

QUALITY OF LIFE; ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

What is Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism



Environmental Racism:

- The racial discrimination in environmental policy-making and the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of people of color communities for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership in the environmental movement.



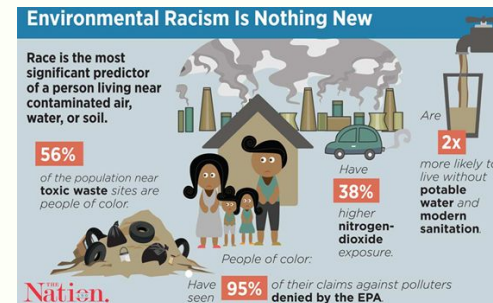
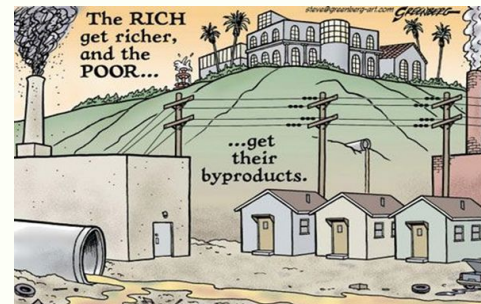
Environmental Justice:

- The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. (EPA definition).

What does EJ REALLY mean?

Environmental pollution and degradation become issues of environmental justice when they involve one or more of the following injustices:

- Targeted Environmental Burdens
- Discriminatory Policy Decisions
- Government Neglect
- Unequal Enforcement of Regulations and Environmental Laws
- Limited Political Power and Representation
 - Sacrificed Communities (Zones)



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TIMELINE



1619

First Dutch Slave ship arrives on the shore of what would be come the United States



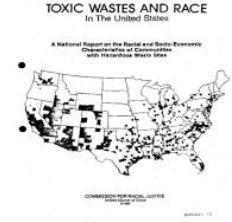
1968

Memphis Sanitation Strike - Black sanitation workers were protested for better working conditions to combat environmental injustices. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. came to support the workers



1982

Warren County, NC (1982)- Predominantly Black county was targeted for the location of a PCB landfill. The community protests and engages in acts of civil disobedience. Their efforts were unsuccessful, but it did bring attention to how Black communities are seemingly the location for such sites



1987

Toxic waste and race becomes the original breakthrough report that brought environmental justice to national attention



1991

The 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was probably the most important single event in the movement's history.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TIMELINE



1994

Issued by President William J. Clinton in 1994. Its purpose is to focus federal attention on the environmental and human health effects of federal actions on minority and low-income populations with the goal of achieving environmental protection for all communities.

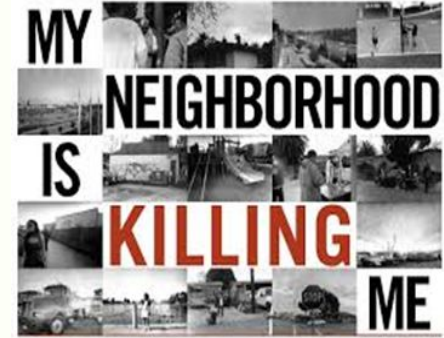


2002

At last, remediation funds were included in the 1998 state budget, and cleanup began in 2002. The detoxified landfill was closed at the end of 2003.

EVOLUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND ITS GENESIS IN ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM, THOUGH IT IS THE LOVE CHILD OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION!
- NUMBER OF GROUPS FIGHTING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INCREASED (GENERALLY DUE TO EXCLUSION OF BIPOC COMMUNITIES FROM THE MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT)
- ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE HAS GREATLY EXPANDED DUE TO FEDERAL ACTIONS (EO 12898) AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS (1992 EJ PRINCIPLES)
- THIS EXPANSION HAS GROWN TO INCLUDE RURAL AS WELL AS URBAN/SUBURBAN, ACKNOWLEDGING THAT MANY WHITE COMMUNITIES CAN BE EJ COMMUNITIES DUE TO DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND POLITICAL NEGLECT



Federal Environmental Protections: Biden vs. Trump

Biden Administration (2021-2024): Strengthening Protections

- Restoration of NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) to include EJ considerations.
- Expansion of EPA's Office of Environmental Justice.
- Justice40 Initiative: Directing 40% of federal investments to disadvantaged communities.
- Stricter air and water pollution standards (PFAS regulations, emissions reductions).

