



EARTH CARE @LEWINSVILLE

CREATION CARE and RACISM

Caring for God's creation requires us to think critically about the causes and effects of environmental degradation. In doing so, we find that environmental issues not only impact the natural world, but also people living in low-wealth communities, which often suffer a higher burden of negative environmental effects than other communities. Our country's history and current reality of systemic racism shape who is affected most by environmental harm – typically Black people, Indigenous people, and other people of color.

Dr. Benjamin Chavis, former executive director of the NAACP, is credited with coining the term “environmental racism” while referring to the correlation between toxic waste sites and racial demographics.¹ Over the years, several studies have been published on the disproportionate impact of environmental issues on certain communities of color. A few recent studies (see footnotes for sources) include the following findings:

- Non-White (and even more so, Black) people have more exposure to harmful particulate matter than the overall population.²
- Fracking disposal sites are more likely to be found in areas with 80% people of color or more than in majority White areas.³
- There is a significant nationwide racial disparity in levels of lead in the blood of Black children vs. non-Black, even after correcting for risk factors and other variables.⁴

As we consider the ways to become both better environmental stewards and better neighbors to our brothers and sisters of humanity, seek to educate yourself about how environmental harm disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in our community. For example, think about the locations of DC and Northern Virginia's landfills and incinerators (hint: they fit the trend of being located primarily in communities of color).⁵ Seeing these issues as intersectional is critical; without acknowledgement of environmental racism, our creation care practice is not whole.

1 <https://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1151&context=facpub>

2 <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304297>

3 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26794166/>

4 <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/5/1552>

5 <http://www.energyjustice.net/content/dcs-waste-and-environmental-racism>