

The current issue (Sept 2003) of "Black Enterprise" magazine features a full page article entitled "Saving The Planet" (below) with illustrations of farmed animals citing a study that found African-Americans are more likely than white Americans to consumer less meat to protect our environment.

The press release of the study issued by the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources is included in this email beneath the article.

The full study is published in the June issue of the peer-reviewed journal, "Environment."

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Title: SAVING THE PLANET

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SAVING THE PLANET

Report debunks myth that African Americans don't care about the environment

When racial discrimination and inadequate education are immediate worries for African Americans, environmental welfare isn't a priority--or so says the stereotype. But "Dispelling Old Myths: African American Concern for the Environment," a report published in the June 2003 issue of Environment magazine, disproves many of these assumptions.

According to a study conducted in the Detroit metropolitan area, 23% more blacks than whites cited neighborhood environmental problems as among their most significant concerns. Although whites mentioned global environmental concerns 16% more often than blacks, most of their responses were in regard to ozone depletion, which results in skin cancer, a disease that affects whites disproportionately more than African Americans.

Paul Mohai, the author of the report and an associate professor at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, says, "There is so much evidence [that blacks] are concerned [about the environment]. Unfortunately, those concerns have been invisible to the majority of Americans and [to] traditional environmentalists."

African American environmental concerns may be a result of the poorer environmental conditions in which many blacks live. But there is no statistical difference between the way blacks and whites rate the seriousness of nature preservation issues, such as lack of open space, oil spills, and national park preservation. In some cases, when compared with white Americans, substantially higher percentages of African Americans rated rain forest extinction, acid rain, and the greenhouse effect as "very

serious." This negates the assumption that social issues affecting African Americans take precedent over their concerns about the environment. "The results are more than just a fluke," says Mohai.

The report also explains that African Americans also take an active role in dealing with environmental issues. In 1980, protests by African Americans in Warren County, North Carolina, led campaigns to reduce hazardous pollution in the state inciting congress to pass the Superfund Act.

Respondents who "often" or "always" make pro-environment lifestyle choices.

Legend for Chart:

B - Blacks

C - Whites

A	B	C
Recycle	44%	64%
Buy pesticide-free food	37%	29%
Drive less	17%	10%
Refuse to eat meat	15%	7%

PHOTO (COLOR)

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By Marcia A. Wade

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African Americans care about the environment as much or more than whites  
ANN ARBOR, Mich. Contrary to commonly held assumptions, African Americans are as concerned as white Americans and in some cases more so about environmental issues.

Paul Mohai, associate professor at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment, is the author of a new study, the first comprehensive examination to date of the environmental concerns, priorities and actions of African Americans. The study, entitled "Dispelling Old Myths: African American Concern for the Environment," will be published as the cover story of the June 2003 issue of Environment magazine.

"The conventional wisdom is that, due to greater concerns about jobs, crime, education and other 'survival' issues, African Americans are unconcerned about the environment," says Mohai. "This study provides clear evidence that conventional wisdom is wrong."

The study draws on national data sets as well as data from the Detroit Metropolitan Area. These include three decades of data from the National Opinion Research Center, U-M Detroit Area Studies from 1990 and 2002, two decades of data from the League of Conservation Voters, and the People of Color Environmental Groups Directory. The study examines not just the environmental attitudes of African Americans but also lifestyle choices, political actions, environmental group memberships, and the environmental voting records of African American legislators.

Among the key findings:

- African Americans are more likely than white Americans to make lifestyle choices that help protect the environment in the categories of buying pesticide-free foods (37 percent of African Americans versus 29 percent of whites), consuming less meat (15 percent of African Americans versus 8 percent of whites), and driving less (16 percent of African Americans versus 10 percent of whites). However, African Americans are less likely than whites to recycle (44 percent of African Americans versus 64 percent of whites).

- African Americans are as likely as white Americans to belong to environmental groups. According to a 1993 national survey, ten percent of African Americans and whites belonged to an environmental group. In 2000, nine percent of whites and eight percent of African Americans belonged to an environmental group. However, rather than joining traditional environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club or the World Wildlife Fund, African Americans frequently form their own groups and mobilize on a grassroots level.

- African Americans express significantly greater concern than whites about their local environment. According to Mohai, this correlates with the poorer environmental quality found in African American neighborhoods. Neighborhood environmental problems, such as high noise levels, abandoned houses, trash, litter, rats, roaches, or other pests were cited as among the most important environmental problems facing the country by 26 percent of African Americans surveyed, compared to only 3 percent of whites.

- African Americans in Congress have been among the strongest and most consistent supporters of environmental protection legislation over the past two decades. Average pro-environmental voting scores for African American members in the House of Representatives have ranged from about 75 percent to 85 percent, while for other House Democrats and for House Republicans average scores have ranged from about 60 percent to 80 percent and 20 percent to 40 percent, respectively.

"Environmental issues are not 'luxury' issues to African Americans," says Mohai. "Survey results such as these demonstrate that environmental quality issues are a priority on many different levels."

Environment is a peer-reviewed magazine written by authoritative scientists and policymakers, yet it is accessible to a more general audience. It is published by Heldref Publications, the publishing division of the non-profit Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, based in Washington, D.C. ([www.heldref.org](http://www.heldref.org)).

The University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment supports the protection of the Earth's resources and the achievement of a sustainable society. Faculty and students strive to generate knowledge, develop innovative policies and refine new techniques through research and education ([www.snre.umich.edu](http://www.snre.umich.edu)).