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the next environmentalism: how movements respond to

THE CHANGES THAT ELECTIONS BRING

— FROM NIXON TO OBAMA

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AMIDST THIS PERIOD of unprecedented collapse of the global financial system, we witnessed another extraordinary moment; an election that potentially offers an enormous change in the U.S. political landscape. For the environmental movement—namely, the multiple groups and networks and organizations that constitute a range of perspectives, organizing, and constituencies that lay claim to some aspect of what we call environmentalism—the election of Barack Obama offers opportunities and challenges in how to respond to this electoral moment. Perhaps more than any other election since 1932, the Obama victory in 2008 offers the notion that the change agents include those who have mobilized and participated and organized rather than just those who seek election. This is based on Obama's continuing statements about what the election was all about as well as how the organizers on the ground interpret their own role.

Does this mean then that we might be witnessing a change not just in electoral terms, but as a moment when change becomes associated with the organizers and the social movements and a reinvigorated civic culture? Is this also a moment for a reinvigorated

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environmentalism? And is this election truly different from other key elections of the last forty years, including when an earlier reinvigorated environmentalism entered the scene amidst promises of a new kind of public discourse—and new kinds of public actions? Exploring some earlier electoral moments in this contemporary history, from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush and now an Obama presidency, can help us situate where and how environmental movements have responded and been influenced by such moments.

First, let me provide some context in relation to my own research about the history of the U.S. environmental movement. In late 1992, I was completing my book, *Forcing the Spring: the Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*. The early 1990s represented an important moment of transition for environmentalism. This included the rise of what we today call the environmental justice movement; the rapid expansion in the resources of the large, professional and policy-based or mainstream environmental groups, an expansion that had culminated in Earth Day's twenty-year anniversary extravaganza that took place in 1990 as well as a new round of policy initiatives such as the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and gatherings such as the 1992 Rio Earth Summit conference. What I sought to elaborate in *Forcing the Spring* was essentially a revisionist history of the roots and development of environmentalism. Unlike most environmental histories, I highlighted those radicals, social reformers, and other social justice advocates for whom environment was embedded in the daily life issues of the city and the workplace. This environmentalism of daily life in an urban and industrial era, associated as much with public health, urban reform, and other social movements not ordinarily identified as part of the history of environmentalism, provided historical continuity for the emerging social movements and environmental groups of the 1960s and 1970s, and then again with the rise of a new generation of environmental justice groups in the 1980s and 1990s. I had, to be sure, also discussed other environmentalist roots, including the classic divide between the wilderness preservationist and the resource management tendencies symbolized by John Muir and Gifford Pinchot. But with respect to each of those tendencies, whether represented by John Muir or the great urban and industrial environmentalist, Alice Hamilton, I had sought to situate the concepts of nature, health, resources, or daily life within a broader definition of environmentalism as a response to urban and industrial change.

As I worked furiously to complete *Forcing the Spring*, I increasingly became interested in the 1992 election itself, coming after twelve years of Republican administrations that included heightened tensions and continuing conflict over the fabric of the environmental policy system that had been established in the prior decade. This was also an election coming after twelve uninterrupted years of Republican presidents. Looking back at that period, I had discussed in my book how the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan had represented an important and intriguing moment in how some environmental groups had responded, initially in full panic mode. Reagan after all had characterized environmentalists as wanting the American people to be hot in the summer and cold in the winter, and saw redwood trees as nondescript rather than sacred. Reagan also appeared ready to do battle regarding the environmental policy system, having defined it politically as "Democrats [wanting] more laws, which requires tons more paper to publish the laws, more bureaucracy to administer them and more litigation to interpret them, not to mention more enforcement activity, all of which consumes more energy." I had found the response by environmental

groups to Reagan's election as reinforcing and extending the evolution of one wing of the environmental movement, some of which I'll discuss in a bit. Did 1992, like 1980, then represent simply an extension of trends within the movement, or, rather, another important moment similar to the late 1960s and early 1970s, suggesting new directions and new kinds of environmental strategies?

