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Slaves to Dead Air: Voices from the West Berkeley Wasteland

cleanaircoalition.net is now signing up people from the communities of Berkeley, Albany and El Cerrito. We are a growing number of individuals who feel it is necessary to turn up the heat on PSC. Specifically, we intend to file a group lawsuit through Small Claims to force PSC to give us a final solution than the "Settlement" BAAQMD has arranged or, failing that, make PSC pay for their constant plume of black air. We have contracted with Neighborhood Solutions and they are on board, consulting with us to assert our rights.

BAAQMD and PSC recently settled on a partial toxic reduction plan but the community does not want to settle for the tiny steps offered. We were never included in the process. We weren't asked to consider this settlement last December. We are literally being made ill on a daily basis and we cannot afford to wait for a substantive change to happen at this rate. We hope the suit will bring PSC back to the table - and answer to the community this time.

cleanaircoalition.net would like to share the following quotes from citizens who are now part of our mass claims action. Our members are sick and tired. Listen:

"We do not spend time out of doors when we smell the odor. We have decided not to cook outside with our barbeque and decided not to purchase a patio furniture set because we would not be able to use it on a consistent basis."

"I am angry and stressed about the potential long term health effects of the noxious fumes. We experience burning eyes, nose and throat. We can't go outside into our own yard and so stay confined to a stuffy, sealed up house. I will add that our sleep is affected nightly when the bag house is roaring at 2:00am and on through the night. We know that the odor will be present the next morning about 11:30 like clockwork. I am concerned about my property value. I certainly would not have bought in this area if the smell had been present in 1993."

"It's difficult to enjoy outdoor activities in yard, riding bike to work, I gag."

"This afternoon,... I complained to BAAQMD about the noxious odors from Pacific Steel. Mr. Frederick Johnson came and initially told me he did not detect these odors despite their being present at the time. At my insistence he did offer to walk around the house and the odor was especially noticeable at the side of my house. He then agreed that there was "a faint odor" and that he would attempt to track it down. I told him that I wouldn't characterize the odor as "faint" but, regardless, I didn't wish to breathe toxic air pollutants. He then told me so much that I was wasting my time complaining because PSC has entered into an agreement with BAAQMD to address the problem and that complaining wouldn't make them move any faster. I told him that, on the contrary, the settlement agreement provides for penalties each time PSC violates BAAQMD's odor requirements and that, in my opinion, additional fines and penalties could very well serve as an incentive for PSC to do more and to address the problem quicker."

"The air stinks, it makes me feel unhealthy, like I'm being poisoned without my permission. It has made me nauseous, made my eyes burn, sore throat, and hurt my lungs. It lowers the quality of life in my neighborhood, makes me not want to go outdoors or spend time in the yard. I don't think its right for anyone to wreck the air in neighborhood."

We are looking forward to attending Linda Maio's PSC meeting on the 15th of this month at the Berkeley Senior Center. We hope the PSC will choose to abate the serious Public Health risk and public nuisance they are causing without shutting down their plant. Our suit demands abatement, not closure. Join Us!