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# Race & Social Justice Initiative Student Leadership Award Proposal

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I believe it is crucial for us as a community to promote public awareness about the many race and social justice issues we deal with, especially in regards to marginalized and often ignored demographic groups that deal with constant burdens society puts upon them. If I were given the opportunity to receive the Race and Social Justice Initiative Student Leadership Award, I would use the funds and resources to carry out research on the issue of Environmental Racism. By definition, Environmental Racism is when racialized marginalized groups are subject to hazardous or degraded environments, at higher rates than the racial groups that generally hold power. I believe that this issue does not receive the amount of attention and devotion it deserves. The Environmental Protection Agency has an agency entitled The Office of Civil Rights, but in its 22 years of service, it has never formally found a single case of discrimination. Meanwhile the current president in office has done everything he can to defund and delegitimize the EPA. It is more likely for African American communities to experience environmental disparities. According to Dr. Robert Bullard “Racism trumps class. Even middle-income African Americans are more likely to live in more polluted neighborhoods” Although extremely unjust, this is nothing new. The history of environmental racism in the U.S. dates back to the relegation of environmentally risky work of enslaved black people.

If I were given the opportunity to receive this award, I would research and explore the regions in South Carolina that are inundated with toxic pollution sources including large industrial animal feeding operations, open-air lagoons where volumes of animal waste are kept, storage facilities for coal-ash waste, landfills and other massive garbage disposal stations. According to *State of Racial Disparities in Charleston County, South Carolina 2000-2015*, disproportionate burdens put upon communities of color cause harmful results including negative health outcomes, stressed communities and reduction in quality of life and neighborhood

sustainability. Although environmental racism is a global issue, we can see many cases in the Charleston Metro area. In 2009, president of the Rosemont Neighborhood Association in Charleston, South Carolina was part of an environmental justice complaint saying “The Rosemont neighborhood is comprised of African-American citizens who have lived in the community for generations, oftentimes inheriting their homes from parents and/or grandparents, ...This neighborhood is tightly knit and has dealt with an abundance of toxic neighbors, including polluting industry and the placement of I-26.”

My research will provide a foundation for community members and leaders to understand and implement lasting change in their communities. The goal of this research will be to create a roadmap for not only citizens of the Charleston area, but anyone who is not aware that marginalized groups are suffering for reasons they cannot control. With bringing awareness to this issue, I hope to strive towards the elimination of environmental threats and elimination of health effects due to those environmental threats. Environmental pollution is a world-wide issue that has no simple solution. I hope to get the opportunity of partnering with the Race and Social Justice Initiative to provide to breakdown and diminish environmental injustices in marginalized communities.