

# WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



*In A WE ACT Minute*

*May 18, 2007*

## Executive Director Peggy M. Shepard Speaks Online



On April 26<sup>th</sup>, Peggy Shepard was part of the U.S. EPA seminar *Protecting Children from Environmental Health Risks in the Next Decade*. Broadcast live on EPA's website, the seminar featured Ms. Shepard alongside:

- William H. Sanders III, Acting Director, U.S. EPA Office of Children's Health Protection and Environmental Education;
- Howard Frumkin, Director, National Center for Environmental Health/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, CDC;
- Carol M. Browner, Principal, The Albright Group LLC;
- Edward B. Clark, Chair, Department of Pediatrics, University of Utah; and
- Susan West Marmagas, Member, Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee.

**Continued below.**

## On Earth Day, Mayor Announces Completion of PLANYC 2030 – A Sustainability Plan for NY

On April 22, 2007, at the American Museum of Natural History, Mayor Bloomberg unveiled [PLANYC](#): A Greener, Greater New York. Many months in the making, the 25-year plan sets out bold goals for the sustainable growth of New York City – specifically addressing aging housing, transportation alternatives, green space, air quality and reducing energy consumption. During his speech, the Mayor acknowledged the importance of environmental justice and equity – a first for any Mayor of New York. WE ACT applauds Elizabeth Yeampierre of UPROSE and Eddie Bautista of City Legislative Affairs (among others) for their dedication to keeping environmental justice concerns on the table throughout the planning process.

Of course, a far-reaching plan like PLANYC doesn't come without its challenges. For instance, WE ACT is keeping an eye on new school construction across the City to prevent schools from being built on polluted sites – a trend growing nationwide. As Environmental Health Coordinator Kizzy Charles-Guzman stated in a recent [Metro article](#), "We shouldn't have to trade off the health of kids and teachers in order to get an adequate school."



**Harlem Waterfront Park –  
Community Driven Development**

To address implementation of PLANYC, WE ACT is on the steering committee of a new citywide coalition called the **Campaign for New York's Future**. Made up of civic, business, environmental, labor and community organizations, the coalition will support PLANYC's implementation in New York neighborhoods during and beyond the current Mayoral administration. As a member of the coalition, WE ACT will continue to work to make sure that the plan for New York City is sustainable for all New Yorkers, no matter where they live.

Read the complete April 22, 2007 report *PLANYC: A Greener, Greater New York* [here](#).

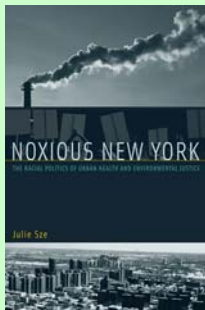
## 2007 Earth Day Event Draws Celebratory Crowd

Learn more about protecting children's environmental health by watching a video of the seminar [here](#).

Ms. Shepard also acted as one of seven advisors for the recent special on ABC News' 20/20 program – Planet Earth 2007. Catch her speaking about Americans' readiness to take steps to fight climate change in [Earth Day – The Will to Change](#).

### *Julie Sze's Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*

In her new book, Julie Sze – a former WE ACT staff member – examines the culture, politics and history of the environmental justice movement in New York City. Her book clearly describes the historical linkages between institutionalized racism, city planning and environmental health impacts.



Discussing community activism in the 1980s and 1990s, Dr. Sze looks at EJ campaigns organized in Williamsburg, Sunset Park, the South Bronx and **West Harlem**.

**Continued below.**



WE ACT would like to thank everyone who made our Earth Day celebration a major success this year. More than 200 friends and supporters joined us on April 19th for **Developing Sustainable Urban Communities: An Earth Day Celebration in Harlem**. Guests listened to the James Pryor Jazz Trio while enjoying food and drink prepared by the catering team at International House on Riverside

Drive in Northern Manhattan. After our guests arrived and settled in, New York's Lieutenant Governor David Paterson kicked off the evening's festivities, which honored this year's WE ACT for Environmental Justice Award winners and wrapped up with a fast-paced live auction emceed by our own Director of Programs Cecil Corbin-Mark.

We're already looking forward to next year's event – WE ACT will be celebrating its 20th anniversary!



Want to see more photos from the event? [Click here](#).

## WE ACT Implements School Bus Cabin Air Quality Demonstration Project

Thanks to funding from NYS Senator José M. Serrano and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, WE ACT will be retrofitting two school buses to measure how emission control devices improve cabin air quality for bus drivers and school children in New York City. While previous studies demonstrate the negative health impact of diesel emissions on bus drivers and children, most studies have been conducted in suburban neighborhoods that are not threatened by the high level of ambient air pollution already present in urban communities of color.

On average, across the U.S. school children spend 1.5 hours on school buses daily during the week. Sitting on a school bus, a child is exposed to four times more diesel exhaust than if he or she had been standing outside the bus. And the cumulative impact of breathing in diesel fumes adds up – diesel exhaust has been linked to triggering asthma and causing cancer (among other health problems).

She traces the growth of community struggles from fighting to close specific polluting facilities, to engaging in community-based planning to improve current and future land use.

Dr. Sze is Assistant Professor of American Studies and Director of the Environmental Justice Project at the John Muir Institute for the Environment at University of California Davis. *Noxious New York* is available through [MIT Press](#).

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During our study, WE ACT will retrofit the two school buses with tailpipe emission controls – a Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF), and a Spiracle Crankcase Filter (which prevents diesel exhaust from entering the bus cabin). This combination offers the most effective retrofit solution for reducing indoor and outdoor toxics, including an 85% - 90% tailpipe emissions reduction, and a 100% indoor emissions reduction. We will test cabin air quality before and after installation of the DPF and crankcase filter controls and analyze our findings alongside other air quality data from Northern Manhattan.

Currently, the NYC Department of Environmental Protection is implementing NYC Local Law 42, which requires that school buses must be retrofitted with the best available retrofit technology. WE ACT hopes that our school bus study will help demonstrate that this technology should include both a DPF and a crankcase filter for every school bus.



### **WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

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