

## 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 telling the story of air pollution in three different neighborhoods in the U.S.

## Artist

Wonuola Obasa (2022)


## Caption

Nearly 7 million deaths a year throughout the world are attributable to air pollution. In the United States, four out of ten residents live in counties with unhealthy levels of air pollution. However, this exposure to unhealthy levels does not have an equal distribution. Research has shown that minority groups such as Blacks, Asians, Latinos and low-income populations are consistently exposed to higher levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub>, which is dangerous fine particulate matter that can enter the body and cause health issues. Throughout the nation, people of color are 1.5 times more likely to live in areas with poor air quality.

Institutionalized racism, which can be thought of as racially discriminatory practices embedded in laws, policies, regulations and institutions, has contributed to creating an environment where people of color are exposed to higher levels of air pollution through practices such as redlining, decreased political power for communities of color, and the choices of locations for affordable housing development. While this is the focus of the podcast, another structural social determinant that affects is socioeconomic status as those of a lower status are more likely to live in areas of increased pollution because of historical injustices where polluting companies were allowed to move into those neighborhoods without much regulation due to decreased political power of those communities or affordable housing units are built closer to sources of pollution because of the cheapness of land. As a result, housing is a proximal determinant as where people live determines their individual differences in exposure.

## Artist Lens

I chose to do a podcast on how air pollution affects the health of minority populations because it is an issue that does not have that much public attention, and many people don't realize how the air that they are breathing in can be detrimental to their health. In the podcast, I briefly introduce the situation in the United States and then allow three characters to "tell their story," with each character representing a different minority group: Asian, Black, and Hispanic. These characters live in different neighborhoods, and different



factors contribute to poor air quality in their communities. Still, the commonality is that they all face the health effects of air pollution.

The stories told in the podcast are not the stories of real people but are very realistic and help depict what it is like in different communities throughout the nation. Using a podcast allows me to tell the message in a way that keeps the listener hooked. This structure allows different people to relate to the issue and think about how their community is reflected in or resembles the communities discussed in the podcast. I then go on to provide broad potential solutions so that people can get an idea of how they can enact change within their communities to impact the environment and health of their communities positively.

## Media

Audio

[Listen to Air Pollutions and Minority Populations](#)