

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an influential African-American civil rights organization founded in 1909. The press release announces the publication of an informational report documenting how the environmental and health hazards of coal-fired power plants fall disproportionately on poor communities with an above average percentage of minority citizens. The report itself is too long to be published in a textbook, but is easily retrieved on NAACP's Web site. The press release summarizes the main findings from the report itself ("Coal Blooded: Putting Profits Before People").

NAACP Report Reveals Disparate Impact of Coal-Fired Power Plants

NAACP Press Release

November 16, 2012

"Coal Blooded" ranks plants, power companies on environmental justice scale

(Washington, DC)—The NAACP and its allies today released a research report titled *Coal Blooded: Putting Profits before People*, which documents the health, economic and environmental impacts of coal pollution on those who can least afford it—low income communities and communities of color.

Coal Blooded ranks 378 coal-fired power plants in the nation based on their Environmental Justice Performance. The score is based on both toxic emissions and demographic factors—including race, income, and population density. The six million Americans living near coal plants have an average income of \$18,400, compared with \$21,857 nationwide, and 39% are people of color.

"Coal pollution is literally killing low-income communities and communities of color," stated NAACP President and CEO Benjamin Todd Jealous. "There is no disputing the urgency of this issue. Environmental justice is a civil and human rights issue when our children are getting sick, our grandparents are dying early, and mothers and fathers are missing work."

In addition to the rankings, *Coal Blooded* lays out a framework for individuals, organizations, and policymakers to make a just transition from coal to other energy sources. The recent closure of two coal-fired power plants in Chicago is used as a case study. The report also ranks coal power companies on their Environmental Justice Performance.

"We are committed to preserving the livelihood of our communities, our country and our climate," stated NAACP Director of Climate Justice Programs Jacqueline Patterson. "Old, dirty coal plants are poisoning our environment, and emissions controls are simply not sufficient. We need to transition from coal and replace plants with profitable, clean energy alternatives."

"This report will help put a human face on the life and death issue of coal pollution," stated Executive Director of the Indigenous Environmental Network Tom

Goldtooth. "Clean coal is an oxymoron. Toxic emissions are harmful to people living nearby coal plants, and also contribute to the devastating effects of climate change."

"Coal Blooded is a chance to show the world how dirty these plants are, and to highlight the impact they have on our communities," stated Executive Director of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization Kimberly Wasserman, who was instrumental in the shutdown of Fisk and Crawford Generating Stations in Chicago. "It is exciting to see people come together and speak up on this important issue."

Pollutants emitted by coal plants have been linked to asthma attacks, lung inflammation, chronic bronchitis, irregular heart conditions, and birth defects. According to the Clean Air Task Force, coal pollution is estimated to cause 13,200 premature deaths and 9,700 hospitalizations per year across the United States.

The full report can be found on the NAACP's website.

THINKING CRITICALLY

about "NAACP Report Reveals Disparate Impact of Coal-Fired Power Plants"

1. This press release is an informative piece based on the research report "Coal Blooded: Putting Profits Before People" as well as on interviews with officials from the NAACP and other organizations. To what extent does the press release by itself convince you that the environmental impact of coal-powered plants disproportionately harms people of color and low income people? How does it try to appeal to *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*? How much would it inspire readers to click on the report itself?
2. As we noted in the critical thinking questions for Shannon King's essay on hydrogen vehicles, it is often hard to mark the point when a primarily informational piece moves from an informative aim to a persuasive aim. The NAACP report begins with an informative aim—gathering and reporting information about 378 coal-fired plants based on toxic emissions of the plants and on demographic information about the communities close to the plants. However, the second half of the report takes on a more persuasive aim, arguing for a shift from a coal-fired to a green energy economy. To what extent does the press release combine informative and persuasive aims?