

Melissa Checker
Department of Urban Studies
City University of New York, Queens College

HIGHER EDUCATION

New York University	1994-2002	Ph.D./Anthropology	2002
University of Pennsylvania	1986-1990	B.A. English/Folklore	1990

FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

Queens College	2012-	Associate Professor	Urban Studies
CUNY Graduate Center	2011-present	Assistant Professor	Ph.D. Program in Anthropology
Queens College	2007-2011	Assistant Professor	Urban Studies
University of Memphis	2002-2006	Assistant Professor	Anthropology

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL HONORS

- 2010 *Award for Outstanding Support and Dedication*, Hyde and Aragon Park Improvement Committee
- 2007 *Association for Humanistic Sociology Book Award*, Association for Humanistic Sociology.
- 2006 Finalist, *Julian Steward Award*, Anthropology and Environment Section, American Anthropological Association.
- 2006 Finalist, *Delmos Jones and Jagna Sharff Memorial Book Prize for the Critical Study of North America*, Society for Anthropology of North America, American Anthropological Association.
- 2004 *Junior Scholar Award* American Anthropological Association Anthropology and Environment Section.
- 2003 *Outstanding Dissertation Award in Social Sciences Award*, New York University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.
- 2000 *Peter Kong-ming New Student Paper Award*, Society for Applied Anthropology.
- 1998 *Roy Rappaport Student Paper Prize*, American Anthropological Association, Anthropology and Environment Section.
- 1994 *Kriser Fellowship in Urban Anthropology*, New York University (4 semesters).
- 1990 *Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Service*, American Institute for Public Service.

BOOKS

Checker, Melissa, 2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*, New York University Press.

Checker, Melissa and Maggie Fishman, eds., 2004. *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power and Public Life*, New York: Columbia University Press. (50% contribution)

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Checker, Melissa, 2009. Practicing Anthropology in 2008: Significant Impacts, Emerging Trends,

American Anthropologist 111(1): 162-169.

Checker, Melissa, 2008. Eco-Apartheid and Global Greenwaves: African Diasporic Environmental Justice Movements, *Souls* 10 (4):1-16.

Checker, Melissa, 2007. "But I Know It's True": Environmental Risk Assessment, Justice and Anthropology, *Human Organization* 66(2):112-124.

Checker, Melissa, 2005. From Friend to Foe and Back Again: Industry and Environmental Action in the Urban South, special issue of *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 34(1): 7-44.

Checker, Melissa, 2005. Introduction to special issue of *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 34(1): 1-6.

Checker, Melissa, 2004. 'We All Have Identity at the Table': Negotiating Difference in a Southern African American Environmental Justice Network. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 11(2):171-194.

Checker, Melissa, 2002. 'It's in the Air': Redefining the Environment as a New Metaphor for Old Social Justice Struggles. *Human Organization* 61(1):94-105.

Checker, Melissa, 2001. 'Like Nixon Coming to China': Finding Common Ground in a Multi-Ethnic Coalition for Environmental Justice. *Anthropological Quarterly* 74(3):135-146.

In Progress

Checker, Melissa, Wiped Out by the "Greenwave": Environmental Gentrification and the Paradoxical Politics of Urban Sustainability. *City and Society* (Accepted, pending revisions).

Checker, Melissa, "To Be Made Whole": Self-Determination and the Changing Meaning of Resistance in a 20-Year Struggle for Environmental Justice. *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* (Accepted, pending revisions).

Checker, Melissa, Gary McDonogh and Cynthia Isenhour, eds., "Sustainability as Myth and Practice in the Global City" a special issue of *City and Society* (Issue accepted, scheduled for Fall, 2011).

Checker, Melissa, 2012. Social Justice and Environment. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41.

CHAPTERS IN BOOKS/ANTHOLOGIES

Checker, Melissa, 2011. Beset by Offsets: Tracking Carbon Offset Chains & Human Rights Abuses. In *Life and Death Matters: Human Rights, Environment and Social Justice, 2nd Edition*. Barbara Rose Johnston, Ed. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Checker, Melissa, 2009. Double Jeopardy: Pursuing the Path of Carbon Offsets and Human Rights Abuses. In *Upsetting the Offset: The Political Economy of Carbon Markets*. Steffen Böhm and Siddhartha Dabhi, eds. Pp. 41-56, MayFlyBooks Press.

Checker, Melissa, 2009. (**Reprint** of Eco-Apartheid and Global Greenwaves: African Diasporic Environmental Justice Movements). In *Beyond Race: New Social Movements in the African Diaspora*.

