



ORGANIZING for  
HEALTH and JUSTICE

52 Linwood Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14209  
(716) 852-3813  
cacwny.org

# Clean Air Connection

FEBRUARY 2020 NEWSLETTER

## Clean Air supports workers of color at Tesla

Roughly \$959 million in state taxpayer money was allocated to the South Buffalo Tesla plant, an amount over 1.5 times our city's annual budget. This massive amount of public funds was given with the promise of creating better jobs and sustainable work.

The reality is starkly different. South Buffalo Tesla plant workers are coming forward to describe the racist, discriminatory and unsafe work conditions maintained by upper management and the plant's human resources department.

The company's overt and covert abuse of power, proven through a host of discriminatory measures, have resulted in multiple former workers filing complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the state Department of Human Rights. Clean Air

### Workers at Tesla's solar factory in New York describe a racist workplace

QUARTZ Michael J. Coren

Quartz November 26, 2019

and other organizations, including the Progressive Workers Union, United Steelworkers and the Labor Network for Sustainability, are supporting these former workers by pressuring state and local governments to hold Tesla accountable. The people of Buffalo were excited to welcome a renewable energy facility with promises of great pay and benefits, but these promises were not kept, especially for many employees of color. Many people of color working at the new factory were given menial tasks, such as sweeping the floor, instead of the technological and manufacturing tasks associated with the positions they were hired for, only to then be deemed lazy and unfit for their jobs. And no meaningful support was given to the employees of color who experienced bathrooms lined with racist graffiti, barriers to employment advancements, and threats from management and fellow employees.

Clean Air will continue to work diligently with former and current workers from Tesla until justice is served and workers have a safe and secure working environment reflecting unionized working agreements.

Watch Channel 4 News' coverage:  
[shorturl.at/dmBI9](http://shorturl.at/dmBI9) & [shorturl.at/qvAQ2](http://shorturl.at/qvAQ2).

And head to [cacwny.org/blog-2/](http://cacwny.org/blog-2/) to read our press release.

NEWS

### More former Tesla workers confirm hostile workplace at Buffalo facility

*'I was labeled as a person who liked to start conflict' said one former Tesla employee who is African American. He tried to get his bosses to address the workplace hostility and favoritism complaints but he said they did not.*

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The people of Buffalo were excited to welcome a renewable energy facility with promises of great pay and benefits, but these promises were not kept, especially for many employees of color. Many people of color working at the new factory were given menial

### Former Tesla workers allege discrimination and harassment at NY plant

All six workers who complained were fired

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For more detailed updates, visit our blog: [www.cacwny.org/press/blog-2/](http://www.cacwny.org/press/blog-2/)

#### Get social with



Clean Air Coalition of WNY



@cleanairwny



@cleanair

# We raised \$50,412.52 to Root Our Resilience!

We raised \$51,412.52 from 320 people in 30 days thanks to our incredible community of members and supporters!

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our team of members who made phone calls, personally fundraised and made meaningful connections for this work that we believe in and embody. And a special thank you to the generous match supporters that made it possible for every single contribution to be matched

dollar-for-dollar.

And if you contributed, became a new member, renewed your membership or made a sustaining gift - **THANK YOU!**

With your support, we will continue to build leadership, strengthen our relationships with one another, take on the corporate elite who pollute our neighborhoods, and take control of budgets and policies that impact our lives and communities.

## Join us for trivia night Feb. 29



# TRIVIA NIGHT!

**Saturday, February 29th**

5:30 Registration | 6pm start



**CWA Local 1122**  
**Genesee St, Buffalo, NY**

We're having a trivia night hosted by Trivia 716 at CWA 1122 3775 Genesee St. Buffalo 14225. Bring a whole team, bring your friends and co-workers, or just come by yourself - everyone is welcome! Fun prizes! Tickets are \$25 a person and includes food and drinks. All proceeds will benefit Clean Air! Get tickets at [cacwny.org](http://cacwny.org).

## Save the date: Clean Air Annual Meeting is March 5

Join us at our Annual Meeting to celebrate and prepare for another year of organizing!

Our membership and partners will come together from across the region to learn from each other, share successes and challenges, and vision for 2020!

Refreshments will be served at 5 p.m. The meeting starts at 5:30 and will end at 7:30.

This year's Annual Meeting will take place March 5 at 1199 SEIU, 2421 Main St #100, Buffalo, NY 14214.

To request childcare, please contact Rebecca before Feb. 21 at 716-852-3813.

