



The Influence of Environmental Toxicity, Inequity and Capitalism on Reproductive Health

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Executive Summary

Our health and environment are deeply interconnected. The exploitation of people, animals and nature drives the environmental crises we face today and damages the health of the most marginalized people. Reproductive health, specifically, is affected by poor environmental quality that makes it difficult for parent children in safe and healthy communities. Improving environmental conditions results in positive public health outcomes and is imperative for reproductive justice.

Many invisible environmental threats — such as toxic chemicals in the air and water and extreme temperatures — impede reproductive justice and cause harm to pregnant people, fetuses, infants and children. This report seeks to help people understand these links more clearly. It also explores the role capitalist systems play in harming reproductive and environmental health. By exposing the connections between fossil fuel extraction, plastic products, industrial agriculture, climate change, and negative reproductive health outcomes, we hope to increase awareness of these invisible threats, illuminate the role of capitalist growth models in causing these harms, and propose solutions for mitigating the ongoing reproductive injustice caused by environmental crises. Case studies within the report highlight Cancer Alley, the connection between plastic phthalates and endometriosis, agricultural toxics pollution in Indigenous communities, and redlining's effect on extreme heat exposure.

While all individuals are affected by the environmental effects of capitalism, low-wealth communities and people of color are experiencing drastically poorer reproductive health outcomes and higher rates of harm. This disparity is exacerbated by systemic inequalities that often prevent less privileged communities from accessing safer resources like organic foods, air conditioning, and comprehensive healthcare. Solutions to these problems must include social, economic, and environmental policy that regulates the wide range of factors blocking reproductive justice in the United States.

Some Examples of Solutions Include:

- Prioritizing health and healthcare for all over profit
- Corporate transparency and accountability for harm
- Testing, regulating and banning harmful chemicals
- Increasing access to safer and healthier products and foods
- Rapid transitions to community-based clean energy and reusable systems

This report hopes to demonstrate that in order to achieve reproductive justice we must overhaul extractive and exploitative systems to help people and the planet thrive.