## Author bio

**Steve Lerner** is Research Director of Commonweal, a health and environmental research institute. He is the author of *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*; *Eco-Pioneers: Practical Visionaries Solving Today's Environmental Problems*; *The Earth Summit: Conversations with Architects of an Ecologically Sustainable Future*; and *Beyond the Earth Summit: Conversations with Advocates of Sustainable Development*.

## **Book description(s)**

The stories of residents of low-income communities across the country who took action when pollution from heavy industry contaminated their towns.

In *Sacrifice Zones*, Steve Lerner tells the stories of twelve communities that rose up to fight the industries and military bases causing disproportionately high levels of chemical pollution. He calls these low-income neighborhoods "sacrifice zones"—repurposing a Cold War term coined by U.S. government officials to designate areas contaminated with radioactive pollutants during the manufacture of nuclear weapons. And he argues that residents of a new generation of sacrifice zones, tainted with chemical pollutants, need additional regulatory protections.

Sacrifice Zones offers compelling portraits of accidental activists who have become grassroots leaders in the struggle for environmental justice and details the successful tactics they have used on the fence line with heavy industry.

Sacrifice Zones describes the plague of environmentally induced diseases that people who live nearby heavy industry endure, and shows how these communities are rising up to take action against the polluters. The book is based on hundreds of interviews of residents of communities on the fenceline with heavy industry. Lerner lets the victims of environmental injustice speak in their own words, and describe in detail what they experience and how they are organizing to improve their quality of life and protect themselves.

## **Endorsements**

"Lerner travels to a dozen low-income, mostly minority communities around the country where the pressure to protect good-paying jobs takes a grim and painful toll on human health. Lerner lets the people living, working, and in too many cases, dying from pollution in these 'fenceline communities' do the storytelling. What the reader will be left with is shame and outrage that the richest country in the world has allowed entire communities to be sacrificed to pollution. But I believe you will also come away from this book with fresh resolve that our fellow citizens will not continue to be forgotten casualties of commerce."

—Ken Cook, President, Environmental Working Group

"This is a compelling treatise on why the dominant environmental protection apparatus should be overhauled to emphasize prevention, precaution, and equal protection. The book is a significant complement to three decades of environmental justice research that provides irrefutable empirical evidence that all American communities are not created equal."

—Robert D. Bullard, Ware Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director, Environmental Justice Resource Center, Clark Atlanta University

"These case histories from fenceline America are compelling, beautifully detailed stories that integrate authentic voices from grassroots struggles for environmental justice. Lerner captures the nuance of these community struggles, and posits the common paradigm linking these twelve communities as he heralds the pain, the passion, the human cost of life and death in America's sacrifice zones."

—Peggy M. Shepard, Executive Director and cofounder of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, New York City

"Easy to read, well written, filled with documentation of the stories, compelling and hard to put down. The stories are important, have not been told, and need to be recounted in a public way. This book will add to the public discourse on the topic and will give motivation to some, solace to others, and consternation to organizations that are exposed."

—Peter L. DeFur, Research Associate Professor, Center for Environmental Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University