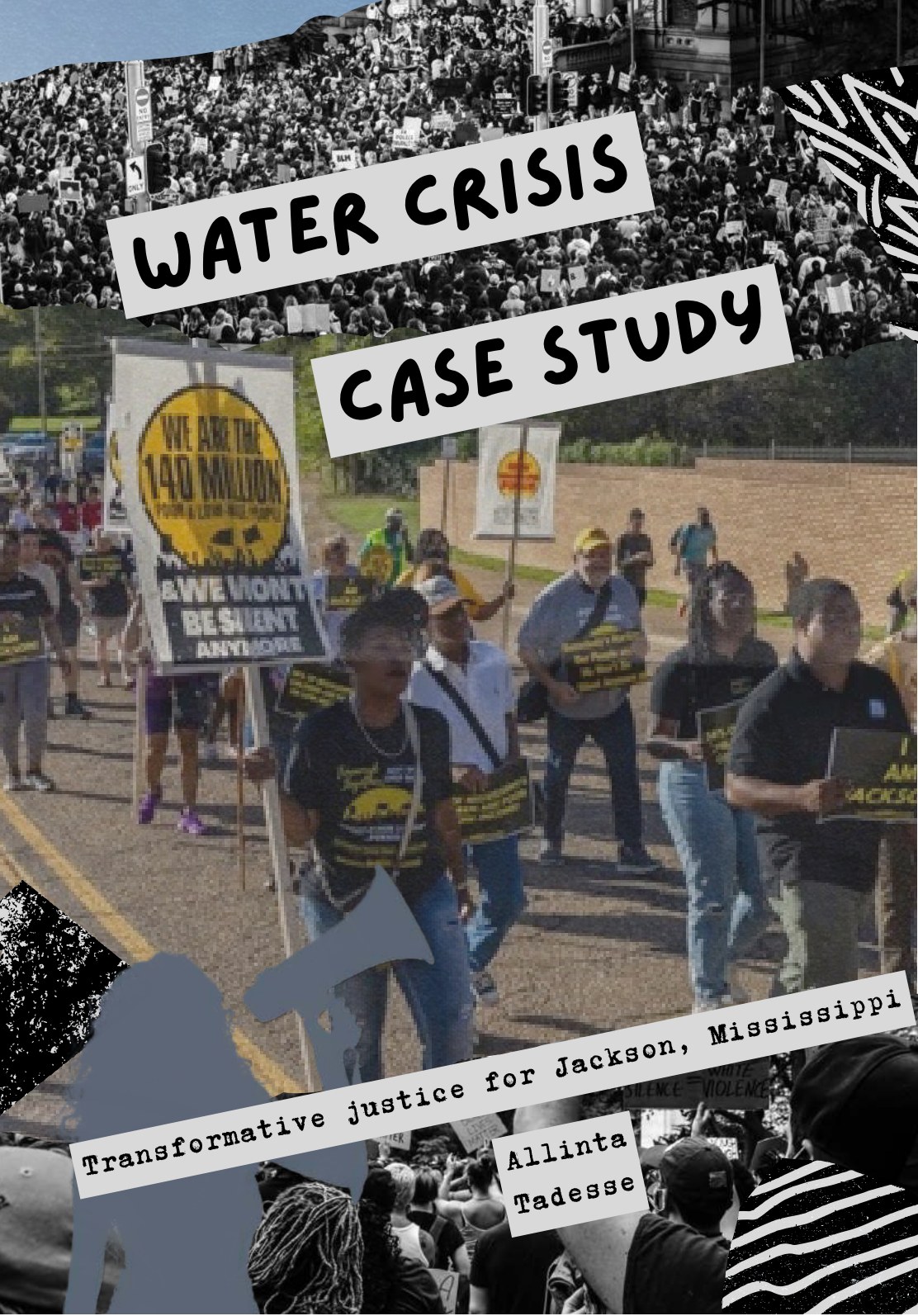




WATER CRISIS

CASE STUDY

Transformative justice for Jackson, Mississippi

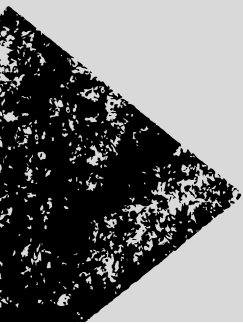
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**TAKE ACTION
NOW**

