

*“It's not a black and white thing, man. ** Those toxins that they're producing there, it affects everybody. It don't make no difference if you are * black*, white*, Jew*, gentile*, rich*, poor*. It affects all of us – and most of all it affects the future! The future generations, that's why we have been fighting on this thing right here, man, for the last four or five years trying to get them to stress to the point: if you make a mess, that's cool—but then *clean it up*. They looking at the cost of it but yet they want to let the rest of us be the ones to cover the cost. I was always trained from the time I was growin' up as a small child—if I ever made a mess—I was always made to go and clean it up.”*

- Rev. Alfred Warren

RECONCILIATION, RESTORATION AND RESPECT

A community collaborative project with

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Photos and audio are from January 10, 2019 at a North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality Q&A Session to share with the community Duke Energy's Final Closure Options for the coal ash basin at Belews Creek Power Station. The information session held at Walnut Cove Elementary School in Stokes County, NC. It was the first of six information sessions held throughout the state to decide the plans for Duke's six remaining coal ash basins.

The text is presented in its original, unedited form, which represents the voice of those present willing to share their testimonies. Minor edits were made for clarity. Emphasis has been added using italics to show the inflections in the voices of those interviewed.

Published March 2019

RECONCILIATION, RESTORATION AND RESPECT

Stokes County is home to Duke Energy's Belews Creek Steam Power Station and accounts for 20% of North Carolina's carbon emissions annually. Belews Creek houses a landfill that is subject to closure under the guidance of North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). The event was held for state officials to present Duke's three proposals for closing the coal ash basin. The basin holds 14 billion gallons and 12 million tons wet coal ash, and is adjacent to additional 8 million tons dry coal ash in "capped-in-place," unlined landfills. This capped site has already failed and resulted in plumes of arsenic in the area with one neighbor's well having the highest arsenic level in the state. On Duke Energy's property, the Craig Road Landfill is currently receiving production ash at around 60,000 tons a year. It could also hold the excavated ash from the 12 million ton basin. However Duke did not include the Craig Road Landfill in any of the three proposed closure options.

On the evening of January 10th, many residents were just coming from the life memorial service of 39-year-old LaToya Lash—a lifelong Stokes County resident and phenomenal singer, arts educator, and mentor to youth, who passed away just days before from an inoperable tumor mass in her stomach. Many residents were also prayerful and concerned for a 2-year-old boy and Stokes County resident whose family lives close to Belews Lake. This toddler had received treatment for a rare brain disease in a Pennsylvania hospital since before Christmas 2018.

To begin, an Alliance of Carolinians Together Against Coal Ash (ACT) press conference gathered lifelong residents' illuminating testimonies on the "Epiphany" they hoped DEQ and Duke Energy would have: to fully excavate into a safe, lined, above-ground, onsite landfills and to further remedy the harms of coal ash that have affected Belews communities for 45 years, and to do so similarly at the six remaining sites across NC.

While NC DEQ representatives indicated their interest to "hear what the community really thinks" and to "protect public health," several of their booths shared incorrect models and data for closure plans. Community organizations, outside scientists present, and many residents pointed this out to DEQ folks onsite—e.g., that Belews has 12 million tons of coal ash in waste ponds, not 2 million. The DEQ event operated on the assumption that residents should, and could, wait in line to talk to ~8 different DEQ representatives, and, where necessary, share their tough stories on repeat at each booth, then fill out a small written comment card. (There was no central Q&A or community comment time witnessed or recorded by DEQ).

In the community booth area—the school's art room—the goal was to host honest **feedback for DEQ**, shared on the **community's own terms**. Residents were asked:

- "What are the true costs of coal ash waste in your own life and in this community?"
- "What type of cleanup should DEQ require of Duke Energy?"
- "What do you love about the community where you live?"

Attendees who stood for photos and audio did so to share a record of who was present both with DEQ, and with their coal-ash-impacted neighbors who may have been unwell, working, intimidated, or lacked transportation. Residents' straightforward strength and **integrity of presence in these photos** shows the NC DEQ and Duke Energy the people and families to whom they are truly accountable.

As a historic hub of multiracial leadership and creative action for civil rights and environmental justice, many in the Belews region hope their experiences will continue to inspire other similar communities nationwide and worldwide.

Rev. Alfred Warren

Minister and lifelong civil rights organizer--from desegregation and removing Jim Crow laws, to environmental justice organizing with Residents for Coal Ash Clean Up and Stokes NAACP. Lifelong resident of Walnut Cove and neighborhoods near Belews Creek Steam Station.

My name is Alfred Warren. I'm a lifelong resident of this area. This community that we having this issue in: I've been here all my life. I know directly [the] impact that this has on the health of all the citizens that live around here in this area.

The reason that I *speak* the way that I speak and *sound* the way that I sound is because of the *impact* of toxic coal ash. You asked if there is any cost to us. There has been a *cost*. A lot of great cost to me because of my health. As I stated earlier: two major strokes, four minute strokes. But, I think by his grace and his mercy I am still here.

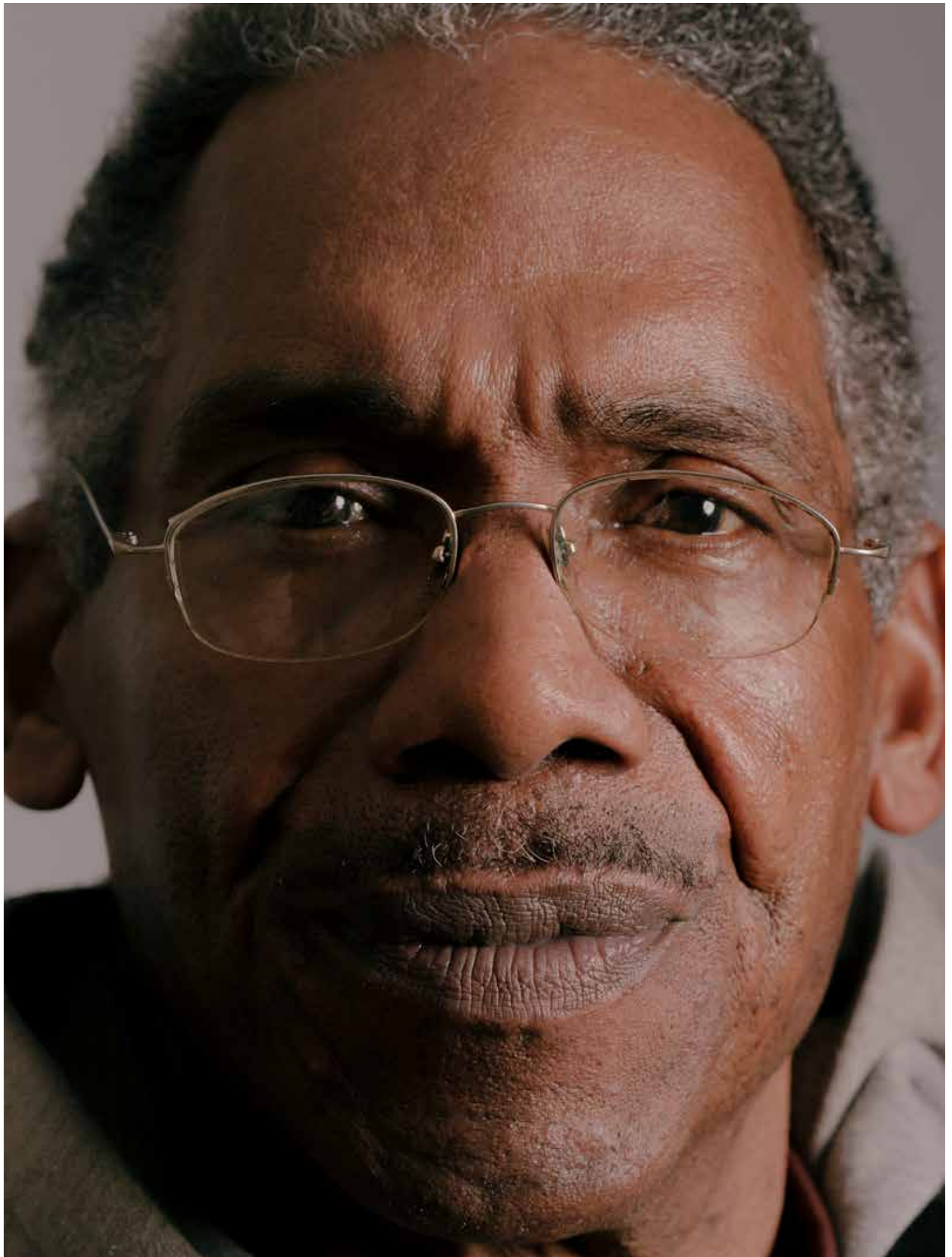
This is one of the things that we stressed to most: is to [protect] *all* the people in Stokes County, Rockingham County, Forsyth County, and all the surrounding areas, places where these plants are that is having a direct impact on the health of the people that live around it. And, it not only affects my health, but also the health of all my family members. I've lost two family members. One brother, Emmanuel, he had cancer in the brain and cancer in the stomach. My twin brother, Alvin Warren, he had a heart attack and died just like that. One day we were working on his home and all of a sudden he took one breath and he was gone. I was standing there looking at him just like I'm looking at you. That's why I know the *impact*.

I'm not about all the rhetoric. I'm not about all the photo ops—that's good and *well*. What I want is to see is *action*. This process should ignite, that's what I come...I come for the action. I don't come for all the rhetoric because we can't get anything *done* with rhetoric.

Duke Energy is trying to get out of this thing the cheapest way they possibly can at the cost of the citizens that live there. This area is a low impact area, meaning--when the term used [is] "low impact", usually mean black folk or either poor white folks. Let's be *real* with one another now!

It's not a black and white thing, man. Those toxins that they're producing there, it affects everybody. It don't make no difference if you are black, white, rich, poor. It affects all of us. And most of all it affects the future. The future *generations*. That's why we have been fighting on this thing right here, man, for the last four or five years trying to get them to *stress* to the point. If you make it, that's cool, but then *clean it up*.

They looking at the cost of it, but yet they want to let the *rest of us* be the ones to cover the cost. I was always trained from the time I was growing up as a small child, if I ever made a mess, I was always made to go and clean it up.



Linda Hicks

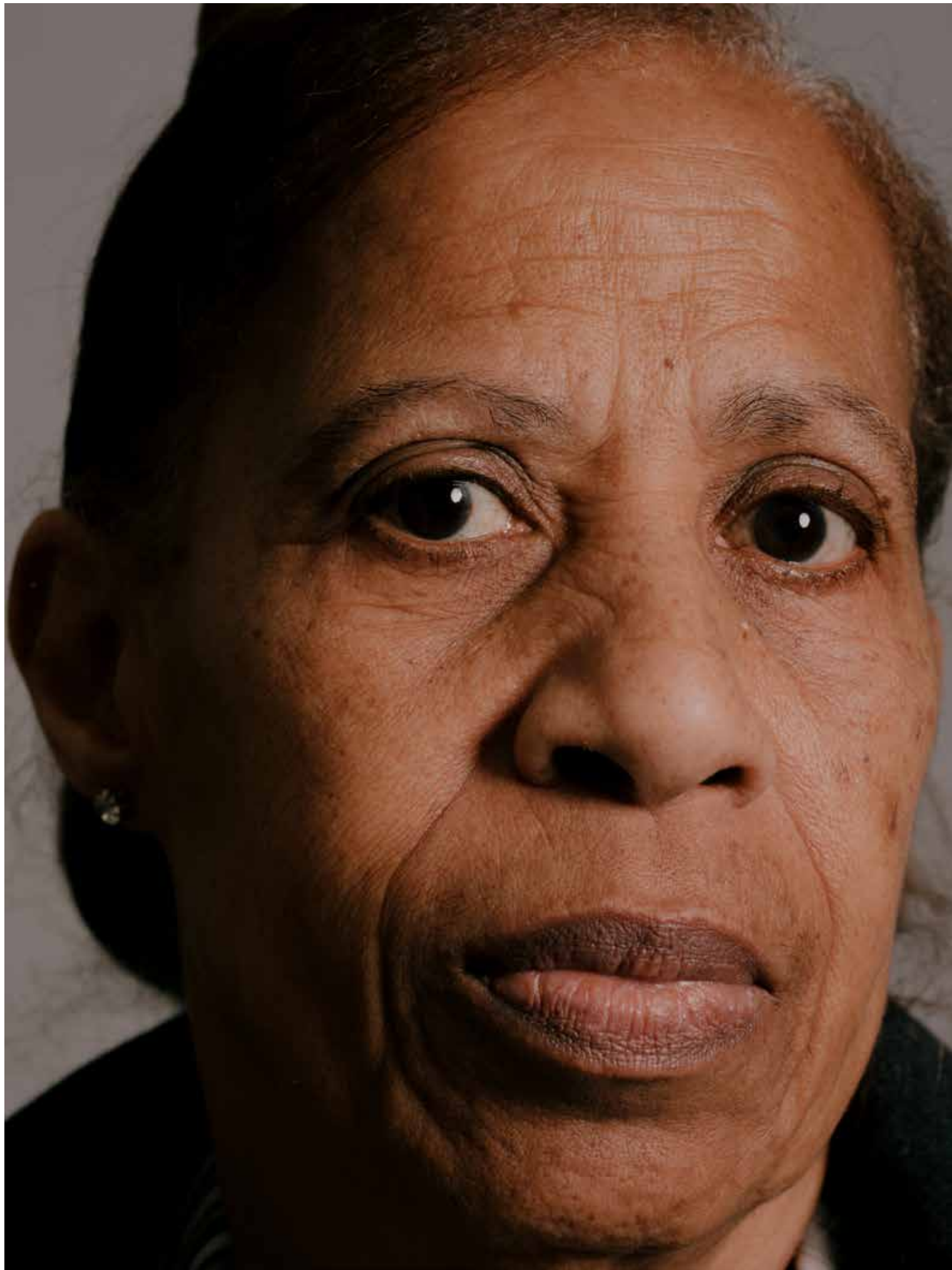
Educator, farmer alongside her husband; they sell vegetables at local farmers' markets, and organize with No Fracking In Stokes, Residents for Coal Ash CleanUp and Stokes NAACP. Lifelong resident of Walnut Cove until she moved to Dillard Community, Stokes Coounty after retirement.

