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## PRESS RELEASE

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# Leadership Award Winners Declare a Different Kind of Energy Crisis for Post-9/11 America

## Does New Pressure on the Environment Make Us Safer or Undermine Long-term Security?

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Will the environment become another casualty of 9/11? Across the nation, grassroots leaders are attempting to return the environment to the public agenda, even as new environmental threats grow.

“Since the catastrophic events of last fall, pressure is building to develop energy policies that could hasten the devastation of our nation’s mountains, forests, streams and mountain communities,” says Janet Fout, Co-Director of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition in West Virginia. “But is intensified exploitation of natural resources necessarily the best route toward homeland security?”

Fout is one of 20 winners of the 2001 Leadership for a Changing World award, a program of the Ford Foundation in partnership with the Advocacy Institute and New York University. Each year, Leadership for a Changing World recognizes the work of 20 community leaders from across the country.

Leadership for a Changing World award winners in West Virginia, Alaska, California, Idaho and Nebraska argue against environmental exploitation for short-term gain in the conflict with terrorism, and for promotion of alternative energy sources as part of a post-9/11 national-security and energy strategy.

Please consider these LCW winners as sources for upcoming stories, editorials, and programs:

- Two West Virginia women fighting mountaintop removal and other destructive mining practices
- A member of the Gwich’in tribe (who call themselves “the Caribou People”) battling to protect the land, culture, and caribou from proposed Alaska oil drilling
- An immigrant from Oaxaca, Mexico, struggling for immigrant and environmental justice
- A single mother in Idaho taking on powerful mining interests in the Northwest
- A Great Plains lawyer protecting poor communities from environmental exploitation

“All of these leaders have something new and fresh to say about the direction of the country,” says Kathleen D. Sheekey, President and CEO of the Advocacy Institute. “They see the environment and social justice as indivisible. Their leadership styles may be different — quieter, and more collaborative – but they’re the real thing. Their stories and perspectives are inspiring. They’re firefighters of a different kind.”

(more)

For more information about the program, or for interviews, please contact Deborah Walter at [dlwaltr@aol.com](mailto:dlwaltr@aol.com) or (908) 522-1677

LEADERSHIP FOR A CHANGING WORLD

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## *New American Leadership Voices*

### **Is the U.S. government trading away the federal Clean Water Act, and West Virginia's mountains, in the name of national security?**

**Dianne Bady and Janet Fout are available for interviews. Contact information:**  
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On May 2, powerful floods swept through West Virginia, killing nine people and leaving hundreds homeless. Dianne Bady and Janet Fout, Co-Directors of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, believe that such frequent, devastating floods are due in part to the coal-mining practice of mountaintop removal, which denudes forests, alters the watershed and reduces the land's ability to absorb water. After decades of flooding, pollution and the permanent alteration of some of nation's most cherished wilderness, the mining industry and government are making a new push for mountaintop removal and valley fill. "To bolster public support, public officials connect the need for energy development — more coal-fired power plants and the weakening of current environmental regulations — with homeland security," says Fout. On May 3, the federal government announced plans to legalize valley fills, thus encouraging the practice of mountaintop removal, which would jeopardize watersheds not only in West Virginia, but also across the nation.

If enacted, the new rules would undermine the 30-year-old federal Clean Water Act. To oppose the change, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, along with other groups, launched a protest across West Virginia and in Washington D.C.. Five days later, in an unexpected turn of events, U.S. District Court Judge Charles H. Haden II ruled against the legalization of valley fills. Bady and Fout see this as a victory in their ongoing fight. An appeal is expected. "We are tired of being the energy sacrifice zone for the nation," says Bady, warning that the attempt to unleash mountaintop removal and valley fill may be one of the first volleys fired on the environment in the name of national security. Bady and Fout, winners of the Leadership for a Changing World award, place increasing emphasis on their work for campaign-finance reform, which they see as one remedy to ongoing threats to the environment and the public's economic and health interests. (Recently, Bady's and Fout's fellow award winner, Laura Forman, a hero to environmentalists nationwide, collapsed and died while leading a protest rally against mountaintop removal.)

### **In the wake of 9/11, a Gwich'in woman rallies worldwide support to defend the Caribou People and a treasured wildlife refuge from oil drilling**

**Sarah James is available for interviews. Contact information: (907) 587-5315**  
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Sarah James, a winner of the Leadership for a Changing World Award, grew up riding dog sleds and hunting and fishing with her family in the land of the caribou. Today she is the tribally appointed spokesperson of the Gwich'in Nation and lives in Arctic Village, an Alaskan village of 120, north of the Arctic Circle. James is waging an international campaign to protect her tribe's culture, the caribou upon which they subsist, and the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. Energy companies and high-ranking government officials contend that oil from the Alaskan refuge is needed to counter the threat of terrorism. James and others argue that, for her culture, oil drilling can create its own kind of terror; harming the environment, disrupting the caribou herd, and potentially destroying the sustenance and soul of her culture. "The gain isn't worth the price," she says. Indeed, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates that there are only six months' worth of economically recoverable oil in the Arctic Refuge, which would not be available for at least ten years. The Arctic Refuge would only reduce U.S. oil imports from 64 percent to 62 percent of total oil consumption in 2020.