Trump Administration (2017-2021 & 2025-Present): Dismantling Progress

- Gutting of NEPA: Weakening community input in projects with environmental impact.
- Defunding and marginalizing the EPA's EJ programs.
- Rollbacks on Clean Air Act regulations, allowing increased emissions.
- Weakening of the Clean Water Act, leading to greater industrial pollution.
- Rescinding federal climate commitments and reversing renewable energy initiatives.
- "Polluter-first" policies benefiting corporations at the expense of public health.

How Federal Deregulation Threatens the Quality of Life for Connecticut Residents

Air Quality Deterioration

Increased emissions from power plants and industrial facilities.
Higher asthma and respiratory illness rates in urban centers.

Water Contamination Risks

Reduced federal oversight on pollutants affecting Long Island Sound and drinking water sources.
Potential for increased lead exposure and PFAS contamination.

Climate Vulnerability

Rising sea levels and extreme weather events.
Lack of federal commitment to climate resilience funding for vulnerable communities.

Who Suffers the Most?

Low-income communities & communities of color bear the brunt of these rollbacks.
Public health, property values, and overall well-being in Connecticut are at stake.

The Essential Role and Urgent Need of Strong State & Local Protections

Key federal environmental laws and their Connecticut state law equivalents

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (1969)

- Federal Law: Requires environmental impact assessments for major federal projects.
- Connecticut Equivalent: **Connecticut Environmental Policy Act (CEPA)** (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22a-1 to 22a-1h) – Requires state agencies to evaluate environmental impacts before approving projects.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) (1976)

- Federal Law: Regulates hazardous and solid waste management.
- Connecticut Equivalent: **Connecticut Hazardous Waste Management Act** (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22a-448 to 22a-454) – Governs hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal.

Clean Air Act (CAA) (1970)

- Federal Law: Regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources to control air pollution.
- Connecticut Equivalent: **Connecticut Clean Air Act** (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22a-170 to 22a-200) – Implements state air quality standards in alignment with the federal Clean Air Act.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) (1980)

- Federal Law: Provides for cleanup of hazardous waste sites and liability for responsible parties.
- Connecticut Equivalent: **Connecticut Transfer Act** (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22a-134 to 22a-134e) – Regulates the transfer of properties with hazardous waste concerns and mandates remediation.

Clean Water Act (CWA) (1972)

- Federal Law: Regulates pollutant discharges into U.S. waters and sets water quality standards.
- Connecticut Equivalent: **Connecticut Water Pollution Control Act** (Conn. Gen. Stat. § 22a-416 to 22a-484) – Governs water quality and discharge permits in the state.



Final Thought:

"Our communities have fought too hard and endured too much to be sacrificed for profit and politics. Environmental justice is Black liberation, one shared with allies across racial, social, and economic differences. It is ALL of our right to breathe clean air, drink safe water, and live in neighborhoods free from harm. We will not be silent. We will not be ignored. The fight is now, and we are unapologetically in it for our people, our future, and our power."



Definitions

CT Environmental Justice Definition:

- A distressed municipality, as designated by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development; OR
- Defined census block groups where 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty
For a family of 4, about \$62,400 a year

Working Definition in New York State:

- The New York Climate Act charged a Climate Justice Working Group with the development of criteria to identify disadvantaged communities
- Not finalized, but a working memo draft includes “45 indicators including: environmental exposures, burdens, and climate change risks; sociodemographic factors such as age, race, and income; pollution characteristics; and health vulnerabilities

CT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TIMELINE



01 Beginning of European Colonization

Beginning in 1630s

Early colonists stole land, forced communities into signing unfair treaties, and systemically worked to thwart Indigenous survival, including limiting land access and environmental harm.

