



Environmental Waste Management and the Perpetuation of Racism

Nicholas Okwodu^{1*}, Goodhead D. A¹, Orike I. C¹, Nzenwa P. O²

¹Department of Biology Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Nigeria

²Department of Animal and Environmental Biology, IMO State University, Oweri, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Waste management usually relates to materials produced by human activities and the processes generally undertaken to reduce their effect on health, the environment and aesthetic. The paper discussed the waste management process, the central principles of waste management and the history of waste generation. In the legal aspect of waste management or disposal, the paper summarized various policies, regulations, acts, agencies and various activities that have been undertaken worldwide to maintain a sustainable disposal approach. It however stress that these regulations are used as administrative means and maintain the environmental quality for maximum number of users. The paper opined that the existence of racism in environmental waste disposal and exposure to hazards is not a secret. It presents a brief synopsis of racism in environmental prejudice as an epidemic, a cancer that subtly eats away relationship even when it is camouflaged behind a mask of politeness and petty incentives. It further states that racism will persist as long as one race is held superior and the other inferior especially as racist did not hide their hatred towards black. It however explained that non-compliance to environmental regulation can be challenged and addressed in a court of competent jurisdiction. It further stress that environmental justice need to be done and combine civil rights with environmental protection to demand a safe, healthy, life giving environment for everyone.

Keywords: Waste; Management; Racism; Legal; Toxicity

INTRODUCTION

Waste generation is an inevitable aspect of life and it becomes a matter of urgent need to observe the process from generation to disposal in order to determine the area of critical concern and tackle them to avoid pollution to a large extent and also preserve good health.

Waste is every one's business and there are two major types of waste-solid or refuse and liquid or sewage. The most dangerous aspect of waste is that which contains highly toxic and hazardous materials that are injurious to both human health and environmental quality. These are waste that requires special precaution in its storage, collection, transportation, treatment or disposal to prevent damage to persons or property and include flammable, explosive, caustic acid, highly toxic chemical substances for industrial, agricultural and domestic purposes.

They are classified into three-radioactive materials, medical wastes and non-radioactive liquid wastes.

These materials are fatal to humans or laboratory animals in low dose, toxic, carcinogenic, mutagenic or teratogenic to human or other life forms, ignitable with a flash point less than 60°C, corrosive or explosive or highly reactive. An organism can be exposed to toxicant at various stages of its life cycle but varies with the organism placement within its food web.

Waste generation rates have been increasing rapidly due to urbanization, industrialization, population growth in developing countries, improved living standards, improved healthcare and due to globalization, a number of new waste-streams have emerged, especially e-waste and hazardous waste. The volume of waste generated is also dependent on the economic status of the people [1]. Racism exists in environmental waste disposal and

Correspondence to: Nicholas Okwodu, Department of Biology Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Nigeria; E-mail: okwodunicholas@yahoo.com

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will persist as long as one race is held superior and other inferior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of waste generation

The history of waste mirrors that of societies that produced it, their relationship with the environment and the resources they mobilized. Throughout most of history the amount of waste generated by humans was insignificant due to low population density and low societal levels of the exploitation of natural resources. Common waste produced during pre-modern times was mainly ashes and human biodegradable waste and these were released back into the ground locally with minimal environmental impact.

The quantity of wastes produced remain small and the methods for collection and discharge often unsatisfactory which led to frequent denunciations of urban dirtiness. Following the onset of industrialization and the sustained urban growth of large population, they build up of waste in the cities caused a rapid deterioration in level of sanitation and the general quality of urban life.

In 1751, Corbyn Moris in London proposed that the cleaning of the city be put under one uniform public management. In 19th century, spurred by increasingly devastating cholera outbreak and the emergence of public health debate that the first legislation on the issue emerged [2].

The dramatic increase in waste for disposal led to the creation of the first incinerator plant (called destructor) built in 1874 by Maniova Alliott and Co. Ltd.

Similar municipal systems or waste disposal spring up at the turn of the 20th century in Europe and North America. In 1895, Harm Huizenga, a Dutch immigrant, began hauling garbage in Chicago [3]. In 1968, Wayne Huizenga, Dean Buntrock and Lary Beck founded waste management inc. and began aggressively purchasing many of the small garbage collection services across the country. In 1980s, waste management acquired Service Corporation of America (SCA) to become the largest waste hauler in the country. In 1993, waste management inc. changes to WMX technologies, inc.