I had finished the draft of *Forcing the Spring*, actually a manuscript at that point without a title, when election day rolled around. Bill Clinton was elected, with his victory night party playing his signature song—Fleetwood Mac's "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow ..." Fully engaged in last-minute editing of the manuscript, I then tuned in to Clinton's inauguration and was struck by the opening lines in his inaugural speech. "This ceremony," Clinton began, "is held in the depth of winter. But, by the words we speak and the faces we show the world, we force the spring. A spring reborn in the world's oldest democracy, that brings forth the vision and courage to reinvent America." How telling, I thought, using a gardening metaphor of bringing new life to bloom at an earlier stage—is this the hope and anticipation, and eagerness of an environmentalism coming out of the shadows of twelve years of Reagan and Bush? Was yesterday truly gone? Perhaps, I argued, the environmental groups might have become too eager, still needing to recognize lessons from earlier moments, not only from those twelve years, but from environmentalism's own complex and diverse roots. Thus, my book's title and my own conclusion of the need for environmentalism to reinvent itself by understanding and reinterpreting its own rich and varied history, and to see the present, not just in terms of what tomorrow could bring, but to also see the present as history.

1968-1974, THE RISE AND FALL OF RICHARD NIXON

IN *FORCING THE SPRING*, I characterized the period from 1968 (and Richard Nixon's election) to 1974 (when Nixon resigned) as an important period of redefinition and expansion of environmental groups, agendas, and policies, while also establishing a new kind of civic discourse. This is the period when the language about the movement itself changed, from the conservationists (with their emphasis on nature and resources) to the environmentalists (with the new and additional focus on water, air, land, pesticides—and urban life and industrial activity). While the election of 1968 itself did not figure prominently in creating, invigorating, or helping expand this new environmentalism, it nevertheless ushered in a period of dramatic political confrontation and emerging social movements, including but certainly not limited to the new environmentalism.

From 1968 to 1970, environmental problems—and various episodes that underlined how intense and all encompassing they were—were seen as visceral, direct onslaughts on both the civic and natural order. In 1969, shortly after Nixon's election, you had the phenomena of a burning river in a Midwest heartland city in today's battleground state of Ohio. The discharges from the steel and chemical plants that bordered the Cuyahoga River as it made its way through downtown Cleveland were so poorly regulated that when the first fires were ignited they raged for three days, sending thick black clouds filled with toxic air contaminants into the ambient environment and providing a scene that seemed more biblical than late twentieth-century America. That same year, the

blowout of Platform B offshore in Santa Barbara, California, not only offered another scene of helpless wildlife and oil sleeked beaches but angry residents chanting "Get Oil Out" rather than "Drill, Baby, Drill."

There were dozens of other episodes in this period: the eutrophication of Lake Erie, suds from the phosphates in laundry detergent foaming up in pristine streams hundreds of miles from where they had been used, unregulated landfills that caught fire and spread so rapidly they trapped young boys who had been playing in the area, and, perhaps most visibly, the air in cities and from industrial sources that could best be described as "mephitic." These scenes represented the state of the environment as it was viewed at the time, not marginal or exaggerated episodes. "Can the world be saved?" Walter Cronkite would ask in a February 1970 news broadcast, as the media caught on that "environment" had joined the war in Vietnam, the conflicts over race and civil rights, and an emerging feminism and gender battles, as part of the great turmoil of the day.

But unlike the networks of groups and movements that addressed issues like race, gender, or the war in Vietnam, an environmental movement in the late 1960s had yet to find its voice. The older conservationist groups were often suspicious of the new radicalism implicit in the budding environmental critique and had long established a modus operandi of negotiation and compromise while also ignoring some of the most visible environmental concerns at the time like air pollution and industrial discharges. The new environmental groups that did begin to form were often ad hoc, spontaneous responses to particularly egregious environmental problems. In the case of some of the new professionally oriented groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, with its 1960s-style slogan "sue the bastards," or the Ford Foundation-backed Natural Resources Defense Council which assumed the position of a "law firm for the environment," they also tended to be more reactive to the passions that had erupted regarding the myriad of events and episodes that had brought "environment" to the center of the public discourse and policy agendas.

Even the Earth Day event of 1970 was more ad hoc than strategic, with its open-ended message to demonstrate concern. Earth Day was again not a product of a clear organizational response but simply a clearinghouse for anyone and everyone who showed up at events and actions with no specific focus or goal other than to let a hundred actions bloom. Ironically, Earth Day was also made possible by the heroic behind-the-scenes action of Sydney Howe, the president of the Conservation Foundation who, unbeknownst to his conservative board, provided the necessary funding to allow this event to take place. While Conservation Foundation board members did not know at the time about Howe's subversive role, given the Conservation Foundation's distinctive, nonaction oriented approach and establishment posture, the group's board would subsequently fire Howe because of his far more subversive stance that sought to link the environmental cause with other key social justice issues such as racism and a jobs-environment alliance.

