DEDICATION:
Rebecca: This book would never have happened without my partner-in-crime Charlie La Greca. I dedicate this work to the hope that we start building a more sustainable world for my daughter, Naomi Florence, for the children of New York City and for children everywhere.

Charlie: Enough thanks cannot be given to Rebecca Bratspies for her care and vision to create a work of this sort that serves as a bridge to a better understanding of environmental justice. I'm so grateful for her trust, patience, and belief in my abilities and it has been a joy to create these stories with her. This second book is dedicated to all of those brave souls and organizations who live their days protecting our planet. Whether it be civil protests, marches, sit ins, walk outs, working to change policies, teaching, planting trees, harvesting seeds, creating art, music, poems, stories, essays; anything that will nurture and protect our very fragile ecosystem. I'm constantly learning and forever inspired by their efforts and love for our earth and each other.

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It was my first time returning to Forestville since last summer. I couldn’t wait to see all my friends and family.

But I had no idea what I was coming back to.

Forestville was under threat again.

Another environmental threat, and this time it was already here...

...choking us out one by one.
**SIS!**

**Surprise!**

**Why aren't you playing?**

**They just cancelled the game. Poor air quality and too hazardous.**

**You can say that again.**

**Gah!**

**Troop made it though! And so did mom.**

**Well, let's go meet 'em and get your favorite food.**

**That's cool! I'm good. I'll connect with you guys later.**

**Oh, it's like that?**

**Pshh! I got stuff going on, yo.**
Looks like our fella needs a little love, eh?

Mayah! Paving us a visit, huh?

Summer break. Troops taking me around.

This air is strangling our park.

Yeah, we're working hard to care for it, but while you were away, Advanced Energy really ramped up operations.

More people, with more computers, and more lights...

More output... I get it, phew...

Problem is, the power plant has been here for decades.

Before I was born.

Actually before the Clean Air Act, so it has almost no air pollution controls.

And two years ago when you left for college, Advanced Energy proposed to expand even more.

I think troop emailed me about the hearing but... I was so busy with school.
I was trying to get the word out but they caught us on our heels.

We did manage to get a small crew there.

I gave them an earful!

Each of us got two minutes.

I could have used a hundred!

And get this...

The next day advanced energy filed their expansion application.

Like that!

So much for actually listening to us.

Dang...

Hey, what do ya say I show you our new digs?

Plaf

Plaf

What?

And get out of this chest burning fog?
YOU THINK ADVANCE ENERGY WAS WORKING ON THIS FOR YEARS?

Yeah, and only near the end did they let us, the public, know.

This gave us only a small window to participate.

AND NOW THERE WILL BE A HEARING ON THE EXPANSION?

THAT'S RIGHT! SOUNDS LIKE YOUR EDUCATION IS PAYING OFF, BY THE WAY...

Notice how quiet it is? People tend to stay inside now cuz the air is so bad.

CREepy! ...so, where are we now in the process?

S.A.F.E
Social Activism for our Environment

Well... technically... we're home...

HA HA

After you, milady!
YOU READY?

CLICK!

whoa!

WELL...

SAFE

I LOVE IT!

YOU GUYS HAVE BEEN BUSY.
RECEPTION AREA.
MY DESK.
I'M NOW THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZER.

THE CONFERENCE AND BREAK ROOM.
SIT DOWN, I'LL MAKE YOU SOME OF TROOP'S BREW.

YOU REALLY HAVE ORGANIZED.
THIS PLACE IS GREAT!

DIDJA SEE OUR NEW WEBSITE?

GLUP GLUP GLUP

Ting!

IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS HE'S BEEN SOCIAL NETWORKING UP A STORM ABOUT ADVANCED ENERGY. HE'S GOTT THE COMMUNITY BUZZING, TWO THOUSAND FOLLOWERS, AND GROWING.

NOW... THAT'S WEIRD. HIS NAME... IT'S AWFULLY CLOSE TO MY COUSIN SALVADOR.

OH MAN...
IT'S THIS GUY, "EL SALVADOR".

CHECK IT.

WOAH, IT IS KINDA STRANGE. IT'S SPANISH FOR "THE SAVIOR".

YA THINK HE'S HARASSFUL?

HOPEFULLY NOT.
THERE'S MORE TO PEOPLE THAN THEIR AVATARS.
TOLD YA I'D MEET YA.

YOU GET ALL YOUR HANG TIME IN WITH YOUR FRIENDS?

FIGURED I WOULD LET YOU GUYS DO YOUR BORING LEGAL MUMBO JUMBO.

THANKS, I THINK.

EVERYTHING'S A JOKE WITH YOU.

THIS IS OUR NEIGHBORHOOD WE NEED TO PROTECT IT.
DEFEND IT.

