



# ***Environmental Racism in New Mexico***

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# Background

- Longtime Educator, Community Advocate, Researcher
- Director of NMELC
- Focus on understanding structural inequities, with a focus on racial hierarchies

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# Community Agreements

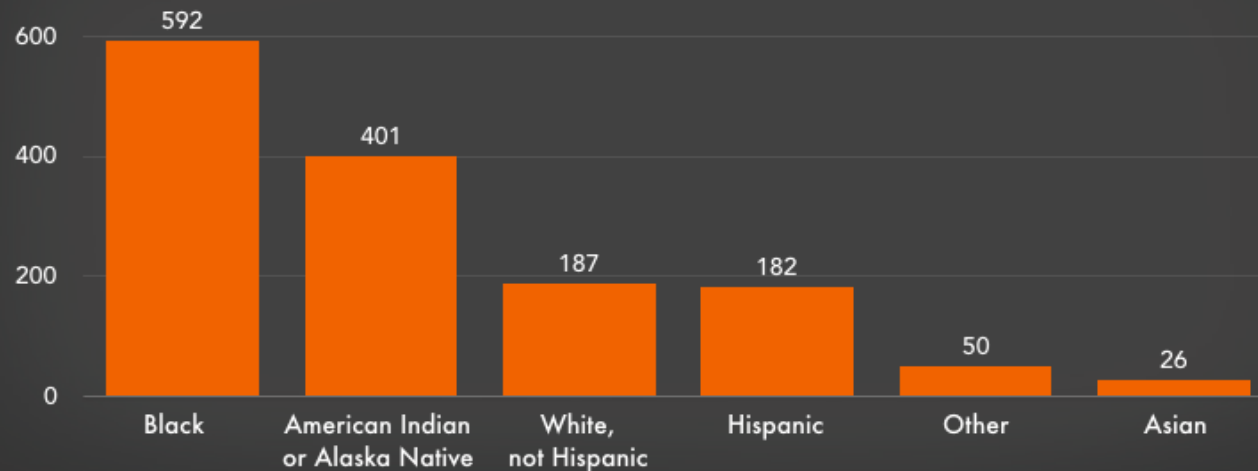
WATER PROTECTION ADVISORY BOARD – AUGUST 14, 2020

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Be Present  
Actively Listen  
Move Up or Move Back  
Respectful Dialogue  
Be Open  
Challenge Yourself -  
Growing Edge  
Reflect before Responding

## Racial disparities in local jail incarceration rates, 2018

Number of people incarcerated in local jails per 100,000 people in each racial or ethnic category

