To The Very Last Breath Marie Harrison’s Epic Stand to Save Bayview Hunters Point

“We have the right to live, work, play and worship on land that is clean.” Marie Harrison - GreenAction Gregory Dicum SF Gate 2.2.2005

Demolition of the PG&E Hunters Point Power Plant Circa 2009

Marie Harrison and grandson Roman

“My grandson used to suffer tremendously...he had asthma attacks and chronic nosebleeds. He would wake up some mornings with his pillow soaked with blood. In the building where my grandson stayed there were four units. Three of those units had children sick with asthma or another pulmonary disease. The other one had an adult with cancer, and the last one had an older child with really bad skin rashes.” SF Gate 2/2/2005

In 2007, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom announced the eminent closure of the Hunters Point PG&E Power Plant. This was not the first time such a declaration had been made. The plant had been scheduled for shut down in 2001 and Marie Harrison had become expert in the impacts air pollution was having on her family and her community.

As a contributor to the SF Bayview Newspaper and community organizer for GreenAction, Harrison became “the power plants’s arch nemesis.” As a 2000 candidate for D10 Supervisor and outspoken leader of the environmental justice movement in southeast San Francisco, Harrison knew it was time to act. Along with activists and community members, Harrison strategically blockaded the entry to the power plant to force its closure.

It took two more years of a “David versus Goliath” environmental justice battle - one of Bayview Hunters Point’s biggest- but in 2009 the PG&E Power Plant was finally demolished.

Marie Harrison died on April 5, 2019 after suffering a respiratory arrest secondary to a chronic lung disease called idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. IPF is a fibrotic lung disease characterized by progressive and irreversible lung scarring and decline in lung function. Lung transplantation is the only definitive cure. IPF affects only 12 people per thousand each year and many die within four years of diagnosis. Most patients with IPF are smokers who suffer from chronic infections or workers in polluting industries like the hundreds operating in the 94124 zip code in Bayview Hunters Point.

Marie Harrison did not smoke! IPF is associated with environmental exposures to metal dust, wood dust, coal dust, silica, stone dust and biological dusts from mold spores.

Particle Pollution in Bayview Hunters Point averages 20 tons of emissions annually

Marie Harrison was a fighter to the end. The final year of her life was spent in protests at San Francisco City Hall and atop the Hunters Point Shipyard at the Lennar development on Parcel A. The Bayview Hunters Point Community Air Monitoring Project will vote at it’s May 2019 on a proposal to name itself the **Marie Harrison Community Air Monitoring Network.**

Environmental Health & Justice Leaders Michelle Pierce, Tony Kelly and Marie Harrison

Leading a protest rally wearing oxygen cannulas in front of San Francisco City Hall May 2018

Friends at the December 2018 GreenAction Holiday Party

Dance in Peace - Marie Harrison