

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE + CHICAGO CASE STUDY

Presented by
Adelina Avalos

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin today by recognizing and acknowledging that we are on the lands of multiple Native Nations. These lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal; and these lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution for the past 150 years. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgment and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward to a more just world.

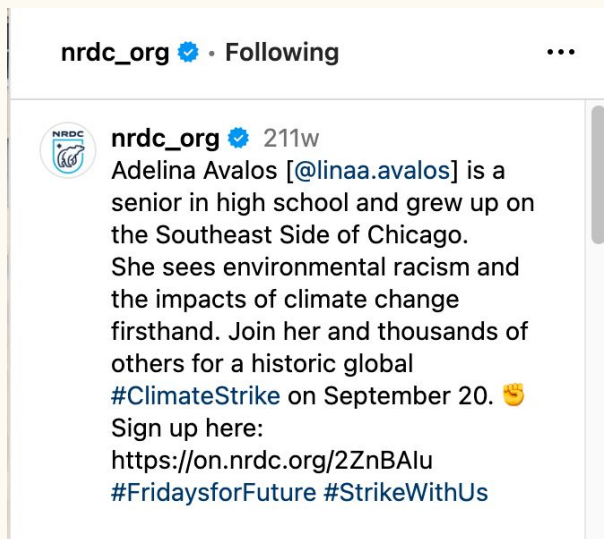
Who am I?

- Adelina Avalos, she/her
- Senior here at **UIUC**!
- Agriculture and Consumer Economics major with concentration in **Environmental Economics and Policy**
- **Latino/a Studies** Minor
- iSEE **Greener Campus Intern**
- Sister of **Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Inc.**



My Environmental Justice Journey:

- Began as the *state lead* of **IL Youth Climate Strike** in 2019, ➡ held multiple protests that brought out over 10,000 people across the state (including a strike in **Champaign!**)
- Continuing into 2020, I began to get involved with the **Southeast Youth Alliance (SYA)** as an *organizer*, the **Sierra Club** as a *Ready For 100 Leader* and the **National Resource Defense Council (NRDC)** as a *Youth Ambassador*.





My Environmental Justice Journey Cont.:

- Alongside SYA and NRDC, I became more involved with **The People's Lobby (TPL)**. I consider TPL my “political home.”
- Staying with TPL, I have just wrapped up my third summer working as a full-time staff member. I have held multiple roles, but the most prominent have been **Environmental Justice Organizing Intern** and **Fundraising/Membership Coordinator**



Other Notable EJ-related things:

I have led various EJ workshops, and spoke about EJ at some super cool places! Such as:


- **National Public Radio (NPR)** on Youth Climate Strike, *April 2019*
- **UNICEF** Panel on Youth Climate Activists, *October 2021*
- **The Adler Planetarium for NASA's** “Climate Change & Me”, *July 2023*
- ...and more! :)






Our Goals

Today, we will:

- Map the terrain. Identify what it means to be an environmental justice advocate.
 - Discover and discuss our own core values and ideas.
 - Envision solutions that could help us achieve environmental justice.
- 

Today, we won't:

- Get caught up political details.
 - Solve environmental racism.
 - Learn everything!
- 

“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.”

–Dolores Huerta, notable labor organizer



Agenda

- Welcome + Background on me (8 mins)
- Agenda (2 mins)
- “Are Natural Disasters Actually Natural?: Crash Course Climate & Energy #9” (15 mins)
- Environmental Justice at a Local Level - Chicago’s Southeast Side (5 mins)
- Discussion (25 mins)
- Next Steps (5 mins)

You are here.



CLIMATE JUSTICE

MY PERSONAL DEFINITION + EXPLANATION

Environmental Justice is the principle that no matter how much money you make or the identities you hold, environmental disasters should not impact one person more than another!

This relates to climate change because climate change causes an uptick in extreme weather events such as tsunamis and hurricanes to happen, which often hit disadvantaged people a lot harder.

For example, when a hurricane touches land, who has the money to put up the necessary protective equipment, who doesn't?

Environmental Justice looks like...

