



## JPIC: Environmental Racism

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Most of us heard of the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Did you know that over 54% of the population in Flint is Black?

“Cancer Alley”, an 85-mile stretch of land along the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, is sometimes referred to as the “frontline of environmental racism.” The area is lined with oil refineries and petrochemical plants and residents from the area are 50 times more likely to develop cancer than the average American. Those who live there are predominantly Black.

“Asthma Alley”, also known as South Bronx, New York, is 1.4% Caucasian, 57.4 % Hispanic, and 34.1% Black.

Environmental racism can exist in many forms, from citizens drinking contaminated groundwater, workplaces with unsafe health regulations, the existence of coal-fired power stations close to predominantly non-white communities, or children attending school in decaying buildings with asbestos problems. People of color are far more likely to live in areas with higher rates of air pollution, toxic waste facilities, landfills, and lead poisoning.

It was an African American civil rights leader, Benjamin Chavis, who first used and defined the term “environmental racism”. Chavis defined environmental racism as “racial discrimination in environmental policy-making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements”.

Race is more closely aligned to the nation’s commercial hazardous waste facilities than socioeconomic status. Black Americans making \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year are more likely to live in a polluted area than are white Americans making \$10,000 a year.

How are we, as Franciscans, to respond to environmental racism?

Click [here](#) to read, What is Environmental Racism.

Click [here](#) to read, 10 egregious examples of environmental racism in the US