



# STORYLINES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

MAPPING A  
PEOPLE'S  
HISTORY OF  
UNIONTOWN



## DESIGN DOCUMENT PROTOTYPING PHASE

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BLACK BELT CITIZENS  
FIGHTING FOR  
HEALTH & JUSTICE

STORYLINES OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
JUSTICE



MAPPING A PEOPLE'S HISTORY  
OF UNIONTOWN

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ALABAMA  
DIGITAL  
HUMANITIES  
CENTER



Zev Ross  
Know Your Data



CCSS  
Center for Conservation  
Social Sciences

## STORYLINES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



## MAPPING A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF UNIONTOWN

## HUMANITIES THEMES

### HISTORY OF PERRY COUNTY

Reconstruction, Civil Rights, Social Justice

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ)

Key issues and their impact on  
communities

### EJ ISSUES TODAY IN UNIONTOWN

Uniontown's continuing story  
of resistance and resilience

## NARRATIVE SUMMARY

Storylines of Environmental Justice: Mapping A People's History of Uniontown will transform oral histories into an interactive digital platform for the public that showcases community member voices, uncovers Civil Rights histories, and connects them with contemporary environmental injustices facing Uniontown and countless other minority communities like them in the United States.

This project will create a digital StoryMap with an Omeka community oral history archive that will engage users in the three humanities themes for the project:

1. Reconstruction and civil rights history of Perry County
2. Environmental justice and livable geographies
3. The social context of contemporary environmental justice issues in Perry County

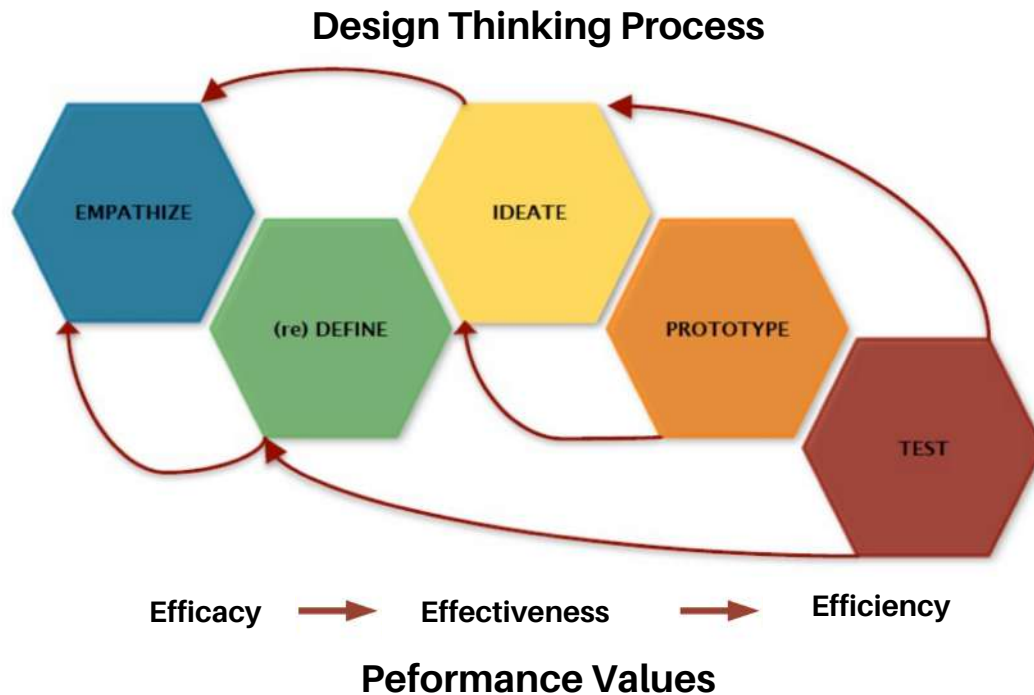
The Omeka site will serve as an archive for the oral histories as well as a public interface to engage with these stories and contribute content. Omeka is an open-source platform with robust support, which makes it a sustainable option to house the project. The StoryMap weaves together the stories and contextualizes them in the geographical and historical landscape.

To develop and test the prototype, the project will use StudioLab's co-design process, working with key stakeholders.

*A StoryMap is an animated web application that tells a story as a user scrolls through maps and other digital materials*



# DESIGN METHODOLOGIES



## CRITICAL DESIGN THINKING

To integrate the interests of target audiences, we will use StudioLab's critical design thinking approach which balances the performance values of cultural efficacy, technical effectiveness, and organizational efficiency.

Meeting weekly with key stakeholders, we:

**Empathize** - Learning and sharing stories, experiences, and initial desires. We then  
**Define** - Refining and defining the core design challenge, within which we next  
**Ideate** - Brainstorming and generating solutions and experiences, from which we  
**Prototype** - Building low-resolution designs for iterative development, before we  
**Test** - Putting high-res, fully developed deliverable before end users for testing.

Over the course of the initial 3 months, we execute three full cycles of this process, integrating stakeholder input and feedback into each successive iteration.

Our recursive co-design process ensures that **cultural efficacy** (doing the right thing) guides our **technical effectiveness** (doing that thing) and **organizational efficiency** (doing that thing in a sustainable manner).

This critical design thinking approach is informed by research and practices of design justice, pluriversal design, and participatory action research.