Winston Salem Journal Now (Andrew Dye) reported, "Linda Hicks, of the Dillard Community, wears a face mask during a meeting outlining options for closing coal ash impoundments on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019 in Walnut Cove, NC. Hicks says she wears the mask primarily due to environmental threats posed by the Belews Creek Power Station."



Sandra Watson

A grandmother, Sandra is now on disability. She prioritizes family in the region and water/air safety concerns living near Belews. Lifelong resident of Walnut Cove in the Walnut Tree and London neighborhoods, which are approximately three miles from the active, unlined coal ash ash basins, which has contaminated local groundwater.



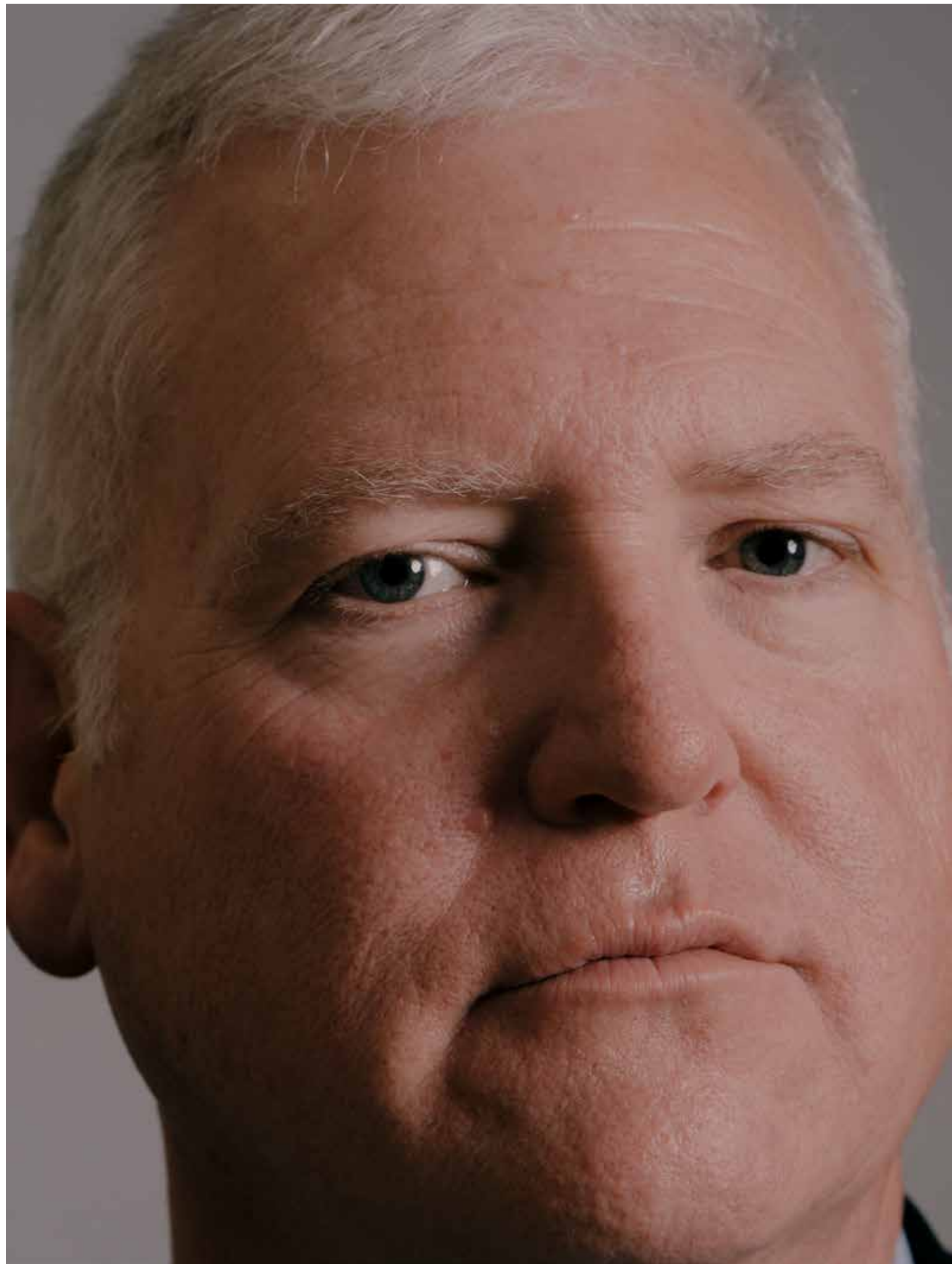
Ira Tilley

Good Stewards of Rockingham County, NC House 91 Candidate (Republican), Commissioner's Circle Department of Agriculture, Rockingham Chamber of Commerce. Resident of Reidsville, from Mayodan, downstream and over the Rockingham county line from Belews Creek Steam Station.

Okay, I'm Ira Tilley, I'm with Good Stewards of Rockingham County, and I'm here attending the DEQ meeting in Stokes County in Walnut Cove--and I feel very strongly about the coal ash situation. I strongly believe that the coal ash needs to be excavated and encapsulated, not kept in place. Kept in place just merely allows the coal ash to sink deeper into the ground, and go right into the water stream. Being from Rockingham County--there's several members of our organization here tonight from Rockingham County. We're here because we want to stand in solidarity with the folks here in Stokes County because we realize how dangerous--and you know, I want to say this too. ...This is not a political issue. It's a *health and wellness* issue, and it affects people of all different backgrounds.

I think the bipartisan strength is great. But *this* is rather disappointing too. Unfortunately see, basically, regardless of *what* political party is in Raleigh, they tend to take PAC money and special interest money from Duke Energy and other energy-related corporations. Unfortunately, it looks like the *people* suffer.

But there again that goes back to, regardless of what *administration* is in Raleigh, they all have taken hundreds, if not millions of dollars from the energy corporations, especially Duke Energy. ...But we wish they would do the right thing. We hope they will.



Rev. Leslie Bray-Brewer

Columnist and former editor, The Stokes News, former high school teacher, and longtime 4H Stokes County leader. Pastor of The Well, a Christian Fellowship home to youth support and community improvement programs, including multiracial youth arts group UIC: United In Christ, and multi-partisan, multi-racial, multi-denominational, intergenerational event Stokes Stoked to make Walnut Cove a “City of God”. Organizer and educator with Residents for Coal Ash Clean Up, and The Cove Group. Lifelong resident of Stokes County, first along Belews Lake, then in Danbury.

Yes, I lived in what’s called the Forest Chapel community... which is right on the Belews Creek Steam Station, actually. About 5 minutes from Walnut Cove downtown. I have moved to Danbury, which is 12 miles north of Walnut Cove, but I still own property right on Belews Lake [it cannot sell].

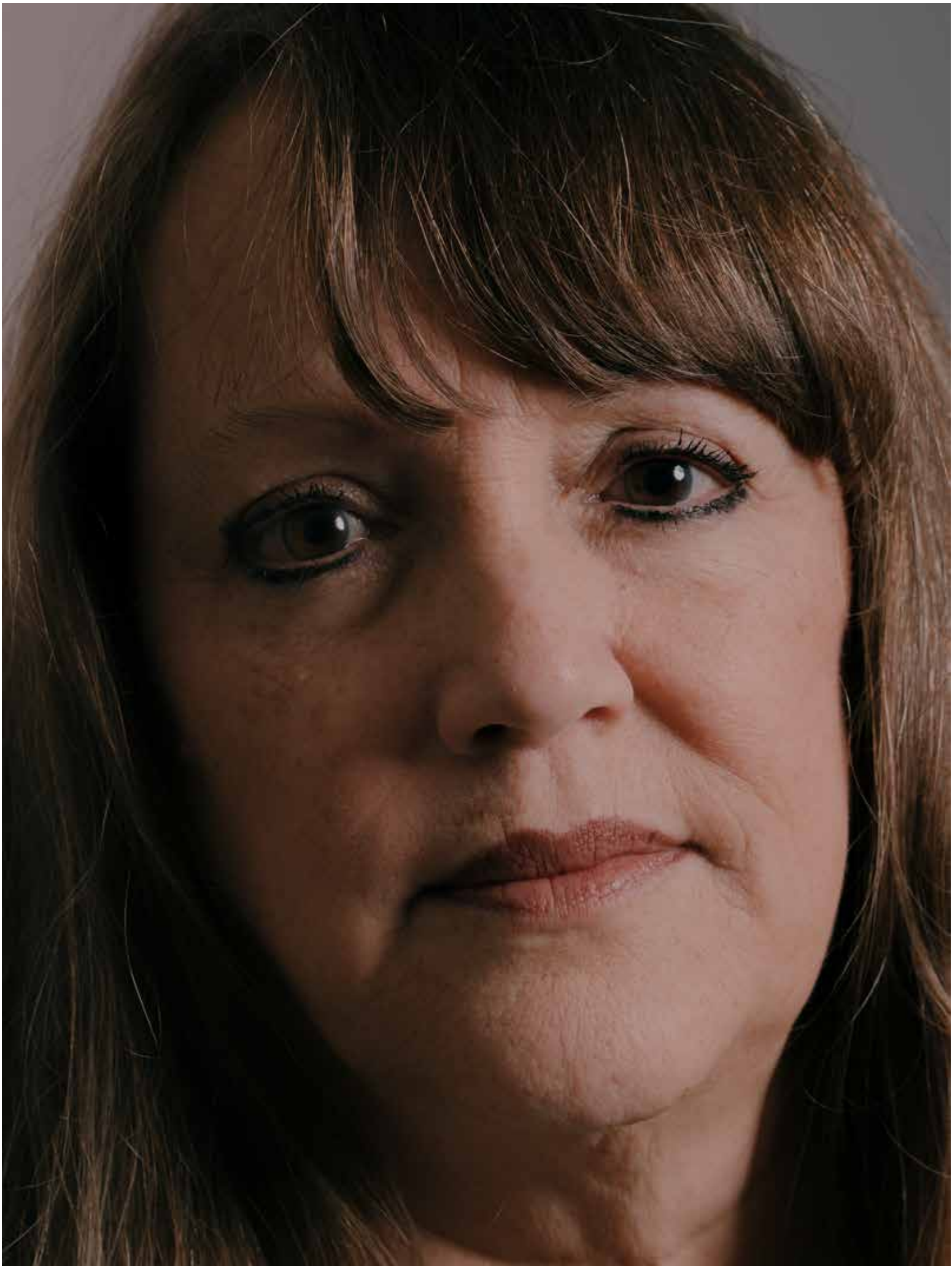
[...] A quarter of a century ago, *that* long ago, a person who lived along Belews Lake for many years, had some kind of issue with their lungs—I can’t remember if it was cancer--went to the doctor in Greensboro, and the doctor said “Oh! You live over on Cancer Lake.” It was that well known: *Cancer Lake*. ...Simply because they’d seen so many cases, especially with lung cancer, of people who lived *right near* the steam station around Belews Lake. Coal ash related, *definitely*.