Leith Mullings, ed. Pp. 262-284, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Checker, Melissa, 2009. Doris Bradshaw: Battling Environmental Justice. In *Tennessee Women: Their Lives and Times, Vol. 1*. Beverly Bond, Sarah Wilkerson Freeman, eds., Pp. 403-424. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Checker, Melissa, 2008. Withered Memories: Naming and Fighting Environmental Racism in Georgia. In *New Landscapes of Global Inequality*. Jane Collins, Micaela de Leonardo, Brett Williams, eds., Pp. 169-190. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Checker, Melissa and Maggie Fishman, 2004. Introduction. In *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power and Public Life*. Melissa Checker and Maggie Fishman, eds. Pp. 1-26. New York: Columbia University Press.

Checker, Melissa, 2004. Treading Murky Waters: Day-To-Day Dilemmas in the Construction of a Pluralistic U.S. Environmental Movement. In *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power and Public Life*. Melissa Checker and Maggie Fishman, eds. Pp. 27-50. New York: Columbia University Press.

REVIEWS

Book Reviews

Checker, Melissa, 2010. Review of *Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown* by Javier Auyero and Debora Alejandra Swistun (Oxford University Press, 2009). *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 15(1): 230–232.

Checker, Melissa, 2009. Review of *Toxic Exposures: Contested Illnesses and the Environmental Health Movement* by Phil Brown (Columbia University Press, 2007). *Medical Anthropological Quarterly* 23(1):70-73.

Checker, Melissa, 2008. Review of *Grounded Globalism: How the U.S. South Embraces the World* by James L. Peacock (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007). *Anthropological Science* 115(2):187-188.

Checker, Melissa, 2006. Review of *Stony the Road to Change: Black Mississippians and the Culture of Social Relations* by Marilyn Thomas-Houston (Cambridge University Press, 2005). *American Anthropologist* 108(3):622.

Film Reviews

2008. Review of “Cheat Neutral,” Directed by Beth Stratford (<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/cheat.html>).

2008. Review of “The Greening of Southie,” Directed by Ian Cheney; Produced by Curt Ellis (<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/print/gos.html>).

2007. Review of “Arid Lands,” Directed by Grant Aaker and Josh Wallaert; Produced by Sidelong Films LLP (<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/arid.html>).

REPORTS AND OTHER PUBLISHED WORKS

Editorial Essays

Checker, Melissa, David Vine and Alaka Wali, 2010. “A Sea Change in Anthropology? Public

Anthropology Reviews,” *American Anthropologist* 112(1):5-6.

Checker, Melissa, David Vine and Alaka Wali, 2010. “Introducing Public Anthropology Reviews,” *American Anthropologist*, 112 (2): 308.

Journalism

Checker, Melissa, 2011. “An Explosive Situation” *Counterpunch*, January 21-23 (<http://counterpunch.com/checker01212011.html>).

Checker, Melissa, 2010. “Another Natural Gas Controversy” *Gotham Gazette*, August 17 (www.gothamgazette.com/article/environment/20100817/7/3337).

Checker, Melissa, 2009. “Double Jeopardy: Carbon Offsets and Human Rights Abuses” *Counterpunch*, September 9 (<http://www.counterpunch.org/checker09092009.html>). (**Reprinted in** *Synthesis/Regeneration* 51:Front cover, 19-21, Winter 2010).

Checker, Melissa, 2009. “The Ins and Outs of Carbon Offsets.” *IEEE Spectrum Magazine*, June. spectrum.ieee.org/energy/environment/the-ins-and-outs-of-carbon-offsets).

Checker, Melissa, 2009. “Staten Island’s Toxic Stew”, *Gotham Gazette*, May 29 (<http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/environment/20090526/7/2923>).

Checker, Melissa, 2009. “The Manhattan Project’s Legacy on Staten Island” *Gotham Gazette*, June 4 (www.gothamgazette.com/.../the-manhattan-projects-legacy-on-staten-island/).

Checker, Melissa, 2008. “Working for a Greener Harlem”, *Gotham Gazette*, November 27 (www.gothamgazette.com/print/2770).

Checker, Melissa, 2008. “Carbon Offsets: More Harm than Good?” *Counterpunch*, August 27 (<http://www.counterpunch.org/checker08272008.html>).

Checker, Melissa, 2008. “Climate Change Could Threaten a Green Willets Point” *Gotham Gazette*, August 14 (www.gothamgazette.com/article/landuse/20080814/12/2611).

