

— Environmental Racism

TedTalks: Eco-Edition
Hosted by Leah Courtney

Discussion Guidelines

- Listen respectfully and do not interrupt others
- Listen with intent of understanding others' views
- When discussing experiences or feelings, use "I" statements (e.g. I feel...)
 - Do not share others' experiences
- Allow everyone to have the chance to speak
- Respect others' decision to not participate - do not volunteer someone to speak
- Criticize ideas, not people
- This is a brave space
- If you learn something new, that's great! It's better to learn now than not at all
- When watching the video please turn off your camera to protect the zoom bandwidth but turn it back on after!

Definitions

Environmental Racism:

“The institutional rules, regulations, policies or government and/or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for locally undesirable land uses and lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws, resulting in communities being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous waste based upon race.”

Environmental Justice:

The response to environmental racism.

The movement “promotes environmental, economic and social justice by recognizing the direct link between economic, environmental and health issues and demanding a safe, clean community and workplace environment.”

According to “[greenaction.org](https://www.greenaction.org/)”

Climate Justice can't happen without Racial Justice

Hosted by David Lammy - the first Black MP to hold the Justice post in British Parliament, either in government or opposition.

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_lammy_climate_justice_can_t_happen_without_racial_justice#t-557128

Intersectionality

Definition:

“ the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or **intersect** especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups”

Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced this theory that when it comes to how inequalities persist, race, gender, and other identities are best understood as overlapping rather than isolated.

According to merriam-webster.com

Statistics

Black Americans are exposed to 56% more pollution than they cause while White Americans are exposed to 17% less air pollution than they produce.

Black Americans are more likely to suffer from respiratory diseases like asthma.

Annual CO₂ emissions per head in the U.S is 16.5 metric tons.

Annual CO₂ emissions per head in Guyana is 2.6 metric tons.

Percentage of minorities in leadership positions in U.S. environmental organizations is less than 12%.

What was the most striking aspect of the video? Did anything stand out to you as particularly upsetting, jarring, or inspiring?

5th and Hill

A 3.5 acre lot at 5th Street and Hill Street in Champaign, IL that from 1887 - 1953 it was a manufactured gas plant site.

Gas was manufactured by heating coal, followed by a process to remove coal tar and other impurities. These products were left on site until the closing of the plant.

The chemical compounds in coal tar, BTEX, move through the soil and are associated with various health problems. Illinois Power and Ameren found these compounds have contaminated soil and shallow groundwater in and around the property.

Multiple clean ups have taken place starting in 2009 but Champaign County Health Care Consumers are still fighting for adequate clean up.

Was this an issue you knew about? What is your reaction to learning about it now?

According to healthcareconsumers.org

Discussion Questions

- At the beginning of the video, Lammy mentions that growing up, “climate change was the last thing on [his] mind.” In what way is it a privilege to be able to consider climate change as a global issue? Is it a privilege to consider climate change a major issue or threat? If so, should everyone regardless of their privilege prioritize climate issues? Should climate change concern everyone equally?
- After explaining various statistics, Lammy says, “it gives a whole new meaning to the Black Lives Matter slogan, ‘I can’t breathe’”. How does this make you feel? Do you think this is good or bad?
- Do you feel there is a privilege in being able to look at issues separately?
- At on point, Lammy says, “the Black Lives Matter movement needs to wake up to climate injustice”. What are your thoughts on this? Whose responsibility is it to “wake up” to these injustices?
- What might be potential solutions to expose less people, or at lower rates, of these harmful toxins?
- How might greenwashing (“trendy” sustainability initiatives) emphasize inequalities? What are some examples of this?

Intersectional Environmentalism

“Intersectional Environmentalism is an inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for both the protection of people and the planet.”

Leah Thomas

Founded in May 2020 after a viral Instagram post, intersectional environmentalism was founded by four social activists and environmentalists that are committed to amplifying the voices of underserved communities, preserve cultures, and protect the planet.

According to
intersectionalenvironmentalist.com

Resources

- Intersectional Environmentalism
 - <https://www.intersectionalenvironmentalist.com>
- News article about environmental impact on library
 - <https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/news/local/volusia/2021/01/26/fema-hurricane-irma-daytona-beach-city-island-library/6679283002/>
- Black Environment Network
 - http://www.ben-network.org.uk/about_ben/intro.asp
- Definitions from GreenAction
 - <http://greenaction.org/what-is-environmental-justice/>
- Fifth and Hill Page
 - <https://www.healthcareconsumers.org/5th-hill-fact-sheet/>