

Environmental Racism: Why are Black and Brown Communities Disproportionately Exposed to Pollution?



What is Environmental Racism?

Environmental Racism is an international social and climate issue that affects millions of people across the world. Yet, it isn't a widely understood concept, and many people still consider it to be a myth. The official definition of environmental injustice (or environmental racism), describes it as a [“form of systemic racism](#), whereby communities of colour are disproportionately burdened with health hazards through policies and practices that force them to live in proximity to sources of toxic waste, such as sewage works, mines, landfills, power stations, major roads and

emitters of airborne particulate matter.” Other typical features of environmental racism include unsafe workplaces, or poor housing/school conditions that expose inhabitants to hazardous pollution or other conditions which have negative health consequences. Often victims of ER do not know they are being exposed to dangerous chemicals, so they do not notice the physical symptoms until irreversible damage has been done, such as developing cancer. Environmental racism is a health issue that results in unnecessary sickness and death every year, most often in children. It can be categorized as a form of racism as it demonstrates a *significantly lower* regard for the health of racial minorities than for white people.

Environmental racism (ER) is most commonly found in communities where there is a large minority population, or people who are mainly poor. This phenomenon is most common in America because of the large wealth gap between white people and ethnic minorities. The cultural hangover of [segregation](#) has allowed inner city areas in the US to remain poor and black, circled by white suburban areas which are financially stable, cleaner and safer. Wealth disparity in the United States is staggering - [in 2018, millionaires made up 3% of the population, and yet the majority of federal officials were already millionaires when they entered office.](#) America is governed by the wealthy, and official bodies are mostly white and male.

Significantly, race is the most significant factor influencing the likelihood of residing near hazardous waste sites and other dangerous industrial facilities. Dr Robert Bullard’s [landmark 2007 study](#) found, that not only were African American children five times more likely to develop health problems because of proximity to waste, but even middle-class black Americans (making \$50-60,000 a year) were more likely to live in polluted areas than poorer white Americans (making under \$10,000 a year). This is not an exclusively American problem either – [black British children are also exposed to 30% more air pollution than white children](#), especially in bigger cities like London and Manchester where there are larger minority populations.

The environmental justice movement in America has a long and interesting history. It began with the [United Farm Workers strike in the 1960s](#), when the mostly Hispanic employees protested against worker illnesses that were caused by exposure to pesticides. The movement gained recognition in 1982, after mass protests in Warren County, North Carolina, a predominantly black area, in which the local government had forced the creation of a dangerous landfill site, against the wishes of the local population. The injustice in Warren County brought the issue to the attention of the national press, and even the president, and yet there has never been any

substantial or effective legislation passed to specifically combat environmental injustice issues like this one. Donald Trump's administration shrank the powers and funding of the Environmental Protection Agency, making government intervention in cases of ER even more unlikely. The [EPA has an Office of Civil Rights](#) which exists to investigate accusations of discrimination, and to protect these vulnerable communities; they have had a multitude of complaints over the last 22 years, but have never made a single conviction of environmental racism. For most environmentalists, this is rightly considered a disgrace, and for victims of ER, it means justice remains unlikely.

A [NAACP report in 2012](#) examined the location of the 378 coal-fired power stations in the US - the 12 most problematic plants have two million Americans living within a three-mile radius. These residents are 76% African American and have an average yearly income of \$14,000. And they are ultimately far more likely to get sick and die as a result of living close to one of those power stations. This is grossly unfair, and combined with the [disproportionate rates of death from COVID-19 and police brutality](#) for black and brown people in America, this adds up to a system of oppression that cannot be ignored any longer by the mainstream climate movement. Nor should it be ignored by the federal government. In June of last year, the speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, referenced the environmental justice movement, and it was integrated into the campaign policies of the new president, Joe Biden. This suggests that the subject will be on the political agenda for the new administration, meaning we may finally see the issue addressed over the next few years.

