

Oral History Interview Protocol: Environmental Justice in Hartford

As indicated in brackets below, this interview guide is designed for two types of interviewees:

- *Those with knowledge of/experience of MIRA trash incinerator and the remediation process.*
- *Those with knowledge of/experience of other environmental justice issues in Hartford.*

Introduction to the Interview:

- Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.
- Our goal is to understand your experiences and insights related to environmental justice and health in Hartford, [especially related to the MIRA trash incinerator and the process to close it and clean it up].
- There are no right or wrong answers—just your story and perspective matter.
- The interview will be recorded and insights will contribute to our research and future exhibits, but your identity will remain confidential unless you choose to share it publicly via the consent form you completed.
- [For those who grant permission to be identified in publications/exhibits] During the interview, may we take a few pictures, which could be used to accompany your words in the exhibit?

General Background and Personal Experience [MIRA-specific]:

- Can you please start by introducing yourself and telling us a little bit about where you live in the Hartford area and how long you've lived here?
- Before we turn to discussing the MIRA trash incinerator, we wanted to start by asking: what are some things you like or value about the natural environment in your neighborhood, or in the Hartford area more broadly?
- Turning to the trash incinerator, can you tell us how you first learned about it, and what your first impressions were?
- The people we're interviewing have different experiences with the MIRA trash incinerator – as residents who were impacted, as people who worked to promote its closure or clean up, or as both. Can you tell us about your own experiences in relation to MIRA?
 - For residents, probe (where necessary):
 - How close is your home/school/place of work to the MIRA trash incinerator?
 - How long have/did you live/work/learn there?

- How did the incinerator impact quality of life and health for you and your neighbors? (e.g. odor, noise, air quality, etc.)
- For advocates, probe (where necessary):
 - How did you become involved with advocacy related to MIRA? (Through any specific individuals or organization?)
 - And when was that? What year?
 - What led you to want to take action?
 - (For GHIAA-associated advocates) How did your spiritual/religious worldview or your religious/faith community contribute to your decision to take action?

General Background and Personal Experience [other environmental focus]:

- Can you please start by introducing yourself and telling us a little bit about where you live in Hartford and how long you've lived here?
- What are some things you like or value about the natural environment in your neighborhood, or in Hartford more broadly?
- What concerns do you have about the natural environment in your neighborhood, or in Hartford more broadly?
 - For instance, air quality, water, trash management, green space and that sort of thing?
 - What about trash – its processing and disposal – how does that affect the environment in your neighborhood?
- The people we're interviewing have different experiences with environmental issues in Hartford – as residents who are impacted, as people who have advocated for change, or as both. Can you tell us about your own experiences with environmental issues in Hartford?
 - For residents, probe (where necessary):
 - How close is your home/school/place of work to the [issue]?
 - How long have/did you live/work/learn there?
 - How did the [issue] impact quality of life and health for you and your neighbors?
 - For advocates, probe (where necessary):
 - How did they become involved with environmental advocacy? (Through any specific individuals or organization?)
 - And when was that? What year?
 - What led you to want to take action on this issue?
 - (For GHIAA-associated advocates) How did your spiritual/religious worldview or your religious/faith community contribute to your decision to take action?

Health and Environmental Impact [MIRA-specific]:

- How do you think the MIRA trash incinerator affected the health of people in Hartford?
 - Are there any health issues that seem to be more common in the surrounding community (or among your neighbors), which you think might be linked?
 - *If* the interviewee asks for examples, the interviewer could mention asthma, skin conditions, reproductive challenges, and cancers associated with toxic pollutant exposure.
 - Do you or someone in your family experience health conditions that you think might be linked to the incinerator? Can you share those experiences?

Health Impacts [general environmental issues]:

- How do you think the environment in Hartford affects the health of people who live here?
 - Are there any health issues that seem to be more common in your community (or among your neighbors) that you think might be linked to environmental factors?
 - *If* the interviewee asks for examples, the interviewer could mention asthma, skin conditions, reproductive challenges, and cancers associated with toxic pollutant exposure.
 - Do you or someone in your family experience health conditions that you think might be linked to environmental factors?
- Are there any particular places in Hartford where the natural environment is more harmful to health? Can you describe what makes those places problematic?

