Environmental Justice

PAST + PRESENT + FUTURE

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS OUR CRY OF DEFIANCE AGAINST THE ONSLAUGHT OF OPPRESSIVE TOXINS AND OPPRESSIONS THAT THREATEN TO SUBMERGE OUR HOMES.
Place Matters

Communities of Opportunity
- Parks
- Sidewalks
- Grocery Stores
- Financial Institutions
- Better Performing Schools
- Good Public Transportation

Good Health Status

Poor Health Status contributes to health disparities:
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Infant mortality

Low-Income and Communities of Color
- Fast Food Restaurants
- Liquor Stores
- Unsafe/Limited Parks
- Poor Performing Schools
- Increased Pollution and Toxic Waste Sites
- Limited Public Transportation

Reference: PolicyLink
Living in close proximity to environmental hazards including: hazardous waste sites, industrial sites, high traffic roadways, and gas stations and repair shops leads to an increased risk for adverse health outcomes. (Brender et al., 2011).
GETTING THE LEAD IN

Tests show toxic lead is leaching into Flint’s tap water. Here’s how.

- **Lead solder:** Copper pipe connections, especially in pre-1986 homes, can contain lead.
- **Corrosive water:** Researchers have found Flint water to be more corrosive to pipes than water from the Detroit system, Flint’s previous water source.
- **Water treatment plant:** The city draws and disinfects water from the Flint River.
- **Service lines:** Pipes connecting water mains and individual homes or businesses can be made of lead.

**Lead into water:** Some tap water samples are above the federal threshold for lead.

**FLINT WATER PLANT**
The ‘Dirty South’
“The South has a legacy of unequal protection — why would the environment be any different?”

— Robert Bullard
America's Most Toxic City
(Forbes Magazine, 11/6/2009)

- Number of EPA Responses In Principal City: 58
- Facilities releasing toxic chemicals: 277
- Pounds of toxic chemicals released (2007): 41,502,855
- Air quality ranking (2007): No. 28
Travel and Leisure Magazine: Atlanta Makes Top “10” List of Dirtiest Cities (9/19/12)

- Atlanta ranked #5
- Listing is based on survey by the magazine's readers.
- The survey, America’s Favorite Cities allows readers to rank the places they've been to.
- They gauge “dirty” in a variety of ways: litter, air pollution, even the taste of local tap water.
The Patterns of Pollution:
A Report on Demographics and Pollution in Metro Atlanta
Metropolitan Atlanta has 52 EJ Hotspots
Life expectancy in Atlanta differs based on where you live.

The highest average life expectancy in Metro Atlanta is 87.6 years for residents of Vinings. The lowest is for those who live in the Bankhead neighborhood—they die at 63.6 years old.

Sources: National Center for Health Statistics & Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2019) and AJC, 10/2/19
Redlining: An Unequal Legacy

RESIDENTIAL SECURITY MAP

LEGEND

A - FIRST GRADE
B - SECOND GRADE
C - THIRD GRADE
D - FOURTH GRADE
SPARSELY SETTLED (Color Indicates Grade)
INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL

PREPARED BY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH & STATISTICS
WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE APPRAISAL DEPARTMENT
HOME OWNERS' LOAN CORPORATION
NOVEMBER 9, 1937
Historical Redlining Is Associated with Present-Day Air Pollution Disparities in U.S. Cities
This study, "found that formerly redlined communities see, on average, a temperature increase of 4.7 degrees Fahrenheit (2.6 degrees Celsius) above non-redlined neighborhoods." (Hoffman et al., 2020)
An Inconvenient Truth:

Everybody produces waste, but everybody does not live near waste facilities.
Race Matters: Disproportionate Exposures

- **Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States**, presented the first set of cross-sectional studies that illustrated the association between population demographics and location of commercial hazardous waste facilities and “uncontrolled” toxic wastes sites (United Church of Christ, 1987).

- **Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty**, revealed that race continues to be the predominant factor that predicts the location of hazardous waste facilities in the United States.

  - The racial disparities that exist in the location of hazardous waste sites were found to be greater than in previous years (Bullard et al., 2007).
Environmental Racism

- Encompasses any environmental policy, practice or directive that, intentionally or unintentionally, differentially impacts or disadvantages individuals, groups or communities based on race, color, or ethnicity.