Environmental Racism and Global Health

First, I want to give some international examples of environmental racism, as the symptoms of climate change are allowing the repercussions of unsustainable capitalism to become more visible across the world. The rise of [globalization](#) after the industrialisation of Western society has made it possible for vast quantities of dangerous waste to be taken from Europe and America and dumped into the developing world, where there is less regulation to prevent the dangerous side effects of chemical exposure. [In 2014, 44 million tonnes of electronic waste was produced](#) internationally, and [80% of this waste is exported to Asia every year](#). What is left is shipped to Africa, India, and Mexico. This can have dangerous health consequences. The town of [Guiyu in China](#) receives large quantities of electronic waste from the West; mostly old computers, car batteries, refrigerators, and televisions. Most of the people working in the

e-waste industry here are extremely poor migrants from other parts of China, and are uneducated as to the dangers they are being exposed to by the decaying gadgets. The heaps of discarded material release heavy metals like lead into the water supply, which causes the most serious consequence of environmental racism across the world: [lead poisoning](#).

Lead is fatal in high doses, but even in small quantities, it can cause irreversible physical and mental symptoms, especially in children. This can include brain damage, ADHD, and a damaged IQ, as well as genetic defects like anencephaly, where babies are born with large parts of their brain missing. In Guiyu, circuit boards and copper wires are burned, or washed with acid, releasing toxic ashes into the water and soil, which in turn poisons the region's agriculture, including the rice, which is the most important food source. The fumes can cause skin and eye diseases, as well as numerous cancers. [Children living in Guiyu were found to have dangerously high levels of lead in their blood](#). This was shown to be causing stunted brain and nervous system development. Most of these children will be affected for life, and many will remain working in the e-waste sector long-term as safer jobs remain unavailable to them. Their own children, in turn, will spend their lives suffering the consequences of lead poisoning.

Old [car batteries](#) are exported in huge quantities to Africa, Vietnam, and Mexico, causing similar health repercussions. [Approximately 500,000 used electronic devices](#) are shipped to Nigeria every month by Western businesses, often illegally marked as salvageable to trick the recipients into accepting parts that should be discarded. Up to 100,000 people work in this sector in Nigeria alone, and by allowing this to happen, the companies responsible are placing a *directly lower* value on the health of these people than those in affluent countries. They ship the batteries abroad, knowing that they are most likely poisoning the individuals who are handling them. In parts of Senegal, the dirt is laced heavily with lead that has oozed out of used car batteries that have been buried underground. In the early 2000s, the price of lead rose to such an extent that [residents began to dig up the soil](#) and resell the buried metal. It took 18 children to die before the authorities investigated and discovered that the cause was lead poisoning. Last year, [500 people in southern India were made unwell by potential heavy metal poisoning](#), after the water supply was contaminated by open drains and landfill sites.

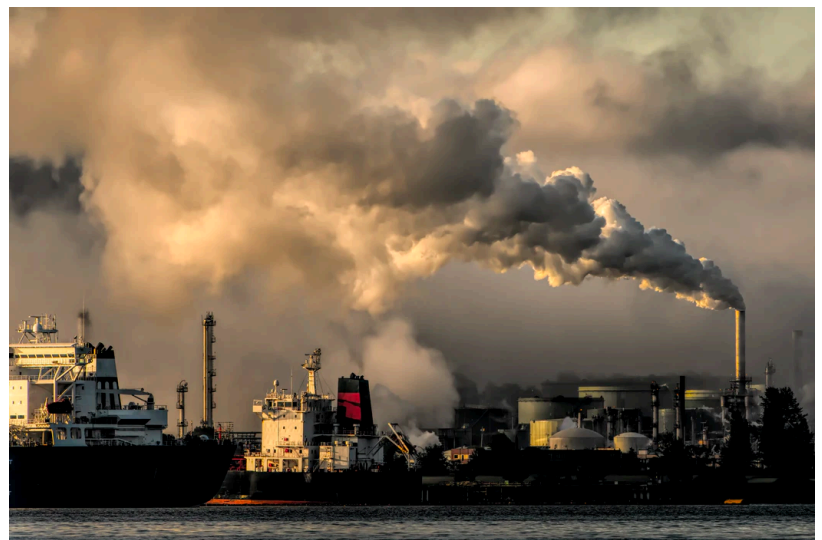
The shipping of mislabelled e-waste is [illegal](#), and yet it happens constantly, often going unreported. In the UK, these materials can safely be recycled, and still, corporations choose to send them to developing countries because this is a cheaper option. This system is essential to

the continuation of Western capitalism—by outsourcing the unsightly consequences of industry to countries deemed "already dirty," we can indulge in reckless consumerism without guilt. Out of sight, out of mind. Can there be any clearer demonstration of environmental racism?

