

Clean Up Green Up

por una ciudad limpia y verde



Ana Cano, Mother and Volunteer

Communities for a Better Environment in Wilmington, California

Ana Cano is a local champion in the Los Angeles community of Wilmington. She fights for her family and her neighbors to protect environmental health.

Ana has lived in Wilmington for twenty years, raised a family there and has struggled with the health risks associated with concentrated industrial emissions. Wilmington is a working-class enclave of Los Angeles adjacent to the nation's busiest port areas—the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Drive south on the 710 freeway toward the LA harbor area and you can see the silhouettes of Wilmington's oil refinery towers and the massive cranes that move giant cargo containers. Mexican-Americans have been central to building Wilmington's port-side industries—shipping, refineries and water front businesses—since before the turn of the 20th century. Latinos make up the majority of Wilmington's 65,000 residents.

The Ports create a lot of wealth for the city, region and state—they handle 40% of imports entering the United States. But that hasn't translated to prosperity for many Wilmington locals—one quarter of residents live below the federal poverty line. And Wilmington is one of the most polluted residential areas in California. Its 4 oil refineries, along with the 3 refineries in Carson (the city next door), make up the highest concentration of refineries in the state.

The volume of port traffic adds up to an astounding pollution concentration—the LA Port alone emits pollution levels equal to 350 of the most polluting facilities in Los Angeles. Heavy diesel truck and rail traffic add another suffocating layer of potentially toxic haze. Many other industrial uses are concentrated in the city—oil refineries, auto recycling and body shops.

Ana is a leader who is working to pass a Clean Up Green Up policy to reduce the concentration of pollution in Wilmington. Her daughter Liz suffered from asthma throughout childhood. Ana recalls waking in the middle of the night to calm her daughter's gasping, and racing to school to take her to the hospital during her attacks. The doctors have told Ana's family that Liz's asthma has a lot to do with the concentration of local pollution.

“Especially when she's outside, her asthma gets worse. It's been very difficult for her, always needing to use an inhaler, missing school so many times, and getting behind in her classes. She cannot do many activities outside, like other children do in cleaner communities.

“I always wanted to do something to improve the quality of the air in my community, and now I have the chance to do it. As a volunteer with Communities for a Better Environment, we're working with the Clean Up Green Up Campaign, which is helping us to reduce pollution. We're preventing and reducing pollution in our community and other communities, to help make Wilmington become cleaner and greener.” – Ana Cano

Volunteering with other residents, Ana is helping small and medium-size businesses to operate in a cleaner way, by offering them information and helping them to look for financial assistance such as low-interest loans to buy newer equipment. A Clean Up Green Up policy would help Wilmington reduce and prevent new pollution and protect the public for generations to come.

For more information contact info@cleanupgreenupla.org or visit www.cleanupgreenupla.com