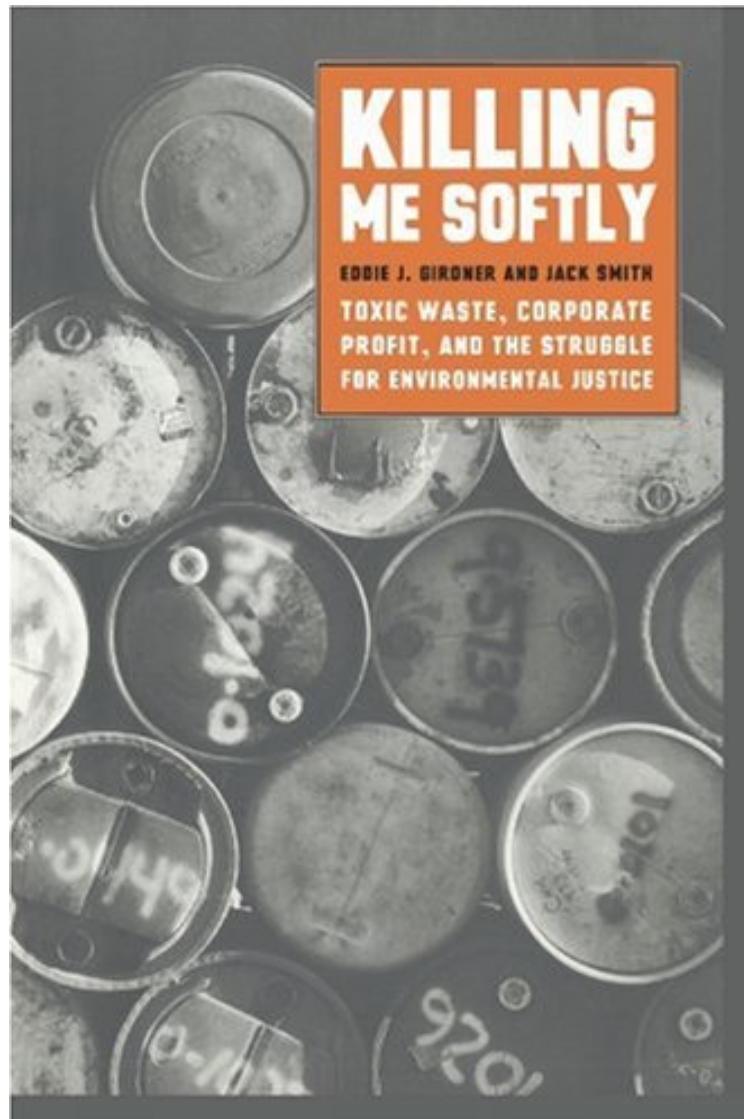


[FREE] Killing Me Softly: Toxic Waste, Corporate Profit, and the Struggle for Environmental Justice

Killing Me Softly: Toxic Waste, Corporate Profit, and the Struggle for Environmental Justice

Eddie J. Girdner, Jack Smith

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Eddie J. Girdner, Jack Smith : Killing Me Softly: Toxic Waste, Corporate Profit, and the Struggle for Environmental Justice before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Killing Me Softly: Toxic Waste, Corporate Profit, and the Struggle for Environmental Justice:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. truth tellingBy JeniferKilling Me Softly describes in clear prose that the most significant problem facing the US is dealing with industrial waste. Much of it is toxic and predictably, as is

