



December 12th Movement
456 Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11216
(718) 398-1766/d12m@aol.com

At closure of the 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, the Durban Declaration declared that the TransAtlantic Slave Trade and Slavery were crimes against humanity and descendants of enslaved peoples were due reparations.

It is 2021, 20 years post-declaration, and reparations has yet to be paid. It is a subject that the United States government ignores and has ignored for decades, despite the consistent struggle for reparations.

As a result of systemic neglect, peoples of African descent continue to suffer third-world conditions and, in some instances, worse than developing countries, within the borders of a first-world nation, the South within the North. ¹

Documented historical events and statistics show systemic environmental pollution in majority-Black communities, subsequent widespread negative health impacts, and state and federal governments and corporations' neglect in mitigating and eradicating the damage to the environment, a neglect from which peoples of African descent have suffered and continue to suffer.

SOURCES, CAUSES, FORMS AND CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS OF RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

13. We acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and further acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the transatlantic slave trade, and are among the major sources and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences;



United Nations

16

14. We recognize that colonialism has led to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and that Africans and people of African descent, and people of Asian descent and indigenous peoples were victims of colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences. We acknowledge the suffering caused by colonialism and affirm that, wherever and whenever it occurred, it must be condemned and its reoccurrence prevented. We further regret that the effects and persistence of these structures and practices have been among the factors contributing to lasting social and economic inequalities in many parts of the world today;

¹ [Durban_text_en.pdf \(ohchr.org\)](#)



Demonstrators march in Sunset Park, Brooklyn last September in support of community-led climate justice initiatives. ERIK MCGREGOR/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

Yale Environment 360, Yale School of the Environment, interviewed climate activist, Elizabeth Yeampierre of Climate Justice Alliance, on June 9, 2020. The interview is documented under the title: **Unequal Impact: The Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change**. In this interview, Ms. Yeampierre makes a link between slavery, exploitation of resources, and environmental injustice. She also criticizes the mainstream environmental movement that was *“built by people who cared about conservation, who cared about wildlife, who cared about trees and open space... but didn’t care about black people.”*

She added: *“Climate change is the result of a legacy of extraction, of colonialism, of slavery. A lot of times when people talk about environmental justice they go back to the 1970s or ‘60s. But I think about the slave quarters. I think about people who got the worst food, the worst health care, the worst treatment, and then when freed, were given lands that were eventually surrounded by things like petrochemical industries. The idea of killing black people or indigenous people, all of that has a long, long history that is centered on capitalism and the extraction of our land and our labor in this country.”*²

Scientists at National Center of Environmental Assessment *“find that black people are exposed to about 1.5 times more particulate matter than white people...Interestingly, it also finds that for black people, the proportion of exposure is only partly explained by the disproportionate geographic burden of polluting facilities, meaning the magnitude of emissions from individual factories appears to be higher in minority neighborhoods... Researchers have found the presence of benzene and other dangerous aromatic chemicals [to be linked to race](#). Strong racial disparities [are suspected in the prevalence of lead poisoning](#).”*³

The following documents instances of environmental racism perpetrated and overlooked by state and federal governments and corporations in the U.S., as evidenced by continued toxic

² [Unequal Impact: The Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change - Yale E360](#)

³ [A New EPA Report Shows That Environmental Racism is Real - The Atlantic](#)

environmental exposures in Black communities and documented by a wide body of researchers:

FLINT, MICHIGAN WATER CRISIS (2014 to Present)

In the Flint (the northern state of Michigan) water crisis, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) wrote about this environmental injustice whereby Flint authorities switched its drinking water to the Flint river without adequate treatment and testing, resulting in widespread lead-filled and contaminated water and serious health conditions. *“The Michigan Civil Rights Commission, a state-established body, [concluded](#) that the poor governmental response to the Flint crisis was a “result of systemic racism.”⁴ The Independent.co.uk wrote in its February 18, 2018, article **Flint water crisis: Race ‘was factor’ in authorities’ slow and misleading response, says city’s black mayor**: “...The group [Commission] concluded that a mix of “historical, structural and systemic racism combined with implicit bias” led to decisions, actions and consequences in Flint that would not have been allowed to happen in primarily white communities such as Ann Arbor or East Grand Rapids.”⁵; 57% of Flint is Black.*

