

## *Environmental racism at Utah's inland port*

On Feb. 2, a community forum was held in Salt Lake City to discuss implications of the Utah inland port. Experts, professionals and residents alike aired concerns about policymakers overlooking worsened air quality and the destruction of fragile ecosystems in the name of economic development. Spokespeople from Racially Just Utah also joined the dialogue to share ways in which the port continues to be a clear instance of environmental racism.

Environmental racism refers to any act that results in disproportionate effects of environmentally hazardous conditions on communities of color. The area approved for inland port construction will take place in the northwest quadrant of Utah, near the Great Salt Lake. The port site will envelop significant portions of Salt Lake County acreage — specifically sections of West Valley City and Magna.

Data from the U.S. Census shows that people of color make up about 21 percent of Utah's population, and 27.9 percent of Salt Lake County's population. In comparison, people of color make up 53.2 percent of West Valley City's population and 36.4 percent of Magna's population. As such, the placement of the port alone is an illustration of environmental racism. The implications of the port are even worse considering that residents of the area are already disproportionately burdened with pollution from refineries and traffic.

In addition, the establishment of inland port has lacked transparency and representation. Utah state Reps. Angela Romero and Sandra Hollins have expressed concern and frustration about the way in which Gov. Gary Herbert and other government officials have proceeded.

For the 79 percent of Utah residents that are white, this situation calls for allyship. White allyship requires continual self-awareness, responsibility and accountability. An important component of white allyship requires taking action to confront racial inequity on the local level. The inland port is a

set a baseline for air, water, light and noise pollution through the Department of Environmental Quality. Collecting baseline data will help accurately assess health impacts of the port. Second, SB144 proposes to create a solid infrastructure designed to monitor pollution levels.

The implementation of this bill is urgent, time-sensitive and absolutely crucial when working toward equitable public health. If we do not collect this baseline information now we will never be able to collect data on pre-construction pollution levels. Meaning the affected population will be denied hard evidence of any effects of the port.

Other points of action include closely following port construction updates, following the Coalition for Port Reform and attending City Council meetings and community forums. Support organizations led by people of color working on this issue such as Racially Just Utah. Be sure to speak up, share the information you learn with those around you, and encourage others to do the same. **Audrianna Dehlin**, Salt Lake City, is a recent graduate of Utah State University with a bachelor's degree in psychology, and a passion for academia, sustainability and advocacy.



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*For The Tribune*

detrimental product of environmental racism that needs to be met with ownership. It should go without saying that economic development by means of racial injustice, increased pollution and environmental depletion is absolutely unacceptable.

So, what can you do? To begin, reach out to your legislators in support of Senate Bill 144. This bill aims to achieve two main goals. First, it will

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