



# Oral History: Reverend Kenneth Keith Davis

Excerpted from:

*Measuring What Matters: Neighborhood Research for Economic and Environmental Health and Justice in Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo*



PACIFIC  
INSTITUTE

654 13th Street, Oakland, CA 94612  
[www.pacinst.org](http://www.pacinst.org)

In partnership with West County Toxics Coalition, Neighborhood House of North Richmond, Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization, Historic Triangle Neighborhood Council, Morada de Mujeres del Milenio, North Richmond Shoreline Open Space Alliance, and Richmond Progressive Alliance

With support from The California Wellness Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Y & H Soda Foundation, Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment, California Environmental Protection Agency, Firedoll Foundation, Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation, and The California Endowment

The full report is available at [http://www.pacinst.org/reports/measuring\\_what\\_matters/](http://www.pacinst.org/reports/measuring_what_matters/)



Creative Commons, 2009. Material can be adapted and reproduced for non-commercial purposes, as long as the author is credited. More info: <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses>.



# REVEREND KENNETH KEITH DAVIS

“ I’ve been here in and out of Richmond and North Richmond for quite a few years since coming originally in the sixties. I’ve noticed quite a change since coming back into this area. I think we have the most wonderful climate in the world, but I don’t think we have the most beautiful air in the world. I wake up in the morning now and the first thing I’m doing is trying to get warm water on my face to wash my face, trying to clear my nasal passages; my eyes are burning. I notice my throat, and I notice the frequency with which I am going back and forth to the medical facilities trying to get something because of how I feel. And there is nothing they can tell me other than it is allergies. Well, there is something wrong.

Pollution is a major problem in this area. Pollution is something we’re dealing with on a daily basis. And with all the pollution we are subjected to, how can you expect to put more pollution in here? There is no solution with more pollution. If we want to try to arrest some of the situations that are plaguing our community, then we should try to start off with having better air quality for ourselves and not worsening what we already have. When I look out my apartment window, I’m looking at Chevron on a daily basis. Every time I look out the window, I see what looks like smoke, different colored smoke, coming up from those chimneys. I know there is stuff being released in the air. They said there wasn’t any harm to us with the stuff blowing right in our faces and our bedrooms and everywhere else, but I know it didn’t look good. Now I’m wondering what else is



out there: we’ve got Chevron, we’ve got General Chemical, and I don’t have any idea what this industry is bringing to us. Every type of industry comes in here. They heap all of these plants on us. They invite industry, they give tax breaks and other types of considerations. Why should my people here in North Richmond suffer?

We have enough difficulty with people that are coughing, gagging, and having all kinds of medical problems. With all the things we’re dealing with, now you’re talking about routing more trucks, more heavy diesel, trucks and engines, and bringing more pollution. How much more can our children, how much can any of us take? We know that we are in bad shape already. This is a small community we live in. We’ve taken everything they’ve thrown on us and look how sick we are. Don’t make me suffer. I want to live and my health is not for sale.”