I’ve had many other relatives right on the lake there, that have had lots of heart and lung issues from emphysema, COPD, different things. [...] I saw first hand that its not... it’s not an *affluent* place where I grew up. And it tends to be a primarily black area where I grew up. We were some of the few white people in the area.

I have 5 children. The first 4 were brought up right on Belews Lake with the steam station in sight, and the coal ash definitely in the air. Severe *asthmatic* troubles, many nights in the emergency room, just trying to... with the breathing treatments, we *always* had to carry the inhalers... and then my fifth child... unfortunately about that time there was a divorce, so the *fifth* child only lived there for a few years and then we *moved* to Danbury. He’s *never had* a breathing treatment, breathing problem, wheezing... *never*. Now, 4 out of 5 that lived on the lake *had* issues... and he did not. It has to tell me the environment had *huge* role to play in my children’s illnesses!

I had, perhaps, the strangest case of all. ...I’d had asthmatic troubles for many years living there, right at the steam station. In 2000 [at age 38], some kind of mysterious illness hit me, with my lungs, my breathing. Doctors could not even diagnose it... I went to Baptist Hospital, I went to doctors... *nobody* could diagnose it. But I just basically could *not* breathe, with extreme weakness and heart irregularities, but nobody could put a *name* to it. I was in a wheelchair for a while... I didn’t really use a walker, but there was one available, had I needed it. Had to be *carried*, sometimes, into church, because I was too weak to walk, and the breathing... I couldn’t breathe.

[...] The ideal future of Walnut Cove? Oh, how wonderful! Cause that’s what I *dream*, what I breathe, what I was *created* to do... was to see how we can improve this town. I ideally see Walnut Cove as a beautiful, *blossoming*, blooming place, where the deteriorated buildings have been repaired, where the businesses are thriving, and not just setting up and making it for six months, and then close down. ...One of the biggest things I fight for, that I know I was created for, is racial healing in this town. We’re gonna see that. ...You have to see it. In the spiritual realm you have to see it, first.



Tracey Brown Edwards

Community educator and organizer with Residents for Coal Ash Cleanup, Stokes NAACP, Poor People's Campaign Moral Revival, NC Environmental Justice Network, America Divided. Experienced several strokes and heart attacks in late 30s and early 40s, and neurological problems in childhood living under fly ash from Belews Steam Station; now advocates in her mother Annie Brown's legacy, who died of a heart attack at 63. Lifelong resident of unincorporated county land (bordering Pine Hall/the Walnut Tree) ~ 2 miles from Belews Steam Station.

What I usually talk about is the health concerns of the community. I, myself, at the age of 44, had three strokes and a heart attack--and there's been a lot of sickness in my community. A lot of cancer clusters, strokes, neurological problems, breathing problems, children with cancer, young women with breast cancer.

And it's just ... there's nothing else there, *but* Duke Energy. *Nothing else* in our community. And then, they put it on the *land* that our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents owned. That's almost like a slap in the *face*, if you think about it.

The point is, DEQ raising the bar--as far as the levels of contamination that were acceptable. Because we were *over* the bar, and so they *raised the bar* so we'd fall underneath. So they were saying that the contaminants and the toxins that was in the water, it was "okay."

They changed the *guidelines*, but under Pat McCrory's administration. And we all know that Pat McCrory had ties with Duke Energy for almost 30 years, *you know*? So he holds some allegiance to Duke Energy--and it's understandable. I mean, you know, but it's not *fair*, because they put us in the *sacrifice zone*.

They sacrificed our community, our family, our health, our water, our land, our air to those that live around Duke Energy's plant. [...]I mean, you know, it's the people, people's *land*, as far as African Americans are concerned. We don't *own* a lot. It's *hard* to keep stuff like that in our families. But if it's contaminated, it's *useless*.

I mean, when my daughter--my daughter's in the ninth grade, now--when she was in the fifth grade, we came out of a meeting. And she said, "Mommy, I'm scared." I'm like, "Madison, why are you *scared*?" And she said, "*Because* if we don't have water, we can't live."

And I thought, I'm like, "Okay ..." There used to be a show on TV, "Are You Smarter Than A Fifth Grader?" My ... I mean, *really*. My daughter said this, and like, if *she* gets it, why don't *they* get it? Are you smarter than a fifth grader? Come *on*. If you don't have clean *air*, clean *water*, you're not gonna *survive*. It's not gonna happen.

**Interview note: Begun as a handwritten catalogue of neighbors' illnesses and deaths, Tracey's beloved mother, Annie Brown's legacy continues (she passed from a heart attack at otherwise-fit 62-year old in 2014, after intermittent partial paralysis). Like many Stokes families, gifted leaders like Tracey continue to shine the light for justice, even as they face illness while living near coal ash.*



Johnny Hairston

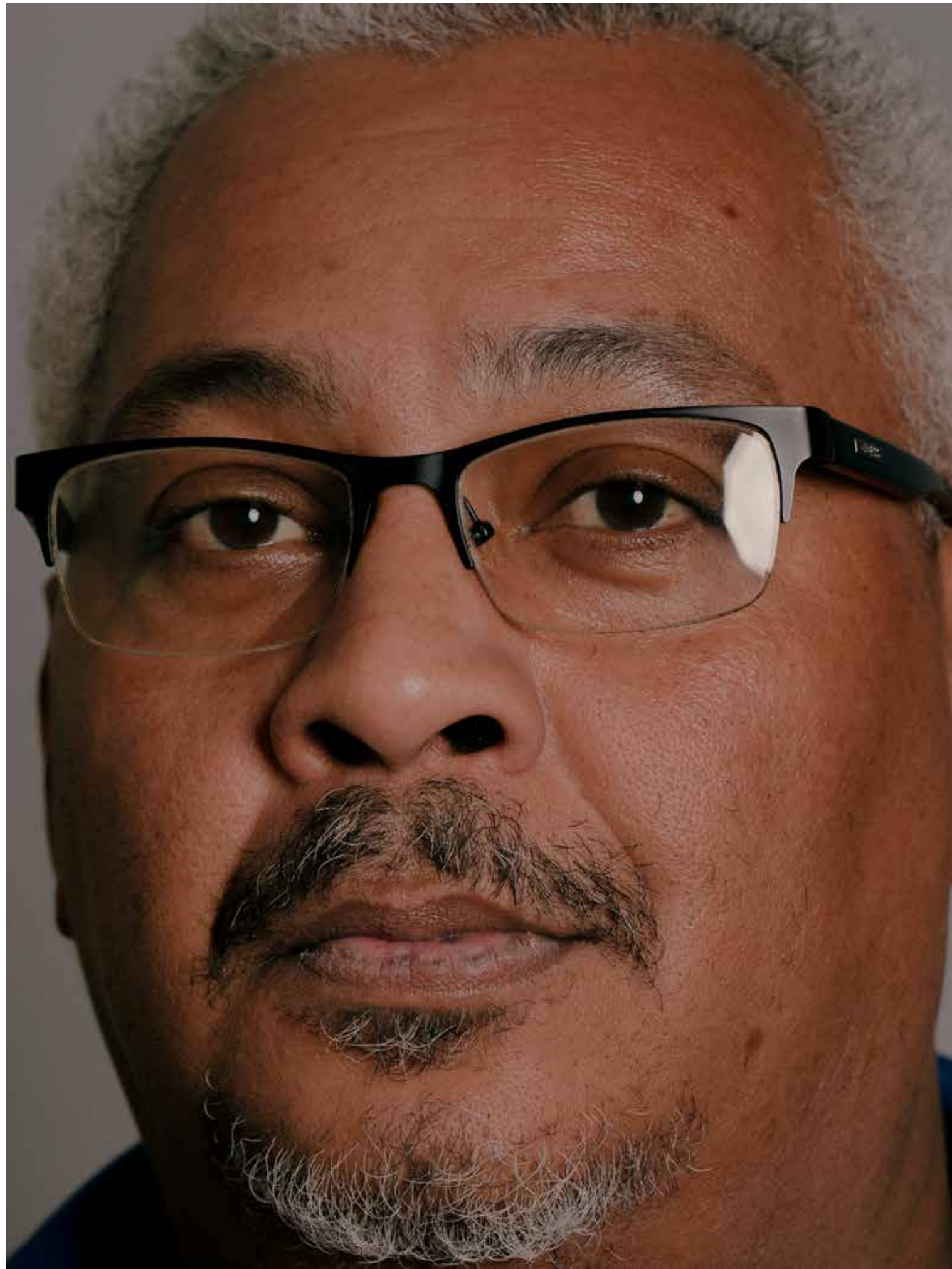
Chef at 311 Restaurant in Walnut Cove, community-builder with The Lilies Project, and member of the Hairston family, which Henry Wiencek identified as the nation's largest family in his book entitled "The Hairstons: An American Legacy in Black and White." Wiencek describes the heart of the Hairstons being located in Stokes Coounty, NC. Lifelong resident of Walnut Cove.

I am a concerned citizen of Stokes County, and I just recently got involved with this coal ash clean-up project that is going on. ...And I've been *overwhelmed* with the information I've taken in. My friend Caroline showed me the inundation maps.

And if the *dam* fails at the Duke Facilities, within approximately 21 minutes, the golf course and [all that's near it] would be *destroyed*. My Aunt and family members live less than a *half-mile* from the golf course. *Their homes* would be destroyed.

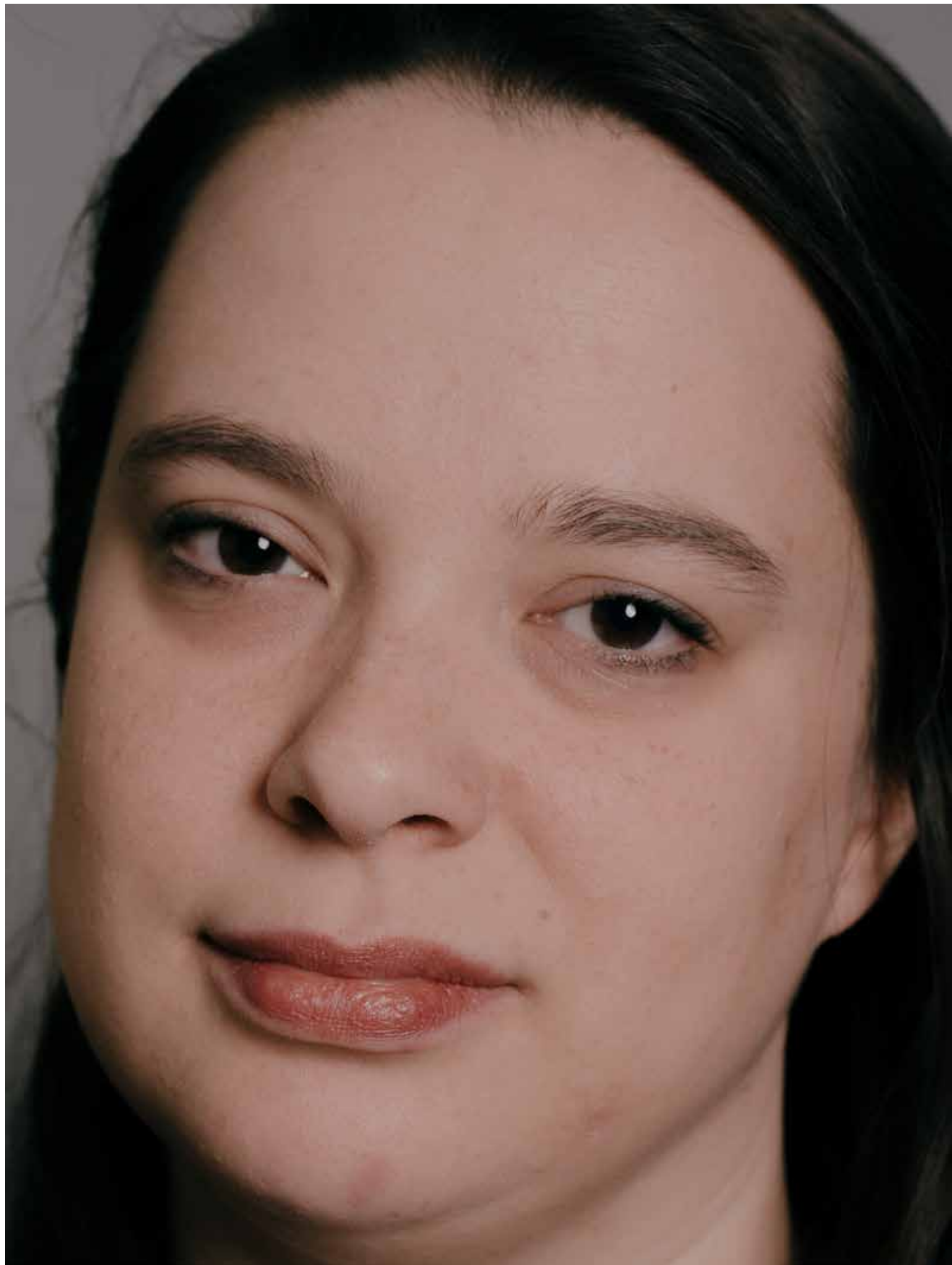
My home, in my neighborhood—my *home* and those near it—would be affected in approximately 38 minutes.