Checker, Melissa, 2008. “Bringing ‘Green Collar’ Jobs to the South Bronx, *Gotham Gazette*, August 19 (www.gothamgazette.com/print/2616).

Checker, Melissa, 2008. “A Community Plan for the ‘Highway to Nowhere’ *Gotham Gazette*, May 29 (www.gothamgazette.com/print/2535).

Checker, Melissa, 2005. Responsibility and Liability: What Do Anthropologists Need to Know? *Anthropology News* 46(7):6-7.

Checker, Melissa, 2005. Environmental Justice Pushed Backwards by Bush Administration. *Anthropology News* 46(6):43.

EDITORIAL POSITIONS & ACTIVITIES

2009-present Co-Editor, “Public Anthropology Reviews,” *American Anthropologist* (with Alaka Wali and David Vine).

- 2003-2006 Editor, "Public Policy Reviews," American Anthropological Association Committee on Public Policy Monthly Column, *Anthropology News*.
- 2002-present Manuscript/Grant Proposal Referee: *American Anthropologist*, *Human Organization*, *Identities*, *Collaborative Anthropology*, *Current Anthropology*, *Transforming Anthropology*, *Political Ecology*, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Southern Anthropologist*, NYU Press, the National Science Foundation, Bullfrog Films.

ORAL PAPERS AND ADDRESSES ((* indicates "refereed;" (**) indicates "invited)

Upcoming

- **Checker, Melissa, 2011. "What Do You Mean by Green?: Green Jobs in a Greed Economy," Labor & the Right to the City Movement Conference, Santa Cruz, CA, February 26.
- **Checker, Melissa, 2011. "Public Scholarship and Environmental Justice." Keynote address, American Studies MA Program. Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia, March 18.

Completed

- **Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Dirty Deeds Done Dirty Cheap: The Political Ecology of Fiscal and Environmental Crisis in Staten Island, New York," CUNY Graduate Center, Department of Environmental Psychology Colloquia Series. December 3.
- *Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Green" Deserts, Green Water, and Green Wash: The Hydrological and Human Costs of Carbon Offsets. American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, November 20.
- **Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Dirty Deeds Done Dirty Cheap: Environmental Gentrification, Organized Crime & the Political Ecology of Fiscal Crisis in Staten Island, New York," University of California Berkeley, Berkeley Workshop on Environmental Politics. October 15.
- **Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience: What Social Science Can Offer," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, June 29.
- *Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Toppled by the Greenwave?: Environmental Gentrification in NYC" Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon, June 18.
- *Checker, Melissa, 2010. "You Too Can Glow in the Dark": Battling Water Pollution and Environmental Injustice in an Era of Climate and Fiscal Crisis. Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings, Merida, Mexico, March 27.
- *Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Toppled by the Greenwave?: Environmental Gentrification in NYC" CUNY Nature, Ecology, Society Colloquium, March 5.
- **Checker, Melissa, 2010. "Polluted Promises: Fighting for Environmental Justice in a Southern City" Drew University Department of Anthropology, March 2.
- **Checker, Melissa, 2010. "The Bottom of the Food Chain': Contamination, Climate Change and Fiscal Crisis on Staten Island's North Shore. Columbia University Faculty Seminar, "Culture, Power, Boundaries," March 1.

*Checker, Melissa, 2009, "Environmental Gentrification and the Unsustainable 'Downside' of Grassroots Environmental Justice Activism" American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, Philadelphia, PA, December 3.

**Checker, Melissa, 2009. "Ethnographer as Muckraker: Investigatory Anthropology in NYC" New York Academy of Sciences, Anthropology Division, November 9.

**Checker, Melissa, 2009. "Do Greenwaves Lift all Boats?: Environmental Gentrification & Sustainable Urban Development" Queens College, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, November 2.

**Checker, Melissa, 2009. "Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Social Justice in a Southern Town" University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Department of Anthropology, October 20.

**Checker, Melissa, 2009. "Will the Greenwave Lift All Boats?: Environmental Gentrification and the Politics of Urban Sustainability". CUNY Graduate Center Anthropology Colloquium Series, March 5.

**Checker, Melissa, 2008. "Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in the City." Georgetown University, April 10.

*Checker, Melissa, 2008. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Participant Perspectives on Participatory Research" Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting, Memphis, TN, March 30.

*Checker, Melissa, 2007. Should We Stay or Should We Go?: Debating Relocation in a Contaminated Neighborhood. American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, Washington, DC, November.

*Checker, Melissa, 2007. "Make Us Whole": Controversy and Contestation in the Extended Aftermath of a Technological Disaster. Society for Anthropology of North America Meetings, New Orleans, LA, April.