- It also refers to the exclusionary and restrictive practices that limit participation by people of color in decision-making boards, commissions and staff, and other regulating bodies.
What Is Environmental Justice?

- Environmental Justice is the fair treatment of people of all races, incomes and cultures with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

- Fair treatment implies that no person or group of people should shoulder a disproportionate share of negative environmental impacts as a result of a country’s domestic or foreign policies.

(EPA, 2010)
Environmental Justice: A Short History

- 1968: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. travels to Memphis TN in support of striking black sanitation workers
- 1979: Houston TX lawsuit to keep landfill out of suburban black neighborhood
- 1982: Warren County NC struggle against a new PCB landfill
- Late 80’s: Landmark study/statistical analyses on disproportionate burden of toxic land uses in communities of color – *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*
Environmental Justice History...

- 1991: First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit
  - 17 Principles of EJ created
  - EPA Office of Environmental Justice and NEJAC Created

- 1992: National Law Journal Study: Unequal protection based on racial divide regardless of income level in the way that the U.S. government cleans up toxic waste sites and punishes polluters. White communities see faster action, better results and stiffer penalties than communities where blacks, Hispanics and other minorities live.

- 1994 Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations

- Follow-up to landmark study released, Toxic Wastes and Race Revisited
Environmental Justice History…

- 2002: Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit
- 2007: Toxic Wastes and Race at 20 published
- 2009: Lisa Jackson Appointed as the first African American Administrator of the U.S. EPA – Reinvigorates focus on Environmental Justice; Expands Conversation on Environmentalism
- 2021: Michael Regan appointed as first African American Male Administrator of the U.S. EPA
- 2022: U.S. EPA Created Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights
Community Solutions to Environmental Injustices

- Grassroots Community Organizing
- Community-based Participatory Research
- Legislative Initiatives
- Direct Action
- Developing Partnerships
- Leveraging Resources
- Education/Mobilization
Building Partnerships

- Community Empowerment Models
- Grassroots Leadership Development
- Hazard Reduction Plans
- Citizen Monitoring/Citizen Science/Community Science
- Good Neighbor Agreements/Collaborative Problem Solving
- Technical, Scientific, and Legal Assistance
- Academic-Community Partnerships
Citizens as Scientists

In recent years, citizen science in air and water quality monitoring and other community-based approaches have been used to address a wide range of health and environmental justice challenges in community settings.
There is a big difference between research performed...
### Comparison: Traditional Academic Research vs. Community Research

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<th>Traditional Research</th>
<th>Community Research</th>
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<td>Short-term, task-oriented, detached</td>
<td>Long-term, multifaceted, connected</td>
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<td><strong>Value of research</strong></td>
<td>Acceptance by peers (e.g., publication)</td>
<td>Contribution to community change</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Academic conference, journal</td>
<td>Any and all forums, media, meetings, community</td>
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(Strand K, et al. 2003)
Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

“Collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change to improve community health and eliminate health disparities.”

---W.K. Kellogg Community Scholar’s Program (2001)
What is Community Science?

“Community science is collaboratively-led scientific investigation, exploration and engagement in the entirety of the scientific process.”

---Public Lab
“Street science is a framework that joins local insights with professional scientific techniques, with concurrent goals: to improve scientific inquiry and environmental health policy and decision making.”

(Corburn, 2005)
There is Value in Local Knowledge

"...local knowledge, inquiry, and organizing can extend the reach and refine the focus of established professional expertise." —John Forester, Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University

"Like a well-informed and motivated patient, a community that actively investigates local health conditions can contribute greatly to better outcomes. But this is a messy and imprecise process, one that is as much about democracy as it is about wellness." In recognizing, “...the value of local knowledge [we] sharpen our understanding of how community residents and health professionals can collaborate effectively to seek a second opinion.” —Don Chen, Executive Director, Smart Growth America

“You’d be surprised at the knowledge walking that street.” ----- Juanita Wallace, Resident and Public Safety Chair - English Avenue Neighborhood Association (Atlanta, GA/Proctor Creek Watershed)
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