

Stop the War on Science By John Hans Gilderbloom, formerly of the University of Louisville,
Urban and Public Affairs, and currently with the independent Center for Sustainable Urban
Neighborhoods

There's a war in Kentucky between science and nonsense. It been going on since 1960s
when Louisville based chemical companies attacked Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, for
warning people about the dangers of chemicals being sprayed on lawns and farmland (several U
of L chemical companies funded the attacks on Carson). Then in the 1970's attacked Jeffrey
Wigand, known as the "man who knew too much," for telling the world via 60 Minutes that
chemicals are being put in cigarettes to cause you to be addicted.

I am facing a similar situation, having been told that people in the pollution industry are
attempting to assassinate my character and even making clumsy efforts to harm me. The
question is: who is winning the war for cleaner air? Did the University of Louisville (U of L)
destroy untold millions of dollars worth of federal, state, and local research and replace it with a
pollution industry-funded center? In an age of climate crisis, how can U of L turn its back on the
people who are suffering so much from toxic pollution? Rather than conducting real science, U
of L is enabling the polluters by disseminating misinformation and shutting down a website that
provided information to the public about the consequences of deadly toxic pollution (i.e.,
shortened life spans for thousands of residents of polluted neighborhoods, more than half of
students in these neighborhoods unable to read or do math at proficient levels, high COVID-19
rates, thousands of abandoned homes, and a per capita release of greenhouse gases that is among
the highest of any place in the U.S.) Air pollution regulation is designed to protect people but in
Louisville the lack of meaningful regulation is designed to protect the profits of polluters.

Louisville born and hero of the left, Justice Brandis made the memorable comment in a Supreme Court ruling that the best disinfectant is sunlight

Can we please stop the censorship of science?

How many people must needlessly die because of urban pollution in over 1,000 cities. We don't know from the environmental defense fund map but we have a pretty good idea where the welcome for chemical companies is put out in Louisville, Kentucky. According to the Congressional Toxic Report Louisville has some of the worst pollution of any city in the nation. Stop the coverup of climate science. It can be fixed. Our best Ally might not be the Democrats that rule Louisville and the state of Kentucky but Robert F. Kennedy. Who believes that environmental factors are the cause of many diseases we have. This is probably the best evidence ever.

Let's be honest—our local government and University are not telling the truth about industrial pollution as the major cause of West Louisville's health, housing, and economic problems. Nor are they being honest about why corporations are fleeing the city for cleaner, more livable cities. They ignore scientific, data-driven, impartial research that provides a recipe for revitalization and renewal in West Louisville. They are working overtime to suppress, destroy, and shred reports that offend the rich polluters who rule the city.

Can the Governor or the President of the United States put an end to the University of Louisville's propaganda campaign, which falsely claims that a lack of trees is the

primary cause of the Derby city's severe health, housing, and economic problems? This misleading narrative is an embarrassment to a university that is currently ranked as an elite R1 University, though this distinction is now in jeopardy. Research for and by greedy corporate interests is being prioritized, blocking legitimate, data-driven research by faculty and students who are committed to uncovering the truth. Shame on the elites—both Democrat and Republican—who remain obediently tethered like poodles to the interests of the powerful. The University of Louisville (UofL), a taxpayer-funded institution, is serving corporate interests of profit over the needs of people. Science will trump the science fiction being promoted by the polluters, the mayor's office, and the Chamber of Commerce. Air pollution is getting worse, not better, and is deadlier than ever, cutting short thousands of lives in West Louisville. Many of these polluters have a record of "going after" individuals who challenge the pollution industry. Rachel Carson, author of the book *Silent Spring*, which documented the environmental harm caused by using pesticides, suffered a coordinated smear campaign that attacked her gender and academic credentials. Companies in Louisville were behind this national campaign. Similarly, the movie "The Insider" tells the true story of a whistleblower in Louisville who was attacked for revealing that the tobacco industry was aware that cigarettes are addictive and harmful. A smear campaign was launched against him.

As a professor at UofL, my research team conducted studies that showed how to cut the number of COVID-19 cases in the city in half, double children's learning proficiency scores in school, extend life expectancy by 12 years, and create greater homeownership equity. How do we do this? Reduce the amount of air pollution in Western Louisville. Our research shows that a reduction in 75,000 pounds of pollution in Western Louisville would slash the rates of asthma,

high blood pressure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and diabetes by at least half—if not more. Alarmingly, UofL disregards providing reliable health information to the people so they can make better choices.

