

UNDERSTANDING THE INNER WORKINGS OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IN THE U.S.

END
CO₂ COLONIALISM
ON NATIVE
LANDS

HUNGRY FOR JUSTICE:
23.5 MILLION U.S. CITIZENS
LIVE IN FOOD DESERTS

SOURCE: CU BOULDER

NOW! FIX
FLINT

CLEAN WATER IS A
HUMAN RIGHT!

environmental racism refers to how environmental hazards disproportionately affect BIPOC communities

this definition is broad & environmental injustices manifest in many forms. let's consider some statistics that encompass the spectrum of environmental racism:

members of marginalized groups are more likely to live in food deserts
(NCEE)

BIPOC experience the lowest rates of urban biodiversity (shell, dyson, fuentes, des roches, harris, miller, woelfe-erskine, & lambert)

Black households are more often located in close proximity to industrial sites & exposed to air pollutants at a higher rate, making this one of the many underlying reasons black citizens contract covid-19 at an alarming pace (the century foundation)

Native Americans more readily face impacts of oil, gas, and coal development (center for american progress)

cancer rates of air toxins disproportionally affect minority groups (james, jia, kedia)

redlined neighborhoods (predominantly Black & Hispanic) average 2.6 degrees celsius hotter (mcgill international review)

quick read: "5 things to know about communities of color and environmental justice" by center for american progress (link in bio!)

why are BIPOC communities more readily located near industrial sites and areas for disposal of toxic waste?

coping with adverse health effects onsought by exposure to pollutants gives Black communities a lesser ability to protest enablers of this injustice, resulting in chronic stress. there is limited information made available about health hazards from these facilities, and, when this information is made available, it is often only provided in english

(Mikati)

redlining, a discriminatory grading system of geographic areas that was outlawed in 1986 yet is still practiced, makes Black communities more susceptible to becoming locations of industrial sites and/or used for disposal of toxic waste (the century foundation)

highways are often in minority communities because they are undervalued and easier to uproot than white, middle-class neighborhoods (the washington post)

Black folks are 1.54x more likely than White to live within a mile of facilities listed in the toxic release inventory, even after accounting for income and education level (Mohai)

native tribes experience modern-day colonialism

Natives rely more heavily on the environment, making climate change especially disastrous for their communities. this phenomenon is compounded by the fact that they experience higher rates of contamination

(schlosberg & carruthers)

the bureau of land management fails to recognize treaty obligations that protect native lands and natural resources within them

(native americans right fund)

Indigenous groups are under constant pressure due to unsolicited resource extraction, higher instances of food insecurity & contaminated water, as well as higher exposure rates to pollutants & diseases (ecowatch)

natives hold spiritual connection to their lands & this is routinely disregarded by the u.s. government (jacobs)

Native elders maintain traditional plant & medicinal knowledge, but are especially vulnerable to covid-19. this is unnerving considering some reservations (like the Navajo) have infection rates per capita that surpass those in hotspots like NYC (ecowatch)

Black & Hispanic households have the lowest median household income on average (US census bureau). supermarkets hesitate to locate within these communities as opposed to whiter, often wealthier areas that are typically more profitable

(ohio university).

low-income = low access

demographic breakdown of who experienced food insecurity in the US in 2019:

-19.1% of Black households

-15.6% of Hispanic households

-7.9% of White households (USDA)

why are these statistics our reality in america?

let's break down some of the origins behind environmental injustices.

and in the future?

COVID-19 has the potential to double these numbers, making food deserts a growing concern (NPR)

but why?

red states are opposed to greater governmental control of companies, making representatives hesitant to increase environmental regulations on their constituents

(politico)

corporate america hires lobbyists to voice their needs to law-makers, whereas BIPOC often do not possess the means to readily access their representatives in this way. large corporations can afford to fund campaigns of politicians, making oil & gas a means of gaining funds necessary for re-election

(pbs)

public officials depend on the energy sector to stimulate the economy & provide job opportunities

(pbs)

policymakers' special attention to the energy sector does not reflect public consensus (pbs). **the energy sector is responsible for 75% of GHG emissions & 93% of carbon dioxide emissions** (eia)

current laws allow corporate polluters to face fines rather than jail time, making it feasible for companies to pay rather than abide by waste & emission guidelines. trump's administration has called for restrictions on charging companies in criminal prosecution for violating environmental regulations

(legal information institute, AP)

energy-dominated politics

How to help: suggestions from the american center for progress & beyond

- 1. establish inclusive goals to protect lands & oceans while seeking to restore contaminated areas**
- 2. elect BIPOC decision-makers and vote for proponents of environmental justice**
- 3. improve tribal consultation and representation for natives**
- 4. contact policymakers and demand environmental action**
- 5. research hotspots of environmental racism such as cancer alley, LA; flint, MI; houston, TX (along with many, many others); & indigenous reservations (INSIDER)**
- 6. understand that environmental injustices occur disproportionately to underprivileged citizens not just on the basis of race, but also due to socioeconomic status, for example**

for clarification & in-depth explanations: see “the nature gap” by american center of progress (link in bio!)

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