Land acknowledgement:
500 years of colonization & oppression
I recognize that I live and work in the land of the Peoria (Pea-Or-Ekah), Miami (My-Am-E), Kickapoo (KICK-a-poo) and Potawatomi (Pot-Tah-WAH-tah-mee) Nations. These lands were traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal. They continue to carry the stories of their struggles for survival and identity today on these and other lands.

(region map 1830 Dennis McClendon Chicago Cartographics)" (p6 Keating 2012)
Permit Denied!

The #StopGenerallIron victory spotlights the effectiveness of people-power organizing, and the complicity of governmental public health with environmental racism.

Jim Bloyd DrPH MPH, (he/him)

Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County CHECookCounty.org

Closing Plenary Panel---13th Annual Health Equity & Social Justice Conference

Malcolm X College Auditorium, August 26, 2022 3:30 p.m.
General Iron

Permit

Lightfoot Administration Announces Denial of General Iron Permit

CHICAGO (Feb. 18, 2022) – The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) announced today that it has denied RMG/General Iron’s operating permit bringing an end to a years-long struggle between Southeast Side residents and the massive metal shredding operation that sought to relocate from Lincoln Park to a majority Latinx neighborhood.

Advocates for the Southeast Side maintain that while this is an enormous victory for the community and for the fight against environmental racism, the City of Chicago must be dedicated to policies that prevent a situation like this from happening in environmental justice communities. Southeast Side residents will proceed with their previously announced rally at City Hall today, as a way to celebrate, but also bring awareness to the need for significant reform.

The following is a statement from the Southeast Environmental Task Force, People for Community Recovery, the Southeast Side Coalition to Ban Pecotex, and NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council), UINo (United Neighbors for the 10th Ward, Southeast Side Youth Alliance, Southeast Side Educators for Environmental Justice, Collaborative for Health Equity Cook County, Bridges Puentes, Alliance for the Southeast (ASE), GWHS Student Voice Committee, Poor People’s Campaign:

“Our community is not a sacrifice zone. This decision can be a turning point for communities of color that have been hurt by environmental racism for decades. Although we are celebrating this decision, the community continues to deal with the toxic legacy that has allowed pollution to accumulate in our community and we will not stop fighting for our right to clean air, and we will continue to fight until the health of Chicago communities like ours can live in a healthy environment.”

###

Source: https://www.nrdc.org/media/2022/220218
“Leadership is the practice of mobilizing people, organizations, and communities to effectively tackle tough public health challenges.”
March 4, 2021 Outside Mayor Lightfoot’s house

@isaiahsarju
HMPRG and CHE Cook County helped mobilize a public health voice in solidarity with the demands of frontline organizations to #DenyThePermit, in opposition to the City and its public health department.

Photos: @isiahsarju

#DenyThePermit demonstrators take over the street near Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s house.
2012 "Food Desert" focus-Cheryl Johnson interview

CCPlaceMatters (Now CHECookCounty.org) https://youtu.be/GYmtREA3Lkc
Hazel Johnson – a mother of the Environmental Justice Movement 1935 - 2011

- She was a community activist.
- She was an ambassador of Altgeld Gardens.
- She was an early mentor to Barack Obama.
- She was a "thorn in the side" of the Chicago waste industry.
- She was a wife and mother of seven children.
- She is the mother of the environmental justice movement.
- For more than 30 years, Hazel Johnson worked to clean up her corner of Chicago's southeast side.
The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit has been described as one of the most important events in the history of the environmental justice movement. The four-day Summit sponsored by the United Church of Christ’s Commission for Racial Justice began in Washington, D.C., on October 24th, 1991. With around 1,100 persons attended from all 50 states as well as Puerto Rico, Chile, Mexico, and the Marshall Islands, the inclusive breadth of participation allowed for the environmental justice movement to coalesce in re-defining the very meaning of “environment.” ...As such, it encompassed a range of issues from housing and transportation to worker safety and toxic pollution. Ultimately, the Summit became the embodiment and the celebration of self-determination and leadership from communities of color. Brooks Berndt | published on Mar 25, 2021

5. affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

7. ...the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.


SEE APPENDIX FOR PREAMBLE AND COMPLETE LIST
Build power for health equity

- Support anti-racism & social justice movements
- Act in solidarity with marginalized and oppressed communities

Struggle for policy change tackling root causes of health inequities

Develop a community of public health voices against racism, for social justice.
“We demand that CDPH follow its own community health improvement plan ‘Healthy Chicago 2025’ and prioritize environmental justice, racial equity, and health equity in its actions.”

Signed by over 70 organizations & over 500 individuals
“This brief outlines how the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) analyzed community-level data on air quality, health, and social factors to identify, for the first time, which neighborhoods must be prioritized for efforts to mitigate and reduce air pollution.” p3

Available at: https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/Air_Quality_Health_doc_FINALv4.pdf
**CLOSING THE LIFE EXPECTANCY GAP, THE HEALTHY CHICAGO 2025 WAY**

**Assessment themes**
To close the racial life expectancy gap, we will...

- Improve systems of care for populations most affected by inequities
- Further the health and vibrancy of neighborhoods
- Strengthen community capacity and youth leadership
- Transform policies and processes to foster anti-racist, multicultural systems