**Community
Organizing!**

**Centering Black
Indigenous
People of Color
Rights!**

**Working in
solidarity with
other political
movements to
achieve
liberation!**

**“People and
planet, always
over profit”**

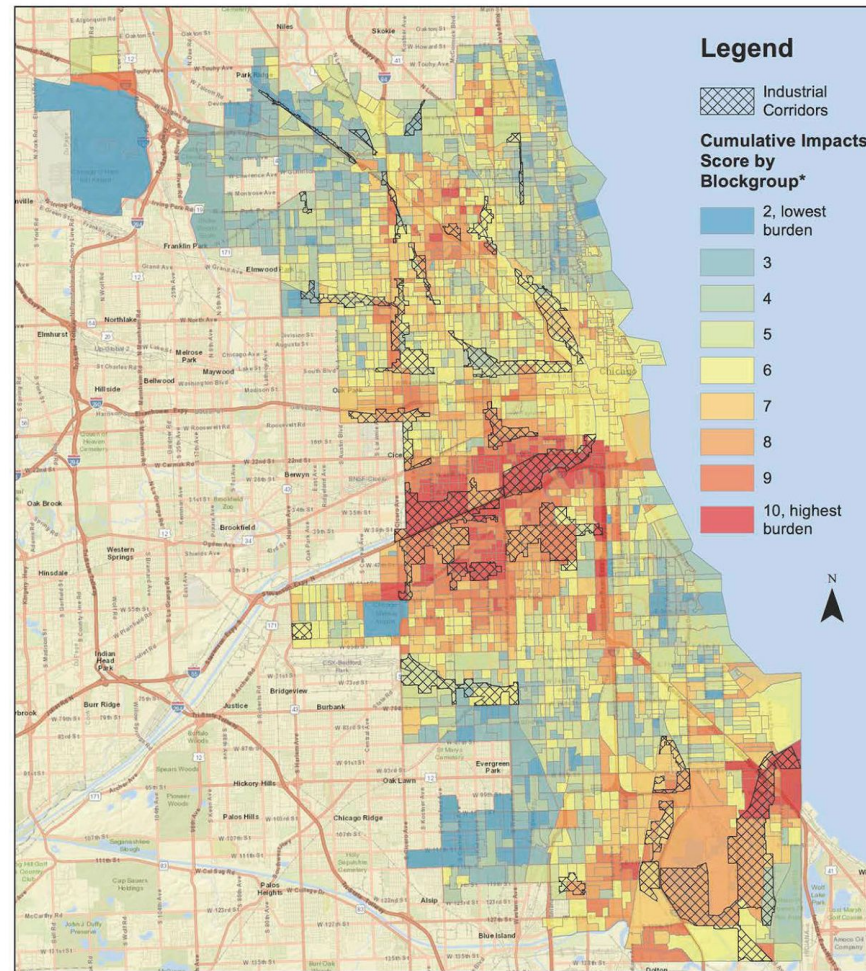


The Southeast Side of Chicago has been a “sacrifice zone” for years



- The Koch brothers & other industrial manufacturing companies have used the Southeast Side as a dumping ground for petroleum coke.
- With the discovery of toxic levels of manganese from the SH Bell facility in the air and soil, community members are in even more imminent danger.
- This is, unfortunately, one of many polluters that have operations set up in the Southeast Side of Chicago.

Cumulative Burden of Environmental Exposures & Population Vulnerability in Chicago



HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

- ❑ **Governmental Policy failure, community members left in the dark about polluters in their neighborhoods**
- ❑ **Inadequate monitoring and inspections**
- ❑ **Little investment into health-based research on residential exposure and biomarkers**
- ❑ **Zoning Policy failure, there are often zoning regulations that favors corporate interests over environmental justice and community safety**

Scrap metal recycler General Iron reaches deal to vacate North Side site

The company will close by end of 2020 and start new operations on the Southeast Side.

By David Roeder | @RoederDavid | Sep 11, 2019, 6:59pm CDT



[schedule](#) [watch](#) [▼](#) [programs](#) [events](#) [kids](#) [about](#) [support](#)

NEWS

[MAIN](#) [VIDEO](#) [ARCHIVE](#) [SPONSORS](#) [ABOUT](#)

[Arts & Entertainment](#) [Business](#) [Crime & Law](#) [Education](#) [Health](#) [Politics](#) [Sci](#)

POLITICS

General Iron Deal Spurs Debate About Land Use, Air Quality

Paris Schutz | September 16, 2019 8:38 pm



[▶ WATCH VIDEOS](#)

SHARE

TWEET

EMAIL

I-TEAM

Filtering community anger: A look inside controversial Lincoln Park scrap recycler General Iron

After a City Council hearing, despite community concerns, General Iron was given the go-ahead on its move from Lincoln Park to a vacant lot adjacent to a high school in East Side.

Community organizers in the southeast side of Chicago successfully stopped General Iron from relocating in 2021! Environmental Justice wins like this happen across the country everyday!

General Iron Chicago: Activists claim victory after scrapyard's move to Southeast Side halted



By [Sarah Schulte](#) via Monday, May 10, 2021

Fourth person joins hunger strike to protest General Iron

Several elected officials voice support for Southeast Side protesters as the demonstration marks a fifth day.

By Brett Chase | Feb 8, 2021, 3:56pm CST




SOUTH CHICAGO, EAST SIDE

After Rejecting Claims Of Environmental Racism, City Moves To Settle Civil Rights Complaint With Feds



Discussion Questions:

- Do you see environmental justice problems in your daily life? What are they?
 - Envision your perfect community. What does it look like? How can Environmental Justice get us to this perfect community?
 - Does this social movement remind you of any other social movement? If so, what are some similarities and differences?
 - Did you learn anything that will stick with you today? What was it and why?
- 

Next Steps!



Instagram Accounts to Follow:

- @indigenouspeoples movement
- @lvejo20
- @il_gnd
- @nrdc_org



Books to Read:

- *As Long as Grass Grows* by Dina Gilio-Whitaker
- *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* by Naomi Klein



Documentaries to watch:

- "There's Something In The Water" (2019)
- "Remothering the Land" (2021)



Thank you!

Please email adelinaavalos12@gmail.com with any questions or
if you would like to chat more!