

Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff

A Chapter of the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery Rallies Environmental Justice Campaigners in Georgia

Today at a church within view of Georgia Power's Plant Vogtle nuclear power plant, civil rights veteran Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery spoke about the issues currently affecting the people this region. In attendance were many local residents from the rural Shell Bluff community in Burke County and many people from the Atlanta area who arrived in a bus chartered by Georgia Women's Action for New Directions.

Dr. Lowery is well-known advocate for environmental justice issues. In a statement for the organization he founded, Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, he said, "The disproportionate impact and siting of environmental hazards in and near communities of color is well documented. This pattern persists and we work with local communities to help ensure enforcement of environmental regulations protective of human health and the environment."

Rev. Charles Utley, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League's Environmental Justice Coordinator, said, "We are very pleased to have Dr. Lowery here today. His wisdom and his experience are like a guiding star for the residents of Shell Bluff." Rev. Utley reminded the assembly of the Japanese nuclear meltdown and added, "After the disaster that took place in March, all Americans should be asking the question: Why should we be investing in such a dangerous adventure when there are other alternatives?"

Bobbie Paul, executive director of Georgia WAND, spoke of the need for unity, saying, "ALL Georgians will be affected and should be concerned because no nuclear reactor is safe. Fukushima has taught us that the unthinkable can happen so now is the time to stop this nuclear madness before it stops us." Georgia WAND is organizing a series of meetings like the one in Shell Bluff opposing nuclear power.

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Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery is a minister in the United Methodist Church and leader in the American civil rights movement. He became the third president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, after Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and his immediate successor, Rev. Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, and participated in most of the major activities of the African-American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda has been active on air quality, water and waste issues for many years and works closely with Georgia environmental organizations helping to ensure a focus on environmental justice.

Georgia Women's Action for New Directions (WAND) is an independent grassroots, woman-led organization that seeks to direct women's voices into a powerful movement for social change. WAND was established in 1982 by Helen Caldicott, long-time anti-nuclear activist.

The Concerned Citizens of Shell Bluff was organized by Rev. Utley in response to the proposed nuclear power plant expansion at Plant Vogtle. He pastors an independent Baptist church in Shell Bluff and has long been an advocate for environmental justice issues. He joined the Defense League's staff in 2002. The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League was founded in 1984 and now has projects and chapters in seven southeastern states.

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