Health Issues in West Louisville (Dirty Air) Neighborhoods vs. East Louisville (Clean Air) Neighborhoods

Health Outcomes	West	East
Asthma	16.2	8.6
HBP	58.2	27.5
Kidney	6.8	2.1
COPD	17.2	4.2
Coronary Heart Disease	15.4	2.6
Diabetes	23.7	5.1
Mental Health	27.4	8.6
Physical Health	28.2	7.9
Tooth Loss	55.1	6.1
Stroke	8.9	1.7
-	-	-
Unhealthy Behaviors	-	-
Smoking	42.2	10.5
Physical Inactivity	55.9	20.9
Obesity	55.5	22
Sleep <7 Hours	52.5	28.2
-	-	-
Home Price Inequality	\$115,000	\$410,000
Life Expectancy	65 years	77 years
Third Grade Proficiency Scores	49 percent	73 percent
Avg Poisonous Toxins Released	75,000 pounds	12,000 pounds
Tree Canopy	No statistical difference between East and West	
Data compiled by Jeremy Chesler from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/500cities/index.htm		
North of Broadway, West of Roy Wilkins Ave., East of 15 th St., East of Rubbertown, in the neighboring Census tract. West of I-65, South of Broadway North of Market, West of 24 th St.		

This is just the tip of the iceberg. We are collecting data that will likely show that birth defects, autism, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, and miscarriages are higher in these neighborhoods. Urban violence and homicide, as noted by U.S. Justice Department, are much higher in these neighborhoods as well.

You would think that everyone from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), governor's office, and mayor's office would take action and make Louisville thrive again. But they did not. Instead, they denied that pollution is destroying the lives and neighborhoods of Western Louisville—not just Black neighborhoods but mostly white Portland neighborhoods as well. It's not a racial issue—it's about corporations, some owned outside the U.S.A., maximizing profits.

This research countered claims that chemical pollution is nothing to worry about in Louisville. Greg Fischer, the former Mayor of Louisville and former President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, got the ball rolling in his first term with the [Health Equity Report](#), which stated that pollution was not the cause of shortened lives. Instead, the report noted that the cause was too much smoking, and later, the cause was determined by the UofL Center for Healthy Air, Water and Soil to be too few trees and bushes.

To attempt to encourage corporations to relocate to Louisville, the mayor's economic development group provided a misleading narrative that the air, water, and soil were not problematic. It was not effective, and that is why Amazon did not include Louisville in its list of the top 25 cities it was considering for the relocation of its headquarters (Nashville won because

of its regard for a healthy environment). Many corporations are fleeing “dirty Louisville” because middle class people don’t want to move to another Detroit-like city that is an environmental disaster. Despite hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent on the city’s campaign to attract companies, business leaders could obtain truthful information on the UofL websites about the environmental problems that were not being addressed in Louisville. Good environmental protections bring investment, not disinvestment.

Efforts to generate debate and discussion and to allow research that counters the propaganda have not been encouraged by UofL at the behest of funders. This is not the kind of academia that Plato imagined. He envisioned an intellectual environment with rigorous discussion and debate, but debate is being stifled at UofL.

Part II

The university, which is supposed to be a marketplace of ideas, has thwarted the attempts of researchers to bring awareness to the harmful effects of pollution in Louisville. What happened to the legislatively approved Kentucky Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development (KIESD)? It was shut down and its website was removed! Tenured professors who research pollution were not given a role in the university’s corporate-funded Center for Healthy Air, Water and Soil. What a ridiculous name for a center that suppresses, destroys, and even shreds reports that bring attention to the destructive pollution created by the chemical, coal, liquor and tobacco industries.

Under the new leadership of the corporate-funded Envirome/Center for Healthy Air, Water and Soil, hundreds of copies of Sustain Journal were shredded at the UofL School of Medicine. What happened to the award-winning Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods

(SUN)? It was also shut down by UofL. The professors running these centers and institutes told the truth and were robbed of their academic freedom. Climate change, our greatest challenge of this century, is being met with disregard by our taxpayer-funded university, where its core mission to discover, analyze, disseminate, and preserve data is being violated. Academic freedom and free speech are being stripped away from professors, silencing those who seek truth in research.

Can you imagine a UofL doctor telling people that to prevent cancer they need to plant lots of trees and not worry about the chemical factory down the street? Over a hundred years ago, Louisville-born Abraham Flexner (who has a street named after him at the UofL Medical Center) insisted on scientific standards for medical schools, advocating for maintaining honesty in education and healthcare. His principles were adopted by every major medical school to prevent quackery. The hallmark of science is replication using different methods and investigators. Medical schools need to be honest and report “inconvenient facts”.

