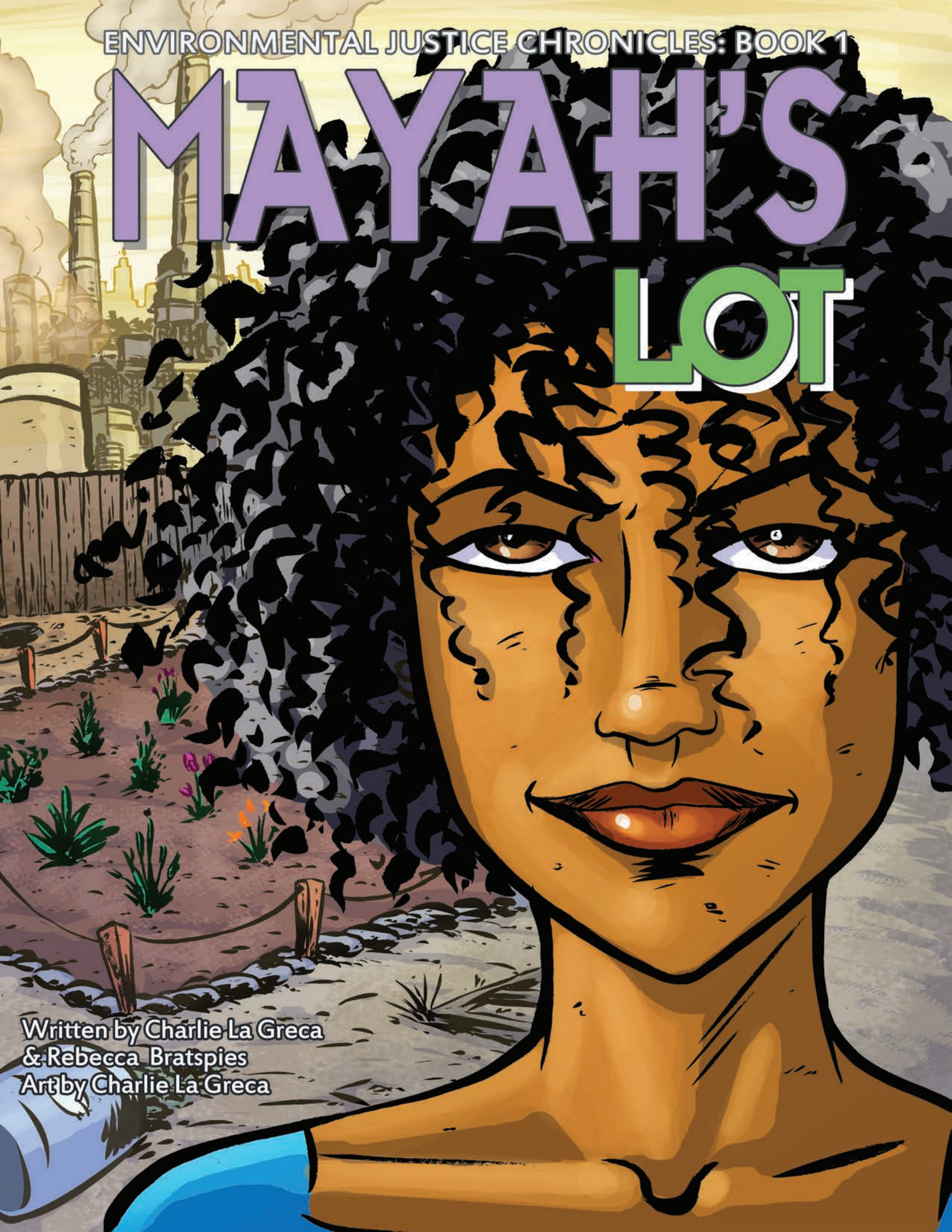


ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CHRONICLES: BOOK 1

MAYYAH'S LOT

Written by Charlie La Greca
& Rebecca Bratspies
Art by Charlie La Greca



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LOT

About the Artists

Charlie LaGreca has worked professionally in the illustration comics industry for 16 years. It all started at DC Comics, where Charlie worked for three years as an artist in the bullpen. His work has been seen in comics, magazines, newspapers, TV, digital online media, ad campaigns, branding, corporate meetings, and live performances from such notable companies as Disney, Nickelodeon, DC Comics, Scholastic, Lego, Top Shelf Comics, Golden Publishing, Fortune Magazine, Fuse TV, Versus TV, Starwood Westin Hotels, and more.