HOW WE GOT HERE

In mid-to-late August 2022, heavy rains led to flooding along the Pearl River watershed. Damaging one of the water treatment plants led to an inability to produce sufficient water pressure at the O.B. Curtis treatment plant. Along with a malfunction of the pumps at the J.H. Fewell treatment plant.

Over the past year, many families in Jackson had unclear water with little to no water pressure. Residents of Jackson continue to complain about the appearance and smell of the water, ultimately deeming it unsafe for use. Schools were unable to function, businesses shut down, and hospitals were overwhelmed. This man-made and preventable crisis is a direct consequence of the neglect of the state of Mississippi to ensure the basic living rights of its residents.

The rate of divestment in Jackson, rooted in systemic racism is only further enhanced by their own government representatives that have openly neglected the people for decades. With more than 80% of Jackson's residents being primarily Black, it only highlights the blatant environmental racism that has been occurring for so long.

Some experts find that the water crisis in Jackson is comparable to the 2014 water crisis in Flint, Michigan; residents were barred from access to clean water due to lead contamination for years. 'It's not a coincidence. [Jackson] is a disproportionately Black city where people knew there was a problem,' and didn't spend the money to fix it, Colin Jerolmack, Ph.D., professor of sociology and environmental studies at NYU, tells SELF. 'It's a result of a legacy of racism. You could draw a straight line [from] prior racist acts, such as discrimination, to environmental racism.' ...The Jackson water crisis is only the latest example of the devastating impacts of environmental racism. Colin Jerolmack, Ph.D. professor of sociology and environmental studies at NYU says. "It's the result of years and years of discrimination and neglect, and people in power often rely on the public's apathy toward racism, coupled with plausible deniability, to get away with it," (Jackson, Mississippi Water Crisis, 2022).





"People hold on to the old days where Black people were seen as a commodity and so they can't let go of the myth that 'white is right, you Black, you get back,'" she says. "So they think they're the ones who should make the decisions and they should benefit from the poor." Bridges says when state leaders block investment in the capital city, steer spending to majority white suburbs, and use federal welfare dollars to benefit football celebrities, it deprives resources from the places they're needed most. -Community Activist Fran Bridges (top left)



Bottled water is distributed during a Monday afternoon rally on Capitol Street in Jackson, Miss., just outside the Governor's Mansion on Sept. 26, 2022.



<https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/local/2022/09/27/prominent-pastor-leads-water-rally-outside-of-governors-mansion/69520435007/>



FEDERAL AID IN JACKSON

EPA PRESENCE

According to CNN, the EPA is planning on implementing a long-term presence in Jackson, in order to mitigate decades-long issues and aid in improving the quality of life for Jackson residents.

INVESTIGATIONS

An ongoing legal battle is occurring on the state and federal levels. Not only is legal action being taken against the state, but transparency is also being demanded by the NAACP and Jackson Residents. Further investigation into racial discrimination enabled by the Mississippi Department of Health and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, based on inadequate infrastructure maintenance that is impacting the health of Jackson residents.

FUNDING

Along with the demands of Black environmental organizations, A grant of \$100 million is discussed to be dispursed to Jackson residents. How the funding is to be used is still amongst debate between federal organizations, activist groups, and the State.



Purpose

The Black Hive is a cohort of Climate and Environmental Justice experts that specifically target environmental issues impacting Black communities in the US as well as globally.

