

**PRESS RELEASE
ANNOUNCING APPOINTMENT OF NJEJA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



NEW JERSEY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

The [New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (NJEJA) Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that Melissa Miles will be assuming the leadership role of Executive Director for the statewide organization. NJEJA is the only New Jersey statewide organization whose mission is focused on environmental justice and also the only New Jersey statewide organization that addresses environmental issues whose leadership is a majority People Of Color. We are excited to welcome our new Executive Director who will continue to center the voices Of Color, low wealth, and indigenous communities throughout New Jersey in their struggles for environmental justice.



Melissa is joining the organization after more than seven years as the Environmental Justice Manager for the Newark based environmental justice organization, Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC).

Melissa Miles is a grassroots activist and organizer living in an Environmental Justice Community in Newark, New Jersey. Long considered the regions' dumping ground, and called a "sacrifice zone" and a "waste-shed" by advocates, it is fertile soil for seeding activism and growing visionaries. Melissa is one of many there awakened to the environmental justice struggles to support the birth of a new community rooted in place where people can live, work, learn, and play in health and harmony.

"I wasn't born, I was grown" is Melissa's personal tagline and speaks to her entry into environmental justice advocacy, which was the result of the political and popular education she received from community organizers at ICC. As a Newark resident Melissa was encouraged to testify at hearings on the clean-up of the Passaic River, the site of the world's largest concentration of dioxin. She did truck counts, air monitoring and community mapping with her

children in a double stroller. She was also part of the Community Advisory Board and represented the community at trainings on climate justice and disaster preparedness workshops before she was even fully invested in the cause. “When I became active in the struggle it was because others asked me to. It was when my son got asthma and I knew that pollution was the cause that I became an activist.”

“We are humbled to welcome such a dynamic and powerful leader as our next Executive Director. Melissa is someone who embodies the values and principles of environmental justice. She has both the lived experiences and the extensive professional and organizing background that make her an ideal leader for this position.” Ana Baptista, NJEJA Board Vice-Chair.

“We look forward to having such a talented, experienced and well respected environmental justice advocate leading our organization. She has also already demonstrated leadership skills that will help NJEJA achieve new heights and grow in new directions.”

Melissa is educationally well-credentialed with a MA in Anthropology from The New School, but she is also adamant when it comes to solutions to the world’s current environmental crises the best and most relevant come from communities and not from universities: “Those that are most affected, have the solutions” is the sentiment from which her advocacy stems. She is a part of several national coalitions including the Climate Justice Alliance, Moving Forward Network, The Coalition for Healthy Ports and the international coalitions, The Movement of People Affected By Dams (MAB) and the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. She is also part of the New Jersey Environmental Justice Advisory Council responsible for advising state agencies including the Department of Environmental Protection on issues of Environmental Justice. Her “expertise” is rooted in her lived experience and her commitment to making sure that people at the frontlines are the protagonists in the struggle for their future.

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The [New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance \(NJEJA\)](#) is an alliance of New Jersey-based organizations and individuals committed to working together to create healthy, sustainable and just communities by eliminating environmental injustices in low income and communities of color. Together we support and work with communities through local, state, and national policy development, targeted campaigns and organizing, education, advocacy, training and technical assistance focused on critical environmental justice issues.