## AUDIENCES

- COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS
- STUDENTS AND ADULT LEARNERS
- LOCAL AND REGIONAL DECISION-MAKERS
- RESEARCHERS AND THE MEDIA
- ACTIVISTS AND ADVOCATES



*Photo: Commissioner and Uniontown resident, Ben Eaton with Senator Booker*

## USER EXPERIENCES

Our human-centered design process will focus on ensuring that the oral histories, interactive map, and other components of the Storylines of Environmental Justice platform will offer rich and meaningful user experiences for a variety of stakeholders. Using a co-design process involving stakeholders ensures their input and feedback in the planning, development, and testing phases.

Our planned UX goals: with the Storylines, **community members** can access and share stories, images, and other content; **students** young and old can learn about Perry County and the history of the Black Belt region; **decision-makers** can draw on community voices to better understand and address pressing environmental and social justice issues; **scholars and journalists** interested in these issues can likewise discover local voices and histories for their research and publications; and environmental justice **advocates and activists** can turn to Storylines of Environmental Justice as platform for both shared learning and informed action.

Over the course of the initial three to six months, StudioLab will meet regularly with key stakeholders, including members of community organizations, schools, and advocacy groups to co-design and develop the platform prototype. A design team composed of researchers and students from the humanities and information sciences will help refine and develop the UX for the targeted audiences, seeking to better understand their perspectives, concerns, and potential for engagement. Using methods of critical design thinking, design justice, and pluriversal design, the team will employ an iterative process of rapid prototyping to optimize user experiences.



## PLATFORM NAVIGATION

### Storylines of Environmental Justice

#### About the project

##### Information about the community and StoryLines project

This section will provide historical background of Uniontown, Perry County, and the Black Belt region, as well as information about key individuals, communities, and events concerning environmental and social injustice, resistance, and resilience.

It will also describe the Storylines of Environmental Justice project, its goals, and key stakeholders in its development.

#### Digital Archive and StoryMap

##### Primary platform area for accessing Humanities content

This section will contain the StoryLines Archive and the StoryMap.

The Digital Archive will feature the oral history audio and video files, transcripts, images, timeline, and other content.

The interactive StoryMap will enable visitors to connect the stories of environmental and social justice to place and history.

#### Share Humanities Content

##### Primary platform area to upload or share Humanities content

This section allows users to contribute or share digital content.

Users can upload audio, video, and photos directly to the Omeka platform, adding to the Storylines Archive.

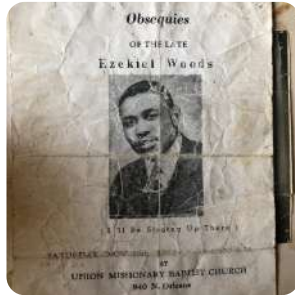
Visitors can also share digital content from the Archive with friends and communities using a wide variety of social media platforms.



# STORYLINES ARCHIVE



## USER GENERATED CONTENT



Family photos and artifacts, like the ones shared by Deacon Samuel Woods and David Moore of Uniontown during their oral history interviews, are just a few examples of the types of user-generated content that community members and others can contribute to the Omeka site. This can become a space of shared learning with community members shaping the telling of Uniontown's rich history.

## CONTRIBUTE

What type of item do you want to contribute? Image

### Contribute a Image


Upload a file Choose File No file chosen

Image Description An account of the resource

Personal Information

Name

Email Address

☐ I'm not a robot 

☐ Publish my contribution on the web.

In order to contribute, you must read and agree to the [Terms and Conditions](#)

☐ I agree to the Terms and Conditions.

Contribute

Users of the site will be invited to share their own stories that intersect with history and current life in Uniontown in Perry County, AL. We will provide prompts and best practices for photos and video.

