



**PACIFIC
INSTITUTE**

Research for People and the Planet

**March 8, 2006
Marriot Courtyard, San Francisco
US EPA Hearing on Particulate Matter
(National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter)**

**Comments of Emily Lee
Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security**

Hello, my name is Emily Lee. I am a program associate at the Pacific Institute, which is a non-profit research institute based in Oakland. Since our *Community Strategies for Sustainability and Justice* program was launched in 1995, we have been partnering with local community-based organizations in Bay Area environmental justice (EJ) communities to do research for community needs. In the past few years we have conducted two research studies on diesel pollution in two EJ communities in the Bay Area: West Oakland in 2003, and West Contra Costa County in 2005.

Our West Oakland diesel study found that some West Oakland residents are exposed to about five times more diesel particulates than residents in other parts of Oakland. This is also a community where asthma is epidemic: children in West Oakland are seven times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma than the average child in California. I'm sure you are well aware that diesel particulate matter has been linked to cancer, heart disease, respiratory problems, asthma, and premature death.

Our recent study in West Contra Costa County last year revealed disturbing levels of diesel pollution: average diesel emissions in West County are 40 times higher than the California average. This is also a community that suffers from higher levels of asthma hospitalization than the rest of Contra Costa County, and where trains idle near homes less than 50 feet away.

I strongly urge the EPA to adopt much stronger standards that protect public health, especially the health of communities who are already disproportionately burdened by diesel particulate matter. The EPA should follow the recommendations of the American Thoracic Society, the American Lung Association, and other respected medical and scientific leaders from across the country and adopt the following:

- An annual standard for fine particle pollution no higher than 12 micrograms per cubic meter
- A daily standard no higher than 25 micrograms per cubic meter
- A strong coarse particle standard and monitoring requirement that protects all Americans in urban and rural communities.