

# Profit-Driven Policies on Waste are Fuelling Global Inequality

*Policies around waste management and processing are making global inequalities worse. A leading environmental expert is calling for change.*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, March 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Policies around waste management and processing are making global inequalities worse, according to an environmental professor.



We must join forces with others to advocate for a less contaminated and more socially just planetary system.”

*Professor Myra J Hird*

In new book [Waste: The Basics](#), the expert also says that consumers are being held ‘disproportionately’ responsible for the garbage crisis when industry produces more waste – and it’s often highly toxic.

Author Myra J Hird likens this tactic of blaming the public to campaigns by tobacco companies to draw attention away from the health and environmental risks of smoking.

Instead of blaming the public, Professor Hird calls out policies that prioritise a profit-driven approach to recycling. She also argues not only for more responsible consumption, but also for responsible production by manufacturers.

The academic, from Queen's University, Canada, says: “The global waste crisis will not be resolved until we turn off the waste-generating ‘tap’. And to do this, we need to consider what motivates producers to create products with known and unknown contaminants.

“We need to think about what regulatory and policy incentives and penalties to adopt to hold industry responsible for the products they produce. And the marketing that encourages, incites, shames, flatters and otherwise increases consumption of their products.

“We need national and international regulations that require producers to build product waste and contamination into their product production projections. All these amount to one overarching goal – to get producers to take responsibility for the waste that manufacturing, distribution and retail produces.”

Waste: The Basics is a call to action for policymakers to engage with waste as a social justice

issue. Based on social and environmental science, it provides evidence that attitudes towards waste in the U.S. and other countries are causing harm to lower-income nations and communities.

People of color are more likely to live closer to toxic waste sites and polluted areas in what is termed environmental racism. This is also the case with indigenous and income-insecure communities which has a major impact on health.

An example highlighted by the book is Louisiana, in the U.S., where a stretch of land along the Mississippi has been nicknamed 'cancer alley' because more than 200 petrochemical plants are sited there. Other examples given are 'sacrifice zones' where residents live immediately adjacent to heavily polluted industries.

Waste is increasing despite efforts by some governments and sections of industry. Other nations have backtracked on policies to protect the environment. Last month, President Trump signed an executive order backing the plastic production and fossil fuel sectors.

Waste: The Basics shows how a minority of people are significantly over-consuming. High-income countries account for 16% of the world's population but generate a third (34%) of the planet's garbage.

Private waste management firms are also encouraging households to dispose more to boost profits, according to the author. Professor Hird says single or short-use products and marketing campaigns that encourage consumption are to blame for throw-away societies.

Other issues which add to social injustice include waste export from wealthy to poor regions; the hazards and job insecurity faced by waste pickers; and waste 'landscapes' such as contaminated land.

Professor Hird outlines reasons why lower income communities are more likely to suffer the consequences of waste and pollution. They are less able to afford lawyers, to have time to protest against incinerators, and more likely to agree to a waste plant locally in return for financial compensation.

The author says the world waste crisis is a complex problem and individual action alone cannot solve the issue. Countries, associations and institutions must work together to establish processes that best protect the environment and prioritise waste reduction, adds Professor Hird.

She concludes: "We need to take action to reduce consumption whenever we can, try to consume differently within our means. We must join forces with others to advocate for a less contaminated and more socially just planetary system."

## Further Information

Waste: The Basics, by Myra J. Hird (Routledge, 2025)

ISBN: Paperback: 9781032504247 | Hardback: 9781032504285 | eBook: 9781003398424

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003398424>

## About the author

Myra J. Hird is a Full Professor, elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and Queen's National Scholar in the School of Environmental Studies, Queen's University, Canada. She is also director of Waste Flows, an interdisciplinary research project focused on waste as a global scientific-technical and socio-ethical issue. Professor Hird has published 13 books and over 90 articles; and represented Canada at the G7 in Paris, France.

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