At a press conference organized by UofL on August 28, 2024, university elites touted trees as a solution to the health problems of West Louisville residents and urban problems around the United States. The group collectively made outlandish claims that trees could reduce cancer risk or extend lifespan; however, reliable data shows that this “miracle cure” is about as effective as drinking Clorox bleach to treat COVID-19.

The takeover of the UofL urban mission was finalized at the press conference when UofL President Kim Shatzel announced that “Trees are a major health intervention...” that might reduce cancer and the risk of heart attacks and stated that “Trees are medicine” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH1Tbk4oVw8>). The president of The Nature Conservancy said, “Trees mean healthier people.” High praise was given to Christina Lee Brown, the

brainchild of this effort who raised millions of dollars for the UofL Center for Healthy Air, Water and Soil from corporations, government entities, and well-meaning local groups like Gheens and Republic Bank. Democrat Congressman Morgan McGarvey got into the act by supporting tree planting as a solution. Everyone was silent on pollution as the cause of the crisis in West Louisville. The media ignored the press conference, and the YouTube video only has 275 views, but it's likely a reason why the Board of Trustees had President Shatzel pack her bags. Nobody mentioned pollution prevention as a proven method for improving the health of West Louisville residents.

Professor Aruni Bhatnagar, the Center's lead researcher (making around \$740,000 a year to my \$150,000), claims that tree density will reduce heart disease and other ailments. But growing a dense forest of trees would take 100 years, and by then it would be too late to prevent cancer. Both Democrats and Republicans are pushing to plant eight billion trees at a cost of around ten billion dollars. It is a far-fetched idea that will never happen, yet UofL is blindly pushing this plan as a solution to our health, housing, and economic problems. Has this research undergone rigorous peer review and been published in a top journal? Why was this not mentioned?

Professor Bhatnagar and others are aware that my research contradicts his proclamations. My coauthored studies show that higher tree density in 140 mid-sized cities and in Louisville's 160 neighborhoods is not correlated with better health or lifespan (Gilderbloom, 2025). Moreover, Louisville ranks within the top 25% of high tree density, so why aren't Louisvillians healthier? Why do the neighborhoods with the highest tree density have some of the worst health problems, while other neighborhoods with low tree density have much fewer problems?

Heavy pollution not only affects health and housing in industrial neighborhoods, it also affects the Earth's atmosphere, making Louisville one of the highest emitters of greenhouse gases per capita. High levels of industrial pollution explain why Kentucky has a disproportionate number of man-made disasters. For example, in their [article](#) in the Courier Journal, environmental writer James Bruggers and his colleague Phil McKenna estimate that just one chemical plant out of the 45 in Louisville emits enough dangerous greenhouse gases to equal the pollution of 671,000 cars.

University of Louisville needs to be a lighthouse of truth, not disinformation. My independent website provides scientific rebuttals to the claims being made about pollution by UofL (<http://www.sunlouisville.org>). The research studies on UofL websites that Kentucky citizens were supposed to have access to were removed, but we fought back. While the work of 30 UofL faculty and students was censored and banned, and classes on the subject were canceled, the reprimands, threats to fire me, and physical violence against me did not dissuade me. I was raised to be fearless in speaking truth to power. My new book, *Climate Chaos: Killing People, Places, and the Planet*, authored by 29 faculty members and students, was published by Lexington Press in New York. The book exposes Louisville's environmental horrors and includes a contribution from a UofL medical school faculty member who is greatly concerned about the current situation there. The book also includes a speech by Nobel Prize winner Al Gore, as well as the writings of the late great Pope Francis, who sought to unite faith and science as a pathway to solve this urgent global crisis. Inspired by the research in the book, three-time Emmy Award winner Chris Nolan is developing a documentary titled *Climate of Hope* (<http://www.climateofhopefilm.org>). Too many people are unnecessarily dying, and we

need leadership that will not accept money from those connected to the liquor, coal, tobacco, and chemical industries. As a scholar, I encourage those in academia to debate, not bow down.

I believe people have the right to know the truth. I am hoping to be hired by another state university to teach my class on sustainability that was canceled by now President Bradley. Moreover, I hope to have another university in Kentucky repost the original KIESD website and SUN website (<http://www.sunlouisville.org>). I am also setting up an independent Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods and hope to get it funded by the same donors who fund the Envirome Center. We will be a watchdog group that exposes nonscientific research. I will continue to speak truth to power. My truth is finding ways to extend the lifespan of West Louisville residents, double proficiency scores of third graders turn abandoned homes into homeownership opportunities, reduce toxic pollution from 75,000 pounds to 12,000 pounds as in St Matthews and make a local contribution to reversing climate chaos—our most pressing crisis.