The University of Michigan Health stated: *“Tests found a concerning increase in the number of children with elevated lead levels in their blood after the water switch.”⁶*

The Environmental Protection Agency, under former President Trump, wrote in the Atlantic magazine, also on February 18: **Trump’s EPA Concludes Environmental Racism Is Real: A new report from the Environmental Protection Agency finds that people of color are much more likely to live near polluters and breathe polluted air—even as the agency seeks to roll back regulations on pollution.**⁷

⁴ [Flint Water Crisis: Everything You Need to Know | NRDC](#)

⁵ [Flint water crisis: Race ‘was factor’ in authorities’ slow and misleading response, says city’s black mayor | The Independent | The Independent](#)

⁶ [Study Examines Blood Lead Levels of Flint Children \(uofmhealth.org\)](#)

⁷ [A New EPA Report Shows That Environmental Racism is Real - The Atlantic](#)

Environmental Racism

Cancer alley represents some of the nation's harshest structural and historical inequities. The toxic air pollution disproportionately affects Black and low-income residents, with many of the plants concentrated in predominantly Black neighborhoods. For example, the population of St. James Parish is 49 percent white and 49 percent Black; the majority of plants are concentrated in the fifth district, a district that is 80 percent Black. St. James residents are also fighting against plans to build a new plastics plant on top of the graves of former enslaved African Americans.

The conditions that cancer alley residents face are disproportionately common throughout predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods in the United States. This phenomenon, known as environmental racism, is due to the fact that minority residents across the country are more likely to live in housing near chemical pollutants. This correlates with some of the highest death rates and severe health problems such as cancer and heart disease. While cancer alley environmental racism correlates with income, studies show that across the country, Black Americans with higher incomes are still exposed to toxic air at higher rates than white Americans with lower incomes.

"CANCER ALLEY", LOUISIANA (1960s to Present)

Cancer Alley or Death Alley is an 85-mile stretch of about 150 petrochemical refineries and plants along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The rate of air pollution-induced cancer is well above the national average of 50 times. Residents of this area also report increased miscarriages and decreased life expectancy, among other health concerns.

This report by the University Network for Human Rights presents localized health data from the area surrounding the Denka/DuPont plant. In March 2018, a team of trained researchers collected health data from a large sample of residents who live within 2.5 kilometers of the plant. Below, we present our in-depth analysis of this household health survey data. Our data reveal **extremely improbable rates of cancer and other illness among residents surveyed.** We also found that **prevalence of cancer and other illness among our survey sample is correlated with proximity to the Denka plant**, with higher rates of illness closer to the plant.

Some statistics include:

- nearly half of the children in surveyed households living within 1.5 kilometers of the plant regularly suffer from nosebleeds, headaches, or both.
- roughly 40% of surveyed residents reported regularly experiencing chest pain, heart palpitations, or both.
- over half of surveyed residents regularly experience headaches, lightheadedness, and/or dizziness.
- one-third of surveyed residents said they regularly have trouble breathing and/or experience wheezing.
- almost half reported regular eye pain and irritation.

- over 40% of respondents experience coughing, sneezing, and/or a horse/sore throat most of the time.
- almost 30% of surveyed residents experience lethargy/fatigue most of the time.
- over one-third of respondents regularly experience skin rash/irritation and/or itchy skin.⁸

The following article from the University Network for Human Rights documents detailed resident history of reported adverse health conditions that have not ameliorated over the years.⁹

A March 2, 2021, online newspaper HuffPost headline reads: **“U.N. Human Rights Experts Say Environmental Racism In Louisiana’s Cancer Alley Must End”** reported on Louisiana’s Cancer Alley and condemned a seemingly typical American occurrence that affects mostly Black residents. The article continues by stating: *“The U.N. report estimated that the combined carbon emissions per year in a single parish would exceed those of 113 countries”*.¹⁰

10 egregious examples of environmental racism in the US



Smoke billows from one of many chemical plants in the area October 12, 2013. ‘Cancer Alley’ is one of the most polluted areas of the United States and lies along the once pristine Mississippi River, affecting predominantly communities of color.

