

WEEK

11

Environmental Justice



"Environmental justice is the movement to ensure that no community suffers disproportionate environmental burdens or goes without enjoying fair environmental benefits." –Van Jones

Do you often think about how the air you breathe in your neighborhood might impact your health? Have you ever been instructed to not plant a garden or allow your children to play in your yard because of ground pollution? Has your water ever been contaminated with lead, so that drinking, washing, or cooking with it isn't safe for your family?

These issues are a reality for many people across our country, as well as here on Long Island, where even in the same county people experience drastically different qualities of air, earth, water, and life. Communities with proximity to highways or waste centers like landfills and ashfills are exposed to more pollution, increasing the likelihood they will be impacted by health issues like asthma, pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

In previous challenges, we discussed structural racism in housing and healthcare, and how where you live may impact your health. Due in part to a history of racial discrimination in housing and neighborhood choice, as well as ongoing neglect of the detrimental environmental impacts, communities of color bear the brunt of environmental injustice.

Perhaps the most widely publicized environmental injustice in recent years was the **Flint Water Crisis**, which resulted in 9,000 children (and thousands of adults) consuming toxic, lead contaminated water for 18 months while government officials told residents the water was safe to drink.

Share your reflections and any resources that help further the discussion on today's topic on social media using the hashtag #UWLIEquityChallenge

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Today, we see environmental injustice play out before our eyes, laid bare by the coronavirus's disproportionate devastation on communities of color, and African-American communities in particular. See the activities for a deeper dive into environmental justice.

The effects of environmental injustice are complex and far-reaching. We can take on this issue together through education, advocacy, and action.



ACTIVITY ONE

READ: [When a Virus Exposes Environmental Injustice](#)



ACTIVITY TWO

WATCH: [Environmental Justice Explained](#)



Additional Content

READ: [Inside the Fight for Clean Water in Newark](#)

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