ELI Summer School: Environmental Justice

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Overview

• Background - Miami
• EJ in Chicago
• Coalition Building
  • Miami
  • Coal Ash Pollution in IL
  • Air Quality Chicago
  • #StopGeneralIron #DenythePermit

• Cumulative Impacts Analysis
Community Lawyering

- Uses legal advocacy to build the power of communities to challenge and eradicate these systems of inequality
- Tacticians in the struggle for change → not saviors or gatekeepers
- Aims to transfer knowledge and skills to organizers and clients
- Expand the collective knowledge base of client orgs

Source: Community Justice Project
Environmental Justice in Miami

Toiling in the Soil
Contaminants were found in the ground at seven Miami parks about two years ago. Three have been treated and reopened. Planning or remediation continues at the other four.
2005

Source Google Earth – Environmental Justice Clinic – UM Law
2016

Source Google Earth – Environmental Justice Clinic – UM Law
HOLC Map of Miami

Source: Mapping Inequality Project
Working towards Environmental Justice in the Midwest

Source: NBC News and NRDC
Cumulative Impacts

Environmental Characteristics
• Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM2.5)
• Ozone
• Diesel Particulate Matter
• Air Toxics Respiratory Hazard Index
• Air Toxics Cancer Risk
• Lead Paint Indicator
• Traffic Proximity
• Proximity to Superfund (National Priority List) Sites
• Proximity to Risk Management Plan Facilities
• Proximity to Treatment Storage Disposal Facilities
• Wastewater Discharge Indicator

Sociodemographic
• Low income
• “Minority” percentage
• Less than high school education
• Linguistic isolation
• Children under age 5
• Adults over age 64

Others
• Varies by state
• E.g. MD includes myocardial infarction & low birth rate infants; MI - blood lead levels
Chicago Redlined

Source: Mapping Inequality Project
Air Quality Chicago Project
Air Quality & Health Across Chicago

Other + Health + Social Factors
- Asthma prevalence
- COPD prevalence
- Coronary Heart Disease prevalence
- Low birth weight
- Young age
- Old age
- Unemployment
- Housing burdened low income households

Source: Chicago Dept of Public Health Air Quality & Health Report 2020
#StopGeneralIron Campaign

Photo credit – WTTW and WBBM News
Coalition Building

• Old Smokey: churches + neighborhood groups → class action lawsuit + organizing + documenting

Source Google Earth – Environmental Justice Clinic – UM Law
Coalition Building

• AQ monitoring: classrooms, youth organizations, community-based organizations, community members, bike shops, etc. → gathering data + education + solutions-building
Coalition Building

- Stop General Iron: organizers & community members (the real experts in EJ) + CBOs + big greens → public pressure & actions w/ escalation tactics (hunger strike) & speaking out at national meetings + comments on permits → other fights against additional pollution sources
Cumulative Impacts Mapping, Analyses, Legislation

- California
- New Jersey
- Chicago
- Other

Why Biden’s EPA chief stepped into a Chicago permit controversy

Michael Regan tells the Sun-Times the agency is taking a hard look at “some of the more egregious cases” where low income neighborhoods of color are environmentally burdened — like the Southeast Side.

By Brett Chase  |  May 27, 2021, 8:04pm CDT