Charlie has also created original comics for a number of companies including: Disney, Nickelodeon, Allied Waste, Action Tec, C2Creative, and most recently Boehringer Ingelheim. He is also one of the founders and Vice President of Comic Book Classroom and Denver Comic Con, a charitable organization that fosters literacy in socioeconomically challenged schools through the use of comic books.

Rebecca Bratspies is a Professor of Law at the CUNY School of Law where she is the founding director of the CUNY Center for Urban Environmental Reform. She writes about environmental regulation, especially questions of fairness and sustainability. She is a scholar with the Center for Progressive Reform, an appointed member of the ABA Standing Committee on Environmental Law, and a member of the Executive Committee of the AALS Section on the Environment. Rebecca lives in New York with her partner Allen and their daughter Naomi.

www.CenterForUrbanEnvironmentalReform.org

A Note from the Editor

I founded CUER to address the problem of environmental justice the unfair and unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits. Too many of our environmental 'bads' (polluting activities) wind up in poor communities, especially communities of color.

These communities are already overburdened and generally have far fewer environmental 'goods' (pools, trees, parks or green spaces.) Because environmental decisionmaking can be confusing and hard to understand, these communities often find themselves struggling even to take part in the decisionmaking process.

CUER's mission is to change that! This book is a first step toward demystifying environmental decisionmaking. Through outreach and education, CUER helps communities identify and seize their moment to participate in environmental decisionmaking. By empowering communities to make their voices heard in environmental decisions that will affect them, I believe that decisions will be more fair, more democratic, and better for both humans and the environment.

We created this comic book to break down barriers. We hope that it will be a valuable resource for communities across New York and throughout the country.

Enjoy the book!

Rebecca Bratspies

Acknowledgments

This comic book is a project of the CUNY School of Law Center for Urban Environmental Reform. Its success is due to the help of many people. We would like to thank PS 122Q Principal Pamela Sabel, and teacher Dimitria Kamaris for making our collaboration with the students possible. Thanks to the SASF afterschool program for allowing our environmental justice comic book to be one of their after-school club activities. We especially want to thank our student collaborators for their help in making this project a success. Alex Serbanescu, Michael Espinosa, Alvi Bhuiyan, Shaik Abiden, Agniva Sinha, James Wang, Tiger Zhu, Anthony Lin, Gonzalo Palomino, Dinh Ha, Derek Yu, and Maria Dolores Alvarez all participated in a series of workshops with the artist Charlie La Greca and the editor Rebecca Bratspies. We could not have done this project without their help.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



I BET YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS.



MAYBE YOU THINK IT'S SOME PRIME TIME COP SHOW ON TV.

OR A BUNCH OF ACTIVISTS WITH SIGNS IN SOME REMOTE FOREST GETTING ALL UP IN PEOPLE'S FACES.



MAYBE IT'S THE EARTH FIGHTING EVIL PLANETS FOR ITS LIFE.

WHATEVER IT IS, MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW UNTIL IT'S STARIN' THEM IN THE EYES.



I HAD NO IDEA THAT IT ACTUALLY AFFECTS EVERY ONE OF US. THAT IS, UNTIL IT CAME TO MY HOME...

FORESTVILLE,
NEW YORK

IT'S FINE,
BINA,
I BEEN COMING
HERE FOR
WEEKS.

MAYAH,
YOU SURE
WE SHOULD
BE DOING
THIS?

THE FUTURE HOME OF
**GREEN
SOLUTIONS**

KEEP OUT!
THERE ARE BEARS!
FLOOD LIVES

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LOT





YOU JUST GOTTA BE MY LOOKOUT.

BUT I WANT TO COME OVER AND HELP!

YOU KIDDIN'? YOU'RE MY **TOP** SPY!

IF ANYONE IS COMING, **YOU** GOTTA LET ME KNOW, CAN YOU DO THAT?

OOH, I THINK SO.



'CUZ I'M **SUPER** SPY!



HOW ARE MY LITTLE PLANTS DOING?



NASTURTIUM LOOKS GOOD...

AZALEAS, TOO.



I GOT A **NEW** FRIEND FOR YOU!

IT'S **SPECIAL**, IT'S...

...A **CHINESE ASPEN**.





GET OVER HERE!