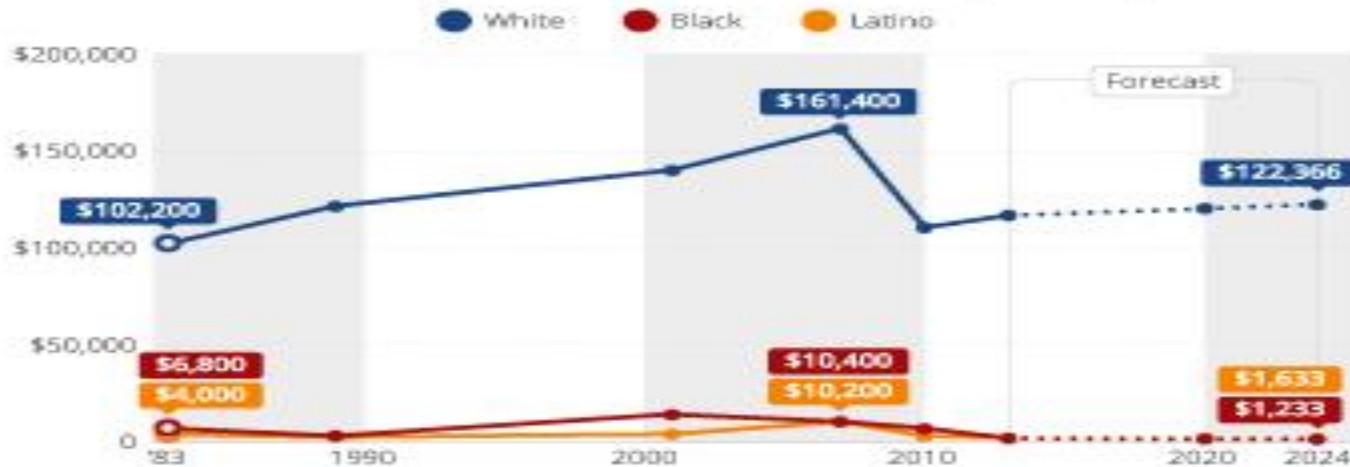


PRISON  
POLICY INITIATIVE

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics *Jail Inmates in 2018* Table 2

## Racial Wealth Inequality Is Rampant In The U.S.

Median household wealth by race/ethnicity in the United States (1983–2024)