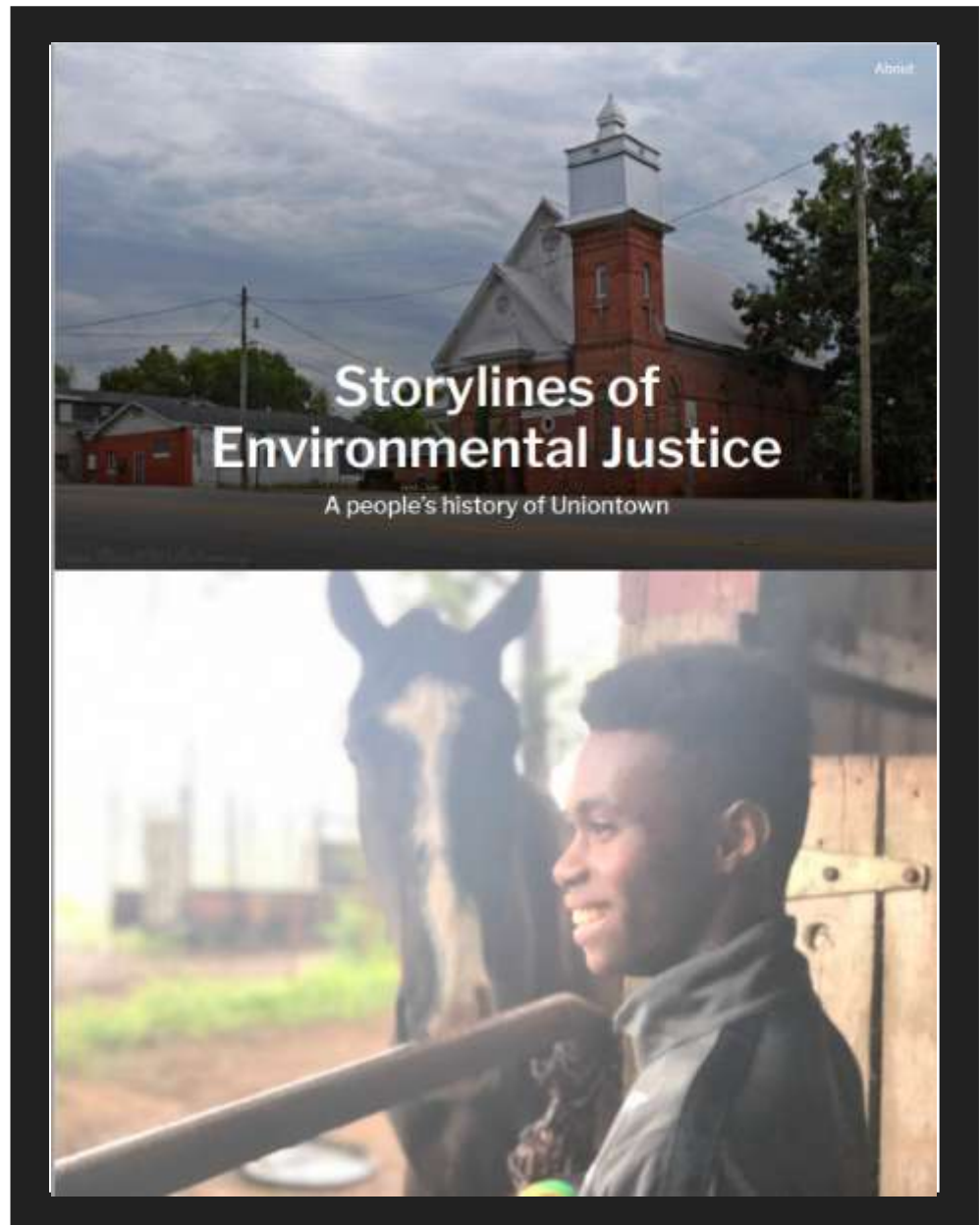
Users will have the option to contribute: photos, videos, and stories. Content can come from Uniontown residents, Black Belt residents, college students, and researchers.

User contributions will be moderated by members of the project's digital media team and the university policy regarding communication clearly linked and posted. This will ensure that content is vetted before posting.





LANDING  
PAGE



The user will enter the StoryMap through a main landing page which will have a large, engaging image and potentially a video with no sound. As the user scrolls, they will see another image of Uniontown that represents the community and is hopeful and demonstrates the strength of the community.

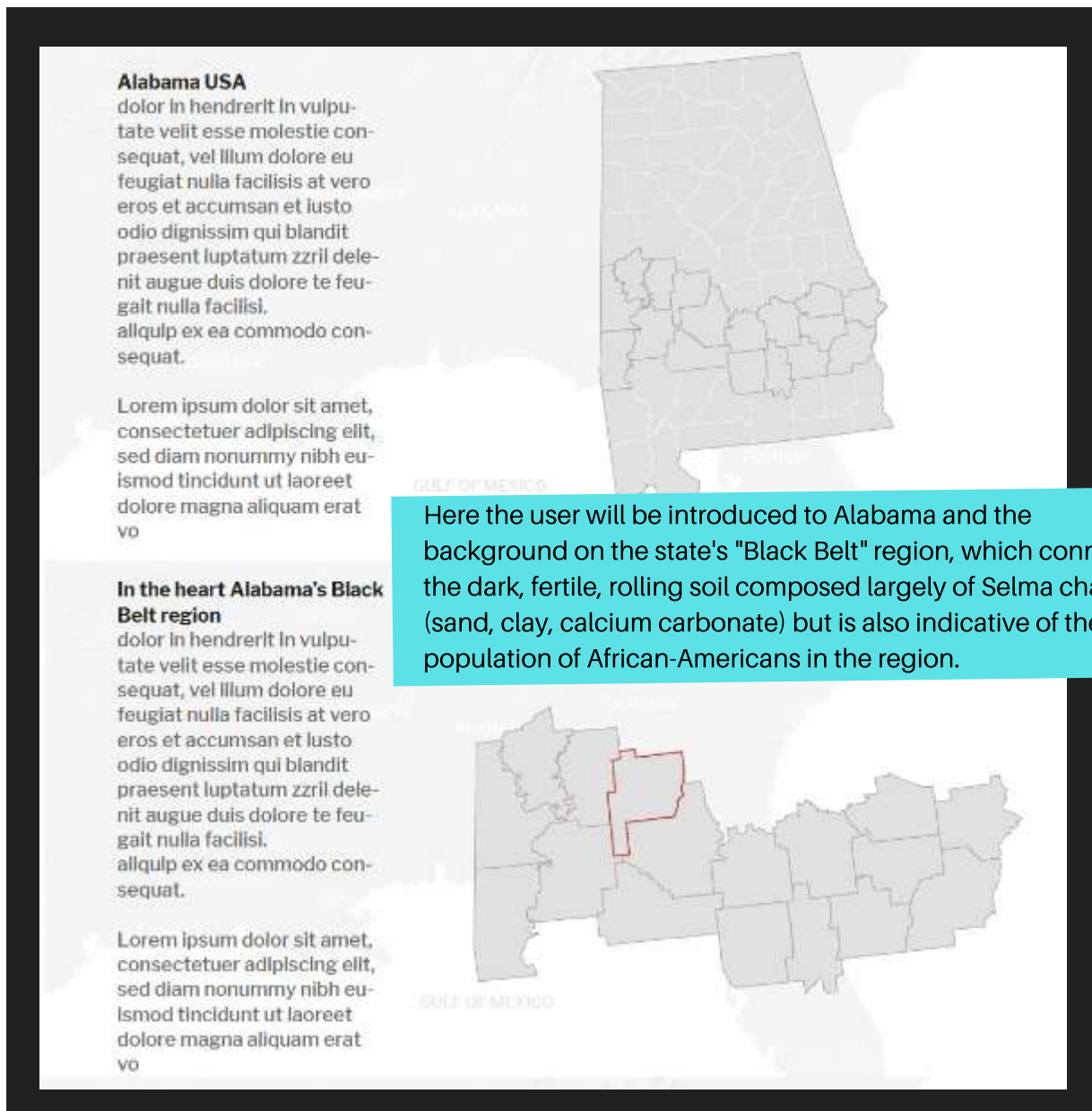
The initial map that the users see will be a set of images that arrive and fade and are designed to give users geographic context for the story -- southern USA, Alabama, the Black Belt region, Perry County, and, finally, Uniontown.





