



Dr. Robert Bullard

The John E. Gould Medal

for exhibiting the highest ethical standards in the practice of geography

The John E. Gould Medal, the American Geographical Society's newest medal established in 2021 by Ilse Melamid to honor long-time AGS chair John Gould, brings ethics to the center of our concerns. It recognizes exemplary work, whether academic or applied, that addresses the ethical implications of geographical or geospatial technologies and decisions. This year's Gould awardee, Robert Bullard, has been a powerful figure in raising our perceptions of environmental inequalities and holding us all to account.

Bullard, Distinguished Professor at the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University, is widely considered the father of environmental justice. As he has written, "Communities are not all created equal." Despite the nation's promise of equal rights to health and safety, extreme racial inequalities persist, with devastating effects economic and social, for health and safety. Geography must address this. It must ask how and for whom our environment was shaped, who decides, who benefits, and how those harmed could be made whole.

The 1970s' environmental movement paid surprisingly little attention to inequities when Bullard was a young professor at Texas Southern. A request from his wife, a lawyer attempting to stop the siting of a landfill in a Black middle-class neighborhood, set him on the path to changing the environmental field. He and his students began amassing data on where Houston's waste sites were located. The geography was stark. They were in communities of color. Bullard went on to investigate and to document this pattern across the South, culminating in his influential 1990 work *Dumping in Dixie*, now in its third edition, and a foundational work in environmental justice. His was the first major monograph of environmental racism linking hazardous facility locations with historical patterns of segregation. The book was part of an awakening that included the 1982 Warren County, North Carolina, protest to stop the dumping of PCBs, the powerful report from the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice that documented disparities in hazardous waste siting, and then *Dumping in Dixie*, the work that provided the intellectual underpinnings for the field of environmental justice: a movement, a field, and a quest for justice that impelled President Bill Clinton to sign Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, in 1994, that required federal agencies to attend to the environmental impacts of their decisions on minority and low-income populations.

Bullard didn't stop there. He has continued to write, lecture, advocate. He has served on numerous boards from the first and current White House National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. As Bullard has shown us, even as some things have improved, the pattern persists: social and planning arrangements too easily offload locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) onto minority and low-income communities. High growth places like Atlanta reproduce inequities as the population expands into a sprawling metropolis. Emergency disaster relief reproduces the inequities that preceded the disaster.

Bullard's awards are numerous, with recognition from universities, governmental and quasi-governmental, and nongovernmental, environmental and health organizations. In his eighteen books and numerous articles, sole, co-authored, and edited or co-edited, he has given voice to many in the environmental justice movement and prompted its expansion to other marginalized communities.

We celebrate Bullard giving us the intellectual structure to hold our society to account.

Therefore, for these reasons and more, on behalf of its grateful members, worldwide scholars, and all who recognize the importance of excellence in geographical research and exploration, The American Geographical Society honors Professor Robert Bullard by presenting him with the John E. Gould Medal on this the 17th day of November in the year 2023 in New York City.