
Criteria for Success:

Students will:

- Present a clear claim addressing health inequity.
- Use accurate data & credible sources.
- Convey urgency through storytelling.
- Begin a polished first draft of their advocacy piece.

Project Guidelines:

How does environmental racism contribute to Memphis Maternal Health and the Infant Mortality Rate?

Projects will be graded on **accuracy, creativity, clarity** and **evidence of learning**

Connecting Malawi & Memphis

Across the world, where people live often determines how long they live. In both **Malawi** and **Memphis**, **environmental racism** shapes health outcomes long before a child is born. Communities of color, whether in rural Zambian mining towns or Memphis neighborhoods like: Frayser, South Memphis and right here in Whitehaven are disproportionately exposed to toxins, pollution, and unsafe infrastructure (water, lights, transportation, pipes, construction and streets).

In **Malawi**, Disabled Pregnant women and children in affected regions face higher risks of respiratory illness, malnutrition and birth complications due to discrimination and lack of care. These environmental and discrimination burdens directly contribute to elevated infant mortality rates and generational health struggles.

In **Memphis**, environmental racism shows up through proximity to chemical plants (**ELON MUSK data centers right here in Whitehaven/Westwood**), lack of clean water access, hospital closures and the placement of landfills near predominantly Black neighborhoods. Shelby County consistently ranks among the worst in the nation for maternal and infant health for Black women. Issues like limited prenatal care access, air pollution, unsafe drinking water and lead exposure echo the same systemic injustices faced by Zambian families.

Though continents apart, **Malawi and Memphis share a painful truth**: when communities are denied clean environments, safe resources and adequate healthcare: babies and mothers pay the price. Our project asks you to investigate these global health inequities and respond creatively using writing, art, or performance to advocate for awareness and justice.

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM EXACTLY???

Environmental racism is the systemic and intentional placement of toxic, harmful, or environmentally dangerous conditions such as pollution, industrial facilities, landfills, contaminated water and poor infrastructure in or near communities of color.

It includes **policies, practices and decisions** that:

- Disproportionately expose Black, Brown, Indigenous and low-income communities to environmental hazards
- Limit access to clean air, safe water, healthy food, quality housing and green spaces
- Underfund environmental protections, healthcare and infrastructure in these neighborhoods
- Exclude these communities from environmental decision-making

In simple terms:

Environmental racism means **your race and your ZIP code can determine how clean, safe or healthy your environment is** and therefore how healthy your body, pregnancy and lifespan may be.

Examples:

- Chemical plants, data centers and other high pollutant businesses built next to majority-Black neighborhoods
- Landfills placed near low-income communities in Memphis
- Lead-contaminated water systems in Black cities (like Flint, Michigan and Jackson, Mississippi)
- Higher infant mortality rates in polluted areas
- Fewer hospitals or clinics in communities of color
- Asthma clusters near highways that cut through Black neighborhoods

Environmental racism creates long-term health consequences, including **higher rates of infant mortality, preterm birth, asthma, cancer and chronic illness** which is why it directly connects to Malawi and Memphis in your lesson students! Make the connections.

How will you share with the community at the symposium that Black/Brown babies are at-risk due to environmental racism and discrimination?

FINAL TASK: PICK YOUR SYMPOSIUM PROJECT!

Choose **ONE** of the following ways to demonstrate your understanding of how environmental racism impacts maternal and infant health in Zambia, Memphis or both through connecting the two.

Option 1 – Op-Ed (500–700 words)

Required Structure:

- **Hook** – Pull the reader in with a powerful fact, question or image.
- **Claim** – What argument are you making about environmental racism and infant mortality?
- **At least 2 solid pieces of Evidence** – Use data, research and sources from our class readings/videos. **CITE ALL EVIDENCE with the person that said it's name, website and direct quote marks around any words that are not yours.**
- **Human Story** – Spotlight a real person or a composite story to humanize the issue. You can ask a family member, teacher or someone safe to ask about their experiences or their emotions regarding what you have learned. Cite them and their name in the story, Mr. Moore said, “It is heartbreaking that Black and Brown women are facing these issues and we must support them better.”
- **Call to Action** – What should the community, city, country or world do next to solve the issue?

You may focus on **Malawi** or **connect Malawi to Memphis** to show how global injustices mirror local ones. An op-ed blends **facts + emotion** to persuade an audience to care or to act.

Option 2 – Spoken Word / Audio Poem / Song (60–90 sec)

Required Elements:

- **Data integrated into rhythm** (e.g., “one in three...,” “16 deaths per 1,000...”)
- **Repetition for emphasis**
- **Concrete imagery** blended with an **emotional plea**

Music and poetry are global tools of resistance. Your piece should educate the audience while also moving them emotionally. You may write from the perspective of a mother, a child, a community or an advocate.

-Must have music/ poem recorded AND printed with lyrics.

- Can be a 60-90 sec music/poem video

Option 3 – Infographic

Required Elements:

- **Memphis-specific data** on infant mortality or environmental racism
- **Clear visual layout** with charts, icons, or graphic elements
- **QR link to credible sources**
- **One-sentence claim** that explains the connection or problem

Your infographic should teach the viewer something quickly, accurately, and visually.

HOW WILL YOU BE GRADED?

Before you turn in check your project against the rubrics!

SEE Grading RUBRICS below:

RUBRICS FOR ALL THREE PROJECT OPTIONS

OPTION 1 – OP-ED RUBRIC (500–700 words)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Claim & Thesis	Clear, compelling claim fully addresses Malawi/Memphis environmental racism	Claim is present and mostly clear	Claim is vague or incomplete	No clear claim
Use of Evidence	Strong, accurate data & research from multiple sources	Some relevant evidence used correctly	Minimal evidence, partially accurate	No evidence or inaccurate
Human Story	Story deeply enhances argument with emotion & clarity	Story included and somewhat connected	Story unclear or disconnected	No story
Analysis & Reasoning	Insightful explanation of how evidence proves claim	Some explanation present	Minimal explanation	No analysis
Call to Action	Powerful, realistic, specific	Mostly clear	Vague or broad	Missing
Writing Quality	Polished, organized, strong voice	Generally clear	Needs revision	Hard to follow

OPTION 2 – SPOKEN WORD / AUDIO POEM / SONG RUBRIC (60–90 sec)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Integration of Data	Data is woven naturally into rhythm	Data included but not seamless	Minimal data	No data
Poetic Devices	Strong repetition, imagery, metaphor	Some poetic techniques	Few poetic techniques	None used
Emotional Impact	Highly powerful & moving	Some emotional appeal	Limited emotion	No emotional engagement
Clarity of Message	Clear stance on environmental racism & infant mortality	Mostly clear	Some confusion	Not clear
Delivery / Flow	Strong flow, cadence, and timing	Generally smooth	Choppy or unclear	Hard to follow

OPTION 3 – INFOGRAPHIC RUBRIC

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Beginning (1)
Memphis Data	Accurate, relevant, well-chosen	Some relevant data	Minimal or unclear	Missing or inaccurate
Visual Design	Strong layout, readable, professional	Mostly clear	Some clutter	Hard to read
Sources / QR Code	Multiple credible sources, QR works	At least one source	QR/code unclear	No sources
Claim	Clear, concise 1-sentence claim	Mostly clear	Vague	Missing
Overall Communication	Easy to understand; teaches viewer clearly	Mostly clear	Partially unclear	Confusing