthier, more sustainable communities in Cancer Alley.



Our partner community organizations included [Concerned Citizens of St. John](#), [Eastern New Orleans Neighborhood Advisory Commission \(ENONAC\)](#), [Zion Travelers Cooperative Center](#), and the [Tchou Tchouma Tchoupitoulas Nation](#). DSCEJ and [Leona's Kings and Queens](#) hosted a culminating luncheon to celebrate the interns and presented them with certificates of completion. The internship was made possible through funding from [Bloomberg Beyond Petrochemicals](#).



On **June 17-19**, DSCEJ staff attended the **2025 Kresge Grantmakers in Health Conference**. Our partner CBO, [Sankofa](#) gave a **Driving Health Equity in the Lower 9th Ward tour**. This event was organized to address all aspects of health disparities in the community, brainstorm innovative solutions and to better understand the importance of community and HBCU partnership. We're so grateful to [The Kresge Foundation](#), [Sankofa](#), [Xavier University](#) and the **HBCU Environmental Corps Summer Internship students** for their participation and work during this outstanding community event.

## Interns Share Community Documentaries at 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Climate Change Conference

The **DSCEJ Digital Storytellers** internship program, funded by the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Gulf Region Program](#), allows **high school students** representing five states in the Gulf Coast region to **take on the roles of climate journalists**.



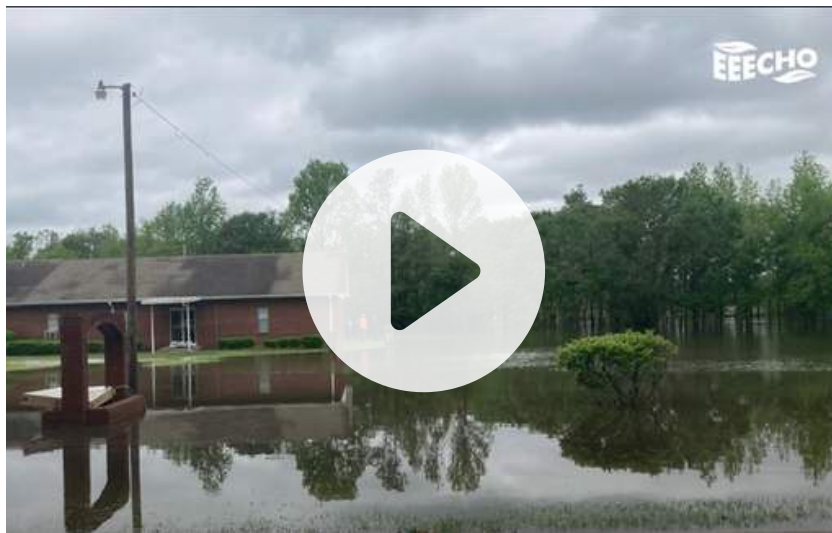
During their internship, **students** partner with regional experts in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, and Medicine (STEMM) and environmental and climate justice organizations to **chronicle stories of vulnerable communities adversely affected by climate change and environmental hazards**.

On Saturday, **March 8**, three of our interns served on a panel at the **HBCU 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Climate Change Conference** in New Orleans. The panel, ***Students Advocating for Communities: Our Stories, Our Strength***, allowed students to share how the experiential learning and knowledge gained through their internship helped expand awareness and build the capacity of Gulf Coast community organizations through research, education, training and storytelling. **The students also showed their short-form documentaries to the audience of over 400 attendees.**