Giles Clarke/Getty Images

- Communities of color in the US are often victims of environmental racism, which describes the disproportionate impact on their lives because of living near hazardous pollution.
- Numerous studies have shown that Black and Hispanic communities are exposed to higher proportions of air pollution, toxic waste sites, landfills, lead poisoning, and other industrial complexes compared to white counterparts.
- An estimated 70% of contaminated waste sites are located in low-income neighborhoods, and an upwards of 2 million Americans live within a mile of sites that are vulnerable to flooding — the majority of which are in Black and brown communities.
- The list goes on and on, but here are a few of the many alarming examples of environmental racism across the country.
- Visit Insider’s homepage for more stories.

U.N. experts calls it “environmental racism” that is in violation of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights: Specifically, experts write: *“This form of environmental racism poses serious and disproportionate threats to the enjoyment of several human rights of its largely African American residents, including the right to equality and non-discrimination, the right to life, the right to health, right to an adequate standard of living and cultural rights,”* the U.N. experts said in the report.¹¹

An article in *The Atlantic* dated February 28, 2018 states: *“The conclusions from scientists at the National Center for Environmental Assessment not only confirm that body of research, but advance it in a top-*

⁸ [Cancer Alley: Causes and Effects of the “Chemical Corridor” in Louisiana \(torhoermanlaw.com\)](https://torhoermanlaw.com/cancer-alley-causes-and-effects-of-the-chemical-corridor-in-louisiana/)

⁹ [Environmental Racism in Louisiana — University Network for Human Rights \(humanrightsnetwork.org\)](https://humanrightsnetwork.org/environmental-racism-in-louisiana/)

¹⁰ [U.N. Human Rights Experts Say Environmental Racism In Louisiana’s Cancer Alley Must End | HuffPost](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/un-human-rights-experts-say-environmental-racism-in-louisiana-cancer-alley-must-end)

¹¹ Ibid.

rate public-health journal. They find that black people are exposed to about 1.5 times more particulate matter than white people, and that Hispanics had about 1.2 times the exposure of non-Hispanic whites. The study found that people in poverty had about 1.3 times more exposure than people above poverty. Interestingly, it also finds that for black people, the proportion of exposure is only partly explained by the disproportionate geographic burden of polluting facilities, meaning the magnitude of emissions from individual factories appears to be higher in minority neighborhoods.”¹²

¹³

Congressman Cedric Richmond represents Reserve, Louisiana, a portion of Cancer Alley where petrochemical companies are polluting the air and poisoning residents. He has reportedly been “bought off” by those same companies, and one of his constituents stated: “It was like he was trying to brush us off”.¹⁴

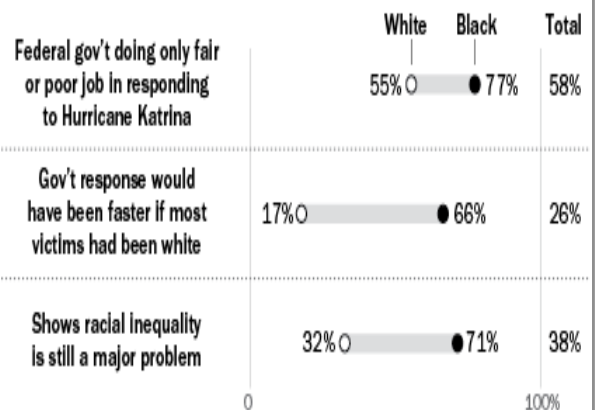
HURRICANE KATRINA (2005)

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall along the U.S. Gulf Coast states. Governmental, weather/oceanic, and engineering officials were well aware of the strength and destructive power of this atmospheric event. Yet, they kept pointing fingers at each other, claiming they were unaware of the individual designated to oversee its mitigation to the point of comedy. The U.S. boasts of its advanced technology to predict such events, but its lack of action was not consistent with this technology. Dr. Joy DeGruy would undoubtedly term this behavior as “cognitive dissonance”.