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"We are the Caribou People. Maybe there are too few of us to matter. Maybe people think Indians are not important enough to consider in making their energy decisions. But it's my people who are ... the ones who have everything to lose," James writes in the introduction of *Arctic Refuge: A Circle of Testimony*. (James' co-authors include Jimmy Carter, Bill McKibben, and Wendell Berry.) James recommends phasing in an automobile fuel-economy standard of 40 mpg by 2012, which, she says, would save more oil in the next dozen years than the total projected yield from the Arctic Refuge, and make America more secure. James has worked with Arctic Village and neighboring Venetie to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and strengthen their traditional culture by using renewable resources such as wind and solar power. (In remote communities, electricity is produced using diesel fuel and generators.) Last summer, the tribe installed a solar-panel system. "This is the start of creating our own energy independence, of walking the walk," she says. James has also launched an effort to create a community radio station powered by renewable energy, which will broadcast over the airwaves and on the Internet in her people's indigenous language.

## Threatened by 9/11 backlash, an immigrant-rights group emerges as an unlikely champion of alternative energy sources

**Rufino Domínguez is available for interviews in Spanish and English. Contact information: (559) 499-1178 • [rdominguez@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rdominguez@sbcglobal.net) • [www.laneta.apc.org/fiob/](http://www.laneta.apc.org/fiob/)**

Rufino Domínguez Santos, an immigrant from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, is U.S. Coordinator of the Oaxaca Binational Indigenous Coalition, with headquarters in Fresno, California. Domínguez built an organization that reaches out to some 80,000 indigenous Oaxacans living in the United States. "Most recently, Rufino led a breakthrough victory on a dramatic environmental-justice issue," says Jonathan A. Fox, chair of Latin American and Latino Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz. In the 1990s, "three dozen Mixteco families settled in a trailer park right next to a highly toxic dump. Because the nearby residents could not speak or read Spanish or English, previous outreach efforts to educate and move them had failed. With legal support from C.R.L.A. (California Rural Legal Assistance), Rufino's Mixteco-language outreach and organizing, and three years of negotiating with various companies and government agencies, the Oaxaca Binational Indigenous Coalition achieved a \$5 million alternative housing solution for the entire community."



Domínguez a winner of the Leadership for a Changing World Award, is a modest man. But he does not shy away from recommending policy changes that would affect all Americans. Today, he calls for an increase in the use and production of renewable energy. Domínguez encourages state policymakers to set a goal of a minimum of 20 percent of our energy production and use from renewables by 2010. Doubling California's renewable energy would reduce carbon-dioxide emissions by more than 23.7 million metric tons per year by 2010 — the equivalent of taking 3.7 million cars off the road in that year — as well as reducing smog-forming nitrogen oxides, according to Domínguez and other activists. While he addresses the context of energy policy changes, his central environmental focus remains on the men and women in the fields, who suffer daily from the toxic injustice of pollution.

## A single mother struggles to protect the health of children across the Northwest from environmental hazards

**Barbara Miller is available for interviews. Contact information: (208) 784 8891-• [paccrcco@imbris.com](mailto:paccrcco@imbris.com) • <http://www.nidlink.com/~paccrcco/>**

In a part of the United States where mining for metal has had a devastating effect on the environment and public health, Barbara Miller has mobilized residents to force a contamination cleanup. As Director of the Silver Valley People's Action Coalition, with headquarters in Kellogg, Idaho, Miller has created a network of health and policy officials who are examining the residual impacts of lead poisoning on public health throughout the Northwest. With Silver Valley as the starting point, the movement has spread across the region through such events as a Health Awareness Conference and a first-ever town meeting, which brought together officials in areas affected by mining



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and officials of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to discuss ways to protect the environment and public health.

Miller is currently working to persuade the E.P.A. to address 12 areas of the Superfund region that the technical advisors have identified as still toxic – especially the removal of lead contamination from the interiors of homes. Her highest priority today is the establishment of the Community Lead Health Project in Silver Valley, to provide a place where children, former workers and residents will, for the first time in a century, easily be able to obtain diagnosis of and treatment for lead poisoning. Rather than viewing pollution through a single focus, Miller considers care of land and water to be part of a larger stewardship that includes the physical, mental and economic health of people and the community. The coalition is currently fighting to save the National E.P.A. Ombudsman's office.

## A public-interest attorney fights for Great Plains victims of social and environmental injustice

**Milo Mumgaard is available for interviews.** Contact information: (402) 438-8853 • [mmumgaard@neappleseed.org](mailto:mmumgaard@neappleseed.org) • <http://www.NeEqualJustice.org>



Milo Mumgaard, Executive Director of Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, with headquarters in Lincoln, Nebraska, offers legal support for new immigrants, families on welfare and the rural poor. “We are now moving into environmental-justice work more heavily,” says Mumgaard. “Environmental decisions create disproportionately negative impacts upon low-income and minority communities. For example, we have helped low-income meatpacking workers living next to meatpacking plants get new regulations dealing with the toxic air in their communities, and we will focus this summer on building public participation on these issues.” Mumgaard points to the toxic hydrogen sulfide produced in meatpacking towns, and the high health costs low-income immigrant communities are forced to bear.

Mumgaard and his fellow community leaders are also speaking out against new factory farms in low-income rural areas with few environmental protections. In Omaha, community organizations representing low-income, minority neighborhoods are calling for additional Environmental Protection Agency efforts to remediate lead contamination in residential soil from nearly 100 years of lead refining and smelting. Appleseed is also working with the Sierra Club and other organizations to reduce Omaha’s urban sprawl. “Money that could be used to create good inner-city jobs and neighborhoods is being used to create environmental problems,” says Mumgaard. “We find that we are gaining some new and unusual allies with this line of work. You can’t separate social justice, economics, and the environment. To do so is to ignore the way people live — and the way they should be able to live.” Mumgaard also says 9/11 has affected the overall mood of the country toward the kind of work that he and other social-justice leaders do. He adds, “What concerns me is that, after 9/11, people say about our work, ‘Aren’t there more important things to worry about now?’ But the reality is there *aren’t* more important things to worry about. Injustice is injustice, wherever it occurs and whoever does it.”

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