SO YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S BEEN TRESPASSING.



WHAT'S A KID LIKE YOU DOING IN HERE?



THIS LOCK AIN'T FOR SHOW 'N' TELL.

I OUGHTA TAKE YOU IN.



YO, OFFICER!

FIGHT GOING DOWN AT THE DELI ON 119TH!
THEY NEED HELP!

WHEEZE



WHEEZE

WHEEZE

I'LL CHECK IT OUT,
AND DON'T LET ME SEE YOU OVER HERE AGAIN!



YOU OKAY, KID?

YEAH.

YOU GOT TO BE CAREFUL.



HERE...



YOU SHOULD COME HANG WITH US, LEARN A LITTLE...

AND YOU MIGHT WANT TO FIND BETTER HELP.

NO ONE GETS PAST SUPERSPY!



QUIT MESSING OFF YOU TWO AND SET THE TABLE.

BUT THEN THIS MAN CAME AND SAVED MAYAH!



AND HE HAD A TANK THAT MADE A STRANGE WHEEZY NOISE.

THAT HELPS HIM BREATHE, I THINK.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING TAKING YOUR LITTLE SISTER OVER THERE?

TWERP!

WHA?



MAYAH, YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT. YOU NEED TO FOCUS AND KEEP STUDYING. COLLEGE IS JUST A FEW YEARS OFF.



I SAW MR. TATSUMI IN THE SUBWAY, HE GAVE ME AN ASPEN SEED THIS TIME

YOU EVER SEE THOSE?

NO, AND DON'T EVEN THINK OF PLANTING EM IN HERE. WE GOT ENOUGH OF YOUR ODDITIES.



HUMPH

THE NEXT DAY.

THE FUTURE HOME OF
GREEN
BUILDINGS

I KNEW YOU'D
BE BACK.

HUH!

I SAW YOUR
HANDIWORK
IN THE LOT.

WHATTA YA
GOT THIS TIME?

CHINESE
ASPEN.

SEEN
THOSE UP
NORTH.

BEAUTIFUL
IN THE FALL,
WE COULD USE
SOME OF THAT
HERE.

TELL YA WHAT:
HOP OVER AND DO
YOUR THING.

JUST SAW
THE COP GETTING
COFFEE.

OK!

HUH!?

M-MY
GARDEU...

TOXIC

ANT
CEMENT
BIOHAZARD





WELL, LOOK WHO IT IS!

YOU'RE GETTING HOME KINDA LATE. WHAT YOU UP TO?



NOT MUCH... YOU KNOW THAT OLD LOT OVER OFF LINCOLN AVENUE?

THE ONE RIGHT NEAR SCHULZ MIDDLE SCHOOL?

YEAH, THEY ARE LOOKING TO TURN IT INTO A WASTE DUMP AND STORE TOXIC POISONS THERE!

AW, THEY BEEN WANTING TO DO SOMETHIN' WITH THAT LOT FOR A LONG TIME.



YEAH BUT...

MAYAH, IT'S JUST BEEN SITTING EMPTY FOR YEARS, WHAT YOU EXPECT?



I'D EXPECT YOU GUYS TO CARE! THIS COULD BE TERRIBLE FOR US!

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS. WE CAN'T DO ANY THING ABOUT IT...

AND IF IT AIN'T A DUMP, IT'LL BE ANOTHER MALL.



WHATEVER... FORGET IT.

THERE COMES A POINT
WHERE YOU CAN'T
TAKE IT ANYMORE...



OTHERS SIT IDLY BY
WHILE PEOPLE WHO **DON'T**
EVEN LIVE IN OUR HOOD
DECIDE TO PUT LIQUID **DEATH**
ON OUR LAND.



NEXT TO OUR SHOPS,
CAFES, AND SCHOOLS.



BUT NOT ANYMORE
CUZ...

EARTH

GIRL

ZAP!

... **EARTH GIRL**
WON'T STAND
FOR IT!!

MAYAH...



