

# THE Skanner®

Challenging People to Shape  
a Better Future Now

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# Opinion

## Environmental Racism is Real, Destructive and Deadly

For many, Earth Day stands as a reminder of everyone's role as stewards of the planet.

It's a time to reflect and to plan ahead for a cleaner and healthier environment.

Still, for many others, it's also a stark reminder about how African Americans and other minorities are often forgotten when it comes to the protection of their communities.

A March 2019 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) found that whites experience 17 percent less pollution caused by their consumption of goods and services.

On the other hand, Blacks and Hispanics experience 56 percent and 63 percent, respectively, more pollution than their consumption would generate.

Whites experience a "pollution advantage" while Blacks and Hispanics experience a "pollution burden."

On his global issues blog, Dr. Robert Bullard said the study builds on a growing body of environmental justice literature showing racial and ethnic disparities in air pollution exposure.

It shows that particulate matter exposure in the U.S. is disproportionately caused by consumption patterns of whites and inhaled by people of color minority, said Bullard, the former dean of the Barbara Jordan-Mickey Leland School of Public Affairs at Texas Southern University and the founding director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University.

Known as the father of Environmental Justice, Dr. Bullard currently serves as a Distinguished



Stacy M. Brown

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Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University.

"Our Environmental Justice movement has been trying to change this and related environmental inequities for the past four decades," Bullard said.

**"In order to do that much damage to a community, one must so thoroughly objectify and dehumanize the people in it that they become things that can be discarded and forgotten about,**

While the study takes a somewhat different approach in examining disparities in air pollution exposure by examining consumption of goods and services, "its findings once again reveal blacks and Hispanics bear a disproportionate 'pollution burden' or costs, while whites experience 'pollution advantage' or benefits," Dr. Bullard said.

"There is a clear disparity between the pollution white people cause and the pollution to which they are exposed," he said.

The study concludes that "pollution inequity is driven by differences among racial-ethnic groups in both exposure and the consumption that leads to the exposure."

There's a name for this inequity, Dr. Bullard said. "It's called environmental racism,"

he said, noting a term coined by NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Chavis, whose also known as the "Godfather of the Environmental Justice Movement," first coined and defined the term environmental racism in his 1983 work, "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States."

Chavis said environmental racism is racial discrimination in the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the presence of life threatening poisons and pollutants near

helped when politics come into play.

A recent press release from the nonprofit Earth Justice said President Donald Trump's policies continue to "chip away at the shield against environmental racism."

Particularly, the NEPA Act has come into the cross hairs of the president.

The NEPA ACT requires review of federal projects before they proceed — among other things to assess environmental, human health and socioeconomic impacts on communities.

Properly implemented, it gives every person a voice in decisions affecting the well-being of their local community, from providing comments on project design to pointing out how a project could harm clean air and water, according to Earth Justice.

It's far more than an obscure environmental statute: The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe made use of the law to fight back against the Dakota Access Pipeline project in 2017.

And today, advocates are charging that the Trump administration is violating core NEPA protections in its quest to build its border wall.

Simply put, NEPA is one of the most effective tools in the fight against environmental racism.

It is essential to ensuring that communities of color, who so often bear a disproportionate pollution burden, get a say in the decision-making processes that are most likely to affect their health, resiliency, and vitality, environmental experts said.

Read the rest of this commentary at [TheSkanner.com](http://TheSkanner.com)

## Why Are Humans Killing Whales Again?

It was announced this past weekend that Japan will resume the killing and harvesting of whales. The only qualification, which, apparently, is supposed to make the world feel better, is that this will take place in Japanese territorial waters.

One can, perhaps, argue that at a point in human history prior to the awareness that whales are the second most intelligent animals on Planet Earth, the killing of whales for oil and blubber was understandable. I am not saying that someone need agree that it was a good idea, but one could at least understand a decision made based upon profound ignorance.

There is no excuse today. We know that humans hunted whales nearly to extinction. We know that whales remain



Bill Fletcher Jr.

The Global  
African

in a fragile environment both due to their numbers and due

**"...what is the Japanese whaling industry thinking? What could they possibly be thinking that would justify moving against another species?"**

to the impact of the current and growing environmental catastrophe.

Therefore, what is the Japanese whaling industry think-

ing? What could they possibly be thinking that would justify moving against another species? We have seen the impact of the conscious human destruction of various species — the buffalo being a profound example — and we know that once a species is gone, there is no bringing it back. There is no "...oops...sorry..." moment.

fly its flag while plunging a spear into the side of a mighty whale. There need to be consequences and those consequences need to be substantial in punishing Japanese capitalism for embarking — once again, and after repeated violations of international agreements — in this direction.

The arguments have been made. The issues are clear. If Japan pursues this course, then a strategic response needs to be offered, if not by cowardly governments, then by courageous global citizens.

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is the former president of TransAfrica Forum. Follow him on Twitter, Facebook and at [www.billfletcherjr.com](http://www.billfletcherjr.com). See his recently published murder mystery *The Man Who Fell From the Sky*, from *Hardball Press*.