

## **Environmental & Peace Activists Join for “Instead of Oil”**

A favorite poster during the Vietnam War said “War Is Not Healthy for Children and Other Living Things.” The message has steadily increased in importance as people realize that environmental effects of war can last an eternity.

This will be the theme of the “Instead of Oil” Black & Green Wednesday program planned by the Gateway Green Alliance and Instead of War Coalition. It will be at 7 pm, July 5 at the Regional Arts Commission, 6128 Delmar Blvd.

The event will begin with a memorial tribute to Damu Smith by *Post-Dispatch* columnist Sylvester Brown. Smith died of colon cancer on May 5, 2006. A St. Louis native, he grew up in the Carr square Village housing project. Smith’s life was spent intertwining the threads of environmental, civil rights and peace activism.

Perhaps best known for helping expose the “Cancer Alley” stretch of land between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Smith was a toxics campaigner for Greenpeace USA. He formed the National Black Environmental Justice Network and Black Voices for Peace.

Michael McPhearson, National Executive Director of Veterans For Peace, is well aware of how war disproportionately affects people of color by taking lives, draining money from social services and contaminating the environment. Representing the Instead of War Coalition, he will cover “The Struggle for Oil and the US Attempt at World Domination.”

McPhearson sees the Iraq conflict as more than securing oil for the US. He views it as part of an overall goal to position the US for “world hegemony.” Costs to the Black community such as deaths and injury of military personnel, erosion of social services, and increased pollution from toxic production are likely to worsen over time.

Outreach and Development Director for the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Erin Noble will explain why she believes that climate change is “the biggest environmental threat facing us today.” It is widely felt that global warming increased the strength of hurricane Katrina before it smashed into New Orleans in 2005. Coastal cities around the world are similarly threatened by global warming, which scientists say is largely caused by burning fossil fuels.

Effects are even more apparent in Iraq, as Bud Deraps will describe in his talk on “Environmental Destruction in Iraq.” During trips there, Deraps has seen first hand birth defects resulting from depleted uranium. Also a member of Veterans For Peace, he will describe how billions have been spent on oil, energy and water reconstruction.

The program will conclude with Larry Rice of the New Life Evangelistic Center. Rice insists that “There will be no peace until we stop our wars for oil with the alternatives to oil becoming standard in the lives of US citizens. These alternatives are free and exist all around us.”

The alternatives include solar energy, wind energy, hydroelectric power, geothermal power (harnessing the constant temperatures below the earth's surface), vegetable oil, hydrogen, and aqua fuel (converting carbon and water into combustible gas). Rice will describe the Mid-American Renewable Energy Center in New Bloomfield, Missouri where his staff use these alternative energy sources instead of fossil fuels.

The July 5 event is sponsored by the Gateway Green Alliance, Instead of War Coalition, Universal African Peoples Organization, Peace Economy Project and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Bring your questions, thoughts and comments for discussion.

The program will be moderated by J’Asa McCaleb of the Gateway Green Alliance and Universal African Peoples Organization. There is no charge for attending. Those wishing to hear a foretaste from speakers should tune into Jean Ponzi’s Earthworms (KDHX 88.1 FM) at 7 pm on Tuesday, June 27 or Zaki Baruti’s Power Hour (WGNU 920 AM) at 9 pm on Thursday, June 29. For more information, call 314-727-8554 or visit [www.gateway-greens.org](http://www.gateway-greens.org) or [www.insteadofwar.org](http://www.insteadofwar.org)