## ALABAMA AND THE "BLACK BELT"

\*Latin text is placeholder



Here the user will be introduced to Alabama and the background on the state's "Black Belt" region, which connotes the dark, fertile, rolling soil composed largely of Selma chalk (sand, clay, calcium carbonate) but is also indicative of the large population of African-Americans in the region.

The Black Belt is a region of the U.S. state of Alabama. The term originally referred to the region's rich, black topsoil, much of it in the soil order Vertisols. The term took on an additional meaning in the 19th century, when the region was developed for cotton plantation agriculture, in which the workers were enslaved African Americans. After the American Civil War, many freedmen stayed in the area as sharecroppers and tenant farmers, continuing to comprise a majority of the population in many of these counties.



# STORYMAP



## PERRY COUNTY AND UNIONTOWN

\*Latin text is placeholder

### Perry County

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### Uniontown

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### Uniontown

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Here the user will learn the general overview of Perry County and Uniontown. Users will learn about how these demographics shape the culture and economics in both of these geographic locations.

The majority of the population is below the poverty level and unemployed. Since the population is primarily Black, readers will be able to interpret and learn about the disproportionate patterns of inequality.



Here the user will learn about Perry County as the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. Much of the history that is embedded in Perry County has shaped the strong and resilient attitudes of the residents and the events that occur today.



HEART OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

### Heart of the Civil Rights movement and a history steeped in strong black leadership that continues today

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Just a twenty-minute drive from Uniontown, Coretta Scott King was born in Marion, Alabama. As a result, she and her husband, Martin Luther King Jr. frequented Perry County for visits, meetings, and events. Users will learn the overview of events and people that frequented Perry County that were instrumental in the civil rights movement.



# STORYMAP



## PERRY COUNTY AND UNIONTOWN

\*Latin text is placeholder



BLACK LEADERS

### A rich history steeped in Black leadership and self-determination

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Here users will learn about specific Black leaders and Black leadership in Perry County in more depth. Leaders include William Pettiford who resided in Uniontown, Alabama. He was a minister and banker who founded the Alabama Penny Savings Bank. He contributed significantly to the Black economy in Alabama during the Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction Era (*Wilson Fallin, 1997, The African American Church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1815-1963*). Leaders like Pettiford are pertinent to the development of Black leadership in Perry County today.





# STORYMAP



## ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES

\*Latin text is placeholder

Here the user will learn about the environmental injustices. It is important to understand the background of environmental justice before fully understanding the specific environmental injustices in Perry County. Here users will also learn the history and branches of environmental justice. The environmental justice movement was inspired by the civil rights movement and began in 1982 in Warren County, North Carolina. Protestors gathered in this predominantly Black county to fight against the construction of landfill that would deposit massive amounts of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).



ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

### Environmental injustice

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Soon after this event, researchers began taking interest and many studies were undertaken to examine the connections between hazardous facilities and minority communities. It wasn't until then that there became documented scientific studies of this phenomena. Since then, environmental justice serves as a movement to continue the agenda that was initiated in 1982.



