

Health Scholar Chris Heaney joins Minister Campbell in his White House visit to discuss public health benefits of clean energy economy

Washington, D.C., November 20, 2009:

Minister Robert Campbell, long-time Chapel Hill, North Carolina activist for social and environmental justice, visited the White House on Friday, Nov. 20th, to speak to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius about issues in the Rogers-Eubanks community related to clean energy and public health.

He was invited to join this distinguished group in a White House briefing on the public health benefits of a clean energy economy. This event brought together public health advocates and community leaders, experts from U.S. agencies and universities, and White House officials for a discussion on the lasting public health benefits of a clean energy economy.

After his participation, Minister Campbell said, "This was a great honor and privilege, to be able to tell the story of the Rogers-Eubanks community, to have our voice heard on a national level. We are concerned about our drinking water and our health and the fact that we are bordered by solid waste facilities. This is not just something for our community, but a national issue: the quality of life and health as we move into a clean energy future. It is imperative not to stand at the doors of injustice, but to open the doors and enter. We must be the bold voice and speak out against injustice for those who have no voice."

UNC Kellogg Health Scholar-Community Track, Chris Heaney, who has developed a CBPR project to investigate residents' concerns related to air and water contamination, accompanied Minister Campbell on his trip and said, "witnessing him take steps up the West Wing of the White House Executive Office Building was inspirational-- knowing he was carrying with him the results of community-based participatory research that supported many of the community's concerns with water and air quality, and would be able to share them with the highest level of our nation's public health leadership."

Minister Campbell participated in a breakout session with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Thomas R. Frieden and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Director, Linda Birnbaum. He left behind a 50 page briefing document detailing concerns about landfills, industrial agriculture and livestock operations, and the lack of safe drinking water and sewer services in marginalized, underserved communities of color. He also gave White House Office of Public Engagement Associate Director, Greg Nelson, EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson, and Health and Human Services Secretary, Kathleen Sebelius signed copies of the history book, Rogers Road, a CBPR project with UNC Health Behavior and Health Education Ph.D. student, Emily Eidenier.

After returning to Chapel Hill, Minister Campbell said he is, "focused on following-up with a new network of contacts and pursuing opportunities to improve the health and well-being of residents of the Rogers-Eubanks community." Minister Campbell presently serves as a member of the deacon board at the Faith Tabernacle Oasis of Love International Church and is President of the Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association (RENA), co-founder and co-chair of the Coalition to End Environmental Racism (CEER; <http://rogersroad.wordpress.com>), and 3rd Vice President and Head of the Environmental Justice Committee of the Chapel Hill/Carrboro NAACP. He is also a Board Member of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and community research associate in partnership with the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health.