

# From the Director's Desk

By Juliet Ellis, Executive Director



In 2006, *Race, Poverty & the Environment* co-published a special issue of the journal entitled “Getting Ready for Change: Green Economics and Climate Justice” with the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. People like Van Jones and Majora Carter had just begun to talk of “green jobs” and to develop an inspiring vision of the green economy as a vehicle for achieving greater social equity.

Since then, many organizations have formed to advance this work. Legislation has passed at all levels, such as the federal Green Jobs Act, California’s landmark climate change bills (AB32 and SB375), and green building ordinances in local jurisdictions all over the country.

The current climate change landscape strongly resembles the state of transportation advocacy when I joined Urban Habitat in 2001. I remember being surprised then by the absence of organizations that represented those most impacted by poor transit policy and funding decisions—low-income communities and the transit dependent. Urban Habitat developed its transportation justice project to address this lack.

Our commitment to movement building grounded that work, as it does our current climate change strategy. At the state level, we will be coordinating with our allies throughout California to create a network of organizations working on climate justice. We aim to bring together organizations focused on ensuring that green jobs are available and accessible to low-income residents and communities of color; groups concerned about the environmental health implications of the growing solar industry; and those, like Urban Habitat, who are trying to influence the implementation of legislation such as AB32 and SB375. This network will provide a forum for like-minded organizations to share information and strategies, and the opportunity to exercise political and policy-making power without having to be experts in all areas.

At the regional and local levels, Urban Habitat will also focus on implementation of SB375. We are studying the equity implications of elements of the legislation such as CEQA reform and pricing mechanisms. Utilizing our education and training program,

we will develop learning opportunities that can help low-income communities of color engage effectively.

## Urban Habitat Turns Twenty

In developing strategy for climate change work, Urban Habitat has two decades of experience in land-use, transportation, and planning to draw on. This year marks the organization’s twentieth anniversary, and we have a lot to be proud of. As one of the few social and environmental justice organizations working on a regional scale, we have been able to take on some of the larger decision-makers that perpetuate systemic and institutional racism. In this fight, our journal, *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, provides one of our most important tools for shining the light on disparities and promoting effective models for advancing equity. *RP&E* was started in 1990 in collaboration with our dear friend and ally, Luke Cole.

As many of you know, Luke was killed in a car accident this past summer. It was a huge shock to those of us who knew him and an enormous loss for the environmental justice movement. When people read the newspaper reports of Luke’s death, many people were surprised to learn that he was only 46 years old—not because he looked older, but because he accomplished so much during his lifetime. (See story on page 84.)

In this issue of the journal we want to honor Luke’s contributions to the environmental and social justice movements. Luke did not need to experience injustice first-hand to join and often lead the fight. We are blessed to have had the opportunity to work with Luke on producing *RP&E* and we are committed to continuing his vision of a magazine that brings forward a framework for achieving racial and social justice. ■



Photo:

Indigenous peoples representing regions from around the world protest outside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia.

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# & the Race, Poverty Environment

a journal for social and environmental justice

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This issue is dedicated to Luke W. Cole (1962-2009)

Founding co-editor of the journal *Race Poverty & the Environment* and founder of the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment.



**Photos:** (Above) Montage from the Luke Cole memorial booklet published October 25, 2009. Courtesy of Nancy Shelby.

(Front cover) San Francisco Financial District, Sept 21, 2009. ©2009 West Coast Mobilization for Climate Justice / Rainforest Action Network.

(Inside Front) Richmond refinery. ©2008 Scott Braley. (Inside Back) Urban garden in Havana Cuba. © John and Faith Morgan / [www.powerofcommunity.com](http://www.powerofcommunity.com).

# the Race, Poverty Environment



a journal for social and environmental justice

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First published as a joint project of the Urban Habitat Program and the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, **RP&E** is now published twice annually by **Urban Habitat** and is dedicated to exploring the intersection of race, class, and environmental and social justice.

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