

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

A podcast aimed at environmental policymakers to improve environmental justice initiatives in Massachusetts.

Artist


Osasenaga Idahor (2024)

Caption

According to climate change models cited by the state’s department of environmental protection, by 2080 Massachusetts is projected to hit an average of 17-52 days every year where the thermostat will read a number above 90 degrees. Some populations are less prepared than others to face the future challenges of climate change and need aid to adapt and deal with the present and future effects of climate change. Among these vulnerable populations are environmental justice populations, which are distinguished by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection as predominantly low-income, non-English speaking for their primary language, or people of color. Although Massachusetts has demonstrated political support for addressing the climate adaptation concerns of environmental justice populations, the number of environmental justice populations statewide is growing. This podcast aims to address environmental policymakers in Massachusetts and illuminate how existing environmental justice initiatives are not as effective as they could be for these vulnerable communities.

Artist Lens

I am passionate about addressing health consequences of environmental justice because I grew up in Hyde Park, Boston, a neighborhood that has had hazardous chemicals polluting the nearby community for decades. Since being honored this past November with my role on the Environmental Protection Agency’s inaugural National Environmental Youth Advisory Council, I have been determined to use my platform to boost individual intervention and community-wide policy ideas for local community resilience. I am the host, editor, and producer of a podcast, “The Climate Doctor (no MD),” which I have hosted for two years now, and I wanted to make another podcast because I have had success using the medium to communicate to both policymakers, academics, and even lay people in environmental justice populations like Hyde Park the intersection of climate and health.



The intended target audience of the podcast episode I have produced is for relevant Massachusetts environmental policymakers. This audience includes organizations like the Boston's Mayor Office, the Environmental Protection Agency Region 1, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and generally, Massachusetts cities with a progressive environmental justice perspective. Many of these organizations are committed to environmental justice in their organizational climate action frameworks, but the impact of the stated commitment needs improvement in my opinion. I believe that effective initiatives not only address the environmental health concerns of environmental justice populations, which manifest as downstream intermediary determinants of health, but also the structural determinants of health that have oppressed these communities for decades. Since my audience was for policymakers, this podcast episode tone was slightly more serious, and my final call to action more policy-focused than what I normally do on my podcast. Because I am talking explicitly to policymakers, I also wanted to drive the point home early that these organizations have good intentions, but ultimately that the impact on these environmental justice populations is wanting. I used several statistical data and cited academic studies to collaborate my opinions, because statistics are most effective in convincing policymakers rather than stories or narratives.

Media

Audio

[Listen to Extreme Heat and Environmental Justice in Massachusetts Podcast](#)