Environmental Justice

Dharma and Haley
ECO Agency supports the right to a clean and healthful environment for all people.
Environmental justice is an intersectional social justice movement that calls for mass education and awareness about environmental injustices and fair treatment of all people in respect to implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and practices. This movement supports a world where all people, regardless of race, feel that the environment they live in is safe and protected.
What is Environmental Racism?

Environmental racism refers to the tendency of minority communities to be targeted to host industries that have the potential to cause incredible environmental hazard. This increased risk of environmental hazard on people of color is rooted in decades of racism.

79% of all municipal solid waste incinerators in the US are located in predominantly black and brown communities and these facilities emit toxins that pose human health risks.

More than 35 Native American reservations were targeted for landfills, incinerators, and radioactive waste facilities in the early 1990s.
How Did Environmental Racism Start?

Environmental racism is rooted in housing patterns in America. Redlining in the 1960’s continued segregation and placed Black people in neighborhoods labeled “hazardous”. Additionally, many Black Americans were denied mortgages in “desirable” neighborhoods.
The Environmental Justice movement began in 1982 in Warren County, North Carolina when the state announced plans to move contaminated soil to the majority Black county. This sparked research into environmental and health issues in Black and Brown communities. The Toxic Waste and Race report by the Commission of Racial Justice came out in 1987 and confirmed that hazardous waste sites disproportionately located in primarily black areas. This led to many people being outraged and the true beginning of the movement.
West Coconut Grove Bahamian Neighborhood Incinerator

Between the years 1925 and 1970, there was a trash incinerator in West Coconut Grove known as “Old Smokey” that blew ash into the air whenever it was running. This community has been predominantly Bahamian immigrants since the 1880’s and throughout history this neighborhood has faced racism through redlining practices, the presence of the KKK, Jim Crow practices, and tension with police. Samples taken within the past decade showed contamination from carcinogens such as arsenic, lead, barium, and cadmium. For two years, the presence of contamination was kept from residents who continued to frequent parks and various green spaces, unaware of the possible effect that it could have on them. The community has since been told that the contaminants are at a safe level for those living there, but a group of University of Miami cancer researchers found a cluster of pancreatic cancer cases in the neighborhood that they have been able to link to drinking water wells that were contaminated with arsenic.
Extreme Weather in South Florida

Extreme weather events are expected to worsen and become more frequent due to climate change, and these events have already proven to have a more substantial impact on communities of color and low-income areas in South Florida. These communities are normally located in areas that are close to toxic waste sites, as seen in the West Coconut Grove neighborhood, or prone to flooding. Many low-income communities do not have existing infrastructure to withstand natural disasters and do not receive proper funding from governments to rebuild after disasters. They also suffer from worsened health and economic disparities due to the toll caused by extreme weather events. Extreme weather events such as hurricanes and heat waves are expected to worsen due to climate change, which could add an additional financial burden every year if families have to rebuild after a hurricane or use more electricity to keep their home cool in the summer.
Black snow refers to the ash that is left in communities mostly in Palm Beach County as a result of sugar farmers controlled crop burns. They purposefully burn parts of their sugar cane crops to get rid of their outer leaves in preparation for the harvesting season which lasts about six months. The most impacted communities include Belle Glade, South Bay, and Pahokee, where about a third of the communities lives in poverty. Pahokee specifically is a low-income community that is 59% black and 30% hispanic. These towns are all south of Lake Okeechobee and to the west of West Palm Beach, a community that is much richer and whiter demographically. Sugar corporations have denied claims that this burning has adverse health effects on residents although the U.S. Department of Education completed a study in 2015 that found that places where residents are exposed to large scale crop burnings, experienced more respiratory related illnesses.
Common Examples of Environmental Racism

These are other examples of environmental racism that we could talk about in short articles similarly to the three slides before this. Picking a new topic such as the ones below and writing about them monthly to add to the website would be a good way to keep this project ongoing.

- Flint, Michigan water crisis
- South Bronx’s Asthma Alley
- Urban Oil Fields in Los Angeles
- St. James Parish, Louisiana’s Cancer and Asthma Alley
- Uniontown, Alabama Landfill
- Houston, Texas Toxic Release Inventory Facilities
Why should you care?

It is a massive ethical issue when certain groups of people are subjected to increased environmental hazards than other groups. Environmental Justice links the fight for human rights with the fight for a more sustainable world. The toxins that people of color are disproportionately subjected to are the same pollutants driving climate change. The health of our planet is declining at an alarming rate and we cannot heal Earth without acknowledging environmental racism and advocating for communities that bear the burden of the problem.

Stand with the planet and stand with equality.
Want To Learn More? Here’s a Reading List:

- **The Wrong Complexion for Protection** - Robert D. Bullard and Beverly Wright
- **Disposable City** - Mario Alejandro Ariza
- **Climate Futures: Reimagining Global Climate Justice** - John Foran
- **A Terrible Thing to Waste: Environmental Racism and Its Assault on the American Mind** - Harriet A. Washington
- **Indigenous Environmental Justice** - Karen Jarratt-Snider and Marianne O. Nielsen
- **Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism** - Carl A. Zimring
Organizations

- Miami Climate Alliance is a great starting point: [https://miamiclimatealliance.org/](https://miamiclimatealliance.org/)
- Florida Immigrant Coalition: [https://floridaimmigrant.org/](https://floridaimmigrant.org/)
- League of Conservation Voters Education Fund: [https://www.lcvef.org/](https://www.lcvef.org/)
- Earth Guardians: [https://www.earthguardians.org/](https://www.earthguardians.org/)
- Environmental Justice Foundation: [https://ejfoundation.org/](https://ejfoundation.org/)
- Global Greengrants Fund: [https://www.greengrants.org/](https://www.greengrants.org/)
- Family Agriculture Resource Management Services: [https://30000acres.org/](https://30000acres.org/)
- National Black Farmers Association: [https://www.nationalblackfarmersassociation.org/](https://www.nationalblackfarmersassociation.org/)
- Soul Trak Outdoors: [https://soultrak.com/](https://soultrak.com/)
Sources

- https://18tweed.wixsite.com/westgrove/discrimination
- https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/environmental-racism-what-it-and-how-you-can-fight-it
- https://greenaction.org/what-is-environmental-justice/
- https://www.colorado.edu/coloradan/2019/10/01/environmental-justice-all
- https://projects.propublica.org/black-snow/#:~:text=Nearly%20every%20day%20during%20the,their%20community%20black%20snow.%E2%80%9D
- https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/places-african-american-history/2-pahokee-florida-1909/
- https://bullsugar.org/florida_fights_glades_sugarcane_burning/
- https://www.insider.com/environmental-racism-examples-united-states-2020-8#houston-texas-7