

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STATE-OF-THE-ART IN MISSISSIPPI

K. C. MORRISON

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

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THE CONCEPT

The most common definition of environmental justice (EJ) is equal access of members of community to the benefits of their society for the protection of health and general welfare. As such there is a heavy economic sustainability and equity component of the concept. In its earliest iteration it was associated with postindustrial societies took stock of the hazards of industrial pollutants on the sustainability and safety of the earth's resources. In short order it became apparent that the locus for the most severe environmental hazards were among the poor and least educated members of society. It is this latter concern that animates our racial reconciliation subgroup--how environmental hazards impinge upon equity for these groups.

STATUS OF MS AND ORGANIZED EFFORTS

The general status of EJ in Mississippi is that of gross disparity between whites and nonwhites. The disparity exists across the entire spectrum: the prevalence of hazards; and their interactions with health, housing, employment, *inter alia*.

Despite Mississippi's status as last on a variety of negative measures, including EJ, the subject has nevertheless received some attention from interested groups. African-Americans and other interested parties have a modest level of organization designed to attend to some of these problems. The following are some examples:

- Organizations focused on hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast
- Activists in the Mississippi industrial corridor focused on dumping of toxins
- Head Start mothers organized to reduce early childhood education disparities
- The Center for Environmental and Economic Justice in Biloxi
- Mississippi Center for Justice focused on legal protections
- The environmental Justice symposium at the University of Mississippi
- State legislative hearings

LITERATURE

We have also developed a body of literature that conceptualizes and documents disparities in EJ in this state. One sample is:

- Robert Bullard. 2000. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*. 3rd edition. Westview Press.