

PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

BEVERLY WRIGHT

sociologist, director, author, activist

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Background Information

Beverly Wright was born and raised near the Lower Mississippi River in Louisiana in an area known as Cancer Alley.ⁱ Her understanding of environmental justice came from growing up in a hazardous area and seeing an inequitable distribution of pollution in her community.ⁱⁱ She received a bachelor's degree from Grambling State University and a master's and doctorate from the State University of New York at Buffalo.ⁱⁱⁱ As a practicing sociologist, Dr. Wright conducted vital research in environmental justice.

Wright's Resistance

Wright devoted her time to learning more about the environmental justice field. Her experiences in environmental justice have included working as a sociologist, professor, researcher, and author.^{iv} Through her unique perspective, Dr. Wright is committed to fighting against human rights injustices in environmental spaces. Wright understood the critical importance of making information accessible to all people, especially those most impacted. Dr. Wright challenges communities to reflect on the issue personally to understand their agency in contributing to just outcomes. She designed a curriculum for elementary students within New Orleans Public Schools.^v Wright also created a work-based curriculum for the Hazardous Waste Training Programs. The informational curriculum aims to empower people living near hazardous sites in the Superfund and Brownfield areas.^{vi}

Achievements

Dr. Wright has co-authored scholarly books with Richard Bullard that focus on environmental justice issues.^{vii} Wright also received many accolades for her work, including the EPA Environmental Justice Achievement Award.^{viii} Wright established the National Black Environmental Justice Network in 2020 and serves as an advisor to President Joe Biden in his emergency environmental plan.^{ix} Wright's legacy in environmental justice emphasizes the importance of reminding community members that they have agency. Through her efforts, Dr. Wright has ensured that community members are well-versed in the impacts of hazardous environmental issues and environmental justice.

Essential Questions

1. After witnessing the injustice of environmental pollution in Cancer Alley, Wright worked to address environmental justice. Wright used strategies that included education, critical thinking skills, and participatory, community-driven learning.
 - a. What activities can you think of that allow you to critically participate in your community?

2. Wright made her research findings and the issue of environmental justice available to everyone, including young children, by creating a curriculum.
 - a. Why is it important to make information available to everyone, especially when addressing issues that may affect everyone?

3. *“I understand my role and its importance in stimulating the minds of young people, propelling them into becoming involved in their own destiny.”*
 - b. What is your role in issues you are passionate about?

ⁱ Harress, Christopher. “Beverly Wright: She’s Spent a Lifetime Sounding the Alarm on Environmental Racism.” *Reckon South* (blog), March 23, 2021. <https://www.reckonsouth.com/beverly-wright-shes-spent-a-lifetime-sounding-the-alarm-on-environmental-racism/>.

ⁱⁱ Beverly Wright | The EPA Blog.” <https://blog.epa.gov/tag/beverly-wright/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) - Website. “Beverly L Wright PhD - Deep South Center for Environmental Justice.” <https://www.dscej.org/our-story/our-team/beverly-l-wright-phd>.

^{iv} “Beverly Wright | The EPA Blog.”

^v Beverly L Wright PhD - Deep South Center for Environmental Justice.”

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 - vii Beverly L Wright PhD - Deep South Center for Environmental Justice.”
 - viii Harress, “Beverly Wright”
 - ix Harress, “Beverly Wright”