*Checker, Melissa and Charles Utley, 2007. Community Participation in Environmental Decision Making: One Case Example & Lessons Learned. The State of Environmental Justice in America Conference, Washington, DC., March.

*Checker, Melissa, 2007. Environmental Justice Through Citizen Science. American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, San Jose, CA., November.

**Checker, Melissa, 2006. New Landscapes of Inequality: Environmental Racism. Advanced Seminar, School of American Research, ". Santa Fe, NM, March.

*Checker, Melissa, 2006. In Search of Social Sustainability: Citizen Participation and the NAFTA I-69 Corridor. 2nd International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Social Sustainability, Hanoi, Vietnam, January.

*Checker, Melissa, 2005. Possibilities and Hazards in Participatory Risk Research. Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings, Santa Fe, NM, March.

**Checker, Melissa, 2005. "Making It Visible: Movements for Economic & Environmental Justice." New York, NY. Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs, October.

**Checker, Melissa, 2005, "Environmental Racism and the Struggle for Social Justice in a Southern Town," Haverford College, October.

*Checker, Melissa and Jon Burchfield, 2004, Pitfalls on the Way to Bridging the Digital Divide: Lessons from the South. Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings, Dallas, TX, April (50% effort; presented by Jon Burchfield).

Checker, Melissa, 2004, Discussant. Intersections of Risk and Culture in Health and Environment Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings, Dallas, TX, April.

*Checker, Melissa, 2004. Libel, Lawsuits and Liability: The Legal Limits of Advocacy. Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings, Dallas, TX, April.

*Checker, Melissa, 2003. 'But I Know It's True': Bridging Gaps Between Policy, Practice and Perception. XV International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Florence, Italy, July.

*Checker, Melissa and Kelly Alley, 2003. Human Rights and Environmental Values in India and the United States. Oxford University Roundtable, Oxford, England, June (50% effort; presented by Kelly Alley).

GRANTS

Grants in Progress

Checker, Melissa (PI), *Environmental Gentrification, Urban Sustainability and the Politics of Redevelopment in an Era of Economic Upheaval*, PSC-CUNY Award. Research Foundation of CUNY, #62570-00 40, 2008-2009 (Extended thru 2010).

Checker, Melissa with Jeff Maskovsky and Dana-Ain Davis, *Teaching Urban Diversity*, 2010 Teacher Scholar Grant for Innovative Course Development, Queens College, 2010.

Grants Completed

Checker, Melissa (PI), *Environmental Gentrification: investigating the Unintended Consequences of New York City's 'Greenwave'*, PSC-CUNY Award. Research Foundation of CUNY, #61644-00 39, 2007-2008.

Checker, Melissa (PI), *To Reinvigorate a Vision: Creating a Community-Driven Environmental Justice Action Plan in Augusta, Georgia* Anthropology and Environment Small Grants Fund, 2007.

Checker, Melissa (PI), *The Collection of Cumulative Environmental Risk Exposure Data Using a Community-Based, Participatory Research Model*, University of Memphis, Faculty Research Grant, 2004-2005.

Checker, Melissa (PI), *The Social Construction of Environmental Racism in the U.S. South*. National Science Foundation Cultural Anthropology Program, Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant SBR-9806988, 1998-1999.

Research Write-Up & Travel Awards

Checker, Melissa, *William Stewart Travel Award*, CUNY Academy for the Humanities and Sciences, 2008.

Checker, Melissa, *Donovan Travel Enrichment Fund Award*, University of Memphis (\$500), 2005.

Checker, Melissa, *Donovan Travel Enrichment Fund Award*, University of Memphis (\$500), 2004.

Checker, Melissa, *Society for Applied Anthropology Spicer Student Travel Award*, 2002.

Checker, Melissa, *Morris K. Udall Dissertation Fellowship*, Morris K. Udall Environmental Policy Foundation, 2001.

Checker, Melissa, *Dean's Dissertation Award*, New York University

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES (last five years only)

Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences

New York Academy of Sciences

American Anthropological Association

Anthropology and Environment Section

Society for Applied Anthropology

Society for Humanistic Sociology

SERVICE

Elected Positions Served

2011-2015 Vice President/President-Elect, New York Academy of Sciences Anthropology Division (Elected in 2010).

2003-2006 Undesignated Seat, Committee on Public Policy, American Anthropological Association.

2000-2002 Student Seat, American Anthropological Association Executive Board.

Other Disciplinary Service

2008-2009 Member, American Anthropological Association Resource Development Committee.

