



Press release

April 6, 2020

Comité Diálogo Ambiental Wins \$125,000 Environmental Justice Award

Members of the *Iniciativa de EcoDesarrollo de Bahía de Jobos* (IDEBAJO) are pleased to share that its partner organization, the **Comité Diálogo Ambiental**, has been awarded a \$125,000 grant for their 2020-2021 **Campaña por Agua y Electricidad Limpia/Campaign for Clean Water and Electricity**. JustFund coordinated the award call.

Diálogo's **Campaña por Agua y Electricidad Limpia/Campaign for Clean Water and Electricity** will advocate for sustainable, community-based solar energy alternatives. Project organizers will continue to focus on the human and environmental health harms caused by the AES coal-burning power plant in Guayama, Puerto Rico. The campaign emphasizes coal-ash-waste removal, water clean-up procedures and water monitoring, and learning about and advancing community solar. Projects will include: 1) a community-produced documentary, as well as community screenings and discussions, 2) organizational workshops for water and soil sampling, 3) citizen science trainings, and 4) technical support for ongoing efforts to shut down the AES plant and for transformation of the local community's electric system to onsite/rooftop solar. Campaign collaborators include: Víctor Alvarado Guzmán, Yaminette Rodríguez, Jorge Ortiz Colón, Gloricea Santiago, Mabette Colón Pérez, Nelson Santos Torres, Roberto José Thomas Ramírez, Lymarie Morales, Ismenia Figueroa, Héctor Alvarado, Carmen De Jesús, Daniel De Jesús, Héctor Sánchez, Luis Santiago, José Luis "Chema" Baerga, Hery Colón, and Ruth "Tata" Santiago.

The AES plant has contaminated the South Coast Aquifer, the primary source of drinking water for tens of thousands of southeastern Puerto Rico residents. Local community members and US diasporic Puerto Rican partners have organized against the plant demanding the immediate end of illegal coal-ash dumping along Puerto Rico's southern coast and 14 municipalities, the Dominican Republic, and Florida and closure of the AES plant. Exposure to this combustion residual waste, which contains multiple toxic heavy metals, including arsenic, has been linked to serious health problems, reproductive injustices, including spontaneous abortions and children with birth defects. Several epidemiological studies report high incidences of a host of human health problems, including cancer, hearing loss, and asthma in Jobos Bay communities. In addition to the AES plant, Jobos Bay is also home to the Aguirre thermoelectric power complex, which burns bunker C fuel oil and shares a fence with local neighbors who face continual water, noise, and air pollution.

For more information about this campaign, please contact local project lead, **Ruth Santiago**, at rstgo2@gmail.com. Additional information about IDEBAJO, the Comité Diálogo Ambiental, and the grant call organizer are available at the following links: <https://idebajo.wordpress.com/>; <https://www.facebook.com/idebajo.idebajo/>; <https://www.justfund.us/>.

This grant proposal was co-authored by Dr. Catalina de Onís, Ruth Santiago Esq., and Dr. Hilda Lloréns. Research documenting the long-time AES coal ash struggle in Puerto Rico and beyond is available at these links:



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Book: “Ustedes Tienen que Limpiar las Cenizas e Irse de Puerto Rico para Siempre!” *La Lucha por la Justicia Ambiental, Climática y Energética como Transfondo del Verano de Revolución Boricua 2019*, https://editoraemergente.com/product.php?id_product=225

Articles: Investigative Journalism Series by Omar Alfonso (*Centro Periodismo Investigativo, La Perla del Sur*), <http://periodismoinvestigativo.com/author/omaralfonso/>

“Imminent and Substantial Endangerment to Human Health and The Environment from Use of Coal Ash as Fill Material at Construction Sites in Puerto Rico: A Case Study,” <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812007835>

“In Puerto Rico, Environmental Injustice and Racism Inflammate Protest Over Coal Ash,” <https://theconversation.com/in-puerto-rico-environmental-injustice-and-racism-inflammate-protests-over-coal-ash-69763>

“For Many in Puerto Rico, ‘Energy Dominance’ is Just a New Name for Energy Colonialism,” <https://theconversation.com/for-many-in-puerto-rico-energy-dominance-is-just-a-new-name-for-us-colonialism-80243>

“Hurricane Maria: Puerto Rico’s Unnatural Disaster,” <https://www.latinorebels.com/2018/01/27/hurricane-maria-puerto-ricos-unnatural-disaster/>

“Traveling on Coal’s Death Route: From Puerto Rico’s Jobos Bay to La Guajira, Colombia,” <https://www.latinorebels.com/2018/08/14/coaldeathroute/>

“Puerto Rico’s Coal Ash Material Publics and the Summer 2019 Boricua Uprising,” <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/puerto-ricos-coal-ash-material-publics-and-the-summer-2019-boricua-uprising>

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