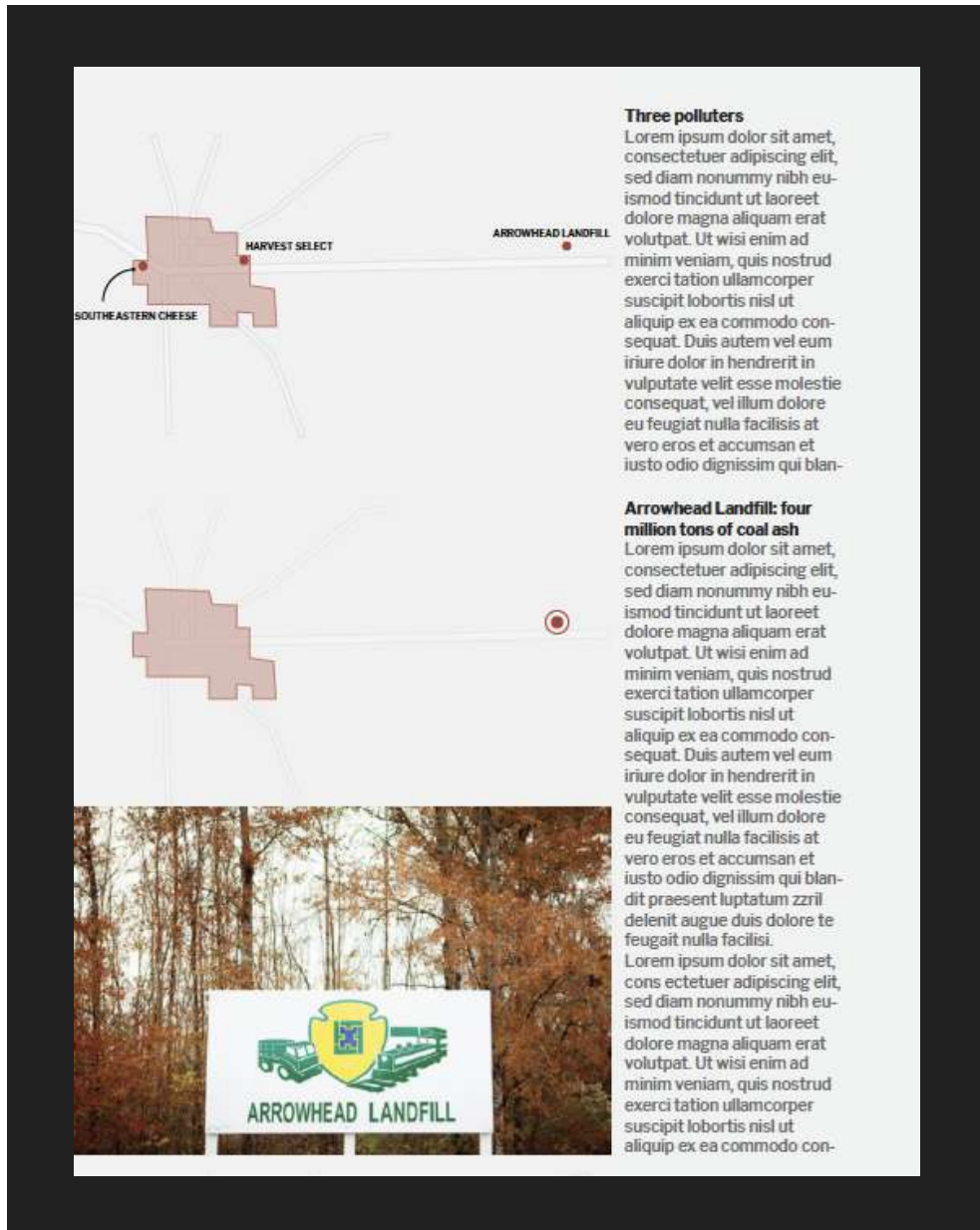


# STORYMAP



## ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES

\*Latin text is placeholder



The second map, associated with the Environmental Injustice section, similar to the first map, will be animated and give the user a sense of how close these major polluters are to town and what impact they have on the daily lives of the community members. The timeline will showcase key events in Uniontown's history.

Here the user will learn about the environmental injustices in Uniontown. Within a four mile radius, there are three hazardous facilities that poison the residents. Arrowhead Landfill has deposited four million tons of uncapped coal ash in the heart of the town. As if this wasn't enough, the Harvest Select Catfish Plant and Southeastern Cheese Corporation release tons of gallons of wastewater that seep into the groundwater and waterways causing adverse health effects on the residents.

These toxins have also been reported to poison the crops and livestock of this primarily rural town. Users will learn the severity of these issues and the extent that it affects all inhabitants of Uniontown.



# STORYMAP



## ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES



Users will learn more in depth about each of Uniontown's industrial facilities and the health effects that they cause as well as the history of each facility.

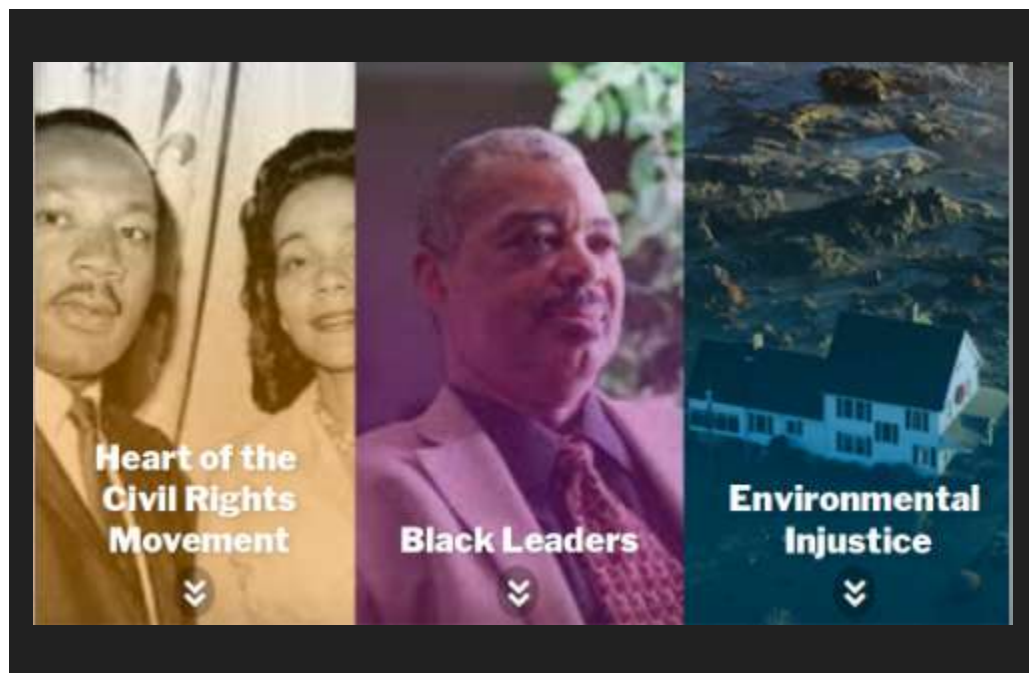
The Tennessee Valley Authority transported four million tons of coal flyash to Arrowhead Landfill in Uniontown. Coal ash is a very toxic substance containing high amounts of arsenic, mercury, lead, etc.