*Thank you to our  
community partners!*



*Mercy United*  
CWA Local 1133

*Communications Workers of America Local 1133 • AFL-CIO*  
821 Elk Street • Suite A • Buffalo, New York 14210  
(716) 828-1133 • Fax (716) 828-1158



# Campaign Updates

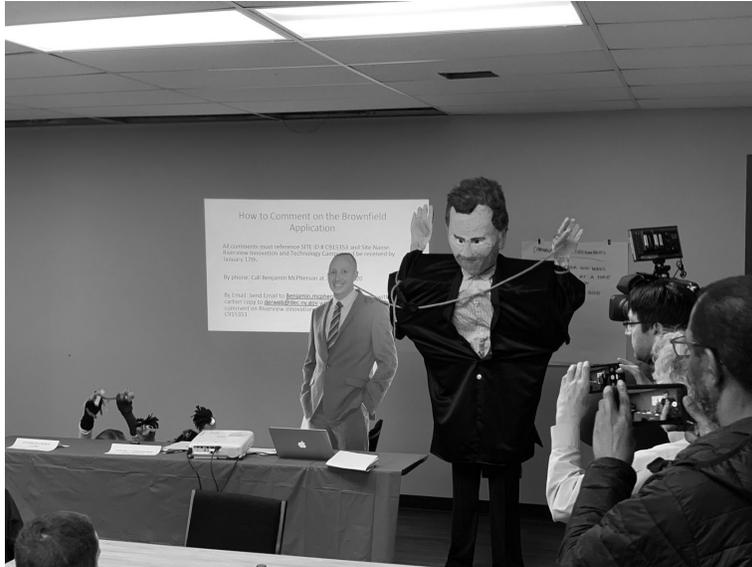
(Want to get involved? Call 852-3813 or email [info@cacwny.org](mailto:info@cacwny.org))

## Members call on Cuomo to reject tax credits for Tonawanda Coke developer

On Jan. 15, Clean Air held a “Public Hearing” on the Tonawanda Coke site brownfield application submitted by developer Jon Williams. Williams, owner of the former American Axle site in the City of Buffalo, has been highly criticized for his lack of urgency in remediating the polluted site in the Delavan Grider community, and as the top donor for Donald Trump’s 2020 campaign in the region.

Our members, alarmed with the application’s inadequacy, requested the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation hold a public hearing. After a month of silence, NYSDEC finally responded – and refused our request.

There are two major pathways for remediation in New York State. The Superfund Pro-



*The Jan. 15 meeting featured a life-size cutout of the DEC commissioner and a 10-foot-tall puppet of Honeywell’s CEO.*

gram is a robust enforceable remediation program, while the Brownfield Program is a tax credit program for developers. If the application is approved as is, the purpose of

the Brownfield Program will be warped from its original intent as a pathway to return blighted properties to the tax rolls. This application sets a dangerous precedent, reduc-

ing the program to a loophole for polluters to avoid their financial and environmental responsibility. Western New York residents deserve a full and comprehensive remediation, which is not what current application seeks.

Appalled that the state would deny community members the opportunity to a hearing, our members put on a show to demonstrate what we think of the state’s process. It included a life-size cutout of the NYSDEC Commissioner and a 10-foot-tall puppet of Honeywell CEO Darius Adamczyk.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo must reject the current application and not give in to big political donors like Honeywell and Williams. Visit our blog to read more.

## What’s next for Huntley?

In mid-January, NRG announced the sale of the Huntley Coal Plant to WB Huntley Redevelopment, an LLC that’s part of WarrenBrook Redevelopment. The future owner of the site will be instrumental in ensuring the proper clean-up of the waterfront site, and Clean Air is following the sale closely. The Just Transition Campaign Team is also following the Huntley Remedial Investigation Work Plan and submitted a public comment.

As is clear from the over 1,300 residents that participated in the Tonawanda Tomorrow planning process, there is a strong desire for more significant and accessible ways for the public to participate in the remediation planning pro-

cess, including ensuring Tonawanda Tomorrow’s vision to ensure residential waterfront access comes to fruition.

We believe that there needs to be additional berm soil sampling to ensure the site’s toxins are not negatively impacting our members who live near the facility and the adjacent Niagara River; additional soil testing of adjacent sites to ensure that toxins haven’t migrated from the site; and additional public participation in the process.

We have requested a public hearing on the progress so that, unlike the Tonawanda Coke Brownfield application, the process is transparent and open to the public to provide feedback and input.

## Notice: Erie Coke closes

Tonawanda Coke’s sibling factory, Erie Coke, has closed. Similarly to the Tonawanda Coke closure, the Department of Labor & Industry activated its Rapid Response Service (RRS) to help former

workers of the Erie Coke Plant. This closing yet again marks the reality of where we are with coal-based industries, and the need for sustainable industries that provide healthy and well-paying jobs. As

Clean Air continues to organize for proper and adequate cleanup of Tonawanda Coke, it offers to set a precedent for Erie Coke which is just over a year behind in the process.

# Clean Air

52 Linwood Ave.

*Return Service Requested*



## Become a sustaining member of Clean Air today!

Clean Air works to build the power of everyday people to make our communities healthier, safer, and more equitable places to live. **Becoming a monthly sustainer helps us continue to hold corporations and agencies accountable to putting our health and environment first.** Choose to give \$5, 10, or \$20 per month! For more information, call Julia at (716) 852-3813, or *send your support directly* to:  
Clean Air, 52 Linwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14209.

**¿No eres miembro? ¡Inscríbese hoy mismo!** Clean Air trabaja para desarrollar el poder de la gente para que nuestras comunidades sean más sanas, y lugares más seguros para vivir. Envíe su apoyo de \$ 10, \$ 20 o \$ 50 a:

Clean Air, 52 Linwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14209