The Earth Day event, heavily touted by the media and reluctantly embraced by Richard Nixon as a less radical, more "apolitical" cause that could be contrasted with the radicalism of the anti-war and black- and brown-power movements, was quickly subsumed a few weeks later by the dramatic events of May 1970, with the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of students at Jackson State in Mississippi and Kent

State in Ohio. But the environmental issue did not go away and an emerging set of environmental groups began to enter the scene, including groups that focused on politics and sought to influence electoral outcomes. In the 1970 Congressional elections, the environmental issue played a role in securing the defeat, often in the primaries, of candidates associated with the polluters. Two years later, the Dirty Dozen congressional campaigns took shape, giving a national focus to a series of locally generated campaigns and arguments about the desperate need for environmental change. Presidential politics also began to focus on the question of the environment. The Democratic Party frontrunner in the period prior to the 1972 presidential election was Maine Senator Edmund Muskie, who sought to identify his campaign as much with the environmental cause as with the explosive issues of race and the war in Vietnam. Muskie had himself been a target of early environmental criticism, led by Ralph Nader, for Muskie's role as chair of the Senate Public Works Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution in crafting the Air Quality Act in 1967, where industry objections had successfully limited the regulatory role of the federal government. But with the environment emerging as a major new cause and as a source of new policy debate, Muskie by 1970 and 1971 had repositioned himself as an unabashed champion of federal government intervention around the environment.

The period from 1970 to 1972 and again from 1972 to 1974 highlighted the emergence of the environmental issue as both an electoral force and as a major new arena for policy intervention. Nixon, replete with his dirty tricks apparatus, recognized Muskie—and the environmental issue—as his major challenge. While effectively targeting Muskie the candidate through this often illegal apparatus, he also positioned himself as at least willing to accommodate to this major new political force, which he continued to identify as apolitical, in contrast to the increasingly politicized antiwar movement. The passage of NEPA and the Clean Air Act and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency along with the passage of more than a dozen bills—some far-reaching, like the Clean Air Act of 1970, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, the Clean Water Act of 1972 (a key piece of legislation that Nixon did veto but was overridden), and the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974—constituted a new and ambitious environmental policy system, complete with new roles and mandates for implementation and enforcement for both the state and federal governments.

Despite Muskie's withdrawal from the presidential campaign and the landslide victory of Nixon over George McGovern in 1972, the environmental issue appeared to have secured its new role, despite rather than through the elections, at least at the presidential level. What became more notable was the development of the environmental policy system itself, partly due to the multiple influences on election outcomes in the period from 1970 to 1974, but mostly because the politics of the environment had become the new mainstream issue, helping, in turn, to give rise to what I characterized in *Forcing the Spring* as the mainstream environmental movement. This movement was led by the new professional-based groups, but it now also including several of the old-line conservationist groups that also sought to position themselves as advocates and gatekeepers of this new environmental policy system. The movement had transformed this emerging environmentalism into a political force and lobbying arm for the environment. Partly a set of interest groups replete with new science, legal, political, and fundraising skills, and partly a movement force that saw itself as acting in the public interest, the new mainstream environmentalism would walk the

corridors of power by the end of the decade among the second tier of officials in the Carter administration.

But environmentalism wasn't simply a creature of the beltway and an adjunct of the electoral and policy process. Local environmental groups, some increasingly militant as they focused on issues that directly impacted their communities, also emerged during the 1970s. For much of the decade, the local groups worked in tandem with the mainstream environmental organizations, although, increasingly, the mainstream groups saw themselves primarily as defenders of the environmental policy system at the federal and, to a lesser degree, the local level. By the late 1970s, with events such as Love Canal highlighting the complex relationships between federal officials, mainstream environmentalists, and local activists, the notion of a coherent and integrated environmental movement was beginning to lose traction. Moreover, fierce and more radical environmental sentiment regarding nuclear power, the intersection of race and environment, and the continuing tension around jobs and environmental policy continued to point to an environmentalism that had achieved a level of power but a lessening of its capacity to act as a unified force.