the American way, the placement of incinerators and dumps are in poor, minority communities. The one moment of inspiration comes in the story of a community that formed across class and race lines to prevent the siting of a dump in its town. However, the US policies, particularly of the Reagan era, created a privileging of industry and corporations over people and the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or the right to the clean air and water that existed before big Waste polluted both. It's interesting to read this in 2012, when everyone is supposed to recycle. Does recycling cans and plastic matter when the bigger issue of toxins is prevalent? I also appreciated the 1990's greenwashing campaigns that set the precedent for every industrial now: everyone is green and offers solutions--at least in ads.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. InspiringBy Malvin "Killing Me Softly" by Eddie Girdner and Jack Smith is a highly readable study of the environmental justice movement and the toxic waste industry. The book skillfully blends economic theory with a real-life case study to create a work that is both deeply thought-provoking and dramatic in its narrative. Thoroughly researched and persuasively argued, "Killing Me Softly" is an excellent book for both students and general readers who may be interested in environmental politics. Girdner and Smith devote the first two chapters explaining how pollution is a systemic problem that is related to capitalism, production and the profit motive. Toxic waste in particular is associated with the growth of the petrochemical industry in the post-World War II era, which not coincidentally has witnessed the rise of the modern waste disposal industry. The reader understands how the regulatory system seeks merely to contain (but not eliminate) waste and how the market tends to offload this waste onto the poor. The authors draw on Marx to explain that this process is historically linked "to the continued process of enclosure" of the commons but with the goal to "enhance the bottom lines" of the politically-powerful corporations that produce and dispose of these wastes. Girdner and Smith then introduces us to the environmental justice movement which seeks to test the theory of grassroots democracy against the reality of corporate control. While minorities and women are most often targeted and disproportionately bear the costs of pollution, the authors argue that the case of Mercer County, Missouri demonstrates that the core issue is class, which in turn is rooted in capitalism's tendency to produce profits for the privileged few at the expense of the many. The chapter about how the close-knit community of rural Mercer County organized to resist the "obliteration of a way of life" by a major corporation is a remarkable story that is written in a compelling manner. The people's ingenuity and determination to persist and continue their struggle in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds is truly inspiring. The authors go on to share some of the lessons learned from the citizen's victory in Mercer County to provide guidance to others. Ultimately, Girdner and Smith's work helps us recognize the necessity for the environmental justice movement to transcend race and national identities and become a much broader movement that struggles against inequality and capitalist exploitation. In the final chapter, the authors propose six principles for a form of local, sustainable development that would allow people to achieve "peace, fulfillment, and happiness" in a way that is not dependent on the pursuit of material acquisition. I highly recommend this exceptional book to everyone.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The political economy of toxic wasteBy SPMThis book gives you an introduction to industrial pollution from a Marxist perspective. In this case, "Marxist" just means that the authors are willing to look at corporate causes, and show how the government interacts with corporations to ensure profits. Their description of the system is very good. In fact, it would be impossible to refute. They show how US taxpayers pay the cost for cleanup, then major chemical firms buy the cleanup companies and make a profit off of their own pollution. After a brief but comprehensive overview of the chemical industry, public relations ("greenwashing"), and the history of dumping chemicals in poor areas, the authors turn their focus to a fight in Mercer County, Missouri. They tell the story of local activists trying to stop Waste-Tech, Inc.'s attempt to set up a toxic waste incinerator. Through public pressure, they struggle to defend their own health. If you want a good book on the environment, try this one. The authors know how the system works and, although detractors may disregard their emphasis on the profit motive, everything here rings true. The footnotes are extensive, leading you to additional information.

The political economy of toxic waste was summed up by Lawrence Summers then chief economist at the World Bank, later U.S. Treasury Secretary in his notorious claim that poor people live in environments that are, from an economic point of view, not sufficiently polluted. The toxic waste industry came to prominence in the United States after 1945. In its ceaseless search for profit, it now routinely endangers the health of people around the world and the planet itself. Smith and Girdner's *Killing Me Softly* examines the growth of the toxic waste industry and the economic logic behind its expansion. It gives a hard-hitting account of the damage it has done throughout the United States. It focuses in particular on the struggle of the people of Mercer County, Missouri, against the plans of Amoco Waste-Tech to establish a huge toxic waste landfill in the county. It shows how the persistence of ordinary people in a poor and politically marginalized area could prevail against the predations of corporate power. Although race and ethnicity play a crucial role in deciding which communities are targeted for toxic waste dumps, Smith and Girdner argue that the critical cleavage within the United States and globally is that of class. The struggle for environmental justice has an important role to play in empowering poor communities and bringing them into a larger movement for social justice.

About the Author Eddie J. Girdner teaches International Relations at Bashkent University in Ankara, Turkey. He is the

author of *People and Power: An Introduction to Politics*. Jack Smith teaches English and Philosophy at North Central Missouri College. His fiction and reviews have been published in a number of literary reviews. He is co-editor of the *Green Hills Literary Lantern*.