2009 Session Organizer, Sustainability as Myth & Practice in the Global City. American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.

2008 Judge, Society for Humanistic Anthropology Book Award

2007-2008 Judge, Peter Kong Ming New Student Paper Prize, Society for Applied Anthropology.

2008 Session Organizer, Talking Back: Anthropologists and their "Informants" Discuss the Relative Merits of Engaged Anthropology. Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting.

2007 Session Organizer, Not Untouchable: Re-centering the Margins in Urban Anthropology for the 21st Century (Papers In Honor Of Owen Lynch), American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.

2007 Public Policy Forum Organizer, "The Precautionary Principle in Practice:

- Promises and Pitfalls,” American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.
- 2006 Judge, Anthropology and Environment Section Junior Scholar Award.
- 2003 Workshop Organizer, “Crossing the Divide: Anthropologists and Effective Environmental Justice Policy Intervention,” American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.
- 2002 Session Organizer, “Environmental Justice at Home and Abroad,” American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.
- 2002 Session Organizer, “Turn and Face the Strange: Narrating Environmental Change in Industrial Communities,” Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meetings.
- 2001 Session Chair, “New World Disorders: Exploring the Intersections of Medical and Environmental Anthropology,” American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings (Invited Session).
- 2001-2002 Member, Society for Applied Anthropology Student Organizing Committee.
- 2000 Session Organizer and Chair, "Cultural Activism, Power and Public Life," American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.
- 1999 Member, International Advisory Panel, Identities in Action Conference, University of Wales.
- 1997 Session Organizer and Chair, “Bridging Unsafe Waters: Anthropologists in Environmental Justice Struggles.” American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings.
- CUNY**
- 2010-2011 Co-Organizer (with Ashley Dawson, College of Staten Island/CUNY Graduate Center), “The Paradox of Sustainability”, CUNY Center for the Humanities, Seminars in Humanities.
- 2010 Moderator, “Seizing Opportunities: Waterfront Works in Progress,” CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities Public Colloquia Series.
- 2009-2010 Panel Organizer, CUNY Nature, Environment Society Colloquium
- 2009-present CUNY Baccalaureate Program, Faculty Advisor
- 2008-present CUNY Nature, Environment Society Colloquium, Steering Committee
- 2008-present CUNY Sustainability Committee
- Queens College**
- 2009-present Queens College Environmental Studies Major/Minor Strategic Planning Committee

2009-present Faculty Partner, Writing at Queens (lead organizer of undergraduate focus groups as part of wider evaluation of QC writing programs).

2008 Planning Committee, Focus the Nation Teach-In on Climate Change

Department of Urban Studies

2007-present Service Learning Strategic Planning Committee

2007-present Urban Studies Club Faculty Advisor

2007-present Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

2007-2009 Urban Studies Internship Coordinator

2007 Organizer, "Green the Ghetto: An Evening with Majora Carter," Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies.

Advisement - Graduate Students

Melissa Zavala, CUNY Graduate Center Anthropology PhD Qualifying Exam Committee.

Maggie Dickinson, CUNY Graduate Center Anthropology PhD, PhD Qualifying Exam Committee.

Elan Abrell, CUNY Graduate Center Anthropology PhD, PhD Qualifying Exam Committee.

Robert Brimhall, Department of Anthropology, University of Memphis, 2003-2005. Masters Thesis Advisor.

Rebecca Puckett, Department of Anthropology, University of Memphis, 2002-2004. Masters Thesis Advisor.

Advisement - Undergraduate Students

Mustafa Ali, BA Degree in Environmental Justice CUNY Baccalaureate Program

Competitive, Application-Based Pedagogical Workshops

2010 Sustainability Across the Curriculum Leadership Workshop, Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

2007 Writing the Academic Essay Workshop, Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking.

2004 Integrating Ethics into Environmental Education Faculty Development Workshop, Carnegie Council.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

2010 Advisory Board Member, North Shore Community Coalition for Environmental Justice.

2009 Guest on Brian Lehrer Show, WNYC.

- 2009-present Advisory Board Member, North Shore Waterfront Conservancy of Staten Island.
- 2007 Air Pollution Curriculum Consultant, West Harlem Environmental Action.
- 2006-2007 Steering Committee, The State of Environmental Justice in America Conference, Washington, DC.
- 2004-present Webmaster, Hyde and Aragon Park Improvement Committee.
- 2003-present Advisory Board Member, Defense Depot of Memphis Tennessee, Concerned Citizens Committee.
- 2000-present Advisory Board Member, Hyde and Aragon Park Improvement Committee.