



## Energy & Environmental Law Society at UH Law

June 9, 2020

In response to the most recent killings by police, militarized violence against protesters, and the longstanding racial injustice endured by Black people in America, the Energy and Environmental Law Society (EELS) stands in solidarity with the Black Law Students Association, the Black Lives Matter movement, and Black communities—especially those in Houston—who bear the disproportionate impacts of an unhealthy environment.

Beyond this expression, we commit today to take immediate and ongoing action to confront racism, including environmental racism, and to better serve Black students at the University of Houston Law Center.

EELS recognizes that, while this moment in our shared history is unequivocally about confronting police brutality and our broken criminal justice system, this is but one link in the chain of interconnected systems designed to oppress Black people in America. We recognize that Black Americans are three times more likely than whites to die from exposure to pollution;<sup>1</sup> that Black Americans are twice as likely to lack adequate plumbing;<sup>2</sup> that Black communities are routinely targeted for siting hazardous waste facilities;<sup>3</sup> and that Black children are diagnosed with asthma at a rate double that of white children.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Black Americans have died at disproportionately higher rates from COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> In light of these realities, EELS is preparing to raise funds for groups such as the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, and commits to hosting educational events around environmental justice issues, to alerting students and alumni about opportunities for pro-bono work, and to engaging with local environmental justice communities.

Furthermore, EELS commits to take intentional and affirmative steps to promote and support Black students at the Law Center, especially those pursuing careers in energy and environmental law. We support calls to

---

<sup>1</sup> Bartees Cox, *Environmental Racism Has Left Black Americans Three Times More Likely to Die from Pollution*, QUARTZ (Mar. 13, 2018), <https://qz.com/1226984/environmental-racism-has-left-black-americans-three-times-more-likely-to-die-from-pollution/>.

<sup>2</sup> Brentin Mock, *If You Want Clean Water, Don't Be Black in America*, CITYLAB (Jan. 26, 2016), <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/01/if-you-want-clean-water-dont-be-black-in-america/426927/>.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Mohai & Robin Saha, *Which Came First, People or Pollution? Assessing the Disparate Siting and Post-Siting Demographic Change Hypotheses of Environmental Injustice*, ENVTL. RES. LETTERS, Nov. 2015, at 1, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Van R. Newkirk II, *Trump's EPA Concludes Environmental Racism is Real*, ATLANTIC (Feb. 28, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/the-trump-administration-finds-that-environmental-racism-is-real/554315/>.

<sup>5</sup> Clarence Gravlee, *Racism, Not Genetics, Explains Why Black Americans are Dying of COVID-19*, SCI. AM. (Jun. 7, 2020), <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/racism-not-genetics-explains-why-black-americans-are-dying-of-covid-19/>.

increase the number of Black law students and commit to hosting events for Black alumni currently working in the field to share their experience with bias and racism in the workplace.

Finally, EELS invites Black students at the Law Center to reach out to our members and our leadership to let us know of any other ways that we can support you. We pledge to be stronger allies—not just during these times, but by building true coalitions as we move forward—and we commit to continually educating ourselves and our members about what that means in the context of this organization’s mission. Finally, as individual members, we commit to speaking out against racism and racial discrimination to which we bear witness, both inside and outside of the classroom. We offer condolences for the lives lost, the families destroyed, the opportunities stolen, and the generations stunted by the scourge of racial injustice.

In Solidarity,

Energy & Environmental Law Society at UH Law

Justin Hicks, President

Neil Segel, Vice-President

Julia Ngo, Treasurer

Christine Sulkis, Secretary

Erika McDonald, Member