

**THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN'S CLEARINGHOUSE FOR HAZARDOUS
WASTES AS AN AGENT OF ADULT EDUCATION IN THE
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICEMOVEMENT FROM 1981-1995**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This historical study examined the educational dimensions of the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes from 1981-1995. Its role as an agent of adult education in the grassroots movement for environmental justice was demonstrated by tracing the movement from the toxic waste disaster at Love Canal, New York and focusing on the role of Lois Gibbs as a leader in the movement. The conceptual framework for the study was built upon interdisciplinary work in the fields of adult education, sociology, and educational history.

The study examined the mission, belief systems, processes and strategies of learning and information dissemination by the Clearinghouse during three periods: 1981-1986, during which the organization was formed and began to develop a mission and belief system; the 1987-1991 period when CCHW experienced enormous growth and began to exert its power nationally with campaigns such as the McToxics Campaign. It was also during this period that CCHW began the process of working toward a unified grassroots environmental justice movement; and the period from 1992-1995 which marked the beginning of CCHW's second decade of existence and in which CCHW conducted an in-depth organizational assessment. Organizing and technical assistance were found to be the primary vehicles of learning. Publications and site visits were powerful dissemination mechanisms used to assist citizens in their struggles against corporations and government authorities. Secondly, citizens who remained active in the environmental justice movement often took on broader roles such as organizing regional citizen groups.

The study found that women composed nearly eighty percent of the leaders in the movement. Reasons for involvement varied, but most women became involved initially out of fear for theirs or a loved one's health. Conclusions drawn indicate that learning occurred through everyday experiences and empowered citizens to take direct action in their communities. Secondly CCHW emerged as a powerful national political force due to its ability to maintain its mission of continuously listening and meeting the needs of its grassroots constituents.

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