ALGEBRA

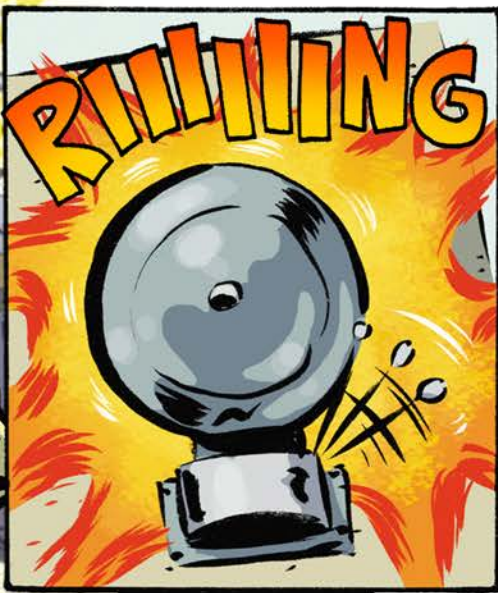


MAYAH!

HUH?

$y-k=a(x-h)^2$
 $x-h=a(y-k)^2$

OH, CRUD.
I SPACED
OUT.



GYM CLASS



ANNA, YOU WANNA
GO WITH ME TO THIS
MEETING TONIGHT?

IT'S IMPORTANT
'CUZ THEY'RE GOI-

YOU TOLD
ME ABOUT IT.
SOUNDS WEIRD,
AND I WOULDN'T
KNOW ANYONE.



PLUS, MY
PARENTS MIGHT
TAKE ME SHOPPING
FOR MY BIRTHDAY!

LUNCH



WOULD
YOU LIKE
ONE?

MAYAH!



YOU'RE NOT
EATING LUNCH?

I'M TRYING
TO GET PEOPLE
TO GO TO THIS
COMMUNITY
MEETING.



WHY?
THIS PLACE IS A
DEAD ZONE, AND
YOU'RE JUST GONNA
GET IN TROUBLE.
THINK ABOUT IT..

IN TWO YEARS, WE..
CAN BE OUTTA THIS
HOLE, AT A NICE
COLLEGE UPSTATE!



YEAH...
I GUESS
YOU'RE RIGHT.



EVERYONE HAVE A SEAT, WE GOT A **SERIOUS** TOPIC TONIGHT.



I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE CAUGHT THE PUBLIC NOTICE REGARDING THE LOT ON **LINCOLN** AND **121ST**.



IT WAS HARD TO FIND IN THIS WEEK'S PAPER, AND IT'D HAVE **SNUCK** PAST ME...

...HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR A **NEW FRIEND** WHO I'M SO GLAD... DECIDED TO COME.

...MAYAH.



WANNA TELL 'EM WHAT YOU SAW?

UH, OK. I'VE BEEN IN **FORESTVILLE** SINCE I WAS BORN, AND ONE OF MY **FAVORITE** PLACES TO GO IS THE LOT **TROOP** MENTIONED.



ANYWAY, LAST WEEK I HOPPED THE FENCE, AND MY GARDEN WAS **DESTROYED** AND I FOUND **PLANS** FOR **TOXIC WASTE STORAGE**.

THANKS, MAYAH.



THE AGENCY HAS **TENTATIVELY** APPROVED THE PERMIT FOR THE FACILITY..

AND THE **FORTY-FIVE** DAY COMMENT PERIOD STARTED **LAST WEEK**.

SO WE GOTTA GET OUR ACT TOGETHER.





LOOK IF WE GET THE FORESTVILLE APPROVAL WE'LL BE FINE.

WE'VE GOT TO **EXPAND** OUR WASTE HANDLING CAPABILITIES. THE INVESTORS ARE UP IN ARMS.



NO ONE IN THAT TOWN IS GOING TO SQUAWK, BUT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.



YOU KNOW WHAT? I'LL HANDLE THE HEARINGS. GOTTA GO.



GOOD MORNING!

WHY SO GLUM?



LULU, WE NEED TO EXECUTE ON OUR TRI-STATE WASTE STRATEGY.

IT'S THE KEY TO BUILDING OUR MARKET SHARE.

I SUGGEST WE LAY OUT A FEW MORE WASTE FACILITIES.

WATERTON LOOKS PRETTY GOOD.

WATERTON HAS **BAD** DEMOGRAPHICS. WAY TOO MANY HOMEOWNERS. THEY'RE SURE TO FIGHT US, AND WE CAN'T AFFORD THE DELAY.



WE ALREADY HAVE FORESTVILLE TENTATIVELY APPROVED. ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND THE LOCAL COUNCIL VOTE...



AND **THAT...** WILL BE EASY.

FORESTVILLE PERMIT HEARING



NICE TO SEE YOU ALL AND SUCH A BIG TURN OUT...