So I'm just asking to be a *voice*. For myself, my friends, my family, my community. And help *clean up* the coal ash.



Meghann Evans

Pianist for The Well, journalist for Winston-Salem Journal, The Stokes News, Mount Airy News, Marketing/Communications Coordinator Pet Sitters International. Daughter of Rev. Leslie, lifelong resident of Stokes County, first at the banks of Belews Lake, then in Danbury, now King. Meghann, now in her 20s, and similarly to her other three siblings living at Belews—but unlike her fourth, youngest sibling who was raised away from the banks of Belews Lake—had severe respiratory problems as a child, requiring many late night ER visits.



Danielle Bailey-Lash

Bank teller and community advocate with Residents for Coal Ash Cleanup; featured in US Newsweek, CNN with Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Scientific American for her experience with stage IIIB brain tumor starting at age 35, as a mother of 2. Resident since adolescence of Stokes Co., and in her 20s-30s lived at banks of Belews Lake, where radon levels in her home made it unsafe to drink water for her family or pets, and unsafe to shower for more than 10 minutes, according to the Forsyth Co. Health Dept.

Well, for me: Brain Cancer. Stage 3-B Astrocytoma. When I found out, that was in 2010 [at age 35]. And they originally gave me a *strange expiration date* of: I could live 3 to 6 months. OR if there was a miracle, I would live thirty years. So: I'm going for the miracle of course!

I'm in remission. But I still have this *part of my skull* open here. ...My daughter is 14, and she's always like: "Ewwww, Mom. Groooooossss. Don't show people that!?" And I'm like "I'm *proud* of this! I'm *alive*!" [laughter]

I guess that's where they know how to pick—like for here—they wouldn't go to Stratford Road. Where all the Doctors and Dentists happen to live. ...And say "We're Gonna Put a Duke Energy Plant Right Here." [deep, official voice]. ...Because those people would be like "Well, *First of All*." [more nasally voice]. "My cousin is the so-n-so of such-n-such," and they might be shareholders in Duke Energy...

Now, I'm *sure* that they don't say it just plain *that* way, but I'm sure they probably have like little *acronyms* for like, "PBCPH: Poor Black Community, *Put Here*."

[...]I just want there to be some type of *regulation or law*, or some type of way that *a company can't buy off the government*.

And I'm not that good with *politics*, but I feel like there has to be *some* government official, or...department in the government that's like "Oh, we *can't be bought*. We're totally for the people."

Because that's what I always *thought*. America was like: "We're *for the people*."

And I'm people. My *children* are people. ...We're people *here*.

So shouldn't the government care about us? Like, "Hey you guys, Duke Energy: *you're not gonna do that to those people!*"

It's just *disturbing* to think someone would say "*Let them get sick*, over there."

[Danielle a third craniotomy for brain tumor presence in Fall 2018, with ongoing anti-cancer care in 2019.]



Bobby Jones

Educator and organizer with Down East Coal Ash Cleanup Coalition, Wayne NAACP, and as Deacon at Greenleaf Baptist Church, Goldsboro, NC (home to coal ash waste ponds, in addition to hog farming and chicken farming waste, with toxins that spill over and flood surrounding neighborhoods during hurricanes like Matthew '16 and Florence '18).

Goldsboro is a typical Eastern-Southern town. It has problems. With uh, uhm—racism, and whatever—but it's *home*. It's where we're *from*. It's where we're born, where we're *raised*. It's our *culture* there. Our *family's* there. So, that's why I'm *there*, and that's why my hope and dream continues to be to make it a better *place*. That's, that's *why* we *stay there*, you know?

One of the things that is a *concern* in Goldsboro, as well as *here* in Stokes County, is corporate *bullying*. Clearly Duke Energy is a *bully*. They've taken *advantage* of our communities. ...They didn't *have* to be here, but they *chose* to come here. And they *came* here with the idea to, seemingly, exploit the community and not put anything *back* into the community. I mean—they've got a *lot*, a lot of money. They've got the *influence* of the community [leaders]. They *bought* them a law: House Bill 630.

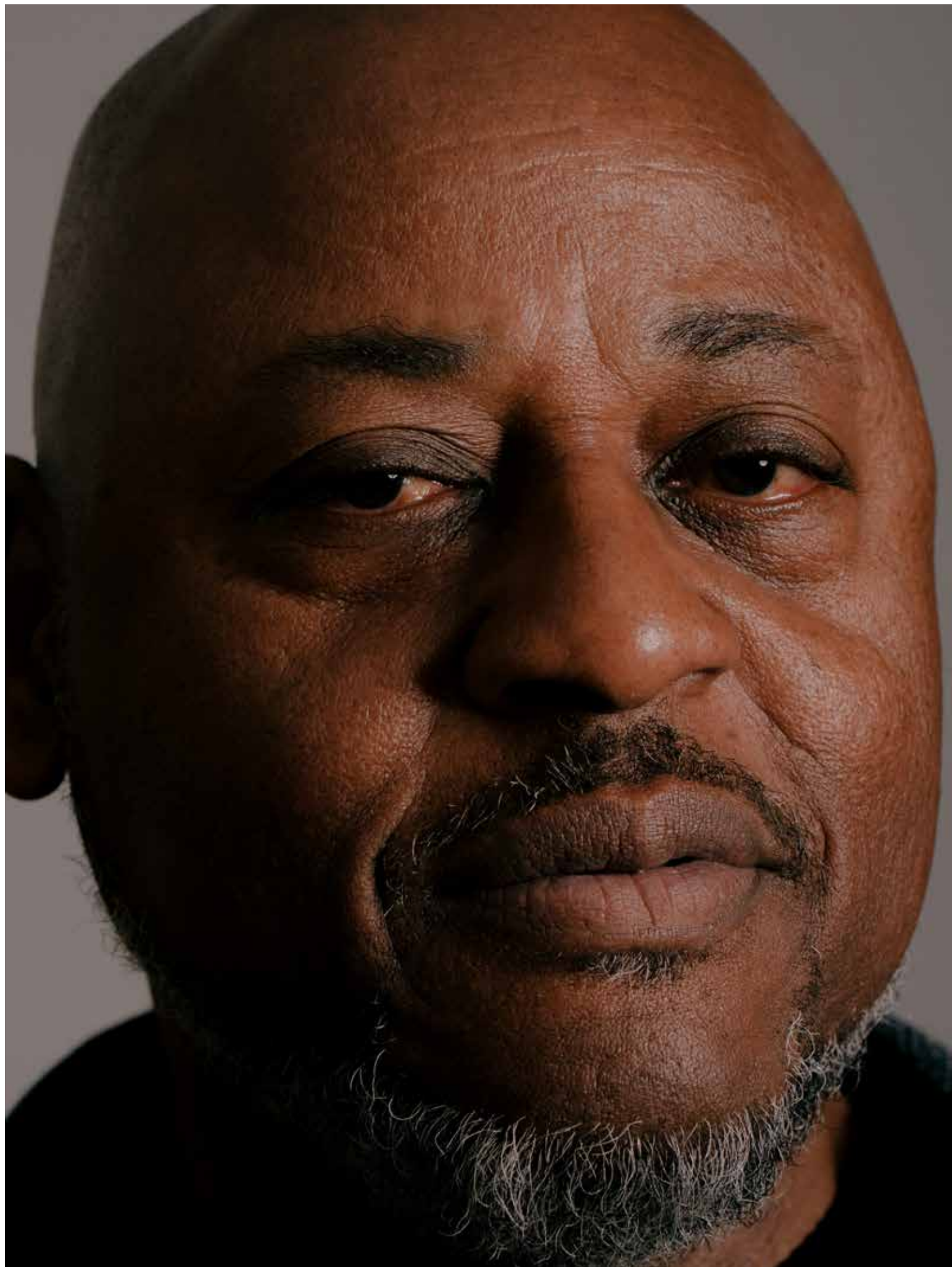
I mean—they literally bought them a *law*, and that law *defines* how coal ash is going to be dealt with and going to be handled. *Regardless* of what it does to people. So many *people*, just like here in Stokes County, have gotten sick and continue to *be sick and die* as a *result* of that. And: what is Duke [Energy] *saying*? Well, we'll give a *little* money here, give a little money there [e.g., water filtration under 1/2 a mile for some], but meanwhile we're looking at our bottom line. We're going to pay our CEO \$21.4 *million* a year for 2017. 2015 Duke Energy had a net profit of \$2.85 *billion*. And it continues to increase. Last year it was over \$3 *billion*. *You know*.

They, literally, they say they [Duke Energy] can *afford* to do what they *want* to do. They're clearly a corporate bully. And that's one of the things that *concerns* me, that's one of the things that I'm willing to *stand and fight for* Wayne County, Goldsboro, and in Stokes County, Walnut Cove and Belews Creek.

[*What gives you strength?*] I want to *echo* that God is clearly my source. In addition, I want to say we got to *focus* on the *community*, the *people* in the community. These *people* are *living, breathing, human beings* just like everybody else. And they *deserve* to be treated fairly.

Some of the saddest things that *happens* in our community meetings is to *hear* the people *talk*—and a *lot* of times, they blame *themselves*, for *this*. And Duke Energy came and, and *destroyed* their *community*, destroyed their *lives*. And they have an interesting approach—where they'll [Duke Energy will] *come* in to a community, or a family. And give one or two of them a *job*. And *now* they can't speak *out against* it. ...Had a lady just *break down* and start crying at one of our *meetings* and say, "Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express *how bad I feel*. Because I never could *talk about it*. Because they said I would be *hurting the family*. I would be *hurting the community*." This lady had had *three* bouts with *cancer*.

So, you know, I've gotten to see the *resilience* of the people. They've been through *all of that*, but they're still *holding on*. They're still excited about tomorrow, as *yesterday*. So, I've got to *add* the people: *resiliency* of the people. They're still *facing forward*. Got to be *supportive* of *that*.

