

CUENTAME – BRAVE NEW FILMS - TOXIC HOMES CAMPAIGN



<http://mycuentame.org/toxicwasteland>

Description of project:

The toxic homes campaign is a series of videos focused on different Latino working communities in California where environmental conditions have been degraded by toxic waste management companies. Our goal is to expose the issue and demand that the Department of Toxic Substance Control takes action. The detrimental effects of the condition impact both workers, their families and the community at large in these primarily underserved constituencies. The series has been made possible because of generous grants from the Ford Foundation and the California Wellness Foundation.

Our first video and action titled *[The Dirty Business of Turning This Latino Farmworker Town Into A Toxic Wasteland](#)*, focuses on Kettleman City, a rural, majority Latino and farmworker community halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is home to the largest hazardous waste dump this side of the Mississippi and to shockingly high rates of childhood cancer, birth defects and miscarriages - two facts residents believe to be connected. Now the dump is looking to double in size and the agency responsible for approving the expansion - the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)- is letting it happen. We engaged in an online/social media, on the ground, video campaign to exert pressure and stop the expansion.

The second video focused on the small town community of Autumnwood in Wildomar, CA. This is yet another community that has spiraled downwards because of the catastrophic failings of the DTSC. "It's been a surreal nightmare. I believed I was living the American dream when I bought a home in Wildomar, California. That is until I became sick and others around me – neighbors and community members - were dying and became ill too. We've lost our health, our wealth and had to abandon everything we

own,” said Wildomar resident **Xonia Villanueva**. “We contacted our local government who contacted the DTSC, we thought they would come to the rescue because they are the agency tasked with protecting citizens from toxic harm. It took over a year for DTSC to finally come out and do their own testing, which they deem to be inconclusive. In previous testing, commissioned from another agency, it became clear that DTSC was purposefully misleading us on the contaminated soil and the chemicals seeping into our home and yard. I’m disappointed to say 35 years after Stringfellow and Love Canal, we are still not safe from corporate polluters and the government agencies that protect them.”



<http://www.bravenewfilms.org/toxichomes>

With this video we helped our primary partners, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment and Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, to educate legislators about the issue. This effective campaign led to a hearing where the legislators commented on the heartbreaking video series and the importance of helping these families and putting an end to these practices.

- Committee Response to Toxic Homes Campaign: <http://bit.ly/1iUVJcx>

Partners

Our primary partners on this project have been the Center for Race, Poverty, and the Environment who have provided research and on the ground linkage and use of our media production and our online distribution. - CRPE/Cuentame also developed an action in Sacramento at the DTSC offices, and promoted an email and call campaign to its members and social media pressure.

CRPE Communications Director Marisa Alexander had the following to say, “CRPE has enjoyed partnering with Cuentame. They have been able to lift up the important stories of our communities - stories which aren’t often heard – to educate and inspire action through media. The ability to connect a new online audience with incredible videos to our on the ground work has been helpful. We hope that through the partnership we can also expand and develop our own narrative as an org and continue making the impact.”

Additional distribution partners enlisted:

Latino Rebels (blog, social media)

US uncut (social media)

California Environmental Justice Alliance (social media distribution)

18 million and Rising (social media)

UpWorthy (media)

National Hispanic Media Coalition (social media)

Lograr Community Institute

Presente

Press

Coordination on press release with groups and outreach to press

- Outreach for Toxic homes included:
 - Mark Grossi - Fresno Bee
 - Alex Breitler - The Record
 - David Dannelski - The Press-Enterprise
 - Amy Quinton - Capitol Public Radio
 - Jessica Garrison - LA Times
 - Jason Dearen - Associated Press
 - Lauren Sommer - KQED
 - Mark Prado - Marin Independent Journal
 - Felicity Barringer - New York Times
 - Matt Weiser - Sacramento Bee
 - Paul Rogers - San Jose Mercury News
 - Ian James - The Desert Sun
 - Molly Peterson - KPCC
 - Steve Scauzillo - Pasadena Star News
 - Deborah Brennan - U-T San Diego
 - Kate Sheppard - Huffington Post
 - TV Stations:
 - KOVR 13 CBS
 - KCRA 3
 - KNTV NBC
 - Fox 40
 - FOX 11
 - KXTV 10 ABC

Partial Press Clips:

- TV:
 - KTTV-LA (FOX 11): <http://bit.ly/1fGO8NX>
 - KIEM (NBC): <http://bit.ly/1fGOgND>
 - KNTV-SF (NBC): <http://bit.ly/1fGOIkq>
- PRINT:
 - LA Times: <http://lat.ms/1fGOynG>
 - Wildomar Patch: <http://bit.ly/1e4PSh1>
 - Mint Press News: <http://www.mintpressnews.com/time-running-out-for-latino-community-standing-up-against-waste-facility/170397/>

Social Media Samples and Metrics

This campaign was focused in California and went only to our and the partners California lists.

Total Reach: 625,000

Would You Think Of California As An Environmental Leader After Watching This?

<http://youtu.be/WzjQkYmyJGs>

The Dirty Business Of Turning This Latino Farmworker Town Into A Toxic Wasteland

<http://youtu.be/h4qaHCFaF9I>



pamela wilson 1 month ago

This is such a terrible situation, and so close to where I live. I'm very grateful to My Cuantame for bringing the story home in such a powerful, succinct and effective way.

Impact Objectives:

The full series will work to accomplish the following list of objectives set by our primary partners:

1. Deny permits to expand the Chemical Waste Management Kettleman Hills, CA hazardous waste landfill.
2. Do not settle with Exide, take immediate action to shut down the Exide plant.
3. Conduct full and comprehensive testing in Wildomar, CA with the purpose of discovering the extent of contamination and the real health hazard in the community.
4. Immediately halt shipments of potentially radioactive waste to Buttonwillow, CA and other facilities not licensed to receive it.