The exportation of dangerous waste is not the only example of ER on an international scale. The structures associated with polluting industry (power stations for example) are typically built close to low-income or racial minority communities. This phenomenon can be found in every country on the planet. In 1981, the blood of the children from the town of Torreon in Northern Mexico was tested for heavy metals due to anxiety over their proximity to the Met-Mex Penoles lead smelter, the largest smelter in Latin America and the fourth largest in the world. The dust from the factory (which contained lead arsenic and cadmium) was blowing into the homes of families downwind of the plant for decades. They were entitled to no legal protection and the results of years of exposure were devastating for the community. In this case, years later when the children of the town were retested and the extent of their poisoning became clear, protests brought national attention to the cause and some attempts were made to [provide justice through community investment and compensation](#). Steps were taken to ensure that this wouldn't happen again in Mexico, but for many other victims of ER, justice remains unlikely.

In 2008, a [manganese factory in China poisoned 1,300 children](#) - the plant was within 500m of two schools and a nursery, in which 60-70% of the

students had dangerous levels of lead in their bloodstream. A similar event occurred in Nigeria in 2010 when [poisoning from gold extraction killed 111 children](#). Lead smelting in Dong Mai, Vietnam, caused [500 people to exhibit chronic symptoms](#), including 25 children experiencing brain damage. In 2015, the World Health Organisation estimated around 950 people had been inhaling particles of lead dust in the villages surrounding the plant. Just one year ago, an [LG Polymers factory](#) in Southern India experienced a chemical leak that killed 11 people, and hospitalised hundreds more. In 2010, the people of Mexico became the victims of environmental



racism after the [Deepwater Horizon oil](#) spill, which also had a devastating effect on the natural environment. British Petroleum paid generous compensation in an attempt to undo the damage they caused to both the American fishing businesses and the ocean. But they also falsely claimed that the oil had never reached Mexico, and have compensated them for the contamination of their waters and the loss of fish stocks, which huge numbers of Mexicans rely on for their livelihood. Clearly, BP did not consider the people of Mexico as deserving of remuneration as the more powerful parties they did compensate, and they were left to suffer the consequences of reckless industry.

Environmental Racism in the United States; Pollution, Industry, and Agriculture

The United States has a long history of exploiting its own people through environmental racism, which can be partially attributed to its demographically segregated geography. Inner-city communities tend to be crowded, poor, polluted, and mainly black and Hispanic, while suburban areas, accessible to only those with higher incomes, remain mostly white. Corporations, local governments, and industry have less regard for the health of poor black citizens than they do for suburban white ones, who are more likely to have the wealth and political influence to fight back against environmental hazards and protect their communities from exploitation. The primary effect of this injustice is the prevalence of lead poisoning in black communities, especially in children. It is unlikely that children in white communities could be poisoned with no legal repercussions from the authorities in 21st-century America. This is especially true given that lead is a neurotoxin that can be linked to reduced IQ, ADHD, autism, academic failure, and criminality - features that racist attitudes already associate with ethnic minorities and low-income communities.

Documented examples of environmental injustice are extensive, but perhaps the most famous case study is [Louisiana's "Cancer Alley," which follows 85 miles of the Mississippi River](#) between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Home to 150 petrochemical companies and 17 oil refineries, it is the most polluted area of the US and populated by mostly black people, the descendants of the free slaves that settled here after the American Civil War. The extensive pollution of the air, water, and soil has all but decimated the surrounding cities and led to widespread cancer outbreaks and death. In a town called [Mossville, 91% of residents experienced health problems related to the surrounding industry](#). The famous and controversial [Denka Performance Elastomer plant](#), on the banks of the river, has caused the locals' chances

of contracting cancer to increase 800 times; the area is more or less unlivable, but many residents cannot afford to relocate or do not want to abandon their cultural home. [Baton Rouge's black](#) neighborhood is exposed to the City's North Wastewater treatment plant, and in 2009 the residents were made sick by the plague of flies that descended on them, infected by the raw sewage at the plant. In the heat, the smell filled the city, and the residents turned to the EPA for help, but were consistently ignored when they described the conditions they were being subjected to.

