

*Audio Podcast about the Symposium on the Science of Disproportionate Environmental Health Impacts*

CHRISTINE GUITAR: First with us is Roger Kim. Hi Roger.

ROGER KIM: Hi.

CHRISTINE GUITAR: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

ROGER KIM: Sure. I'm the Executive Director of the Asian-Pacific Environmental Network. We're a grass-roots environmental justice organization. We organize in the low-income Asian immigrant and refugee community in Oakland and in Richmond.

CHRISTINE GUITAR: Great. And now you were discussing the paper on proximity. Can you tell us a little bit about what this means for your organization and the communities you represent?

ROGER KIM: What the paper confirms is what our community members have known for a long time. Living in neighborhoods where we have oil refineries—we've got truck routes that go right through the neighborhoods, we've got so many different kinds of facilities that spew out toxics into the community. Our folks go outside, they breathe it in, they see the plumes coming out of the refinery, and they feel the health effects. What the report tells us, basically what it does, is it confirms what a lot of folks already know on the ground—that where you live is a big determinant what your health is going to be. And unfortunately in the United States where you live in terms of how close you live to a polluting facility is really determined by what your race is and unfortunately in the United States that's gotten worse over time as well. We're seeing that more and more people of color are ending up near polluting facilities and we need to do something to stop that.

CHRISTINE GUITAR: And what would you have environmental decision-makers or other organizations do with this information?

ROGER KIM: OK, there are a couple of things we need to do. First we need to continue to empower and educate communities that are on the front lines of this assault on our bodies and on our health. That means making sure that information is getting out to these communities and also that our communities are well-organized and not only participating in decision making but really actively informing those decisions and having an impact on how the decisions are made and on EPA and any other agency that is involved in these kinds of processes.

Second, I think that also what we need to do is make sure we're making better decisions about where facilities are located. That means getting facilities that are already near schools, hospitals, and other people that are sensitive to pollution—getting those facilities out and also making sure we're not putting any more pollution into the neighborhoods that are already overly impacted by toxics and by pollution. That means putting a moratorium on certain neighborhoods that already have way too much poison in their community. It means making sure that we're not locating things next to schools, for example. We've got a refinery in our neighborhood in Richmond that's just right across the street from an elementary school and that's just unacceptable.

CHRISTINE GUITAR: Thank you very much, Roger.

ROGER KIM: You're welcome.