



# ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM & JUSTICE

## LEARNING GOALS

- To understand the concepts of environmental racism and environmental justice.
- To consider how environmental issues have a disproportionate impact on people of color, the poor, and marginalized groups.
- To practice drawing connections between global issues and local challenges.

## ASSIGNMENT

Estimated Time: ~22 min

- Watch: "[A Brief History of Environmental Justice](#)" (3:35)
- Read: "[Delhi's air pollution is a classic case of environmental injustice](#)" (~6 min.)
- Read: "[Roma suffer under EU's 'environmental racism', report concludes](#)" (~4 min.)
- Listen: "[Is There Environmental Racism In Hawaii?](#)" (8:18)

## TERMINOLOGY

- **Environmental Justice:** Refers to the belief that communities should not be forced to live in environments posing serious health concerns due to the race, nationality, or income of residents.
- **Environmental Racism:** Refers to the problem in which people of color are excluded from making decisions that would allow them to shape and protect their environments, resulting in certain communities being unprotected from environmental hazards.
- **Office of Environmental Justice:** Created in 1992, the Office of Environmental Justice is an office under the Environmental Protection Agency and was created to protect low-income and minority communities from environmental injustice. Under the Trump administration, the EPA has lost some of its funding and power to create regulations meant to protect vulnerable communities.
- **Roma people:** Refers to an ethnic group of people of a migratory nature who originated in northern India but now mainly live in Europe.

## KAHOOT QUIZ

- Go to Kahoot.it or use the Kahoot mobile app and enter the pin 02736522
- Or, use [this link](#)



# ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM & JUSTICE

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Since 1982, how has the American government's stance toward environmental racism evolved? Of the federal changes outlined in the ProPublica video, which do you think was the most impactful and why?
- What steps do you think the American government should take next in addressing environmental racism?
- In what way are Roma communities disproportionately impacted by unhealthy environments, more so than other ethnic communities in Europe? What are some of the negative health outcomes that result from unhealthy environments for Roma people?
- How might prejudices against Roma communities further the environmental injustice they already face?
- In Delhi, why does environmental pollution negatively impact low-income residents more than high-income residents?
- What other examples of international environmental racism or injustice can you think of? (Here's one hint: nuclear testing)
- Is a tax on car sales a good way to combat environmental racism and injustice? Why or why not?
- According to the Civil Beat article, why is it more difficult to determine if there is environmental justice in Hawaii than in other states in the U.S.?
- Why might Native Hawaiians be exposed to environmental racism more than other groups in Hawaii? What are some of the health problems disproportionately seen in Native Hawaiian communities that may be attributable to environmental racism?
- What other groups in Hawaii could be considered victims of environmental racism? Why?
- Do you agree with the claim that there has been environmental racism in land-use decision making in recent years? Why or why not?
  - If so, what are some national and local examples of environmental racism in land-use decision making? (see Additional Resources for hints)
- Do you think Hawaii should address environmental justice through legislation? Why or why not? If so, what kind of laws should we consider?
- Other than SDG #1, #10, and #16, what other SDGs does environmental racism and justice relate to?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Environmental Racism Has Left Black Communities Especially Vulnerable to COVID-19](#)  
An article by The Century Foundation explaining the link between Covid-19 and environmental racism, including residential segregation. The article also explains the different policy approaches the government can take to alleviate the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on black communities.



# ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM & JUSTICE

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (continued)

- [How Is Oahu's Trash Impacting the Waianae Coast?](#)  
An article by the Honolulu Civil Beat on the controversy of expanding the PVT landfill near residential communities in Nanakuli.
- [Residents And Policymakers Battle Over Hawaii Wind Energy Projects](#)  
An article by the Honolulu Civil Beat on the controversy around the Na Pua Makani wind farm on the North Shore and the struggle between the need for clean energy and community interests and health concerns.
- [Environmental racism is killing Americans of color. Climate change will make it worse](#)  
An op-ed piece in The Guardian explaining the specific impact of climate change developments, such as floods, hurricanes, and extreme heat, on communities of color and their respective health outcomes.

## IDEAS FOR ACTION

### Easier

- The construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea has created much controversy in the summer and fall of 2019. After looking into arguments for and against the construction of the telescope, hold a respectful discussion with your classmates on what you believe should have been done to address Native Hawaiians' concerns and whether or not this is an instance of environmental racism. Helpful resources may include the following op-ed pieces showing two sides of the argument:
  - [Opinion | The Thirty Meter Telescope Can Show Us the Universe. But at What Cost?](#)  
(New York Times, November 2019. Access the article as one of your free monthly articles when you register.)
  - [It's Time To Reconsider Objections To Astronomy On Mauna Kea](#)  
(Honolulu Civil Beat, April 2020)
- The ProPublica video gives a brief outline of the history of environmental justice in the United States. Work with your classmates to create a more detailed timeline of the progress of the environmental justice movement in the United States. Include specific examples of environmental racism that have occurred throughout the United States. Share your timeline and examples with your class, and consider the similarities and differences between the examples of environmental racism you have found. How might the government better address similar situations in the future?

### Medium:

- The study [The Nature Gap](#) from the Center for American Progress has several graphs and figures explaining the differences in access to nature between high and low-income communities (see the section "Analyzing inequities in natural area loss"). After looking over the data and analysis, brainstorm with your classmates different ways you could present this data, as well as the idea of environmental injustice, in a more accessible way to younger students. Choose one of your ideas, execute it, and present it to a local elementary school class or your younger family members.



# ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM & JUSTICE

## IDEAS FOR ACTION (continued)

- In the same study from the Center for American Progress linked above, the final section of the article focuses on policy recommendations to solve inequities in access to nature. After reading this section, brainstorm ways in which these recommendations could be specifically applied to communities in Hawaii. Write to your local representatives with your suggestions.

### Difficult:

- [KAHEA](#) is a local nonprofit focusing on protecting natural resources and sacred Native Hawaiian sites. KAHEA has also advocated for environmental justice, particularly for the communities in Waianae, whose residents have high rates of asthma and cancer related to environmental stressors. Volunteer with the organization or attend one of their events to learn more about what we can do to promote environmental justice in Hawaii.
- Policy advocacy: research bills in the city council or state legislature on measures to prevent and address environmental racism in Hawaii. Write and submit testimony.

## HAWAII DOE SUBJECT STANDARDS LINKS

### Hawaii Core Standards for Social Studies

- Content Standard [SS.WH.8.12.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.WH.8.7.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.US.12.8.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.US.12.16.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.MHH.4.9.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.PID.4.10.2](#)

- Content Standards [SS.7PI.3.14.1](#)
- Action Projects link to [SS.PID.5.7.1](#)

### [National Health Education Standards](#)

- NHES.2.12.10
- Action Projects could link to NHES.8.12.3

This lesson was created by Megan Tagami.