Source: Prosperity Now & Institute For Policy Studies

statista

Asian American



White



Hispanic or Latino



Black



American Indian/Alaska Native

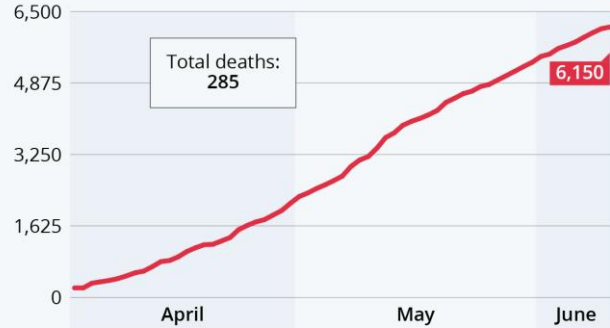


Percentage of students who graduate from 4-year college programs



## Native Americans Hit Hard by COVID-19

Number of COVID-19 cases across Navajo Nation and Hopi Reservation



Data for some dates unavailable  
Source: Navajo Times



statista



## 100 Black Women & Girls Killed by Police

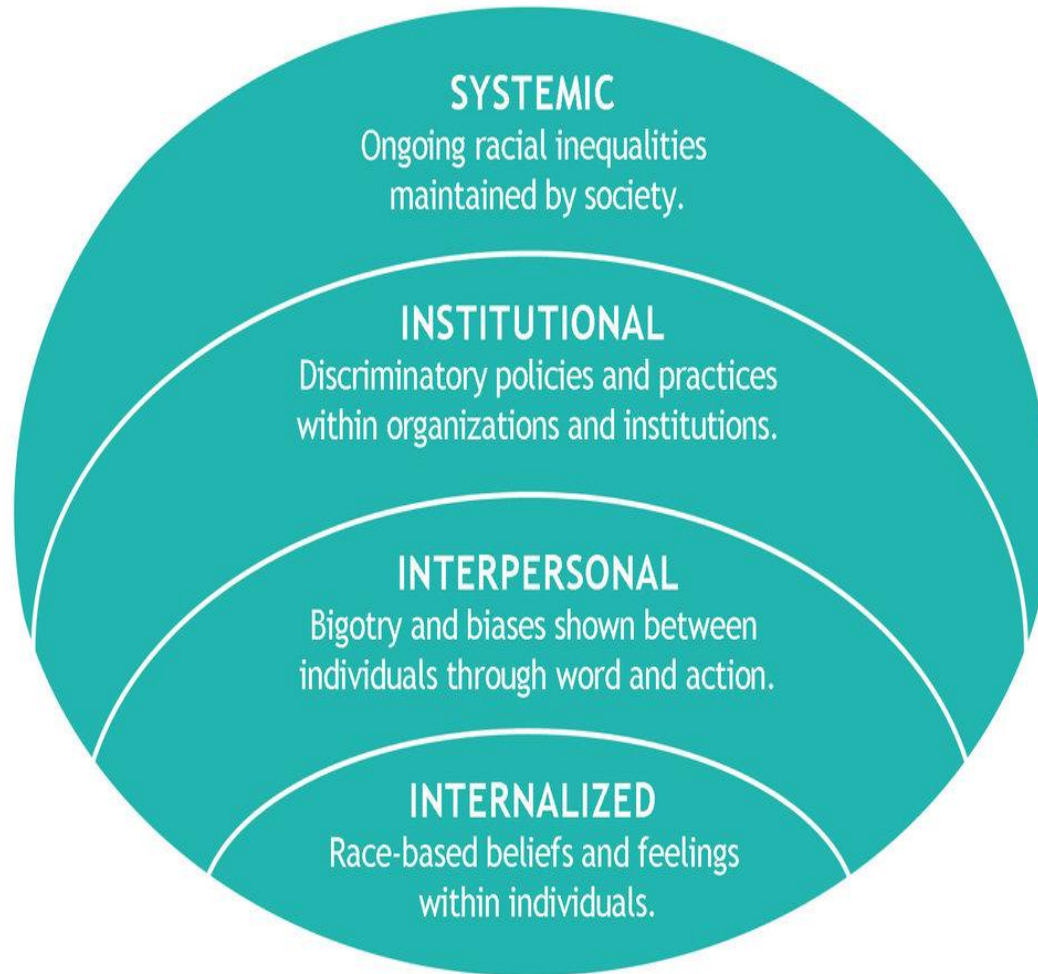
Tomasia Africa, Delicia Africa, Netta Africa, Carolyn Adams, Rhonda Africa, Shelley Amos, Tanisha Anderson, Anonymous, Venus Rene Baird, Carolyn Sue Botticher, Anonymous, Reikia Boyd, Anna Brown, Martina Brown, Eleanor Bumpurs, Cheryl Burton, Marcella Byrd, Wiriann Carey, Alexia Christian, Derrinesha Clay, Erica Collins, Brenda Faye Cooper, Jacqueline Robinson Culp, Michelle Cusseau, Janette Daniels, Shantel Davis, Mattie Debardebelen, Monique Deckard, Emily Marie Delafield, Sharmel Edwards, Delores Epps, Marie Fares, Janisha Fonville, Shereese Francis, Shelly Frey, Pamela Frowner, Anita Gay, Denise Gay, Pearlie Golden, LaToya Grier, Kim Groves, LaTanya Haggerty, Mya Hall, Darnisha Harris, Denise Hawkins, Teresa Henderson, Yvette Henderson, Meagan Hockaday, Karen Day Jackson, Laveta Jackson, Kendra James, Kathryn Johnston, Aiyanna Jones, Cora Jones, Sophia King, Andrena Kitt, Summer Marie Lane, Nuwnuh Laroche, Eula Love, Audrey Marshall, Alicia McCuller, Sharon McDowell, Della McDuffie, Natasha McKenna, Yvonne McNeal, Iquisha Middleton, Adaish Miller, Rebecca Miller, Tyisha Miller, Margaret LaVerne Mitchell, Mary Mitchell, Kayla Moore, Laura Nelson, Gabriella Nevarez, Jacqueline Nicholson, Heather Parker, Frankie Perkins, Charlene Pickering, Lillie Dell Power, Jimmi Ruth Ratliffe, Mackala Ross, Aura Rosser, Alma Shaw, Quenyia Tykia Shelton, Latricka Sloan, Yvette Smith, Ellosie Spellman, Alberta Spruill, Sonji Taylor, Yolanda Thomas, Alesia Thomas, Patricia Thompson, Virginia Verdee, Laporsha Watson, Shulena Weldon, Desseria Whitman, Brenda Williams, Keshia Williams, Malissa Williams, Robin Taneish Williams, Tarika Wilson, Vernicia Woodard, and many other black trans and non-trans women & girls, counted and uncounted, whose lives were stolen at the hands of the police

# The Reality

**Racism continues to plague our nation.**

People of color in the U.S. experience **worse** outcomes and **more** barriers to success than their white counterparts.