DISCUSSION

Waste management

We all produce waste mainly in everything we do and these constitute the single largest source of non-point air and water pollution in the country. Therefore, waste is everyone's business and there are two types of waste-solid or refuse and liquid or sewage which may be classified as municipal (residential or commercial), agricultural and special (health care, household, hazardous waste, sewage, sludge). Hazardous and toxic wastes are the most dangerous aspect of waste that is injurious to both human health and environmental quality [4]. These are wastes that require special precaution in its collection, transportation, treatment or disposal to prevent damage to persons, property

and environment. Waste management usually relates to materials produce by human activities and the process generally undertaken to reduce their effects on health, the environment or aesthetic.

Waste management is therefore defined as the generation, prevention, characterization, monitoring, treatment, handling, re-use and residual disposal of solid wastes. The processes of waste management therefore include generation of waste, waste minimization, waste recycling and re-use, waste handling (storage, collection, transport and transfer), treatment, disposal and regulation, education and training, planning and implementation.

Waste management practices are not uniform among countries (developed and developing nations), regions (urban and rural areas) and sectors (residential and industrial).

Waste generation describes the steady flow of varied wastes that we all produce from domestic garbage and yard wastes to industrial, commercial and construction refuse [5]. Waste generation rates have been increasing rapidly due to population growth, urbanization, industrialization and due to improved living standards, healthcare and globalization. Waste generation is also dependent on the economic status of the people because higher income results in increased consumption patterns and further generation of more wastes.

Many of the materials in our waste stream could be valuable resources if they were not mixed with other garbage. This makes separation an expensive and sometimes impossible task [6]. Hazardous materials in the waste stream may get dispersed through thousands of tons of miscellaneous garbage.

Waste generated in the homes is usually held together or stand in a receptacle until collection time is due. Receptacles for storage of waste include polythene bags, propylene sacks, metal bins, old buckets and disposing wastes into pits dug at the back of the house. Storage of solid waste appropriately is one of the major steps of handling solid waste within our community while inappropriate storage is termed disposal.

Waste, once collected is moved from one source to a treatment or disposal site. The collection and transportation of waste is carried out using special types of trucks. Solid waste is not only rising in quantity but also changing in composition which is exacerbated by low collection rate [7]. The method of processing and recovery of waste include avoidance and reduction in quantity, biological processing, energy recovery, resource recovery and recycling.

Racism in waste disposal

Racism is the doctrine that one group of men is morally or mentally superior to another and that this superiority arises out of inherited biological differences.

Edward defines racism as a system of stratification by which the "human race" and their civilizations and cultures are hierarchically arranged each race occupying a fixed position from the bottom to the apex of the pyramid.

Some races are supposed to be permanently superior while others are innately inferior [8]. In the scheme of stratification, the black race occupies the bottom of the hierarchy while white race is at the apex.

Racism depicts unsavory, unwelcome and untold hatred of the supposed lower race(s) (blacks) by the supremacist (the whites), culminating in the condescending and humiliating treatment of the lower race in every sphere of life.

There is a belief that the fundamental inequality of the races should be preserved, otherwise the inferior races would contaminate them. The existence of racism and discrimination in the release, dumping and exposure to environmental toxicants is not a secret in modern days [9]. Environmental racism is manifested in inequitable distribution and exposure of environmental hazard based on races.

Prejudice in exposure to environmental hazard is an epidemic ravaging the entire world. This is because three out of five African-Americans and nearly half of all native Americans, Asians and Pacific island live in communities with one or more uncontrolled toxic waste sites, incinerators or major landfills. People of colour (blacks) in the United States and around the world are subjected to a disproportionately high level of environmental risks in their neighborhood and on their jobs. It is a reprehensive attitude or actions against the perceived lesser race which places them at the disadvantages position in politics, health, economy, culture, sports etc.

Implications of racisms

- It always ignites feelings of rage and desire to retaliate
- It encourages spirit of rebelliousness at the expense of morality
- It creates bad blood among nations
- Racism stultifies the development of those who suffer from it
- It divides nations within themselves, aggregates international conflicts and threatens world peace

Racism has persisted because there has never been cohesion on the part of the oppressed race to fight the scourge. It is institutionalized, hence a racist has unlimited power and complete elimination of racism may lead to loss of power, prestige, control and domination.

