

## A Recent Crisis: Environmental Injustice in Jackson, Mississippi

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**E**nvironmental injustice occurs when vulnerable communities, such as communities of color or poor communities, are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards. Environmental injustice often occurs in the form of three factors: climate change, government- or company-imposed decisions, and decaying infrastructure. In this study of the August 2022 water crisis in Jackson, Mississippi, we investigate the interaction of all three factors. Jackson is a city with high Black and poor populations — notably, Jackson is a Black, Democratic enclave within a predominantly White, Republican state. On August 29, 2022, Jackson's water system malfunctioned. A state of emergency was declared for Jackson, and citizens were without water for weeks. Prior to the August crisis, Jackson's water system had been operating below federal standards for years from local mismanagement. However, many more factors impacted the causation and resolution of the crisis: the city's demographic evolution since the 1980s, the strained political relationship between state and city governments, and the federal intervention that ultimately restored a working water system. Following the crisis, the federal government established an interim third-party management system, to ensure Jackson's water system would undergo recovery. The current state of Jackson's water system is considerably improved with third-party management in place, though city leadership has experienced less political autonomy. Yet, the federal intervention is only short-term, and remains only as long as the water system is in recovery. Finally, we discuss the implications of this crisis in a broader context

### Biography

Grace Zhou is an acknowledged professor at William Eskridge of Yale Law School. She is currently working at the Brearley School. She is well known for her invaluable guidance and mentorship during her research.

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