



Walter Lyon

2023 Walter Lyon Award

Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living



Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL – pronounced “circle”) is a local grassroots community

organization that has been leading the environmental justice movement in Chester, Pennsylvania from 1992-2001 and again since late 2020. [ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR CHESTER! - CRCQL](https://www.environmentaljusticeforchester.org/)

[\(chesterpaej.org\)](https://www.chesterpaej.org/) Under the leadership of Zulene Mayfield, CRCQL

formed in response to residents’ rising concerns about the overwhelming number of waste facilities being built in Chester, namely Covanta Trash Incinerator, now the largest trash incinerator in the county, which opened along the Delaware River waterfront directly next to a densely populated city neighborhood. Trash, trucks, horrendous smells, and strange health ailments soon took over their neighborhood.

Through community organizing and non-violent direct action tactics, the group led several successful campaigns to shut down different polluting industries threatening the waterfront and community. CRCQL held many public hearings, meetings and actions to empower and educate residents on the damaging effects of air pollution on health.

Early in the campaign, CRCQL inspired the formation of the Campus Coalition Concerning Chester (C-4) which brought together students across 15 campuses in 5 states to support environmental justice in Chester. Together, these groups were successful in fending off several different incinerator and waste treatment facilities from operating in Chester.

In a groundbreaking move, CRCQL was the first activist group to apply the Civil Rights Act in an environmental racism lawsuit against the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and was successful in shutting down Thermal Pure, the nation’s largest medical waste autoclave, which was located in Chester.