

Dumping in Black areas politically expedient

By Jimmie Briggs
Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW YORK - (NNPA News Service) The Hunts Point neighborhood in the Bronx, N.Y., is as notorious for its exhaust-filled air and industrial pollution from power plants and incinerators, as it is for being the locale in the HBO television series, "Hookers at the Point." The residents are predominantly Black and Latino, many of whom have children battling environmentally-related asthma.

"You have these politically expedient places to dump, places that wealthy people avoid," observes Majora Carter, a Hunts Point resident and founder of a community-based organization, Sustainable South Bronx. "It's a policy that no one talks about."

Recently, the Associated Press wire service released the results of a national investigative study echoing what activists such as Carter and others have been saying for years, that Black Americans are overwhelmingly more likely to live in areas with high air pollution, twice

more than their White counterparts, in 19 states. Published on December 13, the study was based on a scoring system that measures air pollution and health effects by the Environmental Protection Agency and the demographic patterns from the 2000 national census. Seen in light of other reports done on the local level, a picture of an environmental crisis for marginalized, poor Blacks emerges.

"The [AP] study comes at a critical time in our movement," explains Robert Bullard, founder of the 12-year-old Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark-Atlanta University and the author of books on the environment such as "Dumping Dixie" and "Politics of Pollution."

"It makes a lot of sense to have a well-respected, White news organization basically saying the same things [as I] and a number of other researchers have been saying the last two decades," he continues. "The [A.P.] study only looked at air pollution but if you overlay hazards such

lead poisoning and dangerous utilities, you get this piling on effect. The EPA has done a lousy job in terms of enforcing air quality standards."

Numerous Black areas across the country are enduring the poisonous legacies of environmental pollution in their communities. According to state agencies in Louisiana, New Orleans faced the cleanup of 22 million tons of trash after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Combined with the floating sewage and human waste, the city's residents are facing what researchers such as Robert Bullard and others are widely describing as a "toxic stew," hazardous the health of returning residents.

Other communities not affected by Hurricane Katrina are also facing challenges. A study done by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health last June revealed that in Maryland, the higher the poverty and Black population in a community, the greater the risk of cancer attributable to air pollution.

Citizens in Mossville, La., went so far as to file a human rights petition with the Washington-based Organization of American States in Washington, D.C., in March for the government's authorization of hazardous industrial sites

near predominantly non-White communities such as Mossville.

"There's been tremendous progress on air pollution," argues Granta Nakayama, EPA assistant administrator. "The number of air pollutants has

dropped by 54 percent since 1970. We're trying to make the air cleaner for everybody, it doesn't matter what community you live in."

The same year the Environmental Justice Resource (See Dump, Page 12)

AIDS study finds sporadic medication not as effective

WASHINGTON (AP) - HIV patients shouldn't be taking breaks in their drug treatment. That's the message from U.S. researchers who halted a major international study that found on-again, off-again medication far riskier than using high-powered AIDS drugs all the time.

Patients who took their medicine only when their immune systems waned were more than twice as likely to get sicker or die as people who took the drugs every day. So concluded a routine safety analysis of the study, which had enrolled more than 5,000 HIV patients in 33 countries when the National Institutes of Health abruptly halted it.

The finding is a blow to AIDS advocates who had hoped that drug-conserving therapy would reduce side effects — and save money on the expensive medications, particularly in the world's poorest countries, where AIDS is skyrocketing.

"All around, it's disappointing news," said Jose Zuniga, president of the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care.

He cautioned that the idea of drug-conserving therapy shouldn't be shelved permanently: It might work one day, when there are newer, even more potent anti-HIV medicines to choose from.

"It should signal us to invest even more in developing the next generation of anti-retroviral drugs that may make this a possibility," Zuniga said.

Combinations of potent anti-HIV drugs help patients live longer, and slow their progression from HIV infection to full-blown AIDS. But the combinations can cause serious side effects; it's inconvenient to take numerous pills a day, and the drugs are expensive.

While treatment guidelines back continuous therapy, earlier small studies had suggested it might be possible to take medication breaks and still control the virus while reducing side effects and cutting costs. So

the NIH funded a bigger study — one of the largest ever done with HIV therapies — to see if those early results were real.

