

WEEK 11

Environmental Justice



“**Environmental justice [means that] no community should be saddled with more environmental burdens and less environmental benefits than any other.**”

MAJORA CARTER

Despite wanting the best for their families, people with limited means are often less geographically mobile, and have fewer affordable choices when deciding where to live. And often, their voices are not heard in society’s decision-making process. This has led to residents with low incomes, and often also people of color, living in areas with high rates of air and water pollution, such as in industrial areas, near highways, or in close proximity to toxic waste sites.

Studies have shown that **black people are exposed to more pollutants than white people**. Pollution and particulate matter exposure have been linked to asthma, low birth weights, high blood pressure, and other adverse health outcomes. This is environmental racism.

In 2013, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that Peoria and Tazewell counties were the home to some of the **most toxic air in Illinois**. That was in part due to the high levels of sulfur dioxide emissions from local coal plants, such as the Edwards coal plant that recently closed.

Chicago’s Southeast side and **Little Village** communities experience a higher exposure to pollution, proximity to experimental hazards, and number of at-risk community members.

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Week 11 Challenge

Please **choose one or two** of the below activities to engage with for 15 minutes this week, and if you have time, we encourage you to complete more.



ACTIVITY A

Read [The Atlantic's coverage](#) of the EPA National Center for Environmental Assessment's 2018 report that showed how people of color are more likely to experience exposure to pollutants.



ACTIVITY B

Read a [conversation](#) between the State Director for The Nature Conservancy in Illinois, Michelle Carr, and Urban Ecologist, Mila Marshall, about race, class and environmental justice.



ACTIVITY C

Have you heard of environmental racism? **Watch** this [3-minute video](#) on how numerous systemic issues contribute to differences in exposure to potentially harmful environmental conditions.



ACTIVITY D

Watch [Youth & Climate: Tonyisha Climate Justice and Air Pollution in Illinois](#).



ACTIVITY E

Read a [Daily Illini article](#) about student organizations work to improve pollution in Champaign.

Share your reflections and any resources that helps further the discussion on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#UWIEquityChallenge](#).

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