The Pew Research Center survey published its results on August 27, 2015 in its article entitled: **Remembering Katrina: Wide Racial Divide over government’s response**. It also notes that: “From the start, the tragedy had a powerful racial component – images of poor, mostly black New Orleans residents stranded on rooftops and crowded amid fetid conditions in what was then the Louisiana Superdome.” ¹⁵

Ten Years Later, a Look Back at the Racial Divide Over Government’s Response to Hurricane Katrina

% who said in 2005 ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey, Sept. 6-7, 2005. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. “Don’t know” responses not shown.


PEW RESEARCH CENTER

¹² [A New EPA Report Shows That Environmental Racism is Real - The Atlantic](#)

¹³ [Environmental racism: Examples of it across the United States \(insider.com\)](#)

¹⁴ [Why is this top Democrat absent from the fight against toxic pollution in Cancer Alley? | US news | The Guardian](#)

¹⁵ [Remembering Katrina: Wide racial divide over government's response | Pew Research Center](#)



NEW YORK STATE

Services

Department of Health

Individuals/Families Providers/Partners

You are Here: [Home Page](#) > [Information on Asthma in New York](#)

Asthma emergency department visits

Source: 2016 SPARCS Data as of 12/31/2016

Region/County	ED Visits 2016	Population 2016	Crude Rate
Reg- 1 Long Island			
Nassau	737	114,327	64.5
Suffolk	918	123,226	74.5
Region Total	1,655	237,553	69.7
Reg- 2 New York City			
Bronx	7,116	142,365	499.8
Kings	5,352	231,554	231.1
New York	2,836	89,737	316.0
Queens	2,961	180,939	163.6
Richmond	368	40,954	89.9
Region Total	18,633	685,549	271.8

“ASTHMA ALLEY”/BRONX, NEW YORK CITY

Refer to the chart at left which shows the borough of the Bronx which has the highest emergency room visits for medical complaints of Asthma in children ages five to 11 (7,116 in 2016), significantly higher than other areas of New York.¹⁶

A National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) table (**Top 10 Metropolitan Areas by African American Health Impacts Attributable to Ozone caused by Natural Gas Pollution**) shows New York City Metropolitan area as having 5,235 Asthma attacks, with 3,821 missed school days per year.¹⁷

According to The Guardian article at left dated April 4, 2020, residents of the Mott Haven section of the Bronx *“need asthma hospitalizations five times the national average and at rates 21 times higher than other NYC neighborhoods.”*

'Asthma alley': why minorities bear burden of pollution inequity caused by white people

Mott Haven in the South Bronx is a classic example where black and Hispanic residents experience a particularly insidious 'environmental inequality'



▲ The population in the Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx is 97% Hispanic or black. A study found that blacks are exposed to about 56% more pollution than is caused by their consumption, and Hispanics 63% more. Photograph: Barry Winiker/Getty Images

Hazar Kilani in the Bronx, New York

Thu 4 Apr 2019 02:00 EDT

The population breakdown is 97% Hispanic or Black. They breathe in daily exhaust emissions from trucks from Fresh Direct trucks and other traffic from four nearby highways and other business-emitting toxic exhaust.