02 Redlining

1933-1940

Between 1933-1940, the Home Owners Loan Association, a federal agency, divided neighborhoods into color-coded groups based race, class, and ethnic composition that financial institutions used to determine lending risk.

03 Urban Renewal

(Mid 20th Century)

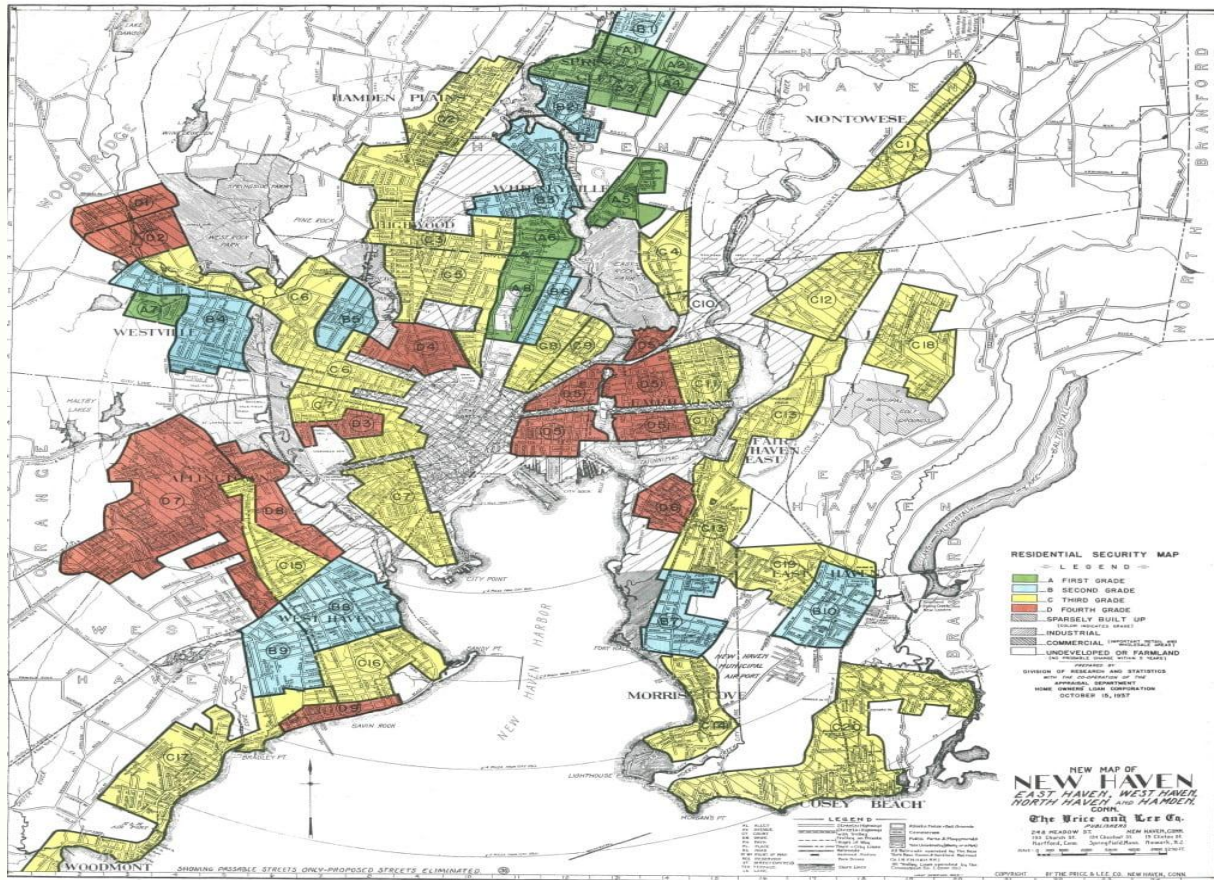
Across the country, the federal government invested in “Urban Renewal” projects to clear “slums”, bring in suburban residents, and increase car infrastructure. New Haven saw the Oak Street Connector that bisected the Oak Street community.