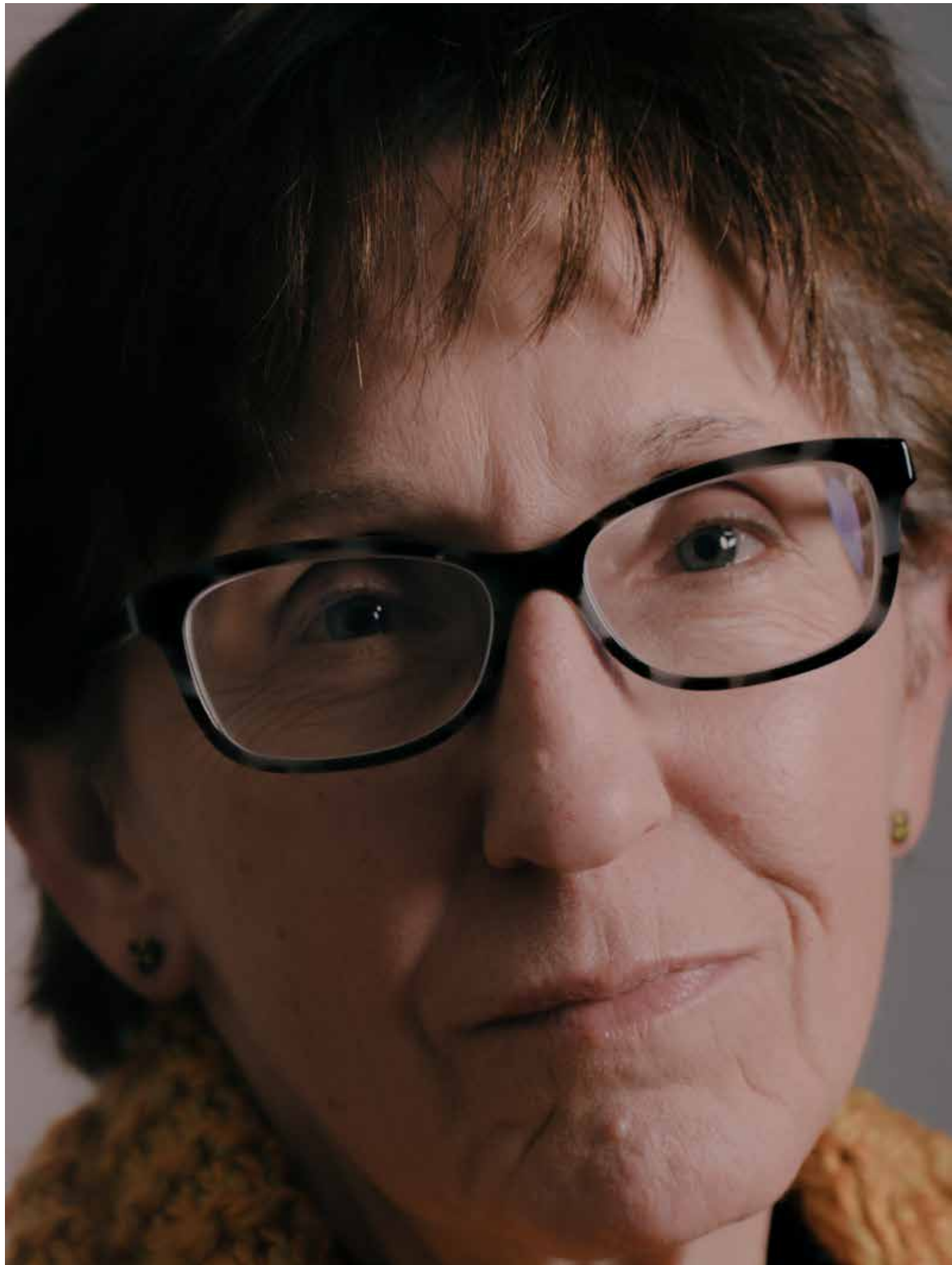


Ellen Peric

Real Estate Broker, Stokes County properties.

I moved here in 2002 and we bought a farm up in the northern part of the county, and I started [in] real estate. I own a real estate company. What goes on in the county, so far as the market, is very important to me. But, also, just because Stokes County is *such a beautiful place*. Kind of [an] untouched place, the places that I see and take people to see. Everybody who comes here wants a certain thing: they want a view, they want water, they want everything, privacy. They wanna be able to *do what they wanna do*, not like in Greensboro anymore. When I think about people who want that in this place, and then you see things like this [coal ash waste], it really bothers you.

Because you think that it's been going on for so long, I don't even know how these people have put up with it! But then you think, "Well, is this anything for us to be proud of, that we have this environmental disaster, maybe just waiting to happen?" We don't know. With a big storm or a big runoff. I guess I like to just be involved because I think it's the right thing to do for Duke Energy to take the coal ash and put it *in* a liner. 'Cause in the land business, selling land, I know *exactly* where the water goes. Water doesn't go horizontally, it goes vertically and horizontally. When things "cap in place," that doesn't stay in one place.



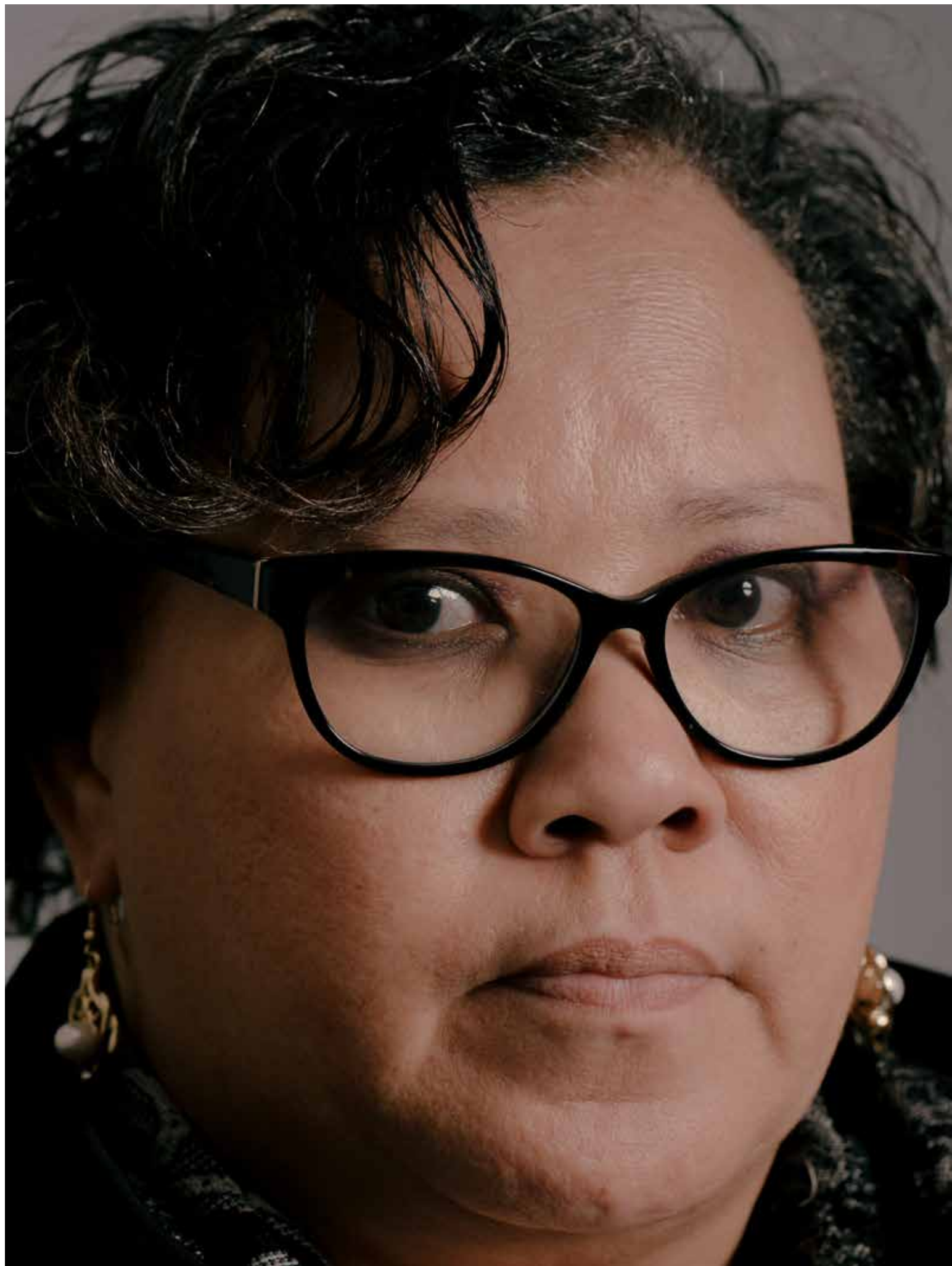
Susan Dalton

Teacher's Assistant in Walnut Cove, NC, and member of Residents for Coal Ash Cleanup and local advocate for racial and health justice. Lifelong Stokes County resident.

Where I live at now, I live in a house and it's ... I'm right at the railroad track. Duke Power's right behind my house. And then they say that--I had the water tested--everything they said [was] that there wasn't nothing in the water, but I don't *know*. And that's why I come to find out, to make sure, but ...

All the people around me are getting, they were getting water and I *wasn't* getting water, so *that* was what was my concern. I said, "Why is *everybody* around me getting water and then I'm *not* getting water?" But I said ... And then here, lately, I've been going backwards and forwards to the doctor and I've been drinking that water and it's really got me *concerned*...

Because I've been here all my life and I wouldn't *want to go* nowhere else. And I just want it to grow [this region]--though, now somebody brings something *in* to run us *away*. 'Cause this is home and this is where I *want to be*. ...There's too many people, in my family, that are *leaving here* because of it. And they saying they passed away with cancer. And so, I just want to know for sure if it's coming from that coal ash.



Yvonne Rutledge

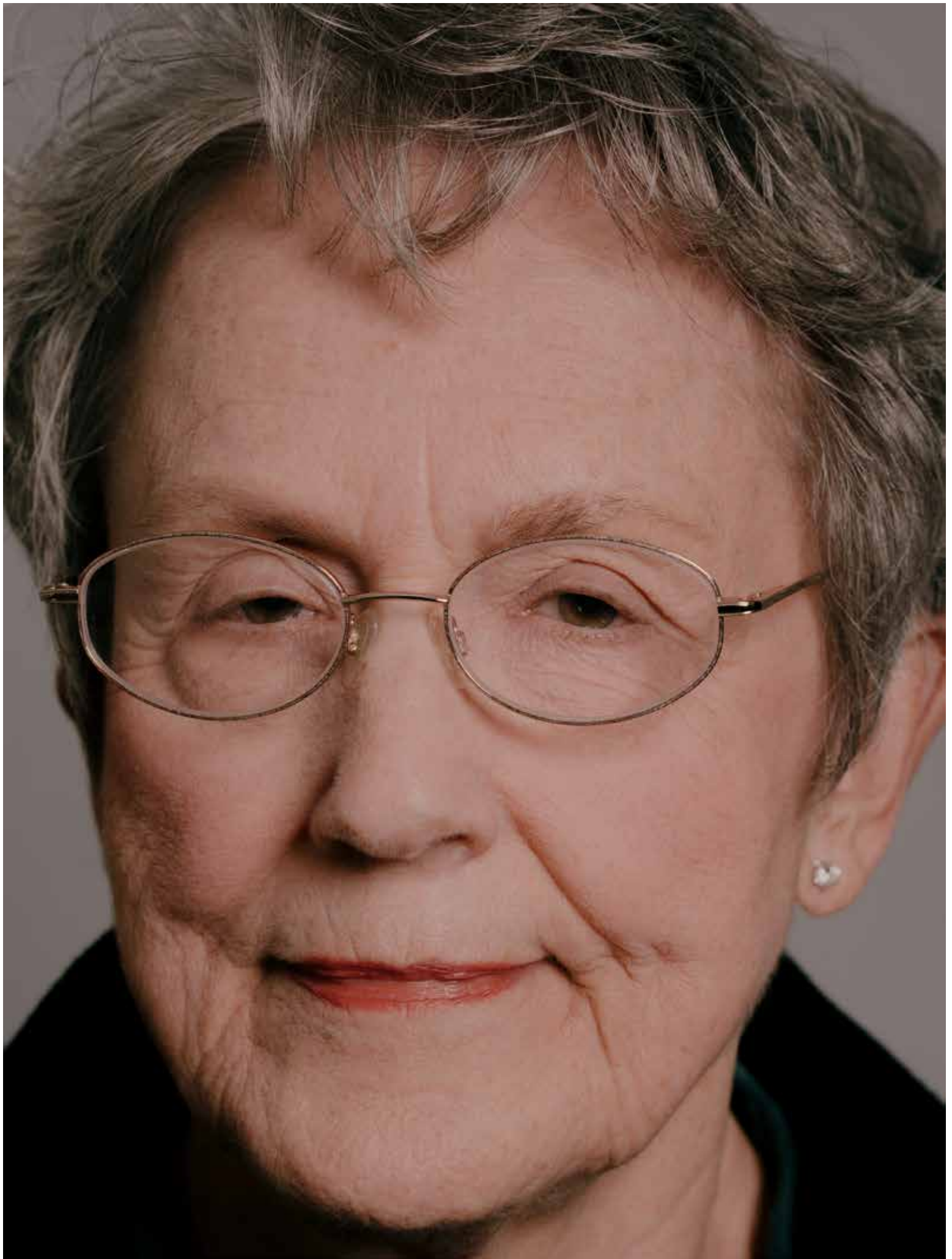
Rutledge and Rutledge Law Firm, *a community institution in Walnut Cove, NC for many decades (mother of Caroline). Lifelong resident of Stokes County, in Germanton.*

All those tables, they seemed to have information, or they *do* have information that backs up Duke Energy, not the citizens. ... The most important thing is they need to get this coal ash into a lined well, a lined, whatever you call that space [gestures above ground, like a landfill]. And I understand there is one *right across the road* in Craig Road Landfill. It's already lined and they could just take it right over there.

