

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - STORY

Name	Georgia Elliott-Smith
Details, area of experience	Anti-incineration campaigner and environmental engineer
Interview date	December 2020
Issues addressed	Environment
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input type="checkbox"/> age <input type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Dates mentioned	June 2020 – legal action started against the UK government over the pollution from incinerators. March 2021 – High Court case.
Locations referenced	Edmonton, London; Enfield; activists in America, Canada, New Zealand, Europe have contacted Georgia to say they are watching this case closely because, if successful, it sets a precedent internationally for waste incineration being included in Carbon taxation; Southwark – Coroners Court finding into the death of Ella Kissi-Debrah.
Campaigns, movements, protests	Anti-incineration campaigning; climate change and Extinction Rebellion; Black Lives Matter sharing information in Enfield about the anti-incinerator action.
Historical context	2020
Tactics	Legal action started against the UK government over the pollution from incinerators; Crowd funding fees for the court case – raising £30,000.

Key words	Economics of waste Circular economy Incinerator pollution Air pollution Climate action Legal action
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A crowd funded legal case brought against the UK government over taxing incinerator emissions reached the High Court (March 2021) ● Incinerators often operating in areas already experiencing social and economic deprivation ● Key to campaigning is to harness what you truly care about

Story summary	<p>Georgia Elliott-Smith, an environmental engineer, tells the story of campaigning against pollution from waste incinerators. Georgia began a legal case for the UK government to recognise that air pollution is harmful and Black and other disadvantaged communities are disproportionately affected by poor quality air. She demanded a tax on incinerator pollution. The case proceeded to the High Court in the UK after Georgia raised £30,000 by crowdfunding.</p> <hr/> <p>Georgia worked as an environmental engineer in industry and joining XR made her see the work she was doing in a different light. The waste industry was often operating in areas already experiencing social and economic deprivation and adding to the burden of pollution – smells, noise, traffic – on those people. To improve the lives of both local people and others more broadly she decided to take action against incinerators that were burning recyclable plastics and, therefore, emitting large quantities of CO₂.</p> <p>Currently, waste incineration emissions are not taxed within Carbon taxation policies and Georgia wants to change this. She began a legal case against the UK government in June 2020 to demand that pollution from incinerators is taxed. This, she hoped, would be an economic incentive for the companies to reduce levels of pollution and/or stop burning recyclable plastics completely. The change is needed to help protect the planet but also, and importantly, disadvantaged communities. One incinerator operates in Edmonton, London, which is a predominantly Black community, and the levels of pollution are negatively impacting them to a greater degree than largely White communities elsewhere. This is because Black people are more likely to work in an industrial setting or live in substandard housing</p>
---------------	--

	<p>that means they are more likely to be regularly exposed to poor air quality.</p> <p>The issue of air pollution from incinerators is inextricably linked to issues of social and economic justice and so the anti-incinerators campaign is important in rectifying this injustice. To raise the funds to take the case to court Georgia launched a crowd funding appeal and raised £30,000. The legal challenge has been upheld by the Administrative Court who confirmed that the case has merit and substance. The case has proceeded to the High Court and was considered in March 2021.</p>
<p>Stand-out quotations</p>	<p>“The economics of waste was firmly stacked against waste reduction and in favour of these hugely polluting, very destructive plants that burn all of these resources and they are usually placed in areas already of social and economic deprivation.”</p> <p>“All of these issues around social justice and air pollution are all coming together now to demonstrate that it really is people of colour and those already struggling in society who are also bearing a disproportionate burden from the pollutants that are coming out from these plants.”</p> <p>“I have learned so much, I cannot tell you how much I have had to learn about the law and about the process and everything on the way.”</p> <p>“I am not a wealthy individual, I am not someone who has ever done this before, this is completely new ground for me.”</p> <p>“When you are passionate and driven on a topic that you know is right, you can change the world.”</p>
<p>Main themes for learners</p>	<p>Working with other campaign groups can boost your voice</p> <p>Critical thinking skills and how to spot inconsistencies between language used and actions taken (examples here include the concept of ‘green washing’, so using terms such as ‘clean, green energy’ and ‘circular waste’ as a way of distracting from their actual practices. It is the ‘side of the story’ of incineration that is not seen by the public</p> <p>Even if an issue is new to you it is possible to make a difference</p> <p>The importance of asking questions about the system and the structure of society.</p>