Origins/History

In 2021, the Movement for Black Lives introduced the Black Hive as one of their environmental initiatives, along with the Red, Black, and Green New Deal. As of now, the coalition consists of over 200 sub-organizations with various organizers, advocates, and leaders continuing to develop demands and policies to remedy our current climate crisis. For more information, visit <https://m4bl.org/the-black-hive/>

Black Climate

Mandate

The Black Climate Mandate consists of nine sections that explore different crises that specifically impact marginalized groups the most, specifically the Black community. These nine mandates include the Climate Crisis, Health (right to breathe), Land, Water Energy, Labor, Economy, Democracy, and Diasporic Solidarity.

THE BLACK HIVE'S DEMANDS FOR CHANGE IN JACKSON

**NOTE: THIS DEMANDS
LIST WAS MADE IN
SOLIDARITY WITH THE
MISSISSIPPI RAPID
RESPONSE TEAM**

- Immediate replacement of all lead pipes and lead paint that is contaminating the water supply in Jackson, MS
 - End deepwater fracking and drilling, in addition to banning on all new fossil-fuel drilling and fracking.
 - Protection of marine habitats, an expansion of marine-protected areas, restoration of vulnerable marine ecosystems, and investment in the protection and repair of fisheries
 - Congress amends the Stafford Act to include man-made and climate-related disasters
 - Closed loopholes for the commodification and the private prioritization of water, oil, gas production, and aqua ecology that is vital to the environment
 - \$100 million in funding from Congress to upgrade the Jackson water system and ensure that this is done by Black-led community-based organizations in the Jackson area
 - Moratorium on ICE patrols
 - Ensure that at least 40% of financial investment and resources are allocated to Jackson residents and community/Black-led organizations
 - The implementation of a climate disaster response team and long-term climate resiliency planning in the most affected communities
 - Establishment and activation of a national emergency water assistance in priority disaster areas, effectively putting an end to the environmentally racist and unjust practices that prioritize private access during emergencies, which denies Black communities any decision-making power or agency
 - Critical upgrades that are essential for a functioning drinking water/ wastewater system must come without predatory financing or indebtedness that would further burden the city
- A LIST OF DEMANDS IS
ESSENTIAL IN ACTIVISM
WORK BECAUSE IT CALLS
FOR ACTION AND
ACCOUNTABILITY TO
OCCUR.**



SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this section is to help brainstorm more solutions that either complement or add to the work that is currently being done in Jackson. Following strategies that have been used in the past, I am basing it on three core principles that serve to create organization when centralizing certain tasks and responsibilities that go to either local leaders and climate activists, as well as federal organizations. For change to occur as rapidly as possible, strategies that fall under any one of these principles need to be occurring simultaneously; however, it is going to take decades of remediation to solve a decades-long issue. These core principles include, Accountability, Transparency, and CEJ Efforts.

Accountability would be the first and most attainable principle to have strategies for, since it has already been acted upon. For instance, investigation into the Mississippi Department of Health and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, along with suing the state of Mississippi for their neglect of the water crisis is already occurring. Some other accountability strategies would include mobilizing campaigns to get corrupt government officials removed from office during elections, and replacing them with representatives that align with the people and are able to hold higher elected politicians at the federal level. Implementing an organization or an entity with the responsibility of water quality restoration and management, that is also responsible for streamlining funds to the counties in Jackson to ensure the proper usage of these funds and preventing more corruption from occurring. This entity would serve a similar purpose as the City Council; in order for it to be fully implemented it might take decades for such an entity to be amended and later approved by Congress. The last principle, CEJ efforts, is the longest aspect of this strategy that includes mitigation that would need to be regularly followed up on for several decades. First, would be upgrading infrastructure so that it can properly filter water. This first step is essential for the emergency status to be removed from Jackson, which has not changed since November 2022. In addition, this infrastructure needs to be implemented with human-caused Climate Change considered; this infrastructure cannot be afforded to cause more damage that has already occurred and any risks need to be regularly monitored at all times. In addition, listing out and prioritizing counties that have been most impacted by water insecurity should be among the first to be recovered.



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