1980-1990 RETRENCHMENT AND NEW GROWTH

THE 1980 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION was significant in how environmental issues had receded as central to the political discourse, even as indications of a growing environmental divide between groups and positions was also beginning to take shape. Barry Commoner, just ten years after he graced the cover of *Time* magazine, decided to turn to electoral politics as the Green Party candidate for president in order to reach a broader audience for his more radical, structural critique of the relationship between environment and economy. Commoner, however, was never able to secure the visibility that his once prominent stature as a major environmental figure seemed to warrant. Instead, he—and the Green Party—suffered not just from the limits of a two-party system in opening up the political discourse but from the lack of a strong labor movement and Social Democratic political and electoral tradition that would have provided space for new social movements that could utilize the electoral arena. In contrast, by the early 1980s, Green parties in Europe had begun to take root by securing seats in parliaments and also by influencing other larger parties to incorporate a stronger environmental approach.

It wasn't simply the failure of the Green Party that marked the decline in the influence of environmentalism in the 1980 election. Ronald Reagan was able to benefit from a type of antiestablishment conservatism that identified environmentalism and the environmental policy system as part of the beltway politics that he was able to run against as a latter-day rightwing populist. Reagan's election terrified mainstream environmentalists. Their immediate response was to hold emergency gatherings of the leaders of the ten largest groups to pull together a common response to what they assumed would be a counterrevolutionary onslaught against the environmental policy system. This gathering subsequently turned into a continuing monthly meeting of what came to be called "The Group of Ten," further consolidating the role of the mainstream environmentalists as the defenders of the environmental policy system and the keepers of the environmental agenda.

Reagan tried, but ultimately failed, to fully erode the environmental policy system, even finding that control over the regulatory apparatus could be challenged

while some of his appointees left in disgrace over various ethical and political lapses. Feeling emboldened, the mainstream environmental groups continued to function as large, professional beltway players, albeit with influence in Congress rather than the administration. The mainstream groups also became successful fundraisers through direct mail and grant writing, particularly by continually sending out alarms about the Reaganite attacks. This process continued through each electoral cycle, and while environmental issues did not figure again significantly in the 1984 election, they re-emerged in the 1988 election, when Reagan's successor, George H. W. Bush, outmaneuvered his opponent Michael Dukakis by implying that the pollution of Boston Harbor suggested that Bush would be a more environmental friendly president than the Democrat that the mainstream environmental groups largely supported.

Bush 41 also recognized the value of sometimes working with rather than continually battling against the mainstream groups. One CEO of the Group of Ten, William Reilly of the Conservation Foundation (who had replaced Sydney Howe during the purge in the 1970s), became Bush's EPA administrator and further influenced mainstream environmentalism's regulatory and legislative focus by pushing for market-based approaches regarding environmental goals. By 1990, with the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day, environmentalism had indeed become a mainstream force, as corporate polluters, politicians from both parties, the media, and various civic groups sought to identify themselves with the environmental cause and assume, sometimes or even often misleadingly, an environmental identity.

However, mainstream environmentalism also suffered from its identification as a mainstream cause, particularly when it came to the protracted issues of race, environmental disparities, and, more fundamentally, the rooted issues of what some activists characterized as the toxic economy. In 1991, the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit identified two key new factors in exploring the changes in the environmental movement. On the one hand, the growth of local activism during the 1970s re-emerged as a new type of grassroots populism in the 1980s, led by, but not limited to, the new activism around environmental issues in low-income communities of color. The term environmental racism entered the environmental discourse and the one-time alliance between the mainstream groups and the local activists became shakier and even hostile in some instances. The People of Color Summit highlighted this more problematic relationship, challenging the nature of the leadership (the absence of people of color) as well as the agenda of the mainstream groups. At the same time, the new emerging environmental justice groups, embracing the late Dana Alston's comments at the Summit that the environment was where one lived, worked, and played identified a broader environmentalism of daily life issues, new definitions of the environmental agenda, and a way to validate the importance and the power of this new activism.

This dual focus of the new environmental justice groups—what I later characterized in my book *Environmentalism Unbound* as a civil rights as well as a more transformative social justice approach—also helped shift the terrain of environmental politics by helping reduce the long-standing critique of environmentalism as a middle-class white movement seeking to preserve some amenities for itself. The civil rights language of environmental disparities identified low-income communities and communities of color as both subject and object of environmental activism. At the

same time, environmental justice groups began to incorporate other issues such as housing, transportation, food, and community economic development as part of their own frame of reference, either indirectly or by utilizing justice as the overarching concept for their linked activities—as in food justice or transportation justice. By the 1990s, environmentalism had re-emerged as a powerful force but with multiple claims regarding what and who it represented.