In [2015, Flint, Michigan made international headlines when it transpired that the city was poisoning its own people through the contaminated water supply for over a year](#). During the process of changing suppliers, the city collected water from the Flint River, which was polluted by industry and agriculture (residents of Flint have been taught not to eat fish from the river because of the contamination). The water had not been treated adequately and looked brown or orange, with particles floating in it. [The city's 100,000 mainly black residents were losing hair and gaining rashes from showering in the water](#), and it had a bad smell and taste because it contained corroded iron, as well as dangerous E-coli and Legionella bacteria. It took the city officials 18 months to accept that anything was wrong with the water, which they insisted was safe to drink. During this time [between 6 and 12,000 children were exposed to lead poisoning, and eventually, 12 citizens were killed by legionnaires' disease from ingesting the bacteria](#). State health authorities launched a cover-up operation that attempted to obstruct the official investigation into the legionella outbreak, including stopping scientists from looking into the deaths that could have been a result of the water switch. The investigation concluded that the death toll from the poisoning was most likely significantly higher than 12, and [manslaughter charges were brought against the officials](#) who withheld information from the public. Many more residents became unwell and the poisoning led to fertility problems in women and a [58% increase in fetal deaths](#). The Michigan Civil Rights Commission concluded that the poisoning and slow response from authorities showed a clear disregard for black lives, which stemmed from systematic racism - affirming that this would never have happened in a mostly white community.

Communities of colour are more likely to live close to power stations, oil refineries, lead smelters, landfill sites, sewage works, steel mills, incinerators, and gas wells, all of which are sources of dangerous chemical waste. This is because industrial businesses, city authorities, and oil companies *actively choose* to place these facilities near areas that are mostly

low-income, black, and Hispanic. After all, they believe these communities have less chance of successfully demanding compensation when health complications occur. Corporations take advantage of the fact that fewer people listen when black people complain. These health problems are extensive and include fertility issues and increased risk of low birth weight in childbirth, as well as increased risk of lung problems, heart disease, and strokes. This was established in Richmond, California, after residents who had lived for decades amid the toxic emissions from the Standard Oil Chevron refinery began experiencing severe health consequences, particularly within the African American community.

Industrial [agriculture is one of the biggest sources of pollution in the US](#). The spraying of pesticides releases hydrogen sulfide and has been linked to respiratory disease. In [North Carolina, the pig farming industry](#) (which is located near mostly poor and black communities) has allowed a buildup of manure from around two million animals. This soaks into the soil, creating groundwater nitrates which cause genetic heart defects in babies. The farmers spray the manure onto the crops as fertilizer, filling the air and water with small fecal particles, and poisoning the Duplin County residents who are more likely to die of kidney or respiratory disease as a result. They have been petitioning the EPA for decades to no avail. In [Florida, thick layers of black soot](#) cover the homes of the mostly black Glades residents of Pahokee, from sugar field burning as part of the sugar agriculture industry. They refer to it as the “black snow” that falls every October.

The proximity of industry is also an ER problem in Detroit, where the most polluted region is 71% black, and the [local Marathon tank farm/oil refinery repeatedly breaks state emissions guidelines](#) so that you can often see the colour of the sky change. In the [Manchester and Harrisburg areas of Houston](#), which are 98% Hispanic, a local school was forced to close because of the dangerous levels of lead in the students’ blood. Every year the surrounding oil refineries and chemical/sewage plants release up to [484,000 pounds of toxic waste](#), leading the residents to question why all of Houston’s polluting industry had been built directly in their backyard. In Chicago just last year, [the city’s car and metal shredding business \(owned by General Iron\)](#) was moved from the white Lincoln Park area to the already polluted, mostly black East Side, which sparked an inquiry and unsuccessful legal challenges.