JEEZ, SORRY...
AT LEAST I'VE GONE TO SEE SALVADOR.
I'VE KEPT MY PROMISE AND GO TO VISIT ALL THE TIME.

I KNOW, I'M SORRY TOO, BEAN.
SO...WE HAVE THE LICENSING HEARING COMING UP?

RIGHT, IT'S OUR LAST CHANCE TO TURN THE TIDE ON THIS.

BUT WE ONLY HAVE TWO WEEKS.

WE NEED A STRATEGY.

WELL, THE AIR IS ALREADY CRAZY BAD.

WE BOTH KNOW THAT.

BUT WE HAVE TO CONVINCE THEM.

REMEMBER WHAT WE DID AGAINST GREEN SOLUTIONS YEARS AGO?

WE GATHERED STATS, TESTIMONIALS... AND PROOF. EXACTLY.

SO WHAT HAPPENS ONCE WE GET ALL OF OUR FINDINGS?

WELL, THE LICENSING BOARD APPROVED OUR REQUEST TO INTERVENE.

SO WE'RE PARTIES, JUST LIKE ADVANCED ENERGY. THEY'RE EVEN PROVIDING US WITH AN EXPERT TO HELP US MAKE OUR CASE.

WE NEED TO GET READY FOR A TRAIL TYPE HEARING.

HOW LONG IS YOUR BREAK?

TIL SEPTEMBER.

GOOD, CUZ WE NEED YOU.

AND YOU, TOO!
CRACKS IN THE
EXCUSE ME?
HEM

HEY!
GET BACK HERE!
It was one thing when he was taunting them online.

Yeah, but this is actually firing the beast.

...and looks to be heading in a bad direction.

It sure got attention.

Just as long as he's not attributed to us.

It's awesome! This guy is doing something not just talking, talking, talking...

It's eerie, his name... ...It's so close to Salvador.

Well... let's get started.
EVERYONE, MEET TONY ALBA. HE IS OUR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EXPERT.

THANKS, TROOP.

I'M HERE TO HELP YOU TAKE AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT ADVANCED ENERGY'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT.

AFTER LOOKING IT OVER, HERE IS WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW...

WHAT IS THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT?

WHAT'S THAT?

A LOT OF TIMES THERE WILL BE SEVERAL NEW PROJECTS GOING ON AT THE SAME TIME.

EACH PROJECT WILL STUDY ITS OWN IMPACT.

BUT THEY'RE ALL HAPPENING TOGETHER?

EXACTLY.

CUMULATIVE IMPACT MEANS THINKING ABOUT ALL OF THEM TOGETHER AND FigURING OUT THEIR COMBINED EFFECT.

MAKE SENSE?

SO...
...they all affect the same air, the same water.

right! your town could have good clean air, then a new plant comes in, and another plant wants to expand.

exactly. they treat each project as if it's the only one instead of thinking about them all together.

you're saying they underestimate the total impact?

and the bus depot wants to add extra buses.

so, we need to document the current air quality.

and the predicted impact of every-thing being built.

and how many days has there been no recess at our schools?

well, we know for a fact games are being canceled.

we can also use the stats we collected from our last fight, such as traffic, and other stuff.

great! let's keep going.
Later...

Hi.

We missed you at the meeting.

Where were you?

I was busy.

This is important, Bina! We got lots to get done! Arg! Sometimes...

I do have swimming, judo, summer theater, and about a million other things.

Hey guys, cool it.

Foop!

That's it! Settle down you guys! Mayah, give her some space!

I'm selfish! Have you even visited cousin Salvi once?

I've been too busy!

So who's selfish?!!

Fine!

Just don't make any more promises, Bina!
KLAK

!?!

hey!
hey!

we got ya on camera!

smile, ya jerk!

fuu-lung
TODAY! THE MYSTERY OF EL SALVADOR CONTINUES... CAUGHT ON FILM LOCKING THE FRONT GATE OF ADVANCED ENERGY.

DONALD WASTLER, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER FROM ADVANCED ENERGY, HAD THIS TO SAY.

THIS ACT OF VANDALISM COSTS ADVANCED ENERGY HOURS OF HEADACHE.

WE DON'T KNOW WHO THIS EL SALVADOR PERSON IS, BUT WE WILL NOT TOLERATE CRIMINAL ACTS.

CRIMINAL ACTS? HE PUT A LOCK ON THE GATE...

YOU ARE SUCH A JERK.

BIG WHOOP!

MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T COME TO THE HEARING TOMORROW.

WHATEVER...

SHOULDN'T YOU BE LEAVING FOR COLLEGE SOON ANYWAY?
THE HEARING.

SO DO YOU GUYS HAVE REPRESENTATION?

