



**STATEMENT OF DELMA BENNETT
TO THE
US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD, DIOXIN REVIEW PANEL
PUBLIC MEETING**

**WASHINGTON, DC
JULY 13, 2009**

Hello, my name is Delma Bennett, and I am a member of Mossville Environmental Action Now ("MEAN"). Thank you for having this meeting. I would like to speak to you about the reason why this Dioxin Reassessment must be finalized in a way that upholds our human rights, today. The health consequences endured by people who are living in communities like my community, Mossville, Louisiana, a community surrounded by 14 toxic industrial facilities are severe and are permitted to operate based on environmental law.

The community of Mossville was settled by African American families in the 1790's and at that time, it was a very healthy and vibrant community. Mossville is an unincorporated community that is now surrounded by 14 toxic industrial facilities that have made our air unhealthy to breathe and our waters unsafe for fishing, swimming, and boating. Half of our residents are children, many of whom use respirators and suffer from skin rashes. My wife is battling with an issue that is depleting her white blood cell count. She is not the only woman in the community with this problem.

The problem that I have is under current law it is perfectly legal for these facilities to release millions of pounds of toxic chemicals a few yards from our homes because the law does not consider how close these facilities are to our homes, schools, churches, and playgrounds. Mossville has the largest concentration of vinyl production facilities in the United States, a coal-fired power plant, and a large oil refinery – all have numerous permits under the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act to pollute our community.

Since 1998, the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has conducted an Exposure Investigation of Dioxins in my community. This effort came about at the insistence of MEAN and the Mossville residents. We learned that the Mossville residents have 3

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times higher dioxin levels in our blood, than the average citizen. The residents in my community have long complained about the health problems that a university health study has linked to industrial pollution. Unfortunately, that was not enough evidence for your agencies to identify the root cause of our dioxin contamination. The research done by MEAN with the help of the Subra Company and Advocates for Environmental Human Rights showed that 7 of the 14 toxic facilities report dioxin releases to the Toxic Release Inventory.

To prove our case, MEAN produced two reports, which I would like to include along with my statement for the record, *Industrial Sources of Dioxin Poisoning in Mossville, Louisiana: A Report Based on the Government's Own Data, Revised July 2007* and *Health Report on Mossville, Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana: The Chemicals and the Mossville Area Industrial Sources of the Chemicals Associated with the Medical Symptoms and Health Conditions of Mossville Resident, May 2009*. Dr. Sanjay Gupta and the medical unit of CNN were so interested in the health disparity and toxic contamination in our community that they featured Mossville in the documentary, "*Toxic America*."

We want a dioxin reassessment that requires all environmental permitting and monitoring that will assure that any dioxin emissions will not increase the risk of adverse health on communities like mine. We also want a dioxin reassessment that respects our human rights by applying the precautionary principle instead of the risk assessment model, the disparate harm already done to the Mossville community proves that a risk assessment model will not protect human health.

Thank you.

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