## LEVELS ON WHICH RACISM EXISTS



## FOUR LEVELS OF RACISM

# Question

***What is environmental racism?***



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# Environmental Racism

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The disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on BIPOC – e.g. toxic waste facilities, garbage dumps, environmental pollutions, foul odors, etc. **that lower the quality of life for individuals and communities.**

# Environmental Racism

- Includes institutional rules, regulations, policies, government, and/or corporate decisions that **target** specific communities for undesirable land uses and results in a lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws
- Because of this, communities are **disproportionately** exposed to toxic and hazardous waste based upon race

# Environmental Racism

It is a well-documented fact that communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by polluting industries (and very specifically, hazardous waste facilities) and lax regulation of these industries.

# Environmental Racism

An estimated **70% of contaminated** waste sites are located in low-income neighborhoods, and an upwards of 2 million Americans live within a mile of sites that are vulnerable to flooding — the majority of which are in **Black and Brown communities**.

*<https://www.insider.com/environmental-racism-examples-united-states-2020-8>*

# Environmental Racism

A 2018 study conducted by the EPA showed that at the national, state, and county levels, BIPOC are **disproportionately** burdened by particulate matter — or air pollution consisting of automobile fumes, smog, soot, oil smoke, ash, and construction dust — than white people.

*<https://www.insider.com/environmental-racism-examples-united-states-2020-8>*



## Example in the US

**Cancer Alley** - an 85-mile stretch of land along the Mississippi River between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, lined with oil refineries and petrochemical plants.

The location got its name "Cancer Alley" because residents of the area are 50 times more likely to develop cancer than the average American. Residents are predominantly Black.