Called the SMART trial, for Strategies for Management of Anti-Retroviral Therapy, volunteers were randomly assigned to take their medicine continuously or only when key immune cells called CD4s dropped to a certain level.

Not only did that strategy not control the HIV virus, but there actually was an increase in side effects affecting the heart, kidney and liver in patients taking the drugs only episodically, NIH said.

The side-effect increase was counterintuitive, and researchers so far can't explain it, said Dr. Sandra Lehrman of NIH's AIDS division.

NIH officials last week notified doctors participating in the study to begin contacting their patients about the results, and to recommend full-time dosing for everyone who had taken intermittent therapy.

For such a large international study to so quickly find an answer — the first patients were enrolled in 2002 — is important, Lehrman stressed.

"This large international study showed the benefit of the viral suppression strategy," she said. The main message for HIV patients is if you're taking the drug cocktails, "it does not appear prudent to get off them."

Beyond the question of treatment breaks, the study also gathered a multitude of data on such questions as risk factors for side effects and HIV progression, information to be unveiled in upcoming medical journals and meetings.

Study sites included the United States and Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, and Uruguay.

Study: Blacks more likely to develop lung cancers

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Blacks who smoke up to a pack a day are far more likely than Whites who smoke similar amounts to develop lung cancer, suggesting genes may help explain the racial differences long seen in the disease, researchers say.

The largest study ever done on the subject also found that Hispanic and Asian smokers were less likely than Black smokers to develop the disease — at least up to a point. The racial differences disappeared among heavy smokers, or those who puffed more than a pack and a half per day.

Doctors have long known that Blacks are substantially more likely than Whites to develop lung cancer and more likely to die from it. But the reasons for the disparity are unclear.

Some say the difference is a matter of genetics, while others contend smoking habits may play a role. For example, researchers say Blacks tend to puff more deeply than Whites, which may expose them to more carcinogens. Smoking rates are also slightly higher

among Blacks, but Whites tend to smoke more cigarettes a day.

In the latest study — published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine — researchers compared the lung cancer risk among ethnic groups who smoked the same amount.

While the study did not address the possible reasons for the racial disparity, lead researcher Christopher Haiman, an assistant professor of preventive medicine at the University of Southern California, said the findings suggest genes may be one of the factors that explain the phenomenon.

The study involved more than 180,000 people, more than half of them minorities. Patients filled out questionnaires about their smoking habits, diet and other personal information.

Researchers from USC and University of Hawaii analyzed lung cancer cases over an eight-year period. After adjusting for diet, education and other factors, the researchers found that Whites who smoked up to a pack a day had a 43 percent to 55 percent lower risk of

lung cancer than Blacks who smoked the same amount. Hispanics and Japanese-Americans were 60 percent to 80 percent less likely than Blacks to develop the disease.

The study found no difference in lung cancer risk among the various ethnic groups for those who smoked more than three packs a day.

Black, Hispanic and Japanese-American men who never smoked had higher risks of lung cancer than White men, but hardly any difference was seen in women in the same ethnic groups.

According to the American Lung Association, Black men are 50 percent more likely to develop lung cancer and 36 percent more likely to die from the disease than White men.

Previous studies have suggested that Black smokers tend to absorb more nicotine and tobacco carcinogens than Whites, geneticist Neil Risch of the University of California, San Francisco noted in an accompanying editorial.

The effect of race on the (See Cancer, Page 14)



Teaching the Art of Beauty

- Pre-Registering for 2006 Classes
- Bi-Lingual (Spanish) Courses
- Excellent Placement Record - 92% Success Rate
- Financial Aid Available for Those Who Qualify
- Prepare for the Nevada State Exam

902 W. Owens | Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-636-8686 | www.expertisebeauty.com

“After graduating from the Expertise Cosmetology Institute, I immediately landed the perfect opportunity at Hot Headz Salon... Money's great and my schedule is MY SCHEDULE. Thanks, Expertise”

— Ms. Kris, Las Vegas Class of 2002