**Assessment priority areas**
Address inequities in...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Populations experiencing inequities</th>
<th>Ideal states</th>
<th>Healthy Chicago 2025 vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black, Latinx and low-income Chicagoans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Having a healthy, affordable home</strong></td>
<td><strong>In a city where... All people and all communities have power, are free from oppression and are strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black, Latinx and low-income Chicagoans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Have enough nutritious food and local food businesses thrive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Closing Our Life Expectancy Gap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communities disproportionately burdened by pollution</strong></td>
<td><strong>Breathe clean air free of harmful pollutants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Here’s how we – the local public health system, including government, community organizations, academic institutions, businesses and others who support a Healthy Chicago – will make change, together, over the next five years and for generations to come.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black Communities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Are safe across the city and have trusting relationships with law enforcement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disinvested and gentrifying communities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Live in vibrant neighborhoods that reflect their identities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black, Latinx and low-income Chicagoans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Benefit from a full range of health and human services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black and Latinx Chicagoans</strong></td>
<td><strong>Have voice and power in the public health system</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
March 9, 2021 Press Conference. Online at HM PRG.org

Press Conference — Public Health Leaders Demand Mayor and CDPH Commissioner Deny the Permit to General Iron

MAR 9, 2021

What: Public Health Leaders Demand Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady Deny the Permit to General Iron

TUESDAY, a panel of health professionals will be joined by a Southeast Side hunger striker to demand Mayor Lightfoot and the Department of Public Health Commissioner Dr. Allison Arwady to deny General Iron’s permit. Recently, over 500 public health and healthcare workers and more than 70 organizations have signed an open letter directed toward Mayor Lightfoot and Dr. Arwady urging them to follow the Healthy Chicago 2025 plan and meet their commitments to health equity in the city

Media Coverage of March 8, 2021 Health Community
#DenyThePermit Public Letter of March 8, 2021

Chicago health leaders urge city officials to scrap South Side recycling plant
“Chicago officials should fight against the racist structuring of health risks rather than participating in its creation.”

Lightfoot and Arwady must decide on which side of history they will be on when this case study of environmental racism is written. A broken permitting process—that absolutely must be fixed—is no excuse for worsening environmental racism in the here and now. Chicago officials should fight against the racist structuring of health risks rather than participating in its creation.
“...thank you for the input that you have provided on the Southside Recycling permit application so far – and for invoking Healthy Chicago 2025 to ensure that CDPH and the City are accountable to our health and racial equity commitments. At the same time, we recognize that the issues at play here are much larger than a single facility, or even a community.

Commissioner Allison Arwady, MD, MPH (March 18, 2021 ‘Dear Colleagues’ Letter)
“Looking toward potential future actions and highlighting past plans cannot obfuscate your current responsibility and authority on this General Iron/RMG permitting decision.”

“We object to the language in your response that says that the Southeast Side is a “vulnerable community” without a statement of the critical context in which the City itself has for decades made and allowed structurally racist decisions to concentrate pollution and other health risks in communities of color, including the Southeast Side as one such concentration of pollution.”
January 6, 2022.

To:
Honorable Lori Lightfoot, Chicago Mayor
Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)
Candace Moore, Chief Equity Officer, City of Chicago

Subject: RMG/Southside Recycling Permit Application and the Imperative to Deny the Permit

We, undersigned organizations, and individuals, write to you as your public health colleagues to communicate to you and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) our insistence that the permit application for the RMG/Southside Recycling, which acquired the assets of General Iron in Lincoln Park in the fall of 2019, be denied. The well-documented excess burden of pollution already experienced by residents living in Southeast Chicago is strong enough evidence against a permit for the RMG/Southside Recycling’s facility in the Southeast Side. The decision to issue the permit would be in direct opposition to the shared vision to close the racial life expectancy gap in Chicago that we as public health professionals have committed to in Healthy Chicago 2025 which envisions a city where all people and all communities are empowered, free from oppression, and strengthened by equitable access to resources, environments and opportunities that promote optimal health and well-being.
“The researcher is very connected to the environmental advocacy groups and is not someone I can reason with...You may need to engage the Chancellor if you want this to be stopped.” Julie Morita, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health, May 2, 2018 e-mail to David Reifman

Our Solidarity Activities to #StopGeneralIron

- **Following the lead of impacted residents**
- Solidarity Fast, On-line Forums
- Op-Ed
- Social Media (Twitter)
- Joining & speaking at Protests
- Invited speakers at press conferences
- Strategizing within CHE and with resident organizers, others
- Organizing open letters
- Critique of flawed HIA process (Joanna Tess, Press Conf)

Source: https://twitter.com/CHIhungerstrike/status/1459648555254263808
Questions

• What are lessons and insights about building people power from the #StopGenerallIron victory? Can they be used in other EJ struggles?
• Are governmental public health leaders able to advance health equity? Who are public health leaders?
• How does a structurally racist, segregated, and neoliberal Chicago block the social justice values & ethics of public health?
• How can examining the history of environmental justice in Chicago and the USA help build the movement for EJ?
References


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https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/HC2025_917_FINAL.pdf


References, continued


general-iron/


Sarju, Isiah. (2021-22.). Photos: Slides 2 (middle); 5; 6; 7.

#StopGeneralIron Hunger Strike [@CHIlhungerstrike]. (2021, November 13). Full video of @CHECookCounty member @_joannatess’ contribution during our press conference this past week (1/3) https://t.co/kkm2yks3Ah [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/CHIlhungerstrike/status/1459648555254263808

Thank you!

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Please follow @CHECookCounty, & join the mailing list at CHECookCounty.org
Bibliography and slides will be posted at CHECookCounty.org

Build Power for Health Equity

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Wesley Epplin  Joanna Tess
Patricia Fron  Griselle Torres
Booker Marshall
APPENDIX
Principles of Environmental Justice

PREAMBLE

WE THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:
Principles of Environmental Justice

• 1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

• 2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

• 3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
Principles of Environmental Justice

• 4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

• 5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

• 6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
Principles of Environmental Justice

• 7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

• 8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

• 9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

Principles of Environmental Justice

• 11. Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

• 12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

• 13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

• 14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
Principles of Environmental Justice

• 15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

• 16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

• 17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.