John Hans Gilderbloom is winner of the prestigious UofL Presidential Medal for outstanding scholarship and two time Arts and Sciences Award for outstanding scholarship. He holds more awards in research than any other UofL faculty member. Dr. Gilderbloom “retired” from UofL in February because of administrative interference in trying to stop publication of his research featured in “Climate Chaos: Killing People, Places, and the Planet” and three time Emmy Award winner Chris Nolan documentary of Gilderbloom’s research <http://www.climateofhopefilm.org> He currently runs the Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods <http://www.sunlouisville.org> with plans to broadcast for free this coming Fall the canceled courses by UofL. He believes his academic freedom and free speech no longer exists if you are crit First you must fight the disinformation campaign of the greedy polluters. This is the

same gang that 60 years ago attacked Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, for warning people about the dangers of chemicals being sprayed on lawns and farmland (several U of L chemical companies funded the attacks on Carson). More recently, they attacked Jeffrey Wigand, known as the "man who knew too much," for telling the world via 60 Minutes that smoking is bad for you.

I am facing a similar situation, having been told that people in the pollution industry are attempting to assassinate my character and even making clumsy efforts to harm me. The question is: who is winning the war for cleaner air? Did the University of Louisville (U of L) destroy \$3.5 million dollars' worth of federal, state, and local research and replace it with a pollution industry-funded center? In an age of climate crisis, how can U of L turn its back on the people who are suffering so much from toxic pollution? Rather than conducting real science, U of L is enabling the polluters by disseminating misinformation and shutting down a website that provided information to the public about the consequences of deadly toxic pollution (i.e., shortened life spans for thousands of residents of polluted neighborhoods, more than half of students in these neighborhoods unable to read or do math at proficient levels, high COVID-19 rates, thousands of abandoned homes, and a per capita release of greenhouse gases that is among the highest of any place in the U.S.) Air pollution regulation is designed to protect people but in Louisville the lack of meaningful regulation is designed to protect the profits of polluters.

Justice ple connected to liquor, tobacco, coal, and chemical companies.

Science will trump the science fiction being promoted by the polluters, the mayor's office, and the Chamber of Commerce. Air pollution is getting worse, not better, and is deadlier than ever, cutting short thousands of lives in West Louisville. Many of these polluters have a record of "going after" individuals who challenge the pollution industry. Rachel Carson, author of the book *Silent Spring*, which

documented the environmental harm caused by using pesticides, suffered a coordinated smear campaign that attacked her gender and academic credentials. Companies in Louisville were behind this national campaign. Similarly, the movie “The Insider” tells the true story of a whistleblower in Louisville who was attacked for revealing that the tobacco industry was aware that cigarettes are addictive and harmful. A smear campaign was launched against him.

First you must fight the disinformation campaign of the greedy polluters. This is the same gang that 60 years ago attacked Rachel Carson’s book, *Silent Spring*, for warning people about the dangers of chemicals being sprayed on lawns and farmland (several U of L chemical companies funded the attacks on Carson). More recently, they attacked Jeffrey Wigand, known as the “man who knew too much,” for telling the world via 60 Minutes that smoking is bad for you.

I am facing a similar situation, having been told that people in the pollution industry are attempting to assassinate my character and even making clumsy efforts to harm me. The question is: who is winning the war for cleaner air? Did the University of Louisville (U of L) destroy \$3.5 million dollars’ worth of federal, state, and local research and replace it with a pollution industry-funded center? In an age of climate crisis, how can U of L turn its back on the people who are suffering so much from toxic pollution? Rather than conducting real science, U of L is enabling the polluters by disseminating misinformation and shutting down a website that provided information to the public about the consequences of deadly toxic pollution (i.e., shortened life spans for thousands of residents of polluted neighborhoods, more than half of students in these neighborhoods unable to read or do math at proficient levels, high COVID-19 rates, thousands of abandoned homes, and a per capita release of greenhouse gases that is among

the highest of any place in the U.S.) Air pollution regulation is designed to protect people but in Louisville the lack of meaningful regulation is designed to protect the profits of polluters.

Justice Brandes is the best best disinfectant is the sun the best disinfectant is the sun.