YEAH, I CHECKED IN ALREADY. I'M OUR REPRESENTATION.

CAN YOU DO THAT?

WOW!

YEAH, I USED TO BE A LAWYER, BUT WITH MY HEALTH I HAD TO STEP AWAY.

WE HAVEN'T REALLY NEEDED IT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL, BUT THIS HEARING CALLS FOR DUSTING OFF THE DEGREE.

TROOP! HOW ARE YOU DOING?

I'M WELL. THANKS.

SHALL WE GO IN?

GOOD AFTERNOON. ADVANCED ENERGY, YOU MAY BEGIN.

YOUR HONOR WE CALL PHILIP KWON, THE ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER WHO CONDUCTED THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON BEHALF OF ADVANCED ENERGY.
AFTER MR. KWON'S TESTIMONY:

IN CONCLUSION, THE EXPANSION, MEANS NEW EMPLOYMENT RAISING THE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE.

THANK YOU, COUNSEL.

MR. THIEBOULD?

THANK YOU, YOUR HONOR.

MR. KWON, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT CUMULATIVE IMPACTS.

AS YOU KNOW, A NEW DISTRIBUTION CENTER HAS JUST OPENED HERE IN FORESTVILLE.

DID YOUR AIR QUALITY ASSESSMENT INCLUDE THOSE IMPACTS?

NO.

THIS ADDED POLLUTION FROM 4000 TRUCK TRIPS A YEAR TO FORESTVILLE'S ALREADY POOR AIR QUALITY.

DID YOU INCLUDE THE NEW WASTE TRANSFER STATION THAT OPENED THIS MONTH?

NO.

HOW ABOUT THE BUS DEPOT?

NO.

THE HIGHWAY EXPANSION?

NO.

...CONSIDER THE NEW PAINT FACTORY?

NO.

THANK YOU, NO FURTHER QUESTIONS.
I’m the School District Six Superintendent. The poor air quality affects our School Sports, Recess, and other Outdoor Activities. We had to cancel 40% of our programs. It’s not fair to the kids and costs us money.

I’m representing Mercy Hospital. Asthma admissions have been skyrocketing. We don’t have enough beds. This board should be looking for ways to decrease emissions, not increase them.

One hour later.

The data about current and projected traffic shows...

Local businesses are already negatively affected by the pollution and this expansion will...

The community’s quality of life has already been harmed...

Until...

Thank you all for your time. We will take this matter under advisement.

The board will have a decision shortly.
GREAT JOB, GANG! I'M REALLY PROUD OF YOU!

YOU KIDDIN'? IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, TROOP...

YEAH, YOU KILLED IT!

I THINK WE DID REALLY WELL.

THAT WAS AMAZING.

NOW WE JUST WAIT AND SEE.

I HAVE TO GET GOING, GUYS. I WANNA SHARE THE NEWS WITH BINA AND MY MOM!
Is THAT...?

WAIT?

PSSHHHH...

CLANG CLANG

... 

AE WASTE
STOP, YOU LITTLE CRETIN!

YOU'RE DONE.

I GOT YOU, AND I'M CALLING THE COPS.

NO, PLEASE DON'T!

IT'S...
CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MAY BE A TOOL BUT IT’S ONLY PART OF THE BATTLE. PAINT WILL WASH AWAY BUT COMMUNITY BONDS CAN’T BE WASHED AWAY AND NEITHER CAN THE LAW.

THAT’S MY SIS.
THANKS FOR COMING OUT TODAY, GUYS. THE RULING CAME IN, AND IT’S PRETTY GOOD.

DAYS LATER...

THE DECISION IS IN OUR FAVOR BECAUSE ADVANCED ENERGY DIDN’T CONSIDER THE CUMULATIVE IMPACTS.

SO THEY HAVE TO SHUT THE PLANT DOWN?

NO, IT’S NOT OVER. ADVANCED ENERGY DIDN’T DO AN ADEQUATE STUDY BUT...

...THEY CAN START OVER AND STILL MIGHT ULTIMATELY GET WHAT THEY WANT.

WAIT... THEY COULD STILL WIN?

MAYBE, BUT WE NOW HAVE TIME ON OUR SIDE.
They didn't pay much attention to us before, but now they will.

Nice!

This might even bring them to the table.

And give us the leverage we need.

Later...

Let's try a step ahead and keep planning for a negotiation.

Hold up a sec, Bean.

I hear El Salvador retired but we could sure use your help especially those tech skills of yours.

Really?

That's easy! We can run a social networking campaign for like $5 a day and reach thousands of people.

We can also let the local news know about the decision and post it all over our social pages, blog and website.

That's the stuff.
How’d that happen?