In every city in the US, from South Philadelphia, where black people make up [60% of the population and 125 people die unnecessarily because of air pollution each year](#), to LA, black

people breathe dirtier air than their white neighbors because someone chose for them to do so. It was the choice of somebody to place the [Dakota Access Pipeline \(a 1,200-mile-long crude oil pipe\)](#) across the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, risking contamination of the tribe's water supply (Lake Oahe) and endangering their cultural heritage. The pipeline is a controversial topic worldwide and a poster picture for the environmental justice movement; it was given the go-ahead by Trump in 2016, but at the beginning of this year, the new president signed an executive order to halt construction. Even though the project has been dogged by legal challenges, it is clear to protestors that the oil industry sees the cultural home of the Sioux tribe as theirs for the taking and the people who live there as expendable.

How Does the EPA Contribute to Environmental Racism?

The [industrialisation of the developed world](#) has presented us with new problems, like what to



do with the hazardous waste that is produced by factories, oil refineries, and power stations. In the 20th century, governments have had to determine the most effective method for disposing of nuclear waste. The goal has always been to do this discreetly and at the lowest cost, with the cheapest method being to dump it on the vulnerable and voiceless, as they are the least likely to resist. In Warren County,

North Carolina, the home of the environmental justice movement, the local authorities built a landfill site near the poorest and most ethnically diverse town in the state. The landfill was designed for the dumping of a chemical called [polychlorinated biphenyl \(PCP\), and more than 6,000 truckloads of it were deposited there despite mass protests](#). The chemical is so dangerous that production of it was banned by the federal government a year later - but only after the damage had already been done to the health of the residents and the soil was left permanently saturated with PCP. These events inspired a 1987 report, written by the United Church of Christ and their Commission for Racial Justice, named [“Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States.”](#) The report concluded that race was the number one factor in the placement of a

hazardous waste facility; race was a bigger factor even than income, and the geography of an area. Living close to a landfill that contains toxic chemicals has unsurprisingly been linked to a plethora of health issues, including fertility and pregnancy issues, genetic defects in babies, and infant mortality.

That was decades ago, and yet in the 21st century, the same cultural conditions allowed for the residents of Tallassee, Alabama to be shunned by the EPA for 14 years when they made complaints of environmental racism. [The Stone's throw landfill, a dumping ground for sewage, asbestos, and other chemical waste](#), has been making the mostly black locals sick for years, as trucks full of hazardous waste drive through their town every morning to access the site. The [EPA ignored the extensive legal complaints](#) they received, and the landfill is still in operation today. It brings a lot of money to its shareholders. Of course, none of this wealth is seen by the residents of Tallassee. All of Alabama's landfills are located near low-income black and brown communities. After a [spill of over 1 billion tonnes of coal ash into the Emory River in Kingston, Tennessee](#), in 2008, the workers who were left to clean the mess developed various forms of cancer, and the Tennessee Valley Authority shipped the ash to Uniontown, Alabama, a low-income black community. The [EPA declared the ash to be non-hazardous](#) and the community was left to suffer, completely unprotected by the EPA's ineffective ER laws.

In 2016, a two-year legal battle began over plans to construct a [Class 1 hazardous waste site approximately 20 miles east of the town of Laredo](#), Texas. The project belongs to the descendant of the well-established family of Laredo, Carlos "C.Y." Benavides III, the owner of the Yugo Ranch. The Ranch was handed down to him by his grandfather. He aims to transform this ranch into the [Pescadito Environmental Resource Center \(PERC\)](#), a "Megadump" that will receive waste from across Texas, Mexico, Arizona, and other states, including industrial, municipal, and fracking waste, as well as coal ash which contains heavy metals. The ranch is close to a creek that leads to the Rio Grande, risking the contamination of Loredo's water supply, as well as air pollution and fires. Laredo is accessible from the Kansas City railway and now the train line will bring toxic chemicals to the poor, Hispanic communities living here, who already lack access to appropriate medical care and health insurance. The increased danger of respiratory illness has led to accusations of environmental racism against Benavides, but the extent of his wealth and influence over the region has made it impossible for him to be successfully challenged in court.