THE COUNCIL WOULD LIKE TO CALL THIS MEETING TO ORDER.

LULU, YOU CAN BEGIN WHEN YOU'RE READY.



wow.
OK, THANK YOU



GREEN SOLUTIONS IS OFFERING FORESTVILLE AN EXCITING REDEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE. IT'LL BRING **MUCH-NEEDED** INVESTMENT AND **WILL REVITALIZE** A BLIGHTED, VACANT LOT. WE TAKE **TREMENDOUS PRIDE** IN OUR ABILITY TO **GENERATE JOBS** IN OUR **PARTNER** COMMUNITIES WHILE **PROTECTING** THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS WE JOIN,



OUR PROPOSED **ENVIRONMENTAL STORAGE FACILITY** WILL SUPPORT EXISTING **BUSINESSES** AND **IMPROVE** THE GENERAL **ECONOMIC VITALITY** OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. IT'S A **WIN/WIN** SITUATION! WORKING **TOGETHER**, WE CAN BUILD A **BRIGHT FUTURE** FOR FORESTVILLE!



THANK YOU.
THE COUNCIL WOULD LIKE TO OPEN THE FLOOR.



WE COULD USE THE JOBS!



DOES THIS FIT WITH THE COMMUNITY'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN?

HOW DO THE NEIGHBORS FEEL?



THIS IS **BEYOND** THE SCOPE OF WHAT WE CAN ACCOMPLISH TONIGHT...

WE'LL HAVE TO ADJOURN THE VOTE TO A LATER DATE **EXACTLY THIRTY** DAYS FROM TODAY.



IS THIS **SAFE**? LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR SAFETY RECORD.

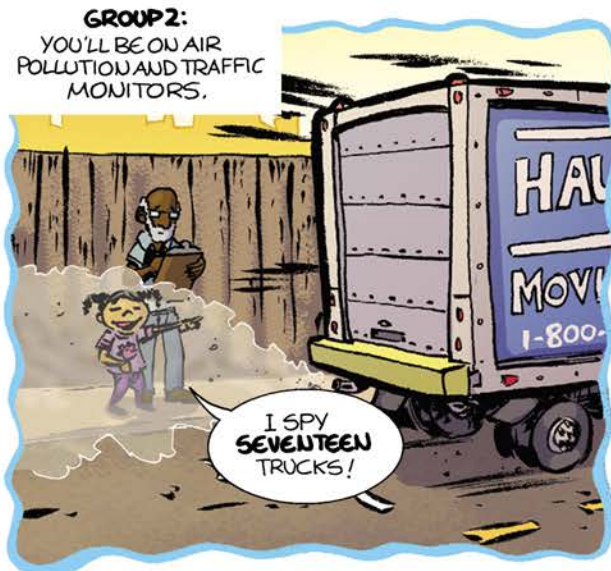


I'M **NOT** CLEAR ON WHAT **IT** IS.



LULU IS TELLING US "ENVIRONMENTAL STORAGE FACILITY," BUT IT'LL ACTUALLY HOLD **TOXIC** AND **BIO-MEDICAL WASTE**.







FINAL COUNCIL MEETING.



WE'RE RECONVENING ON THE PUBLIC COUNCIL REGARDING THE GREEN SOLUTIONS' FACILITY.

ON BEHALF OF GREEN SOLUTIONS, WE'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU. WE LOOK FORWARD TO PARTNERING WITH YOU TO BUILD FORESTVILLE'S FUTURE.



THANK YOU COUNCIL OPENS THE FLOOR.



ACCORDING TO EPA.GOV, WE'RE NOT IN COMPLIANCE FOR OZONE, SULPHUR OXIDES, AND PARTICULATE MATTER.

THIS FACILITY WILL MAKE OUR AIR QUALITY EVEN WORSE!



WE COUNTED FIFTY TRUCKS A DAY DRIVING BY THE LOT. THAT'S TOO MANY. AND GREEN SOLUTIONS' PROPOSAL ESTIMATES ADDING ANOTHER FIFTY PER DAY.



THERE WAS A BIG FIRE THREE WEEKS AGO AND THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH FIRE FIGHTERS TO RESPOND. THEY'RE STRETCHED TOO THIN AND THEY DON'T HAVE HAZMAT SUITS!

ACCORDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S WEBSITE, WE HAVE ONE OF THE HIGHEST ASTHMA RATES IN THE STATE.



