



## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, February 18, 2024

### *Celebrating the Contributions of Black Environmentalists*

“While February serves as a symbolic month of reflection and acknowledgement of the impacts, contributions and successes of Black Americans in all spaces—both visible and unknown—uplifting this work doesn’t end when March begins” (Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, February 2024 Issue). Their contributions reverberate in so many areas of our lives. This column focuses on those contributions impacting our environment.

#### **Buffalo Soldiers – Defenders of Our National Parks**

“Prior to the 1916 establishment of the National Park Service, the United States Army was responsible for protecting our first national parks. Among the units that patrolled the parks were Buffalo Soldiers—African American troopers who were instrumental in blazing trails, constructing roads, creating maps, extinguishing fires, monitoring tourists, evicting grazing livestock, and deterring loggers and poachers. In some parks, including Yosemite and Sequoia, **these soldiers were some of the very first park rangers.**” (Jill K. Robinson, *Sierra Magazine*, 2/24/21)

#### **Hazel M. Johnson – Advocate for A Healthy Environment**

Johnson ... “born in a region of Louisiana now known as ‘Cancer Alley,’ then moving to a Chicago neighborhood built over an industrial waste dump, saw the effects of pollution firsthand as members of her family struggled with health ailments attributed to pollution. In these communities, rates of cancer, birth defects and asthma were grossly higher than those in more affluent ones.

Johnson took charge of creating a safer environment for her community in Chicago, by documenting the health impacts due to contamination and hazardous waste. **She founded People for Community Recovery, led workshops and advocacy trainings for community members, and inspired young people to recognize the importance of a clean, healthy environment.** She elevated her cause to a national level, advocating for legislation to fight further environmental atrocities and hold governments accountable to ensure a healthy environment in minority and low-income communities.” (Dexter Hedgepeth, *Defenders of Wildlife*, 2/6/24)

#### **Lisa Perez Jackson – First African American EPA Administrator**

Jackson “began her career as a staff scientist at the Environmental Protection Agency, working on the agency’s Superfund site remediation program to clean toxic and contaminated areas that impact public and environmental health. She developed many hazardous waste cleanup regulations....

In 2008, she was nominated by President-elect Barack Obama to serve as EPA Administrator, becoming the first African American to hold the position. In this leadership position, she worked across agencies and departments to create standards for fuel-efficient cars, improve emergency disaster response efforts, decrease air pollution and more. **At the core of her work was establishing stronger environmental protections within historically underrepresented and marginalized communities.**” (Dexter Hedgepeth, *Defenders of Wildlife*, 2/6/24)

So that more people have the opportunity to learn about the vast contributions Black Americans have made in so many areas of our lives, Sen. Cory Booker has reintroduced the **African American History Act** in the Senate to advocate for investments to make the story of Black people in America more accessible to teachers, educators, and students. This is a crucial part of America's story. If you would like to support this effort, [add you name as a citizen co-sponsor](#).

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at [socialjustice@holycrossphl.org](mailto:socialjustice@holycrossphl.org).