Native American communities continue to be exposed unfairly to large quantities of nuclear and other hazardous waste; in [Navajo New Mexico, years of uranium mining have led to an increased likelihood of lung cancer and other complications as a result of radon inhalation.](#) Energy company Holtec International has now proposed building a [high-level radioactive waste facility in southern New Mexico](#), irrespective of the wishes of the local Hispanic population, and has failed to provide any information about the project in Spanish. The [application has been rushed through by the](#) Nuclear Regulatory Commission during the COVID-19 pandemic, and there are fears that once Holtec is granted its license, New Mexico will become the designated dumping ground for all of America's nuclear waste, placing the landscape, environment, and wildlife at risk for potentially thousands of years as the waste breaks down.

Racist Housing Policy in the United States and How it Contributes to Environmental Racism.

Racial minority communities in the United States are plagued by the effects of decades of racist housing policies, and the circumstances are worsening as a result of climate change and global heating. Severe storms, which are likely to become more frequent every year that the planet gets warmer, [disproportionately impact black and brown people.](#) [Hurricane Katrina](#) is a perfect example of how the vulnerable can be left completely unprotected by the authorities when faced with ecological disaster. The quality of housing and public services in minority communities is notoriously poor, the streets are dirtier and the residents have less access to parks and green spaces. There are reports of mostly black [schools in Detroit being so heavily infested with cockroaches, rats, and mold](#) that teachers went on strike in 2016 to protest the conditions, claiming that schools in white areas would never remain open if they were this decrepit and dirty. The prevalence of lead poisoning in low-income black and brown children can be linked to living in poorly maintained and cheap, unsafe housing with remnants of lead paint; in [Baltimore for example, there are three times the national average cases \(around 65,000 children over 20 years\) of lead poisoning](#) because of the quality of buildings in poor areas like Sandtown-Winchester. [Half a million children are poisoned every year in America](#), by a substance that has been linked to ADHD and other cognitive issues like aggression and reduced impulse control, which are not always connected by doctors to lead poisoning. As well as lead poisoning, black and brown children are significantly more likely to contract asthma because they are exposed to [38% more nitrogen dioxide](#) than white children, as they are more likely to live near busy roads. [Between 2001 and 2009 there was a 50% increase in cases of asthma in black children, leaving the prevalence of the condition 47% higher than in white](#)

[children](#). The South Bronx, which is one of the most ethnically diverse parts of New York City, has recently been nicknamed “asthma alley” because in some neighborhoods [20% of children have asthma](#); in New York's wealthy white communities, the air is considerably cleaner. This is a physical disadvantage that can affect a child's entire life, entirely because of which Zip code they were born in. The concentration of low-income black communities into cheap, inner city housing has always allowed environmental injustice to prevail against the most vulnerable in society.

Scientists have recently established that extreme heat is one of the most seriously dangerous side effects of global warming, and it is also a big part of America's systemic environmental racism. [Extreme heat is said to kill hundreds in the US](#) every year, and every year heatwaves are more common and severe, along with other extreme weather events. In [Los Angeles](#), “[deadly urban heat waves](#)” are more common in African American neighborhoods, where households are less likely to be able to afford air conditioning and have less access to public services. More concrete and less green spaces in these communities, which are often more crowded, trap the heat in the same way they trap pollution, creating urban “heat islands,” which can be [up to 5.5 degrees Celsius warmer than white areas](#). Interestingly, urban heat islands have been linked to increased crime rates and police brutality, another example of how various forms of racism operate collectively in an institutionalized manner. To fight environmental racism, you have to attack the structure of systemic racism as a whole.

The health consequences of being exposed to raw sewage include [hookworm](#), which enters the body through contaminated soil and can live inside the intestine for years. This causes physical weakness, weight loss, anemia, and even respiratory problems. It can also impact cognitive abilities, like lead poisoning. The illnesses that black and brown children are exposed to don't just have physical consequences, they also cause impaired mental function and slow development. The water systems of 21st-century America are outdated to the point of disuse. During the coronavirus lockdown of March 2020, the [Guardian UK led an investigation into racist water shutoffs](#). Almost 500,000 households nationwide do not have access to piped water, and black households are 35% more likely to live without piped water than white households. Living without running water or an effective and clean sewage system is an indignity that nobody should have to suffer in the 21st century.

