

The Color of Pollution: Environmental Racism in America

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Lesson Title: The Color of Pollution: Environmental Racism in America

Grade/Course: 9-12

Lesson duration: 40 minutes

Topic of Lesson: Environmental Racism

Central Focus: What is environmental racism and how does it present itself in America?

Essential Question(s):

- How is environmental racism a human rights violation?
- How and why are minority and poor communities impacted more heavily than other communities?
- What are possible solutions?

State/Disciplinary Standards:

RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies

RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital text

Daily Performance Objectives:

- Define terms associated with Environmental Justice.
- Determine the issues surrounding Environmental Justice.
- Students will be able to draw on prior knowledge of environmental racism cases such as the deep water horizon oil spill, Flint Michigan, and North Dakota pipeline.
- Understand the difference between environmental racism and environmental justice

Prior Knowledge Resources:

- Familiarity with the cases mentioned within the powerpoint from prior discussion, news, social media.
- Students may have been personally affected by environmental racism or may know someone who has been.

Materials and Preparation:

- Online: internet and headphones
- In person: writing utensil
- Handouts

Assessment/evaluation

Do the students seem as though they understand the concept of environmental racism in America and can they create potential solutions for this predicament?

Slide number	Duration	The teacher will..	The students will..
1	00:45	Introduce themselves and the presentation to the class	Be attentive and actively come up with questions to ask at the appropriate time
2	2:00	Describe what the information in the powerpoint	Be attentive and actively come up with questions to ask at the appropriate time
3	5:00	Play the video provided. Allow for students to share reaction	Be attentive and actively come up with questions to ask at the appropriate time
4	00:58	Describe information in powerpoint and provide discussion time	Ask questions at this time
5	1:38	Describe information in powerpoint	Be attentive and actively come up with questions to ask at the appropriate

			time
6	10:00	Describe information in powerpoint. After doing so, the teacher will hand out paper provided (Oil spill- <i>Teaching Tolerance</i>). The teacher will then go over answers provided as well.	Be attentive. Fill out handout to the best of capabilities
7	5:00	Describe powerpoint. Allow time for students to react/ ponder	Ponder the question and participate by giving opinions.
8	00:52	Describe powerpoint.	Be attentive and actively come up with questions to ask at the appropriate time
9	5:00	Describe powerpoint. Leave time for questions. Give "how do I help" handout. Close class by asking students what they have learned during this presentation and to come up with potential solutions.	ask questions at this time.

Handouts:

- Teaching Tolerance Oil Spill Handout:
http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/tt_gulf_oil_spill_handouts1.pdf
- Non profit organizations related to topic:
[-https://www.weact.org/whatwedo/areasofwork/climate/](https://www.weact.org/whatwedo/areasofwork/climate/)
[-https://gotgreenseattle.org/home/what-we-do/#overview](https://gotgreenseattle.org/home/what-we-do/#overview)
[-https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/](https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/)

Annotated Bibliography

- Campbell, Carla, et al. "A Case Study of Environmental Injustice: The Failure in Flint." International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, vol. 13, no. 10, 2016, p. 951., doi:10.3390/ijerph13100951.

This source was an interview with Robert Bullard done by the Journal of International Affairs (JIA). Bullard is known as the "father of environmental Justice". He is one of the first people to really bring environmental racism and injustice to attention. He explains how he came across this realization by accident while helping his wife with one of her law cases having to do with Houston, Texas. During his research he embarked on a new mission of studying the placement of landfills, incinerators, garbage dumps, and waste sites from the '30s up until 1978. They concluded that " Even though blacks made up

only 25% of the population, 82% of all the garbage waste that was being disposed over that period of time was disposed in black neighborhoods” They brought the first ever environmental racism case (Bean versus Southwestern Waste Management, Inc) to federal court in 1979 and lost due to not being able to prove intent.

He wanted to find out if it was just Houston, Texas. He concluded that environmental Racism happened all over America. He found huge cases in Los Angeles and Alabama. “ In 1987, Dr. Benjamin Chavis of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice did a study on toxic waste and race in the United States. The study found that race was the most powerful explanatory factor for where toxic facilities were located across the country. It was not income; it was not property values; it was not whether people owned or rented; it was not land values. It was race”. But, Bullard wanted to know why this was happening to predominantly black communities. He concluded this was because “ When certain lands are seen as exploitable, the people that happen to be living there are viewed as expendable. Hence the genocide of Native people and the exploitation of slaves. At the same time, pollution is seen as just a byproduct of moving to the highest level of the economy. Smoke, air pollution, water pollution...that is the smell of progress.”

I really want to use this Journal for my lesson. There are some killer quotes in here- like the last one I wrote. He also mentions specific places I can do research on such as Los Angeles Cancer Alley and Alabama black belt. He also divulges into the history of the manner as well.