### PRESENTING INTERNS

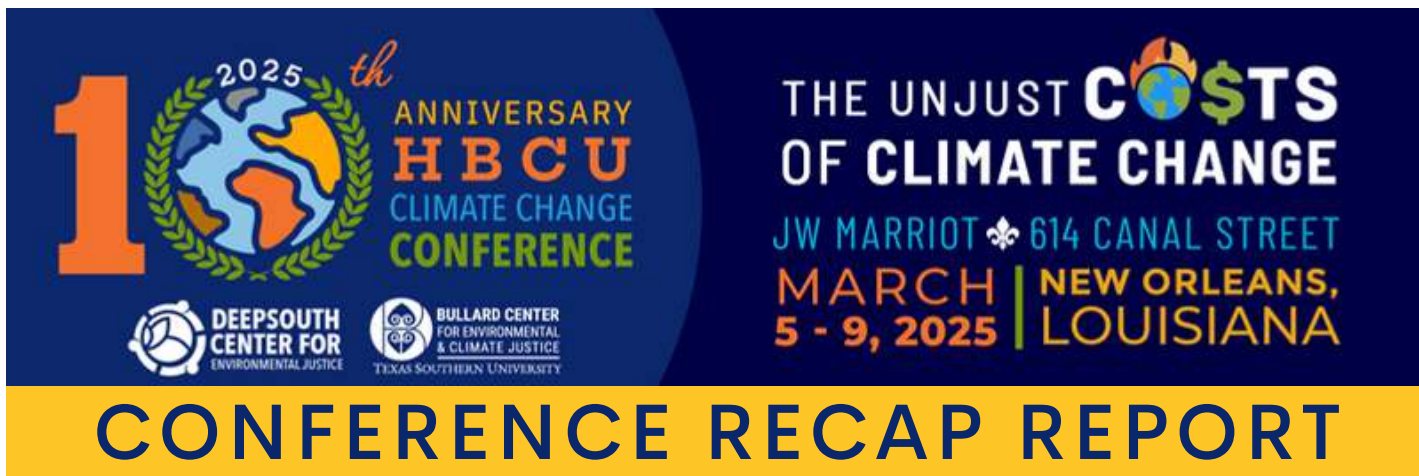
- Christina Smokes - Gulfport High School, *Breaking Point: The Fight Against Environmental Injustice*
- Victoria Cager - Villanova University, *Chasing Earth*
- Jeff Dacosta Osei -Southern University, *Assessing Environmental Risks and Resilience in Alsen/St. Irma Lee Community*



**Breaking Point: The Fight Against Environmental Injustice** (Click to watch on YouTube)

[Visit our website to view all of our student documentaries.](#)





The Annual HBCU Student Climate Change Conference is designed to **educate students, empower communities and build the capacity of HBCUs to work in and with their communities.**

[Dr. Beverly Wright](#), founder and executive director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) and [Dr. Robert D. Bullard](#), founder and executive director of the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University co-convened the 10th Anniversary HBCU Climate Change Conference in New Orleans, March 5 – 9, 2025.



This year's conference theme was, ***"The Unjust Costs of Climate Change."*** Nearly five hundred students, faculty, faith leaders, researchers, community leaders, environmental justice leaders gathered in New Orleans to participate in discussions on building fair and solutions to the climate crisis facing frontline communities.

**481**  
ATTENDEES



**25**  
COLLEGES



**25**  
SESSIONS



**46**  
POSTER PRESENTERS



## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS



The conference kicked off with a **free Community Forum: *Environmental Justice Pioneers and Torchbearers: Passing the Torch to Elevate the Voices of Emerging EJ Leaders***. As we celebrated ten years of training the next generation of environmental and climate justice leaders, our keynote speaker, [Dr. Ben Chavis](#) reflected on the history of the environmental justice movement and its impact on amplifying voices in vulnerable communities. There was a passing of the torch ceremony celebrating seven dynamic environmental justice pioneers: **Dr. Beverly Wright**, **Dr. Robert Bullard**, [Peggy M. Shepard](#), Co-founder & Executive Director of We ACT for Environmental Justice, [Vernice Miller-Travis](#), Executive Vic-President, Metropolitan Group, [Dr. Paul Mohai](#), Professor, University of Michigan School of Environmental Sustainability, and [Dr. David Padgett](#), Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Tennessee State University.

