

Environmental Racism in Louisville



Blog for Air Justice



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Louisville residents understand the strong **ties between environmental concerns in the city and concerns about structural, systemic racism**. We need look no further than Rubbertown to understand how the two are directly intertwined.

West Louisville is home to a greater proportion of Black residents than anywhere else in Louisville, and it is also home to Rubbertown, the industrial area consisting of dozens of chemical manufacturing facilities, pumping harmful chemicals into the air they breathe and the water they drink.

Environmental racism is “processes that resul[t] in minority and low-income communities facing disproportionate environmental harms and limited environmental benefits.”

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In other words, those residents most impacted by Rubbertown’s toxic air experience **environmental racism**. Environmental scholar Dorceta Taylor defines environmental racism as systems and “processes that resul[t] in minority and low-income communities facing disproportionate environmental harms and limited environmental benefits.” Her work on [toxic communities](#) exposes how segregation and zoning laws privilege wealthy communities and place hazardous facilities like Rubbertown in areas where residents face health problems on top of race and class discrimination.



Residents in West Louisville have fought for their voices to be heard in the midst of this fight for justice. Their health, and their right to a clean, natural living space have been routinely neglected by the industries which have taken over their lives, and by the city officials who have not addressed their concerns with transparency or urgency.

“Residents' health, and their right to a clean, natural living space have been routinely neglected.”

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Ignoring these concerns from community members does two things: (1) it reinforces a systemic problem in how this city historically marginalized its communities of color, and (2) it turns eyes away from the irreversible damage we are doing to our planet. Air Justice believes it is long past time for Louisville to begin making right these historic wrongs, and to stop overlooking the harm these facilities are causing.

For more information on Rubbertown and environmental racism, visit:

- Ryan Van Velzer’s [report on American Synthetic Rubber](#), the company after which “Rubbertown” is named.
- The Environmental Protection Agency’s [report on Rubbertown](#).