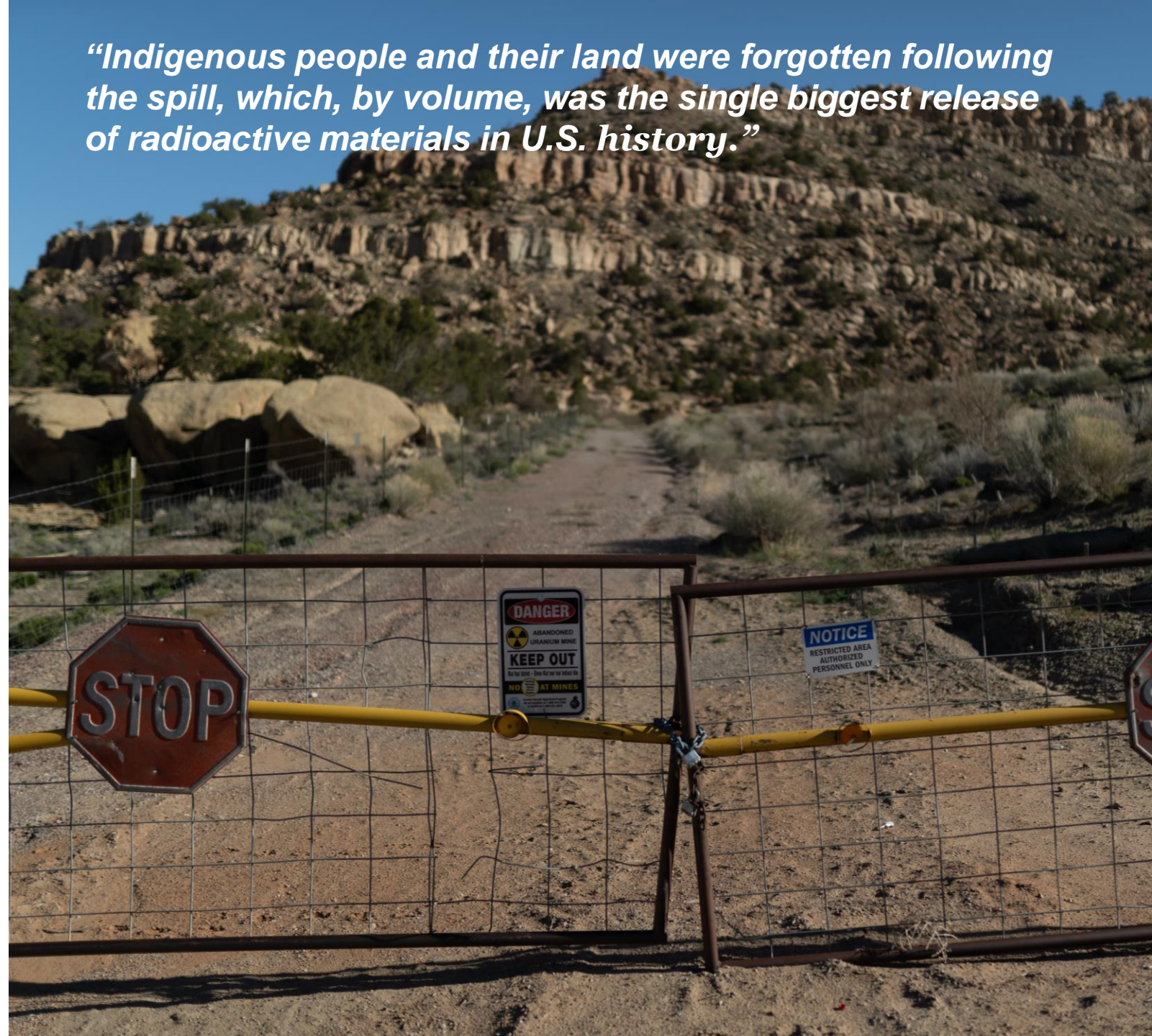




In 1979, a breach from a mine near Church Rock east of Gallup caused about 94 million gallons of radioactive solution to flow into the Rio Puerco River and seep into the surrounding land.

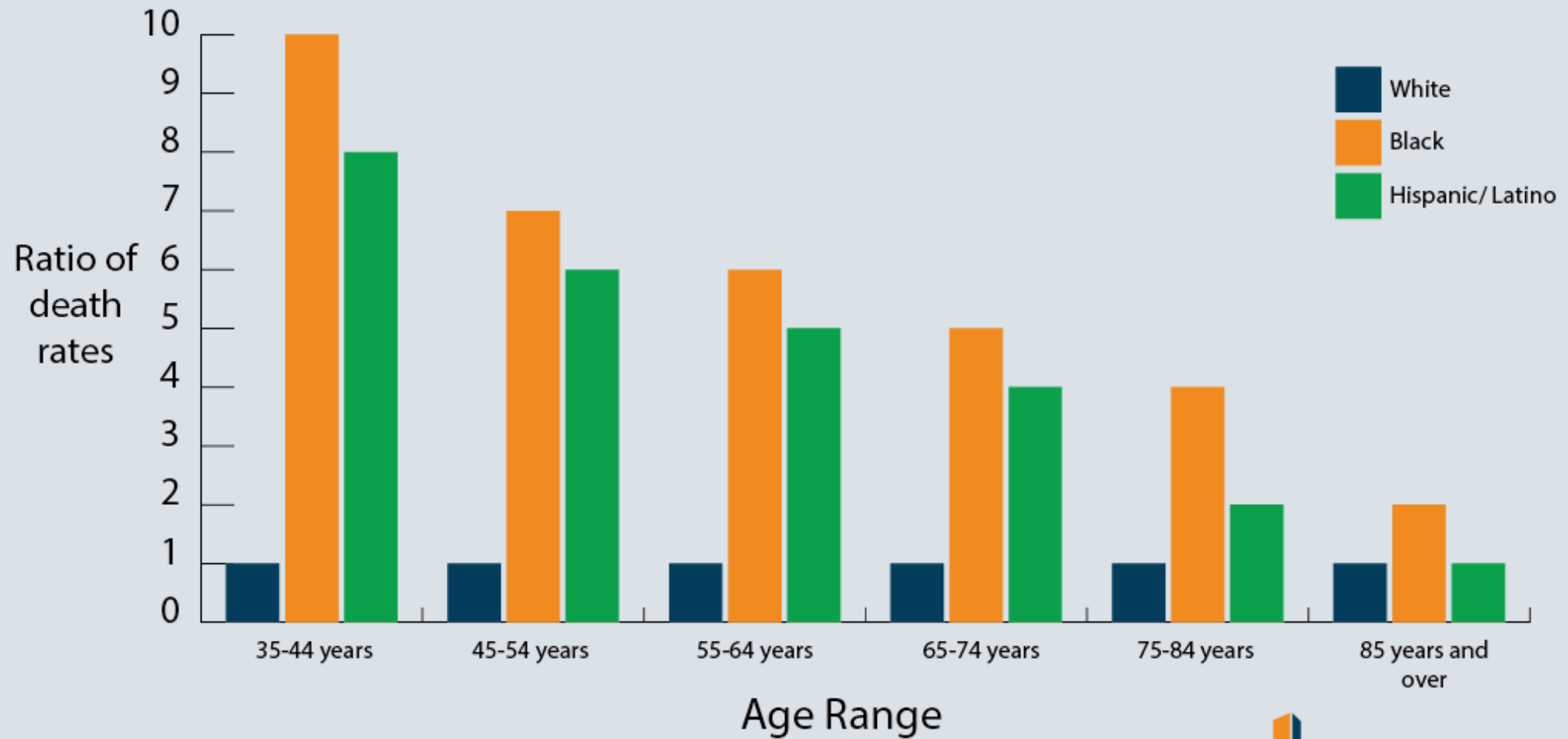
The spill was never cleaned up by the corporation involved because the mines closed shortly after.