04 Formation of CCEJ

1997

In 1997, Dr. Mark Mitchell, formed the CT Coalition for EJ to oppose a power plant in Hartford after he found higher asthma rates among Black and Hispanic residents living near waste treatment sites.

Map showing history of Redlining in New Haven



New Map of New Haven: East Haven, West Haven, North Haven, and Hamden, Conn. Map. Mapping Inequality. 1937.
[https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining.](https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining)

CIRCA's heat vulnerability map of New Haven. (Darker red areas are considered more vulnerable.)

Courtesy of New Haven Independent



LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY TIMELINE



Environmental Equity Policy

1993

CT DEEP adopted the Environmental Equity Policy, laying the groundwork for future laws and regulations. It ensured that all communities would have equal access to environmental benefits and protecting them from bearing disproportionate consequences to environmental pollution regardless of race or socio-economic status

Public Act No 08-94

2009

An Act Concerning EJ Communities and the Storage of Asbestos-Containing Material, The Bill:

- Defined “EJ Community” and “Affecting Facility.”
- Required an EJ Public Participation Plan for new permits, new facilities, and expansions.
- Required written notice to state and local officials
- Required good faith effort to provide accurate and complete information
- Provide opportunity for CEBA

Public Act 20-6

2020

An Act Concerning Enhancements to the State’s Environmental Justice Law.

Updated to include:

- Mandated CEBA when 5 existing facilities are located in the same municipality as the permit
- Mandated posting of sign printed in all languages spoken by 15% of residents
- Required written notice to local and state officials

Public Act No. 23-202

2023-Today

An Act Concerning the EJ Program of the DEEP. Updated to include:

- Informal public meetings must be recorded, and must accept written comments and questions.
- Written notice to residents within ½ mile
- Community residents must be involved in CEBA
- DEEP must develop regulations for relative impact of environmental and public health stressors.

2025 Connecticut Legislative Session

Key pieces of legislation to watch related to Environmental Justice:

- **SB 9:** The Environment, Climate and Sustainable Municipal and State Planning
- **SB 12:** Connecticut's Housing Needs
- **HB 5002:** Housing and the Needs of Homeless Persons
- **HB 6831:** Transit Oriented Communities
- **SB 1418:** Reducing Barriers to Food Security
- **SB 1494:** Testing for PFAS in Certain Water Supplies
- **SJ 36:** Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State's Constitution Regarding Environmental Rights
- **HB 6249:** Limiting Appeals Under the CT Environmental Protection Act
- **HB 6868:** Enhancing Environmental Permitting Predictability

Please refer to the CTLCV Watchlist

PURA Proceedings, EJ Regulations, and Future Policy Fights

PURA Proceedings

- Docket 24-09-07 – Equity, Accessibility, and Stakeholder Engagement

DEEP EJ Regulation Rulemaking

- Public meeting #3 happened yesterday, March 25 online, and will be happening tomorrow, March 27 in-person
- These workshops are helping to shape DEEP's regulations, so strong community attendance is critical
- Next meeting happening in Summer 2025

Future Policy Fights

- Permitting updates
- Improving EJ for the CT Siting Council
- Equal Application of CT'S EJ law to protect communities of 10,000 or less
- Updating our definition of Environmental Justice

How to Handle the Fight Against Environmental Justice

- Get Angry
- Hold elected officials accountable
- Dream big and fight for that
- Focus on a Justice oriented Environmental Justice
- Educate yourself on: racism, feminism, queer and trans liberation, redlining, immigration, food insecurity, economic justice, healthcare
- Donate money to EJ organizations
- Donate to mutual aid funds in your community
- Organize with your community
- Protest in Covid-conscious ways

THANKYOU



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