However, coal ash is currently classified as non-hazardous by the EPA. In addition, the Harvest Select Catfish plant and Southeastern Cheese Corporation produce massive amounts of wastewater that consume the town's water treatment system that was originally constructed to accommodate only the Uniontown residents. Now, residents must face a lagoon for a sewage system and suffer from the improper sanitary water system. The wastewater also seeps into the ground and the primary waterways that residents fish in and drink from.

# STORYMAP



## ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES



When users come to this page they can click on three options to go into greater depth of the three topics introduced in the scroll story.

**Heart of the Civil Rights Movement:** Story of Coretta Scott King from Marion, County Seat of Perry County. Significant places relative to Civil Rights will be shown to users (e.g. Quinn Chapel in Uniontown). Census data showing patterns of socio-demographic change over time. Trends show disproportionate inequality in Perry County and Uniontown with regard to employment, education, and poverty. They can also view excerpts from oral histories (and associated artifacts) that discuss their perspectives on civil rights.

**Black Leaders:** Here users can meet a Uniontown resident. This will feature people and their community oral histories from Uniontown and will link to the Omeka site for users that want to delve deeper into the individual stories and those interested in contributing content. They can also view excerpts from oral histories that discuss their perspectives on Black leadership in Perry County.

**Environmental Injustice:** This will take users to the part of the story map where they can view the photos and locations of the industrial facilities that are impacting the health of the community. They can also view excerpts from oral histories that discuss their perspectives on environmental justice

Each of the three elements of the story will be presented to the user as "bite-sized" chunks initially. These entry-level narratives will provide the user with a summary of each element and the hope is that even if users do not get beyond the initial scroll they will come away understanding the basics of three key elements.



# STORYMAP



## ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES



### Timeline



Here users will view a timeline of significant events in Perry County.

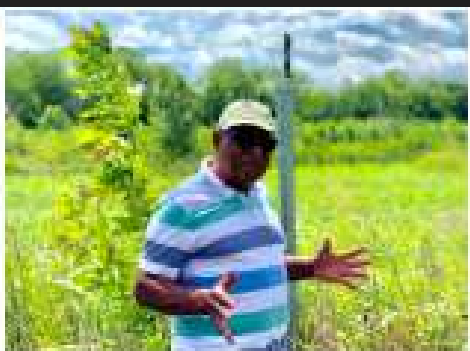
The events that will populate the timeline are currently cataloged on Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice website.



# STORYMAP



## ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES



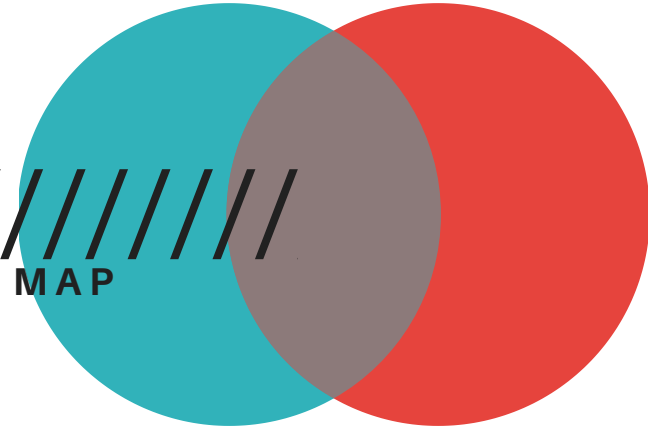
The introductory section ends by introducing the Uniontown Community Oral History Project and the rich set of materials collected by the project in an effort to entice the user to dig deeper. The user can learn more by clicking on one of the "In-Depth" sections at the end, one for each of the three key elements of the story. StoryMap will make use of materials stored in the Storylines CMS. Examples are presented in the following pages.

Users will benefit from seeing the transformative leadership and struggles of Uniontown as an exemplar for communities like it around the country.



“ HISTORY IS  
NOT A PENCIL  
WITH AN  
ERASER ”

//////  
STORY MAP



## MARY JONES-FITTS

### GENEOLOGIST

#### MEET A UNIONTOWN RESIDENT



“ THERE HAS TO BE  
SOME KIND OF LAW ON  
THE BOOKS THAT SAYS  
NOW IF YOU VANDALIZE  
A CEMETERY THEN YOU  
CAN GO TO JAIL FOR  
THAT OR YOU CAN BE  
FINED FOR THAT ”

“ I WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW YOU HAVE TO EMBRACE  
OUR HISTORY, WHETHER IT'S THE DARK SIDE OR THE  
LIGHT SIDE OR WHATEVER SIDE. YOU HAVE TO  
EMBRACE OUR HISTORY BECAUSE IT'S NOT GOING TO  
CHANGE. ”

*The StoryMap would show photos and locations of historical African-American cemeteries in Perry County and how many are in close proximity to industrial facilities.*