I'D LIKE TO PRESENT A FULL REPORT ON GREEN SOLUTIONS' COMPLIANCE HISTORY AND THE FINES THEY'VE PAID.



COUNCIL WILL NOW CLOSE THE FLOOR AND BREAK FOR FINAL DECISION.

AND THEN, THE WAIT...



WE'VE REACHED A UNANIMOUS DECISION. THE PROPOSAL TO SITE THIS FACILITY IS... DENIED.



SO, YOU WANT TO KNOW
WHAT **ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE** IS?

IT'S **PEOPLE** COMING TOGETHER,
TO **IMPROVE** THEIR COMMUNITY,
STANDING **STRONG**, FINDING
A **LEGAL** SOLUTION



JUST LIKE THE **ROOTS** OF
THE **ASPEN**, WE'RE ALL TIED
TO EACH OTHER, HOLDING OUR
CITIES OR **TOWNS** TOGETHER



DID YOU KNOW THAT THE **ASPEN**
IS ONE OF THE **ONLY** TREES THAT
CAN SURVIVE **FOREST FIRES** ?



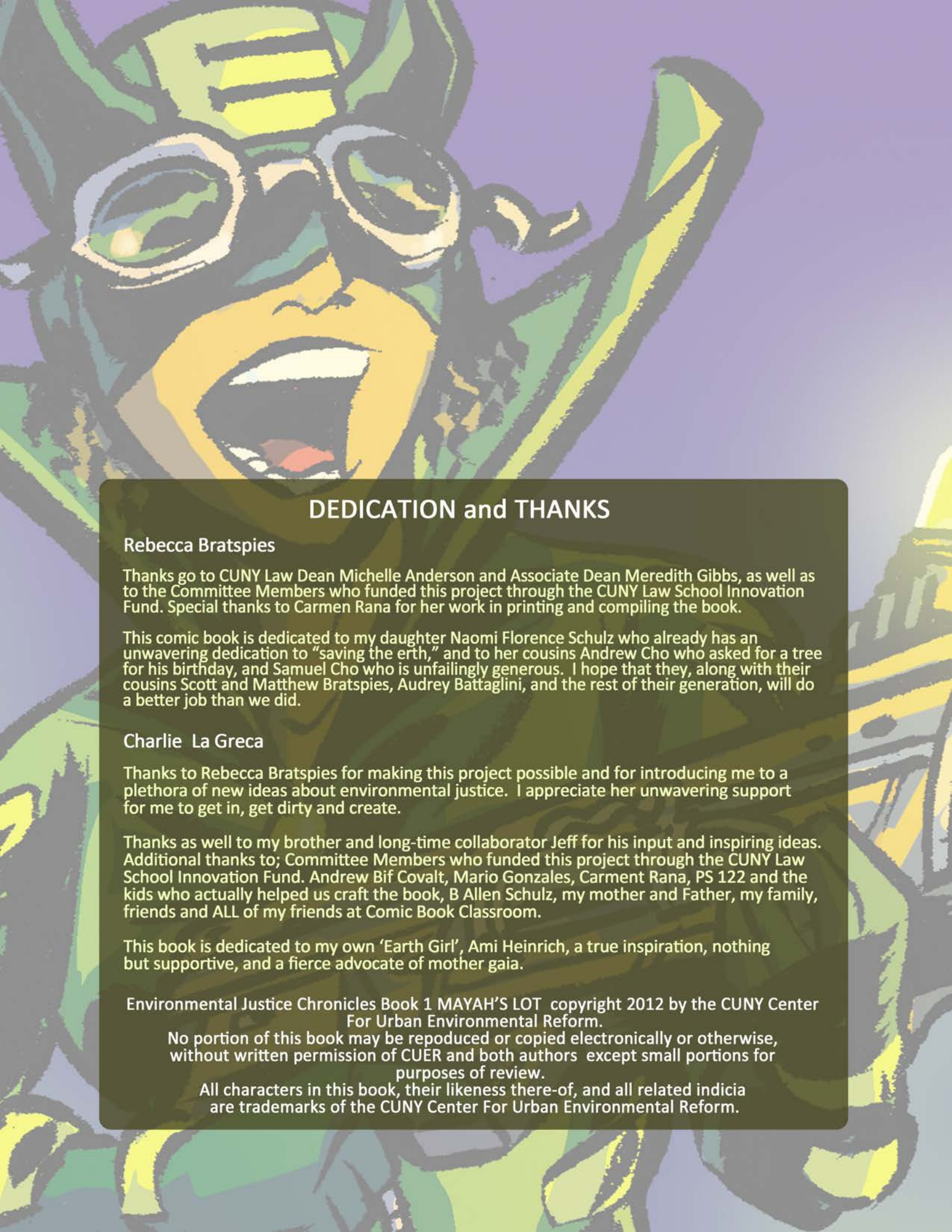
IN A BLAZE OF **451** DEGREES, THE
ASPEN'S **ROOT** SYSTEM RUNS SO DEEP
AND STRONG, THAT NOT ONLY CAN IT
SURVIVE, BUT IT MOST OFTEN COMES BACK...