### OUR TORCHBEARERS:

- **Dr. Dominic J. Bednar**, Assistant Professor, University of California, Irvine,
- **Dr. Michelle Divil**, Research Scientist, Adjunct Professor, Howard University
- **Simone English**, Program Manager for Community Resilience & Stakeholder Engagement, DSCEJ
- **Olivia Lopez**, Program Manager, Multi-state Water Justice and Climate Policy Project, DSCEJ
- **Dr. Alexandria McBride**, Senior Program Officer, Waverley Street Foundation
- **Dr. Regan Patterson**, Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, UCLA
- **Dr. Joy Semien**, Founder & CEO, LEED with Joy
- **Dr. Stephen Pinkney**, Postdoctoral Scholar, Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice



The **impactful work of emerging environmental justice leaders was acknowledged by the EJ Pioneers** who then ceremoniously “passed the torch” to the next generation of **Torchbearers** in a **medallion ceremony**. The community forum delved into the EJ movement's roots, spotlighted the trailblazers who have championed sustainability and community voices, and provided a platform for emerging leaders to share their vision for the future. Poet, **Sunni Patterson**, delivered an inspirational poetic summary of the Torchbearers Ceremony.



## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### BOOK SIGNING

Participants gathered during a book signing and reception, meeting authors, **Dr. Ben Chavis**, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: Overcoming the 500-year Legacy*, **Dr. Beverly Wright** and **Dr. Robert Bullard**, *The Wrong Complexion for Protection: How the Government Response to Disaster Endangers African American Communities*.



### EXPERT PANELS

The conference featured a number of **nationally known authors, researchers, practitioners and iconic figures in the environmental justice, weather and climate arena**, including Dr. Robert D. Bullard, "Father of Environmental Justice," Dr. Beverly Wright, DSCEJ founder and Heinz Award recipient, [Dr. J. Marshall Shephard](#), Georgia Athletic Association Distinguished Professor, University of Georgia, [Alan Sealls](#), President-elect, American Meteorological Society, [Paul Goodloe](#), Meteorologist, The Weather Channel, [Congressman Troy Carter](#), Louisiana 2nd Congressional District, [Dr. Mithika Mwenda](#), Executive Director of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), [Rev. Lennox Yearwood, Jr.](#), President, Hip Hop Caucus, and [Dr. Calvin Mackie](#), Founder of STEM NOLA.



Expert sessions included topics on ***Navigating Equitable Climate Disaster Solutions, Using Environmental Data to Drive Community Advocacy & Solutions, Climate Change: Where Are We Now and Where do we Go From Here?*** Conference attendees participated in engaging conversations about innovations, data-driven solutions and the collective action needed to address the climate crisis.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### STUDENT PANELS

Taking on the challenge of this volatile climate crisis, **students are developing innovative research and advocating for policy reform.** They understand that climate justice means more than reducing emissions; it means protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring that solutions consider the wishes of the communities they impact.

We welcomed student presenters from 25 colleges and universities throughout the nation. There were **seven excellent student panels** with topics such as *Multiscale Analysis of the Impact of Green Infrastructure and Green Buildings on Urban Heat and Stormwater Management*, *A Clothing Crisis: The Impact of Textile Waste on the Environment*, and *The Impact of Climate Change on Chronic Diseases in Black Communities*.



### POSTER SESSIONS

During the poster session, **student researchers presented their posters to conference attendees and anonymous judges, explaining their research findings and answering questions.** Their presentations were scored and **winning posters were awarded trophies, certificates and cash prizes.**

There were **46 dynamic college student poster presentations** and **12 high school poster presentations.** Our young scholars are bridging the gap between environmental science, social justice, and grassroots advocacy. **Many of these students come from frontline communities**—those most affected by climate change—and bring lived experience to the forefront of the climate conversation.





## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION PANELS

There were two CBO panels representing **six community based organizations** including, **Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe & Sustainable (CHESS)**, **Memphis Town, CAG**, **Concerned Citizens of St. John**, **Coalition of Community Organizations (COCO)**, **Sankofa CDC**, and the **Descendants Project**. These sessions addressed the power of collaborative partnership in strengthening community resilience.



### INTERNATIONAL PANEL

The **Global Dimensions of Climate Change Panel** discussed the [Nairobi Summer School on Climate Justice](#) strategic intervention plan to incubate a new generation of activists well equipped to broaden the discourse on climate justice.