But they don't want to see the solution. They want to say this is a problem because of the traffic and having to do all of this hauling. Well, it's just *right across the road*.

Well, I think it's just caused a lot of ... ah ... *grief*, you might say. And, it's probably brought a lot of people *closer* to the Lord. But at the same time a lot of people probably feel like maybe their prayers *haven't* been answered.

And we have to have the *cooperation* of groups like DEQ and the courts, to have those prayers answered. ...That's all I have to say. ...Well, that's *true*, don't you agree? ...Heavens.



Caroline Rutledge Armijo

Director of The Lilies Project, funded by ArtPlace America, Residents for Coal Ash Cleanup, Alliance of Carolinians Together Against Coal Ash (ACT), EarthJustice, Moms Clean Air Force. Former Communications for NC State Parks (DENR), technical designer, visual and graphic artist. Stokes County native from Germanton with a family law practice in Walnut Cove. Resides in Greensboro.

One thing that I'd like to *see*: people given an *option out*, bought out. People say "I just don't feel like I could *sell* my home" [to another family]. And I mean, that's the *problem*! I mean, *none* of the people [affected by Belews] have enough *money* to get up and *move*. They just—they don't *have* the *savings*. Even just miles away to a safer area, but still near their family.

There's other people where that land has been in their family for *300 years*. And they are *not* leavin'. And I *respect* that: I mean, I wouldn't wanna give up my family land! So, most of all, I'd like to see an option for cleaning up the water and the land, *fully*. I'd like to see *radiation* addressed. We focus on the ponds, basins. But there are also the *mountains* [of dry ash]. Belews Lake. What will protect people [nearby] from *radioactivity*? ... People want to be able to go outside. That's an important thing to me—for families to be able to be outdoors in clean air, but also clean water.

And is the dam *structurally sound*? They [Duke Energy] already release water into the Dan River. And that impacts *Madison* [Rockingham County]. They're actively *treating* the *water* for Madison. If the dam liquifies—like Kingston [TN], that'd cause the coal ash *pond to fail*. And then we'd never get it cleaned up! It'd *cover* Walnut Cove, Pine Hall, destroy the *water supply* all the way out to Virginia Beach. So: there's *a lot of people* whose water *depends* on the Dan River.

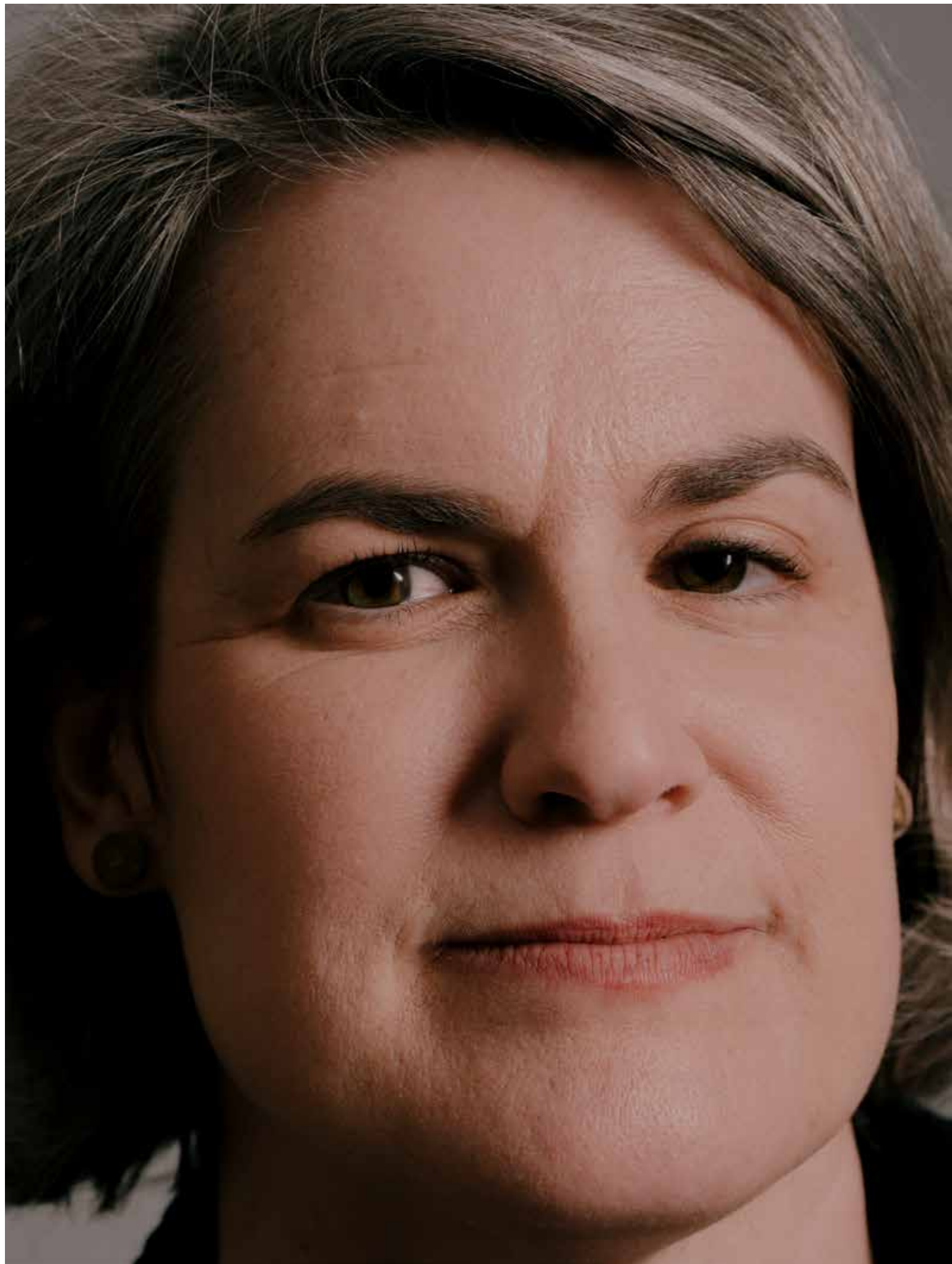
People are *eating the fish* at Belews Lake. People who *recreate there* are getting sick. That's how I first got involved—Friendship Baptist, my family's gone there for generations. Two men both had brain tumors for years, and they both died of those—they were the *most avid* fishermen. There was a young girl who would go fishing with them—she developed leukemia at the age of 12. [Deep breath in] There's *so many people* that are dyin' in their fifties and *forties*. There's a lot of people right now in their *twenties* with cancer. ...Once I realized the connection was there with coal ash, I couldn't *not* do anything. My friends' health? All these people ...dying.

And I've been trying to think: how do we turn a *curse* into a *blessing*? There are *world-class* standards that Duke Energy and our local government water systems are capable of—so, I think there's room for us to have exceptional recovery. Like to *be* the model they'll use for other coal-fired plants around the country. I feel like the trajectory with solar in this state—I feel Duke Energy is dragging their *heels* on that. How could Belews be a part of *leading the way*? Because solar is *happening*—Duke Energy may just get left behind if they don't start being more receptive. I know the financial incentive is not immediately there: but they really *need* to do some innovative thinking on that. They are going to have to adapt to it. I want [Duke Energy] to do the *right* thing in the community, and say this is our example of how to do *stellar clean-up*.

I think things are happening—God is working. I feel like Walnut Cove is this *little place*, that *seems* small and "insignificant", but you know, Jesus was born in a little manger. You know what I mean? It's like this universal thing—something *really powerful* is brewing right here. How this has unfolded ... is the most fruitful thing that has ever happened in my life. God is at work, and it is so big.

It's like what I say to Rev. Leslie. I know you all have been praying about this for years—this is the answer to your prayer. This is the unfolding. [Breath out]. It's not that that little boy lived. [Big breath in]. ...It's that we're *going* to get all this mess cleaned up. It's going to be a Godsend, a miracle. It's gonna happen.

The *ideal* is that people are no longer gettin' sick. When the sickness levels change—then we'll know that we've succeeded. And when there's no fear of the pond failing.



David Hairston

Walnut Tree Community President — *a majority Black neighborhood lacking clean drinking water access that fought for annexation into Town of Walnut Cove for 46 years, 1972-2018, with increased urgency following 1974 construction of Belews Creek Steam Station ~2.5 miles away. Advocate and community leader with Residents for Coal Ash CleanUp, Appalachian Voices, Stokes NAACP, son of beloved community leader Mildred Hairston, and longtime employee and community charity leader with RJ Reynolds.*

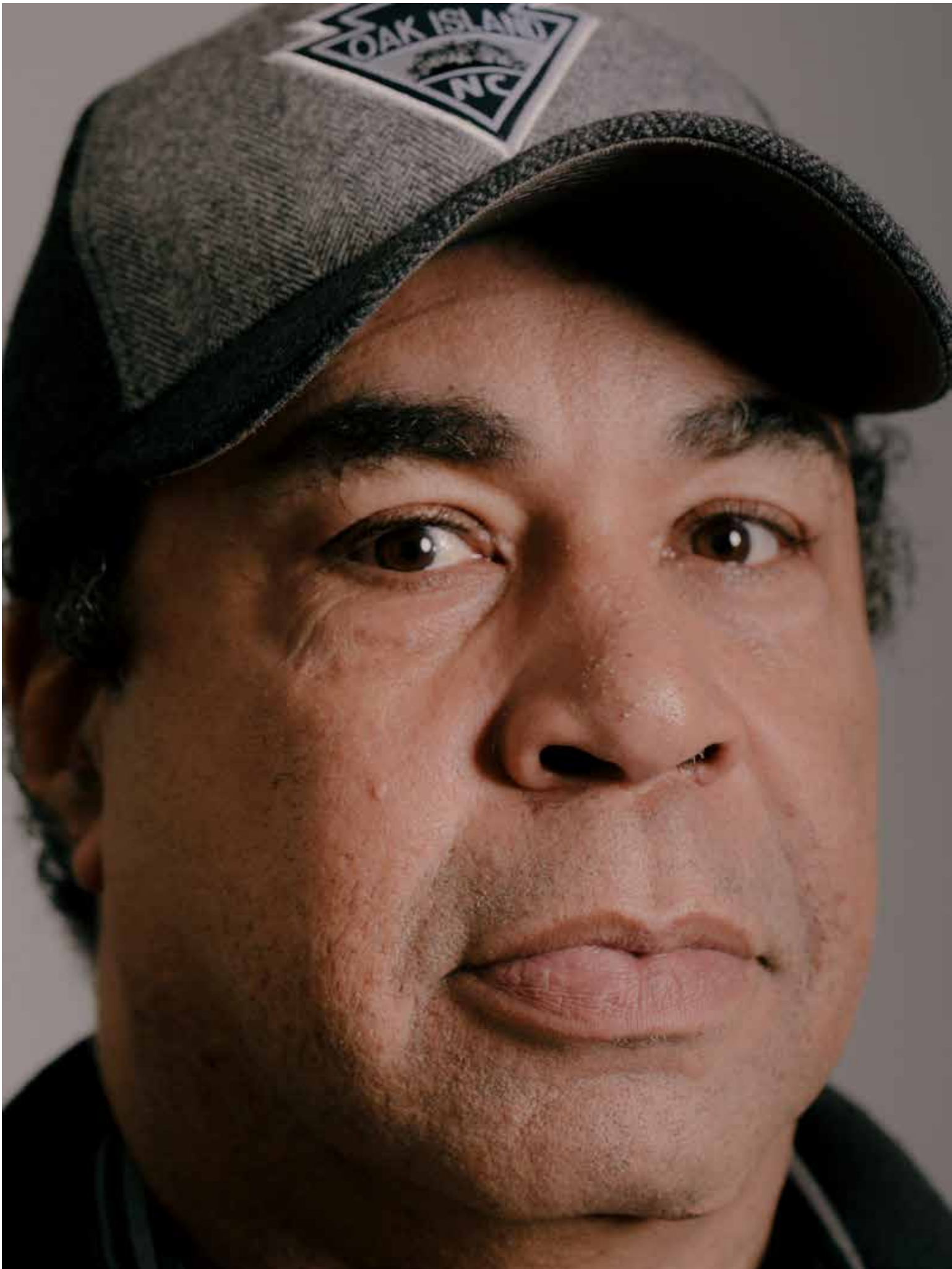
This is what I'm fighting for, now, is the *country living* for our kids. Right now, you'd be scared to let your kids go down to the creek and put their feet in the water or eat the fish that come out of the creek. ...They don't get to *live the life I lived*, as a child, carefree. ...Don't go out and roll around in the grass and play in the dirt, 'cause you're *too scared*, now. You don't know what's there, you know? Those are the memories that I have. And I want our kids to have those, be able to *make those memories*, too.