“ WHEN YOU GET TO HISTORY THEY LEAVE A LOT OF IT. THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW. ”

//////  
STORY MAP

## ALEX JONES FARMER

MEET A UNIONTOWN RESIDENT



“ I WAS OPPOSED TO THE LANDFILL BECAUSE I KNEW WHAT HAPPENED AT THREE-MILE ISLAND. I EQUATE THE COAL ASH TO THE SAME THING AS THE THREE-MILE ISLAND. ”

“ THERE'S A LOT OF CONTAMINANTS IN THE WATER--I DON'T KNOW IF ANYTHING GOT INTO THE STREAM OR SOMETHING THAT CAUSED ALL OF THEM TO START DYING, BUT I HAD LOST A LOT OF MY CATTLE. ”

*The StoryMap would show Mr. Jones' farm with photos of him and his livestock*

“ IT'S TIME FOR US TO  
BRING RACISM TO THE  
TABLE. WE ALL  
DESERVE RIGHTS.”

//////  
STORY MAP

MEET A UNIONTOWN RESIDENT

## ESTHER CALHOUN FORMER PRESIDENT

Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice



“ I'D LIKE TO SEE  
UNIONTOWN BECOME A  
TOWN AGAIN, BUT NOT  
ONLY UNIONTOWN, ALL  
COMMUNITIES IN RURAL  
AREAS, IN THE BLACK  
BELT, ALL OVER THE  
UNITED STATES. ”

“ THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO TRESSPASS OR NO  
RIGHT TO EVEN HAVE HEAVY EQUIPMENT OUT IN A  
HISTORICAL CEMETERY WHERE THERE ARE GRAVES.  
THOSE ARE MY PEOPLE. ”

*The StoryMap would show the location and photos of historical African-American cemetery that abuts the landfill that Mrs. Calhoun is discussing.*

“WHATEVER LITTLE  
FIGHT YOU HAVE IN YOU  
IS NEEDED HERE IN  
UNIONTOWN NOW.”

//////  
STORY MAP

MEET A UNIONTOWN RESIDENT

BEN EATON

PERRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER



“I TRULY BELIEVE THAT  
THESE THINGS WOULD  
NOT HAPPEN IN A  
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE  
COMMUNITY. THEY HAVE  
A TENDENCY TO SEEK OUT  
OUR COMMUNITY FIRST  
BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN  
ON THAT END OF THE  
STRING FOR THE  
LONGEST.”

“IT'S NOT JUST TOXIC FOR ME  
AND NOT YOU. IT'S THE SAME  
FOR BOTH OF US. SO WE ARE  
HOPING TO SEE SOME TYPE OF  
CHANGE AND WHAT THE STATE  
DOES FOR US--PROTECTING THE  
PEOPLE.”

*The StoryMap would connect the stories of Mr. Eaton to the the  
locations he is speaking about, including the landfill.*



## USER TYPOLOGIES

**Initial interest** predicts how interested the user is in the topics before visiting the website.

**Time spent** on website refers to the predicted amount of time the user spends on the website.

**Likelihood to share** refers to the possibility that the user will share the information about the website with other users.

**Benefit to user** predicts how much the user can gain from engaging with the sites.

## SCALE



The blue on the scale represents the percentage estimate of each characteristic as it pertains to each user.

## STAKEHOLDERS

 COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
AND ORGANIZATIONS

 STUDENTS AND  
ADULT LEARNERS

 LOCAL AND REGIONAL  
DECISION-MAKERS

 RESEARCHERS AND  
THE MEDIA

 ACTIVISTS AND  
ADVOCATES



# RESEARCHERS AND THE MEDIA

AGE RANGE: 35-65



## UX SCENARIOS

- Conduct research for publication
- Find connections between disadvantaged/vulnerable communities and toxic facilities
- Identify impact of coal ash
- Learn more about Black history and southern history in the U.S
- Gain local perspective about EJ issues

## INITIAL INTERESTS



## LIKELIHOOD TO SHARE



## TIME SPENT ON WEBSITE



## BENEFIT TO RESEARCHER



## PROS

- Our information can contribute to their research
- Stories can spread amongst academic scholars and through the media
- May contribute research and artifacts to Storyline archives

## CONS

- Not traditional academic publication
- May feel they already know topics addressed
- May be biased against information presented
- Competing time demands

# COMMUNITY MEMBERS & ORGANIZATIONS

AGE RANGE: 8-100



## UX SCENARIOS

- Uniontown residents learn about and contribute to their rich history
- Gain background information about general EJ issues
- If outside Uniontown, learn about a Black Belt region community
- Similar experiences and want to make personal and historical connections with persons of the project

## INITIAL INTERESTS

## LIKELIHOOD TO SHARE

## TIME SPENT ON WEBSITE

## BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY ORGS.

### PROS

- Could share history and contribute new historical data
- Stories can spread amongst similar communities
- Increased pride in the Black Belt region

### CONS

- May not be able to relate
- Tech experience may be lacking
- Experiences may contradict

# STUDENTS AND ADULT LEARNERS

AGE RANGE: 8-80



## INITIAL INTERESTS



## UX SCENARIOS

- Learn about the history before them
- Try to understand environmental issues that affect communities to this day
- May be visiting because of a class assignment or project
- Learn about importance of activism

## LIKELIHOOD TO SHARE



## TIME SPENT ON WEBSITE



## BENEFIT TO YOUNG ADULTS



## PROS

- Tech and social media expertise can help spread awareness
- Encourage other youth to take interests and start activist groups

