



THE MEMPHIS DEPOT TENNESSEE

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD COVER SHEET

AR File Number 191

DDMT-CCC

794

DEFENSE DEPOT MEMPHIS TENNESSEE - CONCERNED CITIZENS COMMITTEE

1454 EAST MALLORY — MEMPHIS, TN 38106 (901) 942-0329

October 22, 1996

The Honorable Lois DeBerry
2429 Verdun
Memphis, TN 38114

Dear Representative DeBerry:

In greetings, the staff and members of DDMT-CCC wish you good health and prosperity. We also would like to commend you for coming our meetings and for your support of our efforts to help the poor black residents of South Memphis from the contamination of the Defense Depot. There are no words we can use to let you know how much you mean to us, to the people of South Memphis, and to the people of Tennessee. We don't know what Tennessee without your service to the poor and downtrodden.

Also, DDMT-CCC would like to thank you on behalf of your efforts to obtain documents from the Defense Depot, which have been denied to us — even pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act! Sadly, we have to trouble you again about obtaining documents vital and relevant to community health. To keep things official, we have to request documents from the Defense Depot in writing; Even though we don't think they will honor our requests.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the horrible situation at the Defense Depot and to solicit your political support for black people in South Memphis.

As you know, the Defense Depot has operated in South Memphis since 1942. A federal facility, the Defense Depot has never had to comply with environmental or health regulations of the City of Memphis, the County of Shelby, or the State of Tennessee. In other words, the Defense Depot operated like a plantation of the Old South, not having to answer to anybody about anything. Now, after becoming a NPL Superfund Site, the Defense Depot still wants to act in the secrecy of the past. This must be stopped. The Defense Depot can not be above the law, certainly not above the Freedom of Information Act enacted by the U. S. Congress.



Cancer



Contamination



Political
Corruption

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DDMT-CCC, a black environmental group dedicated to seeking environmental justice for black people in South Memphis, has appealed to the Defense Depot for information regarding toxic contamination at the facility several times in the past. Time and time again, DDMT-CCC has been denied.

Now, after discovering information at the library that indicates the Defense Depot has engaged in testing, storing, receiving, and manufacturing Chemical Warfare Weapons at the facility in South Memphis without the knowledge of black people, DDMT-CCC is again requesting under the Freedom of Information Act vital documents that may have a bearing on the epidemic of cancer, heart attacks, and strokes ravaging the black community. To be perfectly clear,

DDMT-CCC wants to know if poisons at the Defense Depot have anything to do with black people in South Memphis getting sick and dying.

Why do we want your support? The answer is simple — we think the problem with the Defense Depot has racial overtones! In fact, we know the Defense Depot is unresponsive to environmental and health issues of the black community. The Defense Depot refuses to acknowledge any responsibility for health problems, even though it spews poisons into drainage ditches and leaks poisons into the aquifers. The water supply of not only South Memphis but entire Shelby County has been jeopardized by the Defense Depot. And, this problem is not going away. In time, the citizens (both black and white) will have to suffer.

Therefore, we at DDMT-CCC need your help. We realize that you are not a scientist, nor a Ph. D. Geologist with an emphasis in toxicology and a concentration in Health Science. It doesn't take a big-time degree to make a difference. All it takes is common sense and sound judgement to understand that blacks are being poisoned.

If blacks unite as a people, if black politicians show they are behind the black community, if black doctors and nurses spend a few hours in the black community, if black professionals utilize a little of their talent in the black community, if black

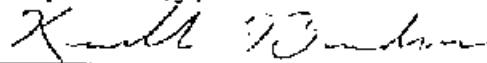
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religious leaders take the lead in the environmental struggle like they did in the civil rights struggle, we can solve all of our problem. Black people have the intelligent and the skills needed to ensure all blacks live in safe and healthy environments without the risk of toxic contamination.

All DDMT-CCC wants is black justice. You don't know how good it makes the average black citizen feel to see black politicians at community meetings addressing health issues. When you, State Representative DeBerry, attend our meetings, black people swell with pride and white officials of the Defense Depot cringe. When State Representative Henri Brooks instructed Defense Depot officials to make information available to DDMT-CCC, the black people in the Depot Redevelopment Meeting's respect for her soared and their hopes rose. We need your presence and open political support to ensure we get the fairest deal possible from white officials at the Defense Depot who could care less about the health of black people.

Ms. DeBerry, please help DDMT-CCC help black people!

Respectfully,



Kenneth Bradshaw

Doris Bradshaw

Founder and Co-chairperson

Defense Depot Memphis Tennessee - Concerned Citizens' Committee

c.c. Grover Hankins, Thurgood Marshall School of Law;
Don Sundquist, Governor of Tennessee.

enclosure

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