The panel included moderator **Abby Haile**, Senior Project Manager, DSCEJ, **Nia Jones**, President and CEO, [The Energy Queen](#), **Zandisile Howe**, Founder & Director of [EcoHarmony Eswatini](#), and **Dr. Mithika Mwenda**, Executive Director of [Pan African Climate Justice Alliance \(PACJA\)](#).



“

### ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

**“This convening was the best yet - they become better each year. The 2025 conference had an electric energy that reflected the confluence of intense EJ work, a heightened awareness about the threats to justice across the nation, a celebration of cultural contributions, and how these elements strengthen and advance our ongoing struggle for fairness, justice, and equity.”**

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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### STUDENT POSTER COMPETITION WINNERS

#### GRADUATE GRAND PRIZE WINNER



**Oluchukwu Obinegbo**, Stanford University  
*Advancing Justice: New Frontiers for Energy  
Equity Metrics in Sub-Saharan Africa*

#### UNDERGRADUATE FIRST PLACE



**Khalil Johnson**, Morehouse College  
*Atlanta's Growing Invasive Plant Population's  
Impact on the Soil Health and Microbiome*

#### UNDERGRADUATE SECOND PLACE



**Mariya Ronczyk**, Paul Quinn College  
*Broken System, Broken Spirits: How Systemic Racism  
Fuels Demotivation and Environmental Injustice*

#### UNDERGRADUATE THIRD PLACE



**Selena McCrear**, Florida Agricultural and  
Mechanical University  
*Campus Sustainability: A Call to Action*



### ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

"All the students were highly brilliant and their presentations were excellent. It was very refreshing to see the younger generation so committed and activated. The conscious level of the Black community needing to "build our own" was prevalent and distinct. The agenda was packed and very informational."





## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### GENERATION NEXT HIGH SCHOOL POSTER SESSION WINNERS



**Alongkorn Lafargue**, Ben Franklin High School  
*Pure Flow*



**Anala Beevers**, Patrick F. Taylor Science and  
Technology Academy  
*Mold Un-Mask*



**Brooklyn Clinton**, Warren Easton Charter High School  
*The Road to Resilience*



### GENNEXT: CLIMATE JUSTICE SEEKERS WORKSHOP

With the **goal of introducing students to climate science and EJ advocacy**, **35 students ranging from grades 3 through 12** participated in the **GenNext Climate Justice Seekers Workshop**, on Saturday, March 8th.

The GenNext Sessions were coordinated by two HBCU graduates **Dr. Joy Semien**, founder of LEED with Joy and **Simone English**, Program Manager for Community Resilience and Stakeholder Engagement at DSCEJ.



## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### GENNEXT: CLIMATE JUSTICE SEEKERS WORKSHOP CONTINUED

The GenNext students were from **17 Gulf Coast middle and high schools located in New Orleans, LA, Phoenix, LA, Gulfport, MS, and Pensacola, FL**. These talented students represented interns from the **DSCEJ Environmental and Climate Justice Storytellers internship, Unity in the Family Ministry, EJ Yes Summer Camp, STEM NOLA**, and school partners with the **Crescent City Chapter of Links Inc.**, our **sponsor** of the GenNext Workshop.



There were two concurrent morning sessions that focused on ***the Unjust Costs of Air Pollution***. The Lab #1 *Globe Up in the Air Particulate Matter*, a learning activity led by **Dr. David Padgett** (Tennessee State University) assisted participants in collecting pertinent GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) data, including air temperature and surface temperature, latitude/longitude, land cover, wind speed, and qualitative site characteristics data, utilizing the Xavier University's air quality sensor network, the Purple Air Sensor network map, and the Clarity Air Sensor network map.

