Session 5: Role-Play Handout

All roles have to do with the export of wastes to Africa. These characters are based on actual news articles, as indicated by the footnotes.

Rosita: Your next-door neighbor who just bought a computer and is trying to recycle her old one.¹

Kara: A student from your town who has set up an electronic waste collection system as part of a college internship. The program is very successful, and Kara is gratified to think that all this waste has been kept out of the landfill. Weekly, they fill a truck with old computers, phones and gadgets and it goes…somewhere.

Lawrence: A World Bank executive who made the news back in 1992 by writing a memo containing the following:

“I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that…I’ve always thought that countries in Africa are vastly under polluted… [S]houldn’t the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the Least Developed Countries?”²

Samuel: A government official in Benin who has been offered an advance cash payment and 30 years of development aid in exchange for accepting hazardous waste and radioactive waste.³

Asad: A Somali pirate who is outraged at the way foreign companies have dumped toxic waste in the coastal waters of his country—where much of the population depends on fish for food.⁴

Rhetta: A mother whose child died in a deadly toxic waste dumping incident in her hometown, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.⁵

Wahab: A business owner from Ghana who buys broken electronics from American companies, fixes the products and sells them. He makes good money from electronic waste and feels he is providing a product many people in his country couldn’t otherwise afford. He is concerned about a ban on importing electronic waste.⁶

³ Koné.
⁴ Rubea Stouppe, Hazardous Waste Dumping in Africa, Africa Faith and Justice Network. According to this article, piracy was a response to toxic waste dumping.
⁵ Koné.