How Can We Find Solutions to Environmental Injustice?

One way that racial justice campaigners plan to address economic inequality is through the process of reparations. Black people in America would simply get compensation in recognition of the hardships and injustices they have suffered since slavery, in an effort to even the playing field. It is unlikely that reparations will be passed through the American Congress any time soon, so how else can the problems of environmental racism be addressed? In a [previous Purple Turtle article](#), we analysed the devastating environmental policies of former President Trump, including his [reformation of the EPA, and the rollback of over 100 new laws designed to protect the Earth from climate change](#). With the election of President Joseph R. Biden Jr, we foresaw progress for the US because he made clear in his campaign that he planned to reverse Trump's policies and reinstate America as a leader in the fight against global warming. This includes making a commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and a slow shift to renewable energy sources, which will reduce the pollution associated with fossil fuels. So far he has [reversed many of Trump's executive orders](#), but is yet to attempt to pass actual legislation, which will be more complex as he will need his opponents in Congress to support him.

To combat environmental racism, Biden has nominated [Michael Regan](#), who is black, to run the EPA, in recognition of the fact that representation in politics is crucial to fighting injustice. He intends to staff the agency with individuals committed to rebuilding trust with vulnerable communities that perceive the government as indifferent to their suffering. The new Vice-president Kamala Harris previously sponsored legislation that [would create a legal definition to identify the low-income black communities](#) that are the targets of environmental racism, allowing them to sue the government if they are exposed to too much pollution, finally creating a solid legal precedent for this kind of case. This means the victims of environmental racism will be able to demand compensation and get justice when their health is put at risk. Biden also needs to concentrate on forming government policy to attack systemic racism in every form, with social and economic reorientation. From [2021, 40% of federal climate investments will go towards reducing pollution in low-income communities](#), and the new White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council will keep environmental justice at the forefront of government policy, as well as giving victims of racism a voice in the government's decisions. Another good policy idea would involve extra taxation on companies that create a lot of pollution, the profits from this can be directed specifically toward low-income communities. The money could be used to improve air quality, build safety standards, provide urban green spaces, solar panels, and better public services, like zero-emissions transport to reduce the

number of cars on the road. America could recover from its current recession by investing in green energy, providing high-paying jobs, and enforcing race quotas.

How Can We Tackle Environmental Racism on a Global Scale?

Outside of America, what can we do about ER on an international scale? Across the world, humans are dealing with more hurricanes, record rainfall, and the most aggressive wildfires in memory. [The wealthiest 10% of humans are responsible for more than half of carbon dioxide emissions, while the poorest half of the planet create only 10% of global warming.](#) Yet the poorest half are those who are consistently suffering, and who will contribute to the [mass climate migration](#) which will occur as a result of rising sea levels. The UN estimates that there will be 250 million climate refugees by 2050 as seawater damages the soil and crops, causing deprivation and food shortages and forcing people to flee to overpopulated inland cities . Environmental organizations must collaborate across borders and partner with groups like the



UN and the EU to stop wealthy nations from exploiting the developing world by outsourcing production, polluting natural landscapes, and subjecting local communities to unfair wages. As international corporations are the main driving force of climate change, we need government legislated reform and more diversity in higher-paid roles. Black and brown people need to have more control and influence. Green organisations can lobby for the introduction of sustainable practices such as [Community benefit agreements](#), which protect residents who live near industry and prevent instances of environmental racism before they occur. Companies can educate their employees on how racism intersects with pollution and climate change, as well as lobbying politicians to support climate policy rather than oppose it. Environmental racism has caused an enormity of suffering across our planet, and it is not something that can be addressed quickly or easily. However, once we address the problem by supporting the victims of pollution and global warming and holding the perpetrators accountable, we can start to bring justice to those who deserve it.