In the article, one resident said: *“Showing research hopefully will drive some solutions. It’s not enough for them that so many kids have asthma. If it was white kids...they wouldn’t have even put the [industrial] plants there...”*

In addition, abcnews online writes that: *“The Bronx*

¹⁶ [Asthma emergency department visit rate per 10,000 - Aged 5-11 years \(ny.gov\)](#)

¹⁷ [Fumes-Across-the-Fence-Line_NAACP-and-CATF-Study.pdf](#)

contains seven of the city's top-10 neighborhoods for asthma rates...The Morrissiana/Highbridge neighborhood, home to the city's second-highest asthma rate, is now among the city zip codes worse hit by the coronavirus..."

Mychal Johnson, co-founder of activist group, South Bronx Unite states: "You couldn't find a location that's more designed for mortalities than the community we live in" and told ABC News that Bronx residents were very concerned about pollution leaving them vulnerable to the virus.

¹⁸

Linda Villarosa wrote an article on July 28, 2020, in The New York Times entitled: **Pollution is Killing Black Americans. This Community Fought Back.** In her New York Times article, she states: *"Black communities like Grays Ferry shoulder a disproportionate burden of the nation's pollution — from foul water in Flint, Mich., to dangerous chemicals that have poisoned a corridor of Louisiana known as Cancer Alley — which scientists and policymakers have known for decades. [A 2017 report from the N.A.A.C.P. and the Clean Air Task Force provided more evidence.](#) It showed that African-Americans are 75 percent more likely than other Americans to live in so-called fence-line communities, defined as areas situated near facilities that produce hazardous waste."*¹⁹

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, United Nations Special Rapporteur, Atlantic magazine, Independent newspaper, University Network for Human Rights, Insider, NAACP, The Guardian, ABC News, New York Times, and other groups have reported on these adverse events in Black and Brown communities, citing statistics after statistics showing indiscriminate pollution in and of Black communities.

What is the reason that these conditions still exist, still permeate into the very fabric of society, affecting all age groups, conditions well-known to city, state, and federal officials, but still ongoing?

It cannot be clearer than stated. Mountains of data compiled by every imaginable body comes to the same conclusion: environmental racism, racial disparity, racial injustice.

Agreed that people of African descent deserve environmental justice as encompassed within the Concept Note/Background of the 28th Session of the Working Group of Experts on people of African descent.²⁰

¹⁸ [Poverty, pollution and neglect: How the Bronx became a coronavirus 'formula for disaster' - ABC News \(go.com\)](#)

¹⁹ [Pollution Is Killing Black Americans. This Community Fought Back. - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

²⁰ 28th Session of the Working Group of experts on people of African descent on Environmental Justice, the Climate Crisis and People of African descent 24-26 March 2021 Concept Note

**28th Session of the Working Group of experts on people of African descent on
Environmental Justice, the Climate Crisis and People of African descent 24-26 March 2021**

Concept Note

Introduction

The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent is pleased to announce its upcoming virtual public session on *Environmental Justice, the Climate Crisis and People of African Descent*, which will be held from 24 to 26 March 2021 from 14.00-16.00 CET. This thematic session will discuss human rights solutions to address environmental injustice, racial disparities, unequal protection and the unique impact of the climate crisis and environmental racism on people of African descent. It will involve a comprehensive look at various aspects of environmental racism and the climate crisis locally and globally. All interested Member States and other stakeholders are warmly invited to join the session.

Background

People of African descent continue to be subjected to environmental racism and are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis. Environmental racism refers to environmental injustice which occur in practice and in policy in racialized societies.¹ Environmental racism is a measurable contemporary manifestation of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Afrophobia and related intolerance. In many parts of the world people of African descent are suffering discrimination, and insufficient respect, fulfilment and protection of their human rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment by policymakers, legislators, and others. This is manifest in the siting of landfills, toxic waste dispensaries, as well as the lack of enforcement of environmental protection regulations in communities heavily populated by people of African descent, often resulting in high rates of asthma and other chronic environment-related illnesses. People of African descent deserve environmental justice. As

Reparations are overdue. Reparations will begin to correct some of these environmental racism and disparities facing Blacks in America. Demands for reparations must be met, not years later, not after studies, commissions, and so-called academic interpretation, but NOW!