The cost I've experienced is the loss of a lot of my classmates. I graduated in 1978 and I moved away—I went off to school, I moved to Winston for a while. After I got back, then I came back home, and I noticed that after maybe 30 years of the ... my friends and classmates that *didn't move away*, they all started dying.

And I'm just 58 years old and I went to my 40th class reunion this past year, and found out that we got 32 *classmates* that are *passed away*. Already. [The small, rural town's main HS]. And that's ... some of these were *way before*. And it was just devastating to me.

That's not counting the family members and friends that I've lost, just like I was telling the lady from DEQ just now. It's *uncommon* for such a small area to be impacted by the *same* disease[s]. And then you can go to Belmont, Chatham and Goldsboro and around the coal ash ponds, it's the *same effect* and the *same story*.

And you keep hearing the same story, and I said: "You don't have to be a scientist or a doctor or engineer to realize the *relationship* of what's going on, the *commonality* of all of this." ..So, that's pretty much what got me involved in all of this.



Frank Holleman

Senior Attorney (litigation), and expert on coal ash waste remediation across the Carolinas with Southern Environmental Law Center. Former US Deputy Secretary of Education, SC elected official, former editor Harvard Law Review, now working across the south, out of Chapel Hill, NC.

I'm a senior attorney at the *Southern Environmental Law Center* and I've been working with the community groups, here and in other places in North and South Carolina, to either convince or force Duke Energy to clean up it's coal ash pollution in all these different communities throughout the two states.

...What's been *striking* is, communities of all types--rural, urban, politically conservative, or politically liberal or not political at *all*--people of all *ethnic* groups, whether they're *longtime* residents, or recent retirees who've moved to the area, *all kinds of people* come *together* to *insist* that Duke Energy clean up the mess it's made, and protect their community and their clean water.

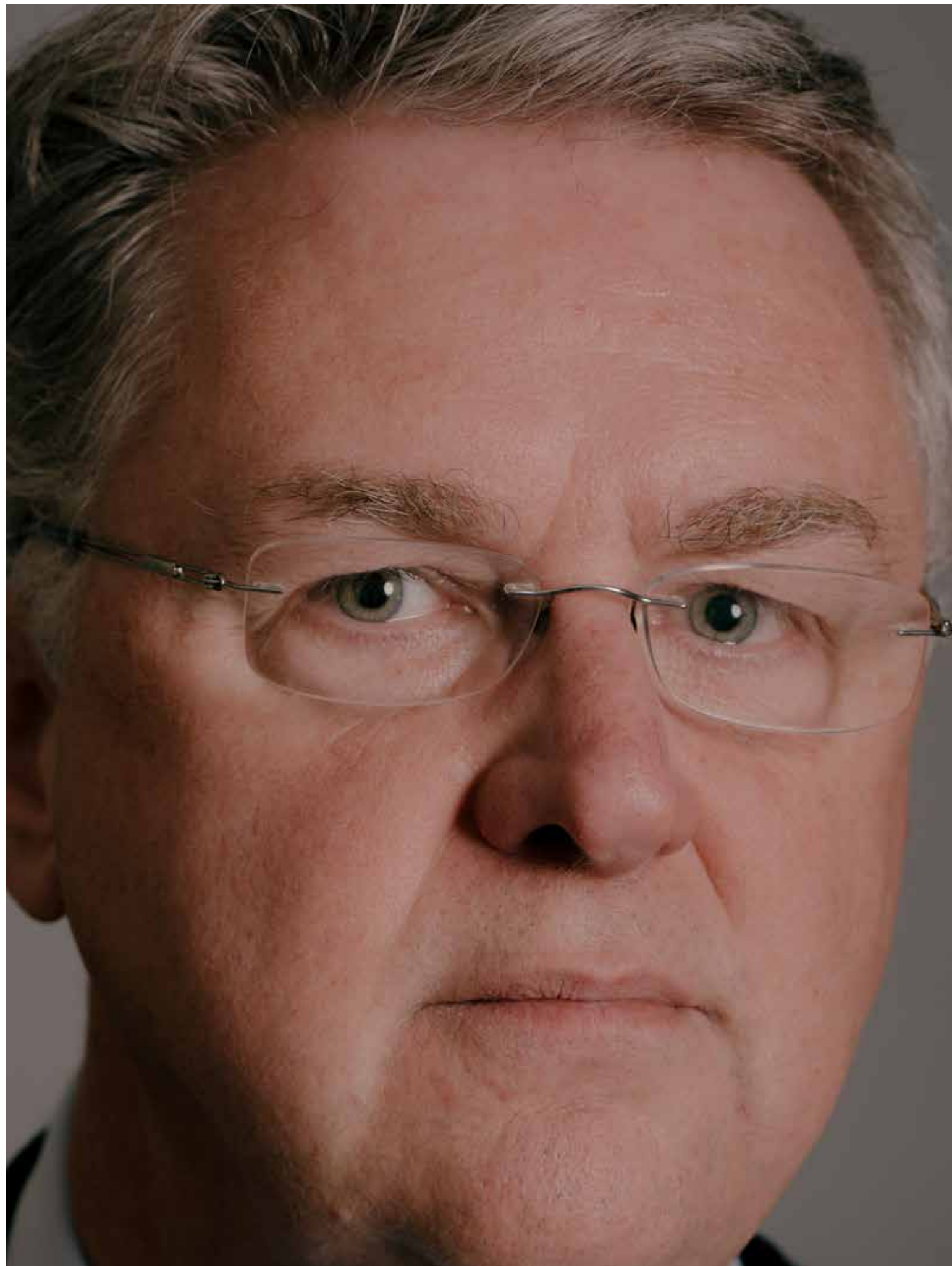
I've yet to find *anybody* who wants Duke Energy to *leave* it's coal ash sitting in their ground water in the center of their community. And we have been successful, thank goodness, in South Carolina. Every utility's unlined coal ash pit is being excavated, and moved to *dry, lined* storage, where it can be maintained *safely*.

In North Carolina, now, 8 of 16 communities. That's happening. It's required by court order, it's required by a settlement agreement we obtained with Duke Energy and it's been forced, as a result of a criminal plea agreement Duke Energy entered into, or Duke Energy's operating companies entered into. ...But, right now, Duke Energy proposes to leave Stokes County *behind* and to treat it *differently* from other communities in North Carolina--and all the communities in South Carolina. And leave this coal ash sitting in the middle of this community in unlined pits, sitting in ground water, where it will pollute for centuries to come.

We'd rather convince or persuade polluters to clean up their act. ...But, in this instance, Duke Energy's been resistant, *unlike* some other utilities, Duke Energy's had to be sued and dragged kicking and screaming to do the right thing in these other communities. And now we're working to see that Stokes County and The Walnut [Tree and Walnut] Cove and the community around Belews Creek is treated fairly, too.

[...] Belews Creek, Stokes County, is *not* getting the *same treatment*. They deserve the same treatment that, *thankfully*, the people in Charlotte and Asheville and Wilmington are receiving, as well. Those people deserved it, too and so do the people *here*.

And the good thing is, Duke Energy can afford it! They pay their CEO over 21,000,000 dollars. They have *great willingness* to spend money when they want to. They *very generously* compensate *themselves* and their *board* members and their *executives*. ...They *can* protect this community and they can *easily* afford it. And: they *chose* to make the mess. And they *should* clean it up.



Sarah Mitchell Fulton

WSSU graduate and former employee at Cook Medical (now on disability). Lifelong friends with father of the toddler with a rare brain disease—whose family lives near Belews Creek Steam Station—and who has been in a Pittsburgh, PA hospital for 55 days as of 2/15/19. Lifelong resident of Walnut Cove, predominantly in The Walnut Tree and London neighborhoods.

I've been here going on 58 years. Little over 58 I'd say.

I love this county—and my *hometown*. I've lived here all my *life*. I know most of the people around here. My mother and father grew up around here, and they have—passed on. But, we are a *tight-knit family*, and a close *community*. It's just—it's just a *special town*.

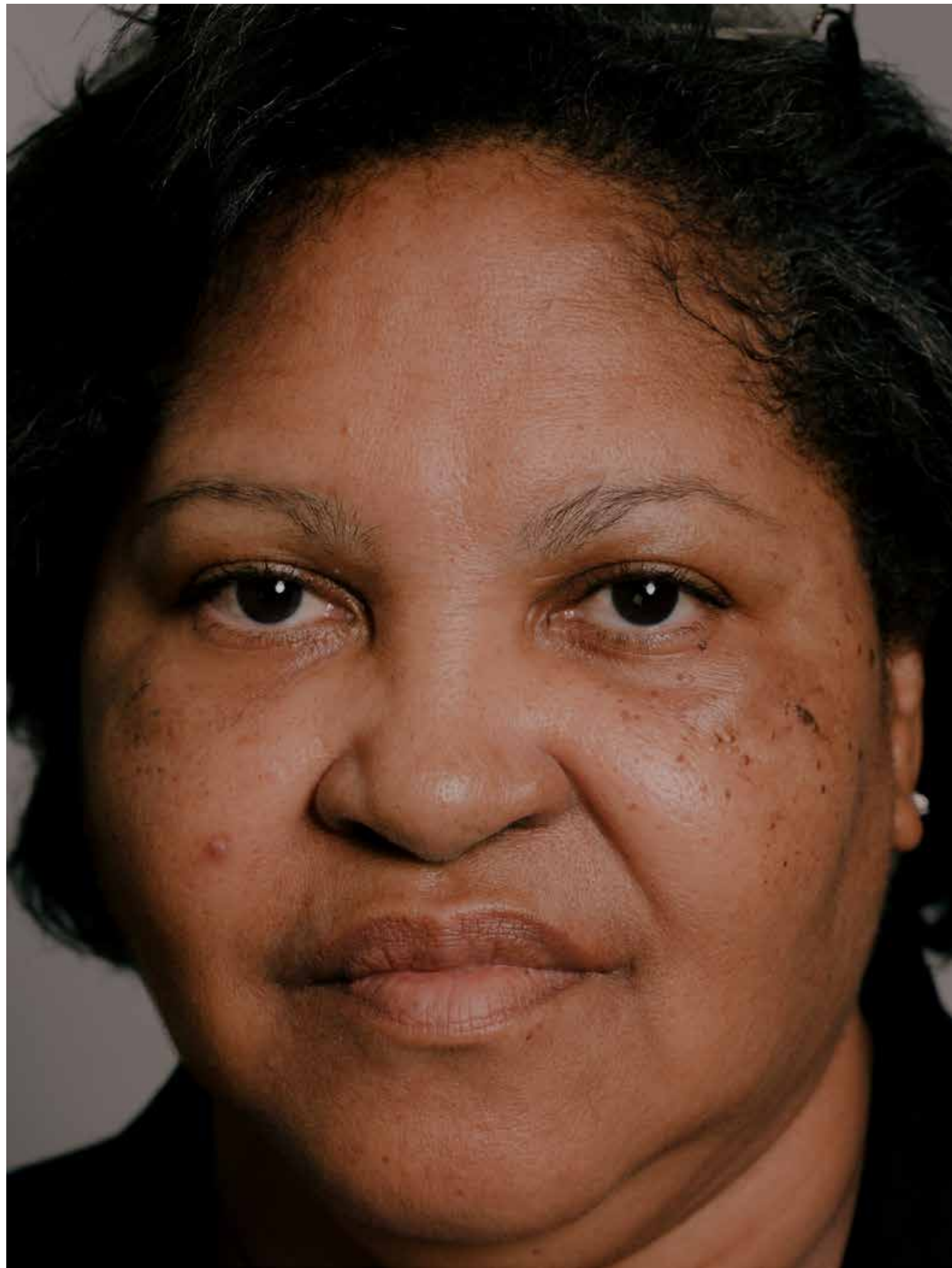
And—I've got grandkids that I want to enjoy the things, or some of the things, that I had when I was smaller. And I want to see them grow up.