**Lab #2 Urban Heat Island Activity: Surface Temperature**, was led by **Dr. Morrell Gasseler** (Xavier University of Louisiana). Students collected surface temperature, latitude/longitude, and other qualitative site characteristics. After gathering data, they returned to the GenNext "EnvironLab" for a presentation on urban air quality and health, focusing on the criteria of air pollutants and the urban heat island effect (UHIE). College student assistants pitched in by entering the collected data into the GLOBE Data Visualization System. Climate Justice Seekers engaged in a group discussion and data analysis, including conversations on the unjust costs of air pollution.



DSCEJ Technical Trainers, **Kim Dunn** and **Bruce McClue** facilitated the "Unjust Costs of Disaster Recovery" session, providing their expertise regarding *"The Costs of Climate Change on Disaster Response & PPE Needs"*, while **EJ Mascot Al the Bear** illustrated the undesired chaos of climate calamities.





## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

### GENNEXT: CLIMATE JUSTICE SEEKERS WORKSHOP CONTINUED



**Dr. Joy Semien** and **Simone English** facilitated the EnvironLab with the Climate Justice Seekers to explore the game of **Environopoly**. The jumbo-sized game brought the real-world challenges of climate change to life through strategies, teamwork, and fun. Climate Justice Seekers bought and sold properties, prepared for disasters, and made smart decisions to protect their communities. They learned hard lessons from bankers, those charged with providing resources, accessibility issues while they faced floods, heatwaves, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. Some Climate Justice Seekers invested in long-term resilience, although upfront costs may have been high, while others risked losing everything when disaster struck due to lack of preparedness and, most importantly, lack of funds and the associated high costs during and after disasters.

**Our students are leading resilience initiatives and research in their communities and on their college campuses by driving bold, creative, and urgent solutions with a vision of a more just and livable climate for all.**

### DAMU SMITH POWER OF ONE AWARD

Damu Smith was one of the world's preeminent civil rights activists and the voice of a thriving local environmental justice movement. The Power of One Award was instituted in memory of Mr. Smith and his most vital work and contributions to Environmental Justice activism and environmental health science related to communities disproportionately affected by pollution.

The 2025 Damu Smith, Power of One Award was presented to **Dr. Femi Adesanya**, a seasoned chemical engineer with over 38 years in environmental monitoring, pollution prevention and education, specializing in air monitoring and water resource management.



### DAMU SMITH LEGACY AWARD

Mrs. **Croscina Crockett** spent 24 ½ years of her career as an educator and researcher with Xavier University of Louisiana and is a former Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Clinical Laboratory Science. Mrs. Crockett began her work as an environmental justice consultant for the DSCEJ in 1995. As a dedicated researcher, she contributed to research on environmental and health disparities, assisted with grant writing, and developed curricula for community workshops.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The HBCU Climate Change Consortium would like to thank all of the sponsors and volunteers for their generous support of this event.

## FUNDERS



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## FRIEND OF THE CONFERENCE



## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTERS

Black in Marine Science (BIMS)  
Black Sustainability  
LEED with Joy LLC  
STEM NOLA

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## ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

“HBCUs and EJ communities have super powers to accelerate climate solutions!”

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In the midst of a myriad of difficult conversations, heartbreaking firsthand accounts of communities in peril and research and data that often painted a bleak future for our planet, a collective spirit of resilience, perseverance and **JOY** prevailed amongst our attendees.





# OUR JOY IS OUR STRENGTH!





# YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BREATHE CLEAN AIR AND DRINK CLEAN WATER.



## Help Us Build a Future Where Everyone Breathes Freely.

Communities on the frontlines of pollution and environmental injustice are often the least heard, but are the most affected. At DSCEJ, we fight for environmental justice by partnering with local leaders and community stakeholders, challenging harmful policies, and ensuring **every person, regardless of race, income, or ZIP code, has the right to clean air, safe water, and a healthy future.**

Your support powers this work. Support DSCEJ and you'll help us push back against polluters, amplify community voices, and create lasting change where it's needed most.

**Stand with us. We thank you for your commitment to environmental justice.**



**MAKE A DONATION**

9801 Lake Forest Blvd | New Orleans, LA 70127 | 504-272-0956 | [dscej.org](https://dscej.org)