

Statement for the opening meeting of the EPA WTC Air Quality Expert Technical Review Panel,
March 31, 2004

My name is Rachel Lidov. On September 11, 2001 one of the many strokes of luck which has characterized my life saw to it that my daughter, then attending Stuyvesant High School, would walk out of that building alive on the fourth day of that school year, that my then-unemployed husband was not interviewing for a job at Morgan Stanley in the Twin Towers as he had hoped to be doing, and that all of our many friends and acquaintances from more than a decade of his working in the heart of the financial district would escape the scene of devastation.

By the end of December of that year I learned that I had pushed luck too far. Choosing to rely on the honesty and integrity of the EPA and slipping into the false security of reading the New York Times daily had deafened me to a true friend's warning that there were serious problems caused by the environmental aftermath of the collapse of the World Trade Center, and that people were being asked to return to school and to work before it was safe for them to do so.

So when others parents at Stuyvesant High School echoed my friend's warning, and provided information on continuing contamination in and near the school, I turned to the task of understanding what the EPA should have been doing to protect those I love and care about. As a parent and as a citizen, I had no other choice. I put aside my daily routine and began to evaluate the risks my daughter and others were being subjected to, and what should have been done to protect them.

I now find myself at the receiving end of mail to the organization I helped found, 9/11 Environmental Action. As the nation begins to scrutinize the circumstances surrounding the attack on 9/11, increasing numbers of people, some of whom you are hearing from today, write to us about their suffering, frustration and despair as the consequences of toxic exposures after September 11th emerge. I am continually stunned by the devastation cause by EPA's negligence, dictated, as we now know, by the White House, in complete disregard of national regulatory law.

As I thought about what is occurring today, I asked myself what I could contribute to what I hope will be a turning point in our country's policies. I am a pianist and a piano teacher, not a scientist. Here is my answer: Like science, art is exacting, powerful, and beautiful. I grasp more firmly than ever that art and science are subject to the natural laws we discover through our work, and which we can choose to honor or destroy. This puts me in a position to distinguish the technical discussions from the political decisions that confront us. Therefore I wish to address some preliminary concerns:

The public record does not tell us how this panel came about, how and by whom the individuals who serve on it were selected. What agencies, offices and entities took part in establishing the panel? This is a matter which should be as easily available to the public. A transparent public process is the right of citizens of this country, when decisions that affect their health and well being are made and evaluated. Has this panel truly been set up by the EPA alone, consulting only with Senator Clinton and her staff?

The follow up question is simply to ask how it is possible that this Technical Expert Review Panel includes neither Dr. Steven Levin nor Dr. Robin Herbert, Medical Director and Co-Medical Director of the Mount Sinai Center for Occupational & Environmental Medicine. Their experience in screening and testing for the respiratory ailments that have occurred from exposure to the World Trade Center contamination is unparalleled. Their omission is disquieting, to say the least.

These basic questions must be answered before this panel can bring to a halt the deadly cover-up of the truth and obfuscation of regulatory action that has brought thousands of healthy individuals to find the simple act of breathing torturous, and to fear the path ahead of them. Only then can you quickly correct the cost-effective compromises of the clean-up of 2002-2003 that still threaten our lives. Only then can you extend its reach to prevent further exposures of those

already here and those who will innocently come here. If we are to prevent more illness and early death we can accept nothing less.

Thank you.

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