What I'm *really* fighting for is the *safety* of my *community*. My *children*, my *grandkids*, and even my *great-grandkids*, when they come up. I want to see that the *land* and the *water they* drink is going to be *clean*. And it's not going to *affect them* like it did me, and my Mom, and Dad, and others.

[...]Let it be *foolproof*—and not just 99%, do it at 100%. Give us something to be—uhm, *thankful* for. We know that God has been here with us *a lot*. And he has put us through a lot.

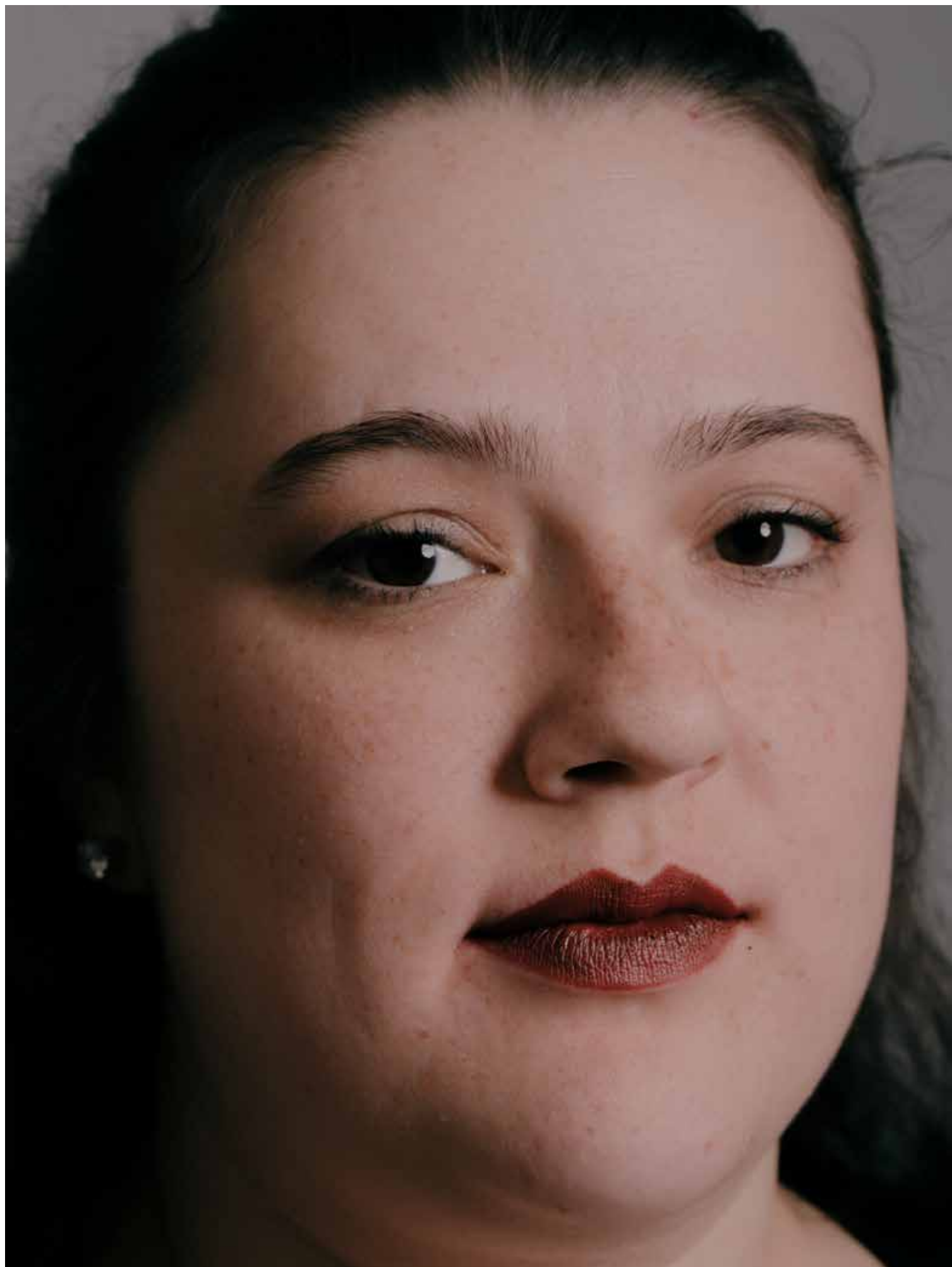
But, Duke Power has to—how do I put it? *Take care* of what they have done. Without the community *pulling together*, and doing what we're doing? They would have swept it *right up under the rug* again. And we don't want to see that! We want to see them to *take* control of what they've done.

[*What gives you strength?*] God: He's my only one. Other than that, I've got the love of my grandkids! [Smiles]. They're my *heart*. And I want to see them *grow*. And I want to *be here* to *watch* them grow, *watch* them play, *watch* them do sports, whatever. Whatever they want to do, I want to *be here*, and watch them grow up, *healthy*.



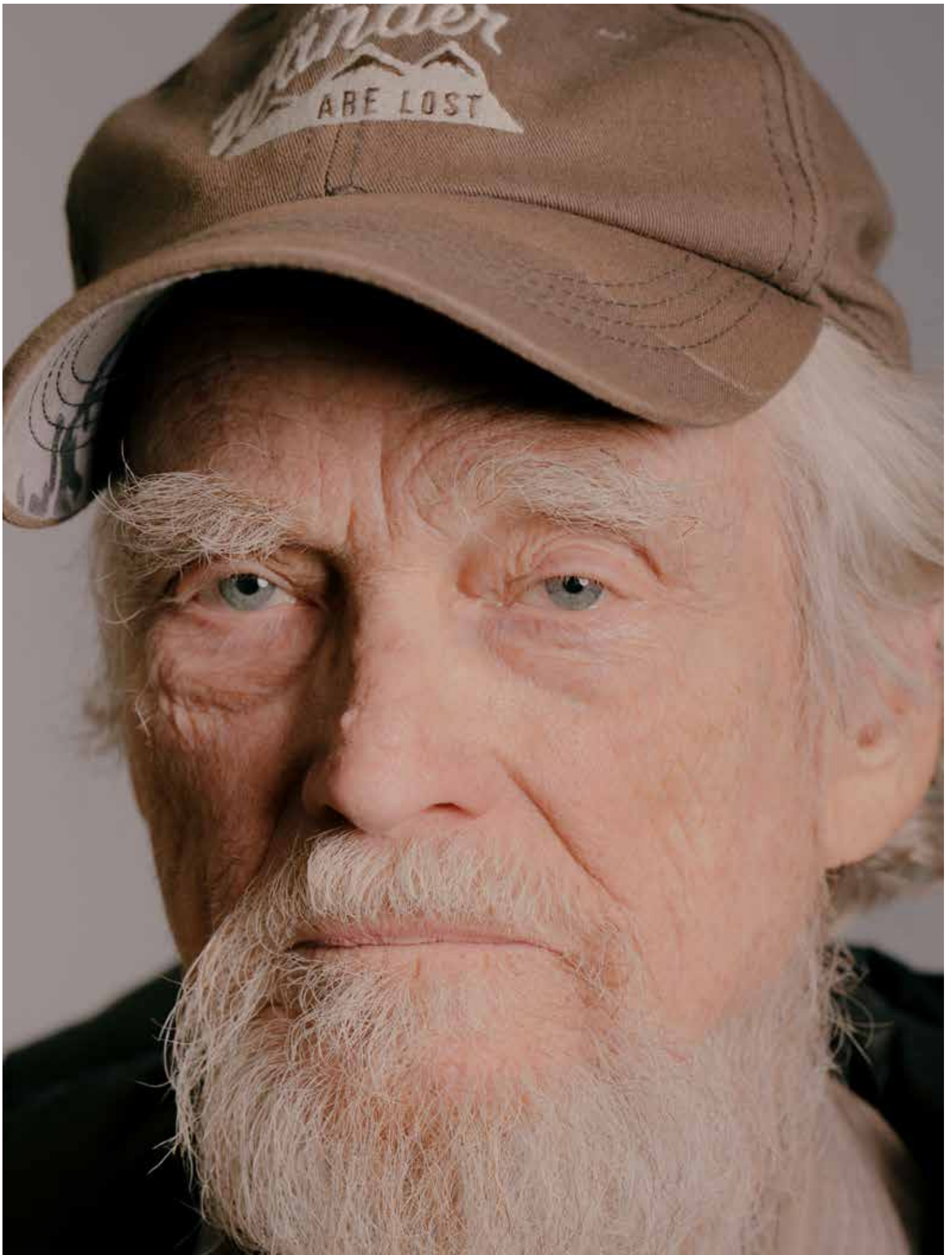
Chelsea Evans

Singer and Community Educator for The Well, Quality Assurance Auditor at Aviation Services Ireland, graduate of AmeriCorps program. Daughter of Rev. Leslie, lifelong resident of Stokes County, first at the banks of Belews Lake, then in Danbury, now in King; Chelsea broke out in hives when snow touched her skin as a child when she lived near the steam station.



John Nygren

World-renowned glass and folk artist, founding member of Piedmont Craftsmen. John is a maker and doer who prioritizes the power of art to lift folks' spirits and educate the public, especially in the difficult situations he and his neighbors face, given health effects of coal ash waste. Stokes County resident.



Confidential

A grandmother, Black woman, who wanted to withhold her name and image.

Well, they need to clean it up. They need to *clean it up*. They need to *admit* to it and clean it and, if *possible*, compensate, you know, the whole nine yards. The answer to a lot of problems in life is--the first thing is to admit. That's whether you have a drinking problem, gossiping problem, drug addiction problem, whatever. The *first thing* is to *admit* it! Once you admit it, then *all* the other stuff will fall into place.

... It's like the old saying, "You do something, you can sweep it under the rug. But before you know it, you gonna have a *hump*. ...You gotta still get rid of that *hump*, 'cause people come in, they're gonna see the light! ...Well, now, either your wood is puckering or you got a lot of trash under there."

Something's going on. "...Why has that got a hump in it?" So, you know, you gotta clean it up. *That's* right. Get it in order. Then it'll be a *whole* lot better for everybody.

TAKE ACTION NOW

CONTACT

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper

1-919-814-2000 @NC_Governor

*Department of Environmental Quality
Secretary Michael Regan*

(919) 707-8600 @Michael_S_Regan

DEQ Assistant Secretary Shelia Holman

(919) 707-8619 @NCDEQ

North Carolina is deciding how the final closure plans for the six remaining coal ash sites in North Carolina, including the Belews Creek community highlighted here. Please contact Governor Cooper, Secretary Regan, and Assistant Secretary Holman to demand full excavation of all North Carolina coal ash to safe, lined landfills on Duke Energy's property.

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING AND ACTION

The Lilies Project theliliesproject.org/final-closure-plans
theliliesproject.org

Appalachian Voices appvoices.org/coalash/nc-closure-plans/
appvoices.org/coalash

Alliance of Carolinians Together Against Coal Ash (ACT)
actagainstcoalash.org

SELC: Protecting Our Water and Health from Coal Ash
southernenvironment.org/cases-and-projects/coal-waste

EarthJustice: Coal Ash Contaminates Our Lives
earthjustice.org/advocacy-campaigns/coal-ash

Why I Care About Coal Ash: YouTube Video Library
theliliesproject.org/hear-our-stories



Walnut Cove is the site of a National Creative Placemaking Fund Project. Together we can come up with creative solutions to address coal ash, 20 million tons of which sits in the Belews Creek community.

WHEN:

January 1st, 2018 - June 30th, 2020

WHAT TO EXPECT:

Public Art made out of coal ash in Walnut Cove
with accompanying art throughout Southeastern Stokes County

+

Quarterly Community Building Workshops featuring
Oral History | Visual Arts | Spirituals | Public Health
Environmental Justice | Renewable Energy

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS:

Stokes County Arts Council | Stokes County Historical Society
Appalachian Voices | NC A&T State University

PROJECT LEADER:

Caroline Rutledge Armijo
caroline.armijo@gmail.com | 919-358-5057

THELILIESPROJECT.ORG