...THRIVING



**THE
END**



DEDICATION and THANKS

Rebecca Bratspies

Thanks go to CUNY Law Dean Michelle Anderson and Associate Dean Meredith Gibbs, as well as to the Committee Members who funded this project through the CUNY Law School Innovation Fund. Special thanks to Carmen Rana for her work in printing and compiling the book.

This comic book is dedicated to my daughter Naomi Florence Schulz who already has an unwavering dedication to “saving the earth,” and to her cousins Andrew Cho who asked for a tree for his birthday, and Samuel Cho who is unfailingly generous. I hope that they, along with their cousins Scott and Matthew Bratspies, Audrey Battaglini, and the rest of their generation, will do a better job than we did.

Charlie La Greca

Thanks to Rebecca Bratspies for making this project possible and for introducing me to a plethora of new ideas about environmental justice. I appreciate her unwavering support for me to get in, get dirty and create.

Thanks as well to my brother and long-time collaborator Jeff for his input and inspiring ideas. Additional thanks to; Committee Members who funded this project through the CUNY Law School Innovation Fund. Andrew Bif Covalt, Mario Gonzales, Carment Rana, PS 122 and the kids who actually helped us craft the book, B Allen Schulz, my mother and Father, my family, friends and ALL of my friends at Comic Book Classroom.

This book is dedicated to my own ‘Earth Girl’, Ami Heinrich, a true inspiration, nothing but supportive, and a fierce advocate of mother gaia.

Environmental Justice Chronicles Book 1 MAYAH’S LOT copyright 2012 by the CUNY Center For Urban Environmental Reform.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

LULU is an acronym for “locally undesirable land use.” Many environmental justice issues involve LULUs like powerplants, waste facilities, and other polluting activities.

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.

<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>

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.

Executive Order 12,898 (signed by President Clinton, 1994) told all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their mission. To do that, federal agencies are supposed to identify and address any “disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects” of their programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12898.pdf>

Many states have similar environmental justice policies—the New York Department of Environmental Conservation has an Office of Environmental Justice.

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html>

We can achieve environmental justice by:

Protecting the environment and health in overburdened communities;
Empowering communities to take action to improve their health and environment;
Establishing partnerships between local, state, tribal, and federal government agencies and community-based organizations to achieve healthy and sustainable communities.

<http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/plan-ej-2014/plan-ej-exec-sum.pdf>

Further Reading:

- ◆ *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*, Robert D. Bulliard, (1990).
- ◆ *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of Environmental Justice*, Luke W. Cole, & Sheila R. Foster (2000).
- ◆ *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*, Julie Sze (2006).
- ◆ *Taking Back Eden: Eight Environmental Cases that Changed the World*, Oliver A Houck (2010).
- ◆ *This Borrowed Earth: Lessons from the Fifteen Worst Environmental Disasters Around the World*, Robert E. Hernan (2010).
- ◆ WEACT has compiled a great list of books for children and adults.

<http://www.weact.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=95ptBXGO3LQ%3D&tabid=186>



CUNY School of Law is the premier public interest law school in the country. The school's mission is to train lawyers who will advocate for the underprivileged and disempowered, and who will work for social justice in their communities.

At the CUNY Center for Urban Environmental Reform (CUER), we believe that environmental justice is a cornerstone of social justice. Our mission is to help communities participate fully and meaningfully in the environmental decisions that affect them. CUER serves as a clearinghouse for the data, experts, and training needed to create a more level playing field in environmental decision making. CUER works to expand public participation in order to make environmental outcomes more democratic and more just.

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