



BEYOND PESTICIDES PRESS RELEASE

Protecting Health and the Environment with Science, Policy, and Action

For Immediate Release

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[Announcing the Second Session of National Forum on Environmental Justice with UN Special Rapporteur Marcos Orellana, PhD and Jayson Porter, PhD on Oct 24, 2:00-4:00 PM EDT](#)

The National Forum Series aims to enable a collective strategy to address the existential health, biodiversity, and climate threats and chart a path for a livable and sustainable future. We come together to empower effective action. You are part of the solution!

Washington, DC, September 29, 2023—On September 22, [Beyond Pesticides announced the second session](#) of the 40th National Forum, *Forging a Future with Nature: The existential challenge to end petrochemical pesticide and fertilizer use*, scheduled for October 24, 2:00-4:00 pm Eastern (EDT).

A future supported by the natural environment depends on our effective involvement in decisions in our homes, communities, states, and at the federal level to ensure that we are taking the steps necessary to protect against existential threats to health, biodiversity, and climate.

The [National Forum Series](#) is an important opportunity to hear from those working as scientists, advocates, land managers (from gardens, parks, and play fields to farms), and public decisionmakers about steps being taken and action needed to prevent a catastrophic collapse of the natural systems that sustain life. However, a key part of this conversation is addressing the grievous inequities associated with elevated rates of poisoning, contamination, and diseases in people of color communities.

Forum Session 2: Environmental Justice as a Human Right

In introducing the importance of environmental justice and addressing the disproportionate risk from toxic pollution to people of color communities as a key part of policies and practices governing ecosystems, Dr. Martin Luther King encapsulated this idea when he said in 1963, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." Sixty years later, people of color in the U.S. and around the world struggle with inequities that place disproportionate risk in ways that are institutionalized in the economic and social system.

The Forum's second session will highlight environmental justice as a human rights issue, as [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) declared "the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable

environment.” According to the UN, “This right is an important catalyst for change, being crucial for the right to life, food, and decent work, among others.”

Forum Speakers

Speaking at the Forum will be [Marcos Orellana, PhD](#), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights, who is an expert in international law and the law on human rights and the environment. His recent reports in South Africa and Australia capture the significance of his pursuit of environmental justice. Dr. Orellana teaches at the American University Washington College of Law.

His work around the world captures critical truths that are challenges across the globe, such as his statement after a visit to South Africa in September. Dr. Orellana said, “The term “environmental racism” describes institutionalized discrimination based on race or colour. In pre-1994 South Africa, the distribution of environmental risks and harms disproportionately and often deliberately targeted low-income groups and along racial lines. Today, despite the efforts by Government in setting up institutions and laws to address this legacy of environmental racism, pervasive air, water, and chemical pollution still imposes a heavy toll, especially on disadvantaged communities. Overcoming it will require significant additional efforts, including structural, legislative, economic, and environmental changes.

Professor Orellana has extensive experience working with civil society worldwide on global environmental justice issues. He was the inaugural director of the Environment and Human Rights Division at Human Rights Watch. Previously he directed the trade and the human rights programs at the Center for International Environmental Law, and he co-chaired the UN Environment Program’s civil society forum. Dr. Orellana teaches at the American University Washington College of Law. He has also lectured at prominent universities around the world, including Melbourne, Pretoria, Geneva, and Guadalajara. He was a fellow at the University of Cambridge, a visiting scholar with the Environmental Law Institute in Washington DC, and an instructor professor of international law at the Universidad de Talca, Chile.

Also speaking at the Forum will be [Jayson Porter, PhD](#), an environmental historian of Mexico and the Americas who teaches science and technology studies, material culture, and black geographies in Latin America. Dr. Porter focuses on oilseeds, agrochemicals, environmental justice, and ecological violence. He is an editorial board member of the North American Congress on Latin America and a Voss Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society (2022), and he recently began teaching in the Department of History at the University of Maryland, College Park.

In “Cotton, Whiteness, and Poisons” (*Environmental Humanities*, Nov. 2022), which Dr. Porter coauthored, identified are some of the historical roots of environmental injustice characterized as “labor exploitation conditioned by racist ideologies” underpinning plantation agriculture. The recognition that dependency on pesticides and fertilizers undermines the economic stability of small farmers, the article states, “At the Tuskegee Institute’s agricultural experiment station, George Washington Carver recognized that commercial fertilizers were a key source of debt for Black farmers and tenants. He encouraged composting and the use of organic fertilizers found on the farm, writing that “many thousands of dollars are being spent every year here in the South for fertilizers that profit the user very little, while Nature’s choicest fertilizer is going to waste.”

In 2022, Dr. Porter wrote in *Agrochemicals, Environmental Racism, and Environmental Justice in U.S. History* (Organic Center, 2022), that “Robert Bullard defines environmental racism as any policy or practice that unequally affects or disadvantages individuals, groups or communities based on their race. Vann Newkirk II adds that environmental racism is the opposite of environmental justice and often ignores or belittles input from the affected communities of color.”

Join us for this ground-breaking conversation and meeting of the minds with two internationally renowned changemakers on human rights and environmental injustice!



40th National Forum Series – 2023

Forging a Future with Nature

The existential challenge to end petrochemical pesticide and fertilizer use

September 14, 2023
UPCOMING—October 24, 2023
November TBD

...to inform and inspire action for a sustainable future

BEYOND PESTICIDES

Registration includes access to all three seminars. Donations are requested, but not required.

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The National Forum Series would not be possible without the support of our major sponsors:



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About Beyond Pesticides

Beyond Pesticides is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C, which works with allies in protecting health and the environment with science, policy, and action to lead the transition to a world free of toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.

For more information, please visit our website at www.beyondpesticides.org.