

Why Pollution Conquers?
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In the United States, it is easy to assume the average income of someone based on the appearance of the neighborhood they live in; the smell, housing conditions, and nearby establishments. Factors that come from a single root: pollution. In high income neighborhoods no one expects sidewalks filled with trash and overflowing dumpsters just as in low income neighborhoods. This pollution affects not only nostrils or property value, it also affects the health of the residents; a problem organizations such as the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or programs like the Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program (GRASP) by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) help bring to attention. Although these organizations are important, they haven't provided areal solution, and they may never do so under current practices. As long as we have more people who do not care than people who do care, nothing can be solved. That's why Lawrence Nault stated, "The land doesn't need more saviors. It needs fewer conquerors." A statement that drives us to the conclusion that environmental justice cannot be achieved if the ones responsible for provoking it do not stop.

What is Environmental Justice? According to the EPA, Environmental Justice (EJ) is "The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, culture, national origin, income, and educational levels with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of protective environmental laws, regulations, and policies." Essentially, the concept that everyone must live in a healthy and safe environment; an idea sadly unrealized. But

EJ demonstrates to be affected by race as well. The EPA has reported that people of color are commonly more exposed to all kinds of emissions and pollutants, an issue identified as systemic racism by experts such as professor Julian Marshall, a faculty member at the University of Washington. Companies have been targeting the land nearby black communities for factory construction, contaminating the air and water, a practice recognized, but not stopped. When the greatest support these marginalized communities get is some funding from the government as compensation, but aside from cleaning themselves their communities, residents have little power against corporations that only care about privileged areas. The most effective solution for this environmental and discriminative issue is by going to the source of it. Communities must care for maintaining clean streets and green spaces to achieve a healthy environment, but to achieve environmental justice nationwide Americans must flip the tables over and face the real problem: corporations, who not only spread this pollution, but purposely center it around marginalized communities that can do little about it. Although many groups address this issue, they are outnumbered by companies that do not get concerned by it. That's why "The land doesn't need more saviors. It needs fewer conquerors." Because there is no need for more people to try to solve a problem when what is needed is for the ones guilty of provoking it to stop.

People face many challenges, making it difficult to dedicate time to solve every existing problem, but this does not justify ignoring them, nor must everyone be involved in every problem. Out there many people do care and take action; however, a shift in focus can turn Environmental Justice a reality. Alone, there is not much I can do, but as a member of a great community, I am not alone. By encouraging others to oppose the settling of harmful factories in nearby communities of any background, we could move closer to Environmental Justice and rid the land of its conquerors.

Works Cited

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