MIRA Advocacy, Closure and Remediation [MIRA]

- Were you involved in any efforts to raise awareness or advocate for change around the impacts of the MIRA incinerator? [Or, tell us more about your efforts to raise awareness or advocate for change around the MIRA incinerator.]
 - Probe: Were there any community actions, protests, or other efforts to raise awareness and advocate?
 - When?
 - Which organizations or individuals were the leaders?
 - Where relevant: How did religious/faith communities contribute?
 - Who was involved? (Neighbors, others?)
 - What was the response or impact? What happened next?
 - [From advocates, probe to understand the process that led to the incinerator's closure, who contributed and how.]
- How did you feel when you learned that the MIRA trash incinerator was closing?
- How do you think the closure has affected the neighborhood for people who live, learn, or work here?
 - Probe: Since the incinerator's closure, have you noticed any changes in the surrounding natural environment?
- If the MIRA trash incinerator site were to be redeveloped, what kind of development would you like to see in its place?

- Probe: What kind of developments do you think would most benefit your community?
- Probe: Would you like to see more green space, housing, businesses, or something else entirely?
- There has been some discussion about the MIRA trash incinerator reopening. What are your thoughts on this possibility?
- When considering what happens to the MIRA site in the future, who do you think should get a say, and who should make the final decision?
- There's some ongoing discussion about the possibility of transferring some of the remaining MIRA reserve funds to an Environmental Justice Fund that would be used to address the lingering impacts of the trash incinerator.
 - What are your thoughts on this idea?
 - Who should get a say in how the fund is used, and who should make the final decisions?
- (Where relevant) How does your spiritual/religious worldview or your religious/faith community contribute to your views on these questions?

Environmental Advocacy and Remediation [general environmental issues]

- Have you been involved in any efforts to raise awareness or advocate for change around environmental issues in Hartford? [Or, tell us more about your efforts to raise awareness or advocate for change around the environmental issues in Hartford.]
 - Probe: Were there any community actions, protests, or other efforts to raise awareness and advocate?
 - When?
 - Which organizations or individuals were the leaders?
 - Where relevant: How did religious/faith communities contribute?
 - Who was involved? (Neighbors, others?)
 - What was the response or impact? What happened next?
 - [From advocates, probe to understand the process, who contributed and how.]
- From your perspective, what should be done to address [this environmental issue] OR [improve the environmental health of Hartford, especially in communities most impacted by pollution and environmental hazards?]
- When trying to address environmental challenges in Hartford, who do you think should get a say, and who should make the final decision? (e.g. local government, organizations, or residents themselves)
- (Where relevant) How does your spiritual/religious worldview or your religious/faith community contribute to your views on these questions?

Environmental Justice [ALL]:

- We've been talking about environmental issues facing the city of Hartford. Thinking now about **suburbs** surrounding the city, do you think they are impacted by similar environmental challenges? Why or why not?
- From your perspective, do the suburbs affect environmental issues in Hartford in any way? If so, how?
- What role should the surrounding suburbs play in addressing environmental issues in Hartford, and why should they play this role?
 - E.g. Should they change their land development or other policies? Should they have to contribute remediation funds? Why?
- People often talk about how environmental issues affect different groups to different degrees using the term, "environmental justice." What does the term "environmental justice" mean to you?
- When thinking about how environmental issues disproportionately affect residents of color, people often use the term "environmental racism." How is that relevant in Hartford, in your view?
- If the Greater Hartford region were to achieve real environmental justice, how would it look different for your children, grandchildren, or generations in the future?
- In your opinion, what's the single most important step we could take to advance environmental justice in our region?
- (Where relevant) How does your spiritual/religious worldview or your religious/faith community contribute to your views of environmental justice?

Conclusion [ALL]:

- As we move toward our last few questions, what message would you like to convey to people who may not be aware of the environmental challenges facing Hartford?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences or thoughts on environmental justice and health in Hartford?
- And finally, is there anyone else we should talk to in order to understand these issues more deeply?

Closing:

Thank you so much for your insights. Your perspective really helps us to see how issues of environmental justice are impacting Hartford and what can be done about it. We're so grateful that you shared your time and your story.