1992-2000 CLINTON AND GORE, BUT NOT MUCH MORE

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, the victory of Bill Clinton and especially the new vice president Al Gore suggested that a new round of environmental policy change and environmental influence was imminent. The idea of a carbon tax was floated—but then immediately shot down. The Clinton campaign's skepticism about the North American Free Trade Agreement turned into a tortuous process of establishing environmental and labor side agreements designed to mollify labor and environmental critics. But while the labor movement remained opposed and nervous about the Clinton-Gore team's direction in policy, the mainstream environmental groups split over the side agreements, with EDF and NRDC in favor but the Sierra Club and Greenpeace opposed. The environmental justice groups, who tended to be suspicious of those in power, nevertheless pushed hard to include environmental justice, and particularly the focus on disparities, as part of environmental decision-making. As a result, they were rewarded with their own policy initiative when, in 1994, the Clinton administration issued Executive Order 12898 that established environmental justice criteria for certain aspects of federal government decision-making.

Once again entering the second tier of administrative positions, environmentalists—both mainstream and environmental justice—eagerly sought to advance their claims and anticipated both legislative and administrative action. But already by 1994, the Clinton Administration would suffer a major setback when the latest version of Reaganite populism reappeared in the guise of the Newt Gingrich-led “Contract with America,” which in turn helped produce major Republican gains in the 1994 congressional elections. Although environmental issues didn't figure directly in the Contract with America planks, new types of antienvironmental approaches, such as the use of the Fifth Amendment language around “takings” associated with the Gingrichite forces, appeared to directly threaten particular environmental initiatives and legislation.

But unlike the 1980s, when the mainstream environmental groups utilized the counterrevolutionary moment to bolster their own forces and still expand the environmental policy system, the Clinton-era 1990s represented for the mainstream environmental groups more of a holding action with respect to new initiatives even as they consolidated most of their gains in fundraising, staff expansion, and a securing of their role as an important although not dominant players in the beltway. Some of the groups, such as the Environmental Defense Fund, expanded their influence by utilizing the language of the market to accomplish environmental change and by entering into agreements with large corporate entities that recognized the value of a green image.

The mainstream groups were also aware that the criticism of the environmental justice groups was hurting their own identity and leaving them vulnerable to the

charge that they were elitists. Nearly all the major mainstream environmental groups began to create “environmental justice” staff positions, albeit often at the margins rather than the center of their agenda and staff resources. Even the more conservative and established groups like the Audubon Society and Environmental Defense Fund created formal programs, such as inner city “nature” programs for Audubon or in the case of EDF an entire office in Los Angeles with an environmental justice identity (created primarily as a result of a court settlement in which money was provided to EDF on the condition that its new office be dedicated to environmental justice).

The environmental justice groups, meanwhile, partly armed with some new legislative and administrative tools and greater recognition of environmental disparities, also went through a period of consolidation and, in some cases, redefinition. On the one hand, the battles around “risk discrimination” continued to reappear throughout the Clinton years and beyond, in litigation, through direct action, and occasionally in new legislative initiatives, often at the state and local level. Some of the more creative strategies, such as the approach of the Environmental Health Coalition in pursuing land use tools such as zoning regarding the concentration of environmental hazards in the Barrio Logan neighborhood of San Diego, expanded the notion that environmental justice involved remaking neighborhoods subject to environmental disparities. Other groups and environmental justice leaders sought to create linkages in areas like transportation, community health, and even global trade impacts experienced at the community level. Generally, the more expansive the environmental justice group, the stronger the group became, establishing a more permanent role at the community, regional, and, through coalitions and linkages, at the state and national level as well. In a few cases, such as the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, the logic of the group’s agenda—the community, environmental, and health impacts of the semi-conductor and electronics industries experienced at the local level—turned the group into a global player as well, making connections with groups in developing countries when the industries relocated to find cheap labor and escape environmental regulations. The problem of “localism” and particularly the ad hoc nature of environmental justice activism that had limited the clout and the role of the environmental justice groups in the 1980s had been partly resolved through the growing sophistication and expansion of agendas during the 1990s by some of the groups within this new movement. But neither mainstream environmental nor environmental justice groups were able to rest secure as they soon came to face a far more hostile reception, with a new election bringing to power environmentalism’s most determined opponents.