“Environmental Injustice in Alabama's Black Belt.” Equal Justice Initiative, 16 Oct. 2019, eji.org/news/alabama-black-belt-environmental-injustice/.

This article talks specifically about residents in a historically African American town named Uniontown, Alabama. These residents filed a complaint about environmental racism in 2012 and are STILL struggling with it. In 2008, a historically white town located near Uniontown had a coal ash spill. The solution to this spill was to dump the remnants in a landfill located in Uniontown for the following two years. The predicament is this: coal was not only unpleasant to look out in your backyard, but it was poisonous. The coal contained arsenic, lead and radioactive elements. “The landfill sits only 100 feet from the front porches of some residents, who have experienced frequent foul odors, upset appetite, respiratory problems, headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. They also complain that fugitive dust from the facility has contaminated their homes, porches, vehicles, laundry and plantings.” The article then proceeds

to say that the lawsuit filed in 2012 by the community was denied by the EPA because of “insufficient evidence”. The landfill also filed a 30 million dollar lawsuit for defamation of the company.

This article is important because it shows what the pollution physically does as well as how little power the people in these communities have against these large companies.

Koehler, Sezin, and Sherronda J. Brown. “How Environmental Racism Affects Indigenous Communities in the USA.” Wear Your Voice, 27 Sept.

2017, <https://wearyourvoicemag.com/race/environmental-racism-affects-indigenous-communities-usa>

In the late 1800s, The Us targeted Indigouous Americans by killing wild buffalo and starving The Indigouous Americans in order to place them in reservation systems. This was done in order to take their land. The problem was that the new land that they were placed in has little to no food and available drinking waters. Indigouous Americans were and still are to this day being denied of their basic human rights. This is Environmental injustice because what the land that was stolen is being used for in business and revenue purposes. This results in factories and companies polluting what little land that Indigious Americans have left with toxics. This is a classic example of exploitation of the poor as explained by campbell. The most recent predicament with Indigious Americans was the pipeline constructed by DAPL. This pipeline will affect access to clean water for over 17 million In digenous Americans. Under the Obama administration the construction of this pipeline was halted. The Trump Administration continued

the construction and it is today being built. The reason it is built there and not somewhere else is because other communities such as Bismarck (a community that fought the pipe being built in their neighborhood) have the means and money to fight it. Since many Indiguous Americans are not “recognized” by the government, they do not have the power nor the means to fight off large corporations such as DAPL.

“Lead Poisoning (for Parents) - Nemours KidsHealth.” Edited by Kate M. Cronan, KidsHealth, The Nemours Foundation, Mar. 2019, <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/lead-poisoning.html>

It is important to explain exactly what the chemicals found in these garbage facilities (such as lead) can do to the human body. This article was written by a healthcare provider explaining that lead poisoning occurs when one has too much exposure through breathing, eating, and drinking. Lead is of course toxic for all ages, but unborn babies and children up to three years old are more susceptible to health problems caused by lead. These health problems include: harm to the production of red blood cells, less absorption of calcium needed for bones, brain and kidney damage. This can result in a person needing to be hospitalized and in severe cases damage to the body for life.

Vox. "Flint's Water Crisis, explained in 3 minutes." 21 Jan. 2016,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUSiLOwkrIw>

Over and over again I keep coming back to the same solution- people in power will do whatever they can in order to make more money or save money. Even if this means the exploitation of the less fortunate. This video demonstrates just that while talking about Flint, 6.

Michigan. In 2011, Flint Michigan became broke due to car factories moving overseas. Many lost their jobs and prices dropped drastically low in this city. To accommodate for this city officials switched back to an old water system (without going through normal governmental procedures). The pipes in this old water system were corroded and caused the water to be contaminated with toxins such as lead. When citizens started to notice, their complaints fell upon deaf ears. The city officials conducted hoax studies that "proved" that the lead levels were normal. They were hiding the truth from the world while the citizens of Flint were poisoned year after year with nothing they could do to stop it.

Parvini, Sarah. "Breathing Uneasy: Living Along the 710 Freeway Corridor." KCET, 23 Feb.

2016, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/breathing-uneasy-living-along-the-710-freeway-corridor>

This article interviews a man named Angelo Logan who lived his whole life near the South Coast District of Los Angeles. This is along the 18 mile stretch of the 710 corridor. This corridor is a constant import doc for los angeles and ships goods to supermarkets all over the states. The people at the bottom are seeing the negative impacts this has on their health. These people are majority people of color and have low economic statuses. Angelo recalls that it was almost deemed as normal for people to get diagnosed with cancer growing up. This happened so after that where he lived was called “cancer alley”. Although there have been movements in Angelos’ community to try to stop this and help cure the environment, the neighboring communities are still getting the brutal brunt of this situation. “[The imports] get to the shelves of the Walmarts while the people see no benefit, and all they get is a negative impact,” Angelo states. This is another classic case of people of lower economic status getting taken advantage of just to make money.