Advanced Energy’s lawyer called me.

What did he want?

I said no. If Advanced Energy wants to meet, they can come to us.

So we’re going to meet here at our office.

That is awesome!

Hahah, it is!

Now, let’s finish up. They’ll be here soon!

He invited us to a meeting at his office.

What did you tell him?

Uhh-huh, well, in an hour actually.

So we’re meeting them today? As in like... now?
We would like to see if we can work something out. I suspect we actually have quite a bit of common ground.

Thank you for joining us. You asked for this meeting. So what's on your mind?

We're committed to finding a solution to the energy needs of Forestville.

Obviously, with regard to the expansion we are now back at the information gathering stage.

So what do you have in mind?

Well, here is what we're thinking...

Hour Two...

Hour Five...

Hour Eight...
TODAY, A BIG WIN FOR THE COMMUNITY AS S.A.F.E. ORGANIZERS AND ADVANCED ENERGY CAME TO AN AGREEMENT.

IMMEDIATELY SWITCH TO LESS POLLUTING FUEL TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY AND REDUCE POLLUTION.

OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS, ADVANCED ENERGY WILL PHASE OUT THE EXISTING PLANT, AND THEIR PROPOSED EXPANSION WILL NOW BECOME A 100% WIND FACILITY.

ADVANCED ENERGY WILL INVEST TWO MILLION DOLLARS IN COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUNDS, WHICH WILL INCLUDE MAINTAINING THE PARK, AND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR LOCAL STUDENTS TO STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE.

ADVANCED ENERGY'S DONALD WASTLER, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, HAD THIS TO SAY:

THIS IS A WIN FOR THE PEOPLE OF FORESTVILLE. ADVANCED ENERGY IS PROUDLY MEETING TODAY'S ENERGY NEEDS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY.
Both sides seemed happy with the result. S.A.P.E’s lawyer and spokesman Sebastian ‘Troop’ Theibould commented:

I’m so encouraged, we could never have gotten some of these provisions in a lawsuit. This is the true power of community and negotiation.

Community support was pivotal. But it was two sisters born and raised in Forestville, Mayah and Bina Powers, ages 20 and 15, who many claim were the heart and soul of this movement.

Our grass root efforts paid off.

This was for our cousin. Salvi, we did it!
TROOP AND I GOT YOUR FAVORITE, VEGGIES AND SOFRITO.

I KNEW I WOULD FIND YOU HERE.

YA KNOW, HE WOULD BE SO HAPPY RIGHT NOW.

I KNOW.

HE WASN'T JUST OUR COUSIN, MAYAH, HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND SINCE YOU LEFT.

I KNOW.

YOU DID ALL OF THIS FOR HIM.

WELL...

HE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T WANT US TO HOPE, SO I BROUGHT A LITTLE SOMETHING.

SO...

YOU READY TO GO BACK TO COLLEGE?
I have a lot more to learn about protecting the environment and the people. There is so much that needs doing.

...yes. A part of me knows I have to go back.

We couldn't have done it without you.

Keep our eyes open. This was a good win, but the next challenge is already coming, I'm sure.

Well, one thing's for sure, you both did a great job.

So what now?

Geez, does it ever stop?

No, it doesn't. And climate change is gonna make protecting our environment even harder.

Bring it, I'm ready!

And Bean, I promise. I'm gonna come back more often or maybe even have you come visit me!

That would be the best, I wish Salvi could join us.

A toast to Salvi, we miss you.

He can and will.
TO SALVADOR!
LEARN MORE ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental Justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Fair treatment means that no person or group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental impacts resulting from industry, development, and commerce.

Meaningful involvement means that potentially affected communities have an opportunity to participate in making the decision, and that their contribution can influence the outcome.

PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

(Below are the first three of seventeen principles as written by the Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental leadership.)

1) Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2) Environmental Justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3) Environmental Justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html

More Info: http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/
About the CUNY Center for Urban Environmental Reform (CUER)

CUER seeks new opportunities for citizen participation and citizen empowerment in environmental decision-making. Too often poor and minority communities are allocated more than their share of environmentally-polluting activities while having access to fewer environmental amenities (like trees and parks). The process of environmental decision-making is often confusing: with complex timelines and arcane rules. Communities often find themselves struggling to participate. I founded CUER to help level the playing field.

CUER’s mission is to revitalize participatory environmental democracy. Environmental decisions are about fundamental equality in a political community. Yet too often, an emphasis on private choices obscures the justice component of these decisions. CUER helps communities develop advocacy strategies responsive to the roles that power, access to information, and inequality play in shaping environmental outcomes. By facilitating an important social dialogue about the acceptability of environmental risks and the need for their equitable distribution, CUER helps build environmental citizenship.

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