## CONS

- May not be able to relate
- Competing time demands and short attention span
- May not find historical content engaging

# LOCAL AND REGIONAL DECISION-MAKERS

AGE RANGE: 21-70



## INITIAL INTERESTS



## TIME SPENT ON WEBSITE



## PROS

- Could contribute/share their stories
- May have similar historical and environmental experiences

## UX SCENARIOS

- Looks for policy-relevant information
- Learn about EJ issues from community point-of-view
- Seeks credible information to inform decisions
- Can apply what learned to their community
- Provides key connections to other decision-makers

## LIKELIHOOD TO SHARE



## BENEFIT TO DECISION-MAKERS



## CONS

- May not see the connection between their community and other Black Belt communities
- May not want to know about injustices/history

# ACTIVISTS AND ADVOCATES

AGE RANGE: 19-65



## INITIAL INTERESTS



## TIME SPENT ON WEBSITE



## PROS

- Tech and social media expertise can help spread awareness
- Encourage other youth to take interests and start activist groups

## UX SCENARIOS

- Connect with another environmental justice organization
- Learn about environmental justice issues in the Black Belt
- Learn how community narratives can be utilized to further social justice

## LIKELIHOOD TO SHARE



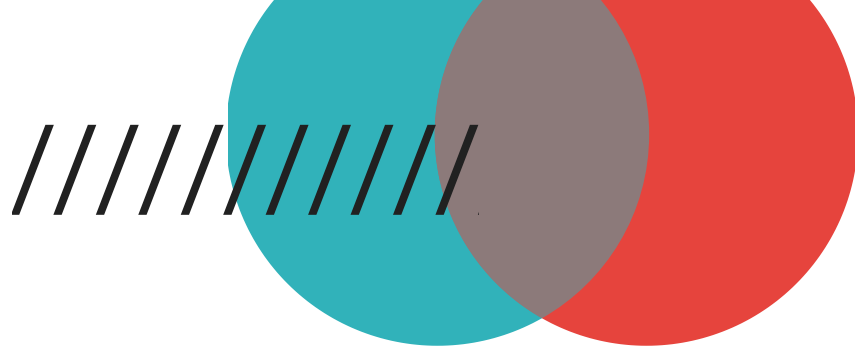
## BENEFIT TO COMMUNITY ORG



## CONS

- May have trouble connecting history with present day issues
- May not be aware of the StoryMap and digital archive





## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

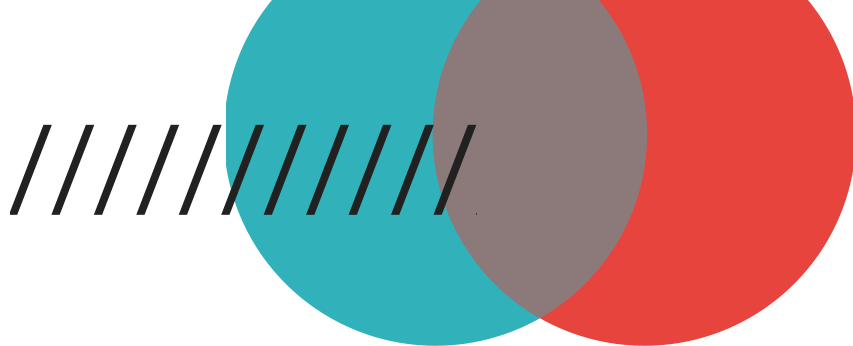
The project will be housed on an Omeka Classic installation, which is an open-source web-publishing platform that contains a content management system for supporting digital collections. The Alabama Digital Humanities Center (ADHC) at the University of Alabama Libraries will host, maintain, and build the platform for the oral histories. Dr. McDivitt has experience creating projects using the Omeka platform, and the ADHC already supports several projects using Omeka. The Alabama Digital Humanities Center's server is supported by the University of Alabama's Office of Information Technology (OIT), and both the ADHC and OIT create regular backups of content.

With Omeka, the content can be uploaded to the content management system, supports the implementation of Dublin Core metadata standards for the content, and allows for a relatively easy process for the content to be uploaded and disseminated through the curation of collections and exhibits. Dr. McDivitt will ensure that the project team knows how to upload new items into the Omeka backend, how to place it within an exhibit or a collection, and will continue to support the creation of the content in Omeka.

The Story Map will be designed in the collaborative prototyping tool Figma which allows for the rapid iterations necessary for high levels of participant engagement in the process of human centered UX design. Figma supports the visualization capacities necessary to deliver hi-fidelity mockups of the map, chart and scroll related animations.

The Story Map will be built by ZevRoss Spatial Analysis using the React JavaScript framework. We will make use of React Scrollrama for scroll animations along with D3 for chart-related transitions and Mapbox for maps and map-related animations. The application will be maintained in GitHub and both the development and production versions will be deployed to an Amazon Web Services server.





## SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The project will continue to adapt to technological changes as needed through regular updates, accessibility checks, and continued attention by both the Alabama Digital Humanities Center and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) at the University of Alabama. The server is provided through OIT, and the project would have regular updates and backups along with the other projects housed on the Alabama Digital Humanities Center's server.

ZevRoss Spatial Analysis will ensure that the Story Map application will use the most recent versions of the proposed web technologies and will ensure that patches are added when they become available. The prototype budget includes one year of maintenance including patches and updates on an as-needed basis on the application by ZRSA.



**Deacon Woods**  
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