2000-2008: IMPLACABLE FOES: BUSH AND CHENEY

FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS, the 2000 election was probably most noteworthy by what didn’t get discussed, given the candidates and the growing attention to environmental issues at the global level. In 1992 and particularly in 2000, Al Gore appeared to downplay and even run away from his environmental reputation most associated with his 1988 book, *Earth in the Balance*. Despite the Republican (and some Democratic) opposition to the signing of the 1997 Kyoto Agreement and Bush’s general ignorance of key environmental questions, not the least of which was the issue of climate change which had been Gore’s primary focus, environmental issues took a back seat in the

presidential debates. With the exception of Gore's last-minute embrace of populist positions late in the campaign and Bush's continuing evocation of a "compassionate conservative" posture, mainstream environmentalists in particular tended to play a limited role in the election, hoping that a Gore win would put them back in a more pre-eminent position. The third-party candidacy of Ralph Nader also compounded the way environmental issues were addressed, since Nader could not only legitimately and proudly identify his own historic role in multiple environmental causes and movements, but he pushed hard on environmental issues as part of his campaign. Unlike Barry Commoner, Nader was able to achieve a fair amount of attention, given the closeness of the election, but like Commoner he also was largely marginalized by the powerful hold of the two-party system.

The complicated Bush victory—the loss in the popular vote and the 4-3 Supreme Court victory—didn't necessarily presage what would soon come to pass and did not quite have the shock effect of the Reagan victory. But that would soon change. First there was Dick Cheney, working closely with his oil executive friends gutting any climate change initiative and other potential environmental measures. Then came the Bush tax cuts and the reappearance of a deficit along with its goal of reducing any public/governmental role. And then came 9-11 with the Iraq War aftermath and its not so obscure oil-grab agenda. Environmentalists of all kinds soon came to recognize that, far more than in the Reagan period, the counterrevolution was determined to gut many of the features of the environmental policy system and to ignore the environmental impacts and environmental disparities facing so many low-income communities and communities of color.

In the 2004 election, environmental groups, both the Washington, D.C.-oriented large-staff-based mainstream groups and the more locally oriented environmental justice groups, mobilized less on behalf of John Kerry and more in order to defeat Bush and Cheney. The Sierra Club sent members to battleground states like Florida, while local groups like the Environmental Health Coalition sought to mobilize their own constituencies, linking local issues to the presidential election. The environmental groups were one of several oppositional forces such as labor, women's groups, and community-action groups like ACORN that came together under the umbrella of the 527 groups that worked outside the Kerry campaign—a collection that resembled less a unified force than separate groups with a common enemy. One of the striking features of the 2004 election was the success of the Bushites in what was characterized as "mobilizing the base," but which also represented strong community and ideological interests joined together. The anti-Bush forces were generally out-organized, although the intensity of the anti-Bush effort, including the environmental groups, suggested that organizing and mobilization and, to a lesser extent the search for a new politics, had re-emerged in a more significant way that at any time since the late 1960s and early 1970s.

2008: THE RISING

AN OBAMA PRESIDENCY also offers cautionary lessons for environmentalists based on earlier lessons stemming from prior elections and changes in administration. It is imperative that environmentalists not define success simply as the ability of an interest group to secure a seat at the table but rather as an opportunity to change the discourse and the framework for policy. It is also crucial for environmentalists,

particularly environmental justice advocates, to recognize that the environmental justice perspective, as environmental justice leader Penny Newman has put it, provides one entry point in the larger quest to envision a more socially just, democratic, and livable community and global order.

Pulling together this talk in the midst of such a fierce election where organizing and mobilization were so prominent and where the rhetoric of change placed the burden and opportunities for change on the organizers and not just the candidate reminded me of the moment in early 1993 when another change was about to occur while I was also trying to make sense of environmentalism's past and the hope for the future. I thought about the Fleetwood Mac song that Clinton had embraced as the symbol of his notion of hope, a song and a campaign that was as much about leaving behind the past as identifying a future. As I watched the election results come in last week, I began to think about the Obama campaign's signature song, Bruce Springsteen's *The Rising*. Written in the wake of 9-11, Springsteen's song is about hope and renewal, where there is not just an escape from the past but coming to understand its lessons as part of the renewal itself. "A dream of life," the chorus sings, and, as we sort out this election and the new and challenging era we are about to encounter, we can envision this moment where hope and renewal may also come to mean reinvention and transformation.