Overview of waste policy and regulations

The story starts with the environmental conservation act (No 7 of 1989) as amended. It set out the requirements for the management of waste and provided the first legal definition of waste. But, it was largely focused on the permitting, control and management of waste disposal sites. The intention being to reduce the environmental impacts associated with many poorly operated landfills, many of which were infact dumpsites [10]. DEAT could make regulation with regards to the reduction, re-use and recovery of waste.

Limited waste policy and regulation emerged between 1989 and 2007 with the publishing of the first National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS) and the white paper on integrated pollution and waste management.

Age of landfilling

Land filling of general and hazardous waste remains the dominant technology of waste management in developing countries, where disposal of waste, often to uncontrolled dumpsites, dominates.

A number of environmental and health concerns associated with landfills, prompted government to develop policy and regulations aimed at improving the way in which landfills were designed by the environmental conservation Act (No 73 of 1989, as amended and minimum requirements document series, published by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry) (DWAF) in 1994 and updated in 1998.

The emergence of recycling

Recycling has been taking place in developing countries for many decades, driven mostly by social needs and to a limited extents, the demand for certain resources.

Government's intention with regards to driving greater waste recycling were changed with the publication of the white paper on IP and W and the first NWMS [11]. DEAT published two guidelines aimed at assisting municipalities implementing the first NWMS.

The flood of regulation

The first waste legislation, the NEM: WA (Act 59 of 2008) was published and provided the mechanism to regulate every aspect of the waste and secondary resources value chain in South Africa. This was followed by a flood of regulation aimed at "controlling" to minimize the environmental and human health impacts associated with poor waste management, while at the same time, striving to drive waste up the hierarchy away from disposal towards re-use, recycle and recovery.

The drive for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme

With a strong historical command and control approach to waste management, the next stage was ushered in with the emergence of alternative policy instruments towards punitive economic instrument such as product taxes, EPR taxes and landfill taxes.

EPR is under consideration by a number of developing countries desperate to find alternative ways of funding basic waste effort to drive job creation and enterprise development.

International standards set up by the WHO and EU

The European Union (EU) has issued several directives to protect environmental quality. These include:

- Drinking Water Directive (SO1778/EEC) and set minimum concentration of various contaminants that are allowed in public drinking water
- Water quality limit for the production of fish habitats

Throughout history countries ordinance have protected emission of objectionable smoke, odors and noise. The primary standards of ambient air quality, water quality etc are intended to protect human health while the secondary standard are set to protect materials, crops, climate, visibility and personal comfort.

Environmental right

Environmental right is a clean, healthy environment, a basic human entitlement in the same sense as freedom from discrimination or the right to own property. A long history in international law argues that we all have an inalienable right to a safe, sustainable environment. The 1982 world charter for nature, assert that “man’s need can be met only by ensuring the proper functioning of natural system” and that it is “an essential human right to means of redress when the human environment has suffered damage or degradation”.

The 1987 world commission on environment and development stated that “all human beings have the fundamental right to an environment adequate for their health and well-being.

CONCLUSION

Waste management is becoming one of the key problems of the modern world, an international issue that is intensified by the volume and complexity of domestic and industrial wastes discarded by the society. As a result of population growth, improved living standards, improved healthcare and globalization, the overall volumes of waste generation have increased with the emergence of e-waste and hazardous waste. The specific response that is elicited by a given dose varies depending on the species being tested and variation that occur among individuals of the same species.

Exposure harm to organism depend on the frequency of exposure, routes of exposure, genetic makeup, age, gender and hormonal status, state of health and environmental factors.

Racism is still an art of environmental toxicology, a scourge that has eaten deep and pervades all aspect of environmental protection.

Racism will persist as long as it is tolerated, promoted in larger society and we remain consumers not producer. Just as Haile Selassie said, “Until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned.” Until there are no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation. Until colour of a man’s skin is of no more significant than the colour of his eye that word citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain in but a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained. The world of non-white is waiting for a period when the whole world will truly embrace colour blindness in environmental exposure to toxicants. A period of, “Rainbow

coalition” complete integration of all races. Laws and regulations have been made, amended, modified to regulate the present urbanization, population increase and the consequent indiscriminate dumping of waste. The United State environmental justice act was established in 1992 to identify areas threatened by the highest level of toxic chemicals, assess health effects caused by emissions of those chemicals and ensure that groups or individuals residing within those areas have opportunities and resources to participate in public discussions concerning sitting and clean-up of industrial facilities.

The related legislations are used as administrative means to manage and maintain the environmental quality for maximum number of users. Equity and environment, sustainability indicators was defined.

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