CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Climate Change is a social justice issue.

Climate change is here, and we are feeling its effects right now. It's causing more frequent and severe weather events, including heavy rainfall, dangerous storms, droughts, and heat waves. It is changing the spread of infectious diseases, interfering with our food sources, and straining vital infrastructure like roads and bridges, across the country.

More often than not, these changes impact communities of color more than others. Climate change is a significant social justice issue. There is an uneven distribution of both benefits and harms from the activities that lead to climate change. African Americans contribute 23% less to climate change but bear 21% more of the harms when compared to other racial groups.[1]

Climate change creates dirtier air, dangerously hot days, wildfires, storms, and floods, which threaten our health and our lives more than ever before.

Human activities – specifically, the burning of fossil fuels for electricity and transportation – are the major driver of climate change. Thousands of scientific experts agree with the global consensus that humans are causing climate change.[2] Reducing the pollution causing climate change is essential to protect our families and our communities.

Climate-induced heat waves disproportionately affect African American communities.

African American communities face more dangerously hot days (temperatures above 105 degrees Fahrenheit) than other communities. A study estimated that on average, counties with higher numbers of African Americans living in them had 2 to 3 more days of dangerous heat per year. That number could increase by 10-times by the year 2050.[7] African Americans are twice as likely to die from dangerous heat compared to other groups.[8]

African American communities are more vulnerable to severe weather and floods.

More than half of African Americans in the US live in the South. The southern US is 4 times more likely to have a significant storm or flood, compared to other parts of the country, causing these problems to be more severe for African Americans.

The impacts and disparities were made terrifyingly clear during 2005's Hurricane Katrina, when about half of the African Americans living in New Orleans were forced to leave their homes.[3] Even worse, more than half of those who perished in Katrina were African American.[4, 5]

We know that storms rip through communities and tear apart families. Many die by drowning or from underlying health problems like diabetes and heart disease,[6] which are made worse by the impacts of climate change.

Doctors recognize significant health impacts of climate change in African American patients.

A national survey found that 86% of African American doctors believe that climate change is an important issue to address with their patients. Among those who serve in African American communities, the majority said they have seen the harms of climate change in their own patients. The most common health effects reported were injuries from severe storms, floods, and wildfires; worsening of chronic diseases due to air pollution and hotter temperatures; and an increase in allergies (due to mold and other exposures).[9]

turn to the reverse to see what you can do

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Polluted air is bad for our communities and bad for our health.

Climate change makes air pollution worse, and this will exacerbate the significant air quality inequities already being experienced in African American communities. The NAACP found that African American communities breathe in air that is 40% more polluted than in other communities.[10] A national survey found that 61% of African Americans had problems from breathing dirty air compared to 43% non-Hispanic white Americans.[11]

Polluted air is especially harmful for African Americans who already have conditions which make it hard to breathe, such as asthma. African Americans with asthma have a 3-times higher chance of going to the hospital from an asthma attack or dying from one.[12]

JOIN OUR EFFORTS

to educate, engage and empower members of the community to take action. Visit www.momscleanairforce.org to learn more and join the force.

PREPARE FOR CHANGE

by working with your community and faith-based organizations to develop action plans for severe weather events and emergencies.

LEARN MORE

about the air quality in your community. Visit www.airnow.gov for information about your air.

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

by talking to your healthcare provider about what you can do to keep you and your family healthy.

HOST A "TABLE TALK"

with your family and friends to help them learn more about air pollution in your community. It's easy to hold an event in your church, mosque, or community center to provide education and increase awareness of climate change and its effects.

DEMAND ACTION

by calling for strong local, state, and federal policies for emergency preparedness and disaster relief. You can do this by calling or writing your lawmakers and asking them to take bold leadership to clean up the air, voting for candidates who support climate action, or arranging peaceful demonstrations on these issues.

MOMS clean air FORCE

CommunityRX
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH JUSTICE