

Speech: LaDuke suggests amendment to U.S. Constitution

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explained. She gave the example of her Northern Minnesota reservation where fish consumption advisories recommend that people should only consume one fish per week because of the high mercury content in all of the local fish. In addition, a "catch and release" approach to fishing is advised. But LaDuke emphasized that for many Native American tribes, subsistence fishing is the norm.

"We're not who we are if we don't eat our fish," she said.

The mercury from local incinerators and coal-fire power plants causes bioaccumulation in the fish, LaDuke said. Yet the government largely ignores her appearances before the state legislature.

"Why doesn't the government listen to the voices of people who actually live there?" she said. "My people use alternative energy so we don't contribute to the demise of lakes."

She noted that the struggle against harmful, cancer-causing dioxins in water is a common occurrence nationally and internationally.

"The water quality struggle is even common here — it's the same struggle as on the Columbia River," she said. "We're all down river from somebody."

LaDuke went on to discuss logging and clear-cuts, which she said are the subject of a constant struggle because successful battles against logging just move the transnational corporations "to Siberia, Manitoba, somewhere else. . . 90 per cent of reservation land was and is held and owned by non-Indians so companies like Weyerhaeuser could be formed," she said. "We cannot be a woodlands culture without trees."

CAER speech increases awareness

■ **CONFERENCE:** Dr. Harris focused on unjust policies in government regarding race and the environment

By Donovan Pacholl
Freelance Reporter

More than 100 people gathered at the third annual Conference on Environmental Racism and Justice to hear the closing remarks presented by Dr. William Harris, founder of the first Black Studies Program in the United States at Portland State University.

Harris, a professor of city planning in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning at the University of Virginia, is currently working with the University professors Dennis Greene and Robert Collin on a book chapter related to African-American city dwellers' experiences and perceptions of nature and the environment.

The conference, sponsored by the Coalition Against Environmental Racism (CAER), emphasized the pollution problems and resource depletion of lower class and minority neighborhoods.

Harris said this conference has hopefully created awareness of governmental policies that are often implemented depending on race, gender, social class and neighborhood — an action he feels is unjust.

"The founders of the constitution framed the social system which placed people of color in an inferior position," he said. "Only to a degree has this changed in the last 400 years."

The Congressional Black Caucus has made sig-

nificant proposals for environmental protection, yet none of these have been taken seriously by the majority of the U.S. Congress, Harris said. Therefore, environmental racism will continue to exist as long as there is social discrimination, political oppression and economic inequities.

"The only way to get [environmental justice] is to bring these variables to zero," he said.

Glen Banfield, ASUO Vice-President, said Harris' speech gave him a better understanding of how to achieve environmental justice.

"I'm very optimistic," Banfield said. "However, I think it's going to be extremely difficult under a capitalistic system."

Cole Clark, from the California Rural Legal Assistance foundation, said he came to the conference to see different ways of looking at the problem of environmental racism.

"Dr. Harris provided me with a different lens to view environmental justice. It was extremely thought-provoking," Clark said.

Professor Harris has been involved with African-American community economic development activities for more than a quarter century. He is the author of three books and numerous scholarly articles, where he continues his efforts for African-American liberation. In addition to being a professor, Harris is the director of the school's Center for Housing and the Social Environment, chairman of the Charlottesville Planning Commission, vice chairman of the Charlottesville Board of Zoning Appeals, and chairman of the Thomas Jefferson United Way Child Care Scholarship Committee.

fighting industrialization or simply changing patterns of consumption and globalization, people have to take back the power. She suggested that government organizations write environmental impact statements before changing the makeup and balance of land, rather than after the fact.

Two solutions LaDuke emphasized were passing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution and holding public policy-makers accountable for their actions. The amendment, which she referred to as "The Seventh Generation Amendment," would focus on the approach that all decisions made today should take into account the seventh generation from now. Holding public policy-makers accountable until language, identity and geology are recovered is necessary, she said.

"70 per cent of global trade is controlled by 500 corporations," she said. "Real vision doesn't come from boardrooms, but from people on the land."

Although there are 250 grassroots Native American Environmental groups in the U.S. currently, they generally have few resources, little recognition and many adversaries, LaDuke said.

During her speech, LaDuke emphasized her political and social views, and how wrongdoings can be addressed.

"I'm not opposed to logging, I'm opposed to clear-cuts," she said. "Just as in fishing and farming, corporatization is overdone — industries become dominated and contaminated."

"The responsibility in a civil society is not to assume there is justice in the law, and change the law to be multiracial and include other cultures and other religions," she said.

The topics of LaDuke's speech were woven together as she emphasized the connections between environmental injustice and the struggle of Native Americans and public policy.

"Forests are referred to as timber by government officials," she said. "There is a commodification of the sacred where 'things' have no

value except market value.

"By and large the law holds up rights of Christian people, not indigenous peoples."

LaDuke emphasized a correlation between decision and policy-makers and government and corporate practices. She noted how "most decisions in the world today are made by states, not na-

tions," she said. This creates a worldwide economic and environmental crisis, she said.

"These problems are a microcosm of indigenous peoples' struggles everywhere," LaDuke said.

In order to combat these wrongdoings, people need to reclaim what is their own, she said. Whether it is renaming their land,



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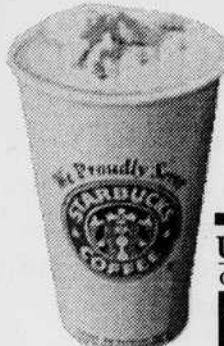
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