Negative impacts continue to this day.



*“Indigenous people and their land were forgotten following the spill, which, by volume, was the single biggest release of radioactive materials in U.S. history.”*

## Race gaps in COVID-19 death rates



Source: CDC data from 2/1/20-6/6/20 and 2018 Census Population Estimates for USA



# Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19



Across the U.S., Black and Hispanic/Latinx communities are experiencing far higher rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths than white communities. Nationally, Black Americans make up 13 percent of the population, but account for 30 percent of COVID-19 cases.

A state-by-state analysis found that in 32 states and the District of Columbia, Black Americans are dying at disproportionate rates from COVID-19.

In 42 states and the District of Columbia, Hispanics and Latinx make up a larger share of COVID-19 cases than their share of the population.

*Laborers' Health & Safety Fund NA*

# Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19

The Navajo Nation, which spans 27,000 square miles in the Southwest with a population of 170,000, has recorded more than 11,000 positive cases and more than 400 deaths.

The Navajo Nation has had “the most cases per capita in the country and as many cases as some of our small states in the U.S.”





# COVID-19 and Environmental Racism

Why do you think BIPOC communities are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19? Why are BIPOC dying at much greater numbers from COVID-19 than whites?

# Access to Water is a Basic Human Right

The Village of To'hajiilee, located along the western most boundary of Bernalillo County, is a chapter of the Navajo Nation.

The wells that supply clean water to To'hajiilee have dried up resulting in the shipping in of all water for household and community needs.

WALH has denied a right of way that would give the Village access to much needed water.

Unsafe, dirty drinking water is unacceptable in Bernalillo County.

Western Albuquerque Land Holdings, LLC (WALH), is denying water to the people at To'hajiilee.

They need to act NOW.



To'hajiilee, New Mexico



## Call to Action

- The work starts with yourself, let go of the guilt, defensiveness, and denial and instead commit to knowledge-building, empathetic action, and change
- Engage and commit to 'tough' conversations. Deep equity work is challenging and uncomfortable, but it must be done
- Raise the equity question regardless of who is in the room and ask how any decision/policy will impact frontline communities
- Listen to and be an advocate for frontline communities who bear the brunt of environmental racism; *frontline communities need to be at the forefront, not an afterthought*

