Environmental Justice in Cancer Alley, Louisiana

Overview:
The 85-mile stretch of the Mississippi River that links Baton Rouge to New Orleans in Louisiana is riddled with manufacturing and chemical plants that emit tons of airborne pollutants into the surrounding communities. Many of these pollutants have been identified as carcinogens and the proximity of these plants to neighborhoods became a significant concern in the late 1980s after fifteen cases of cancer were identified in a two block stretch of homes in St. Gabriel, La. The communities closest to the plants along the Mississippi are predominantly comprised of African Americans. These neighborhoods also have lower levels of education and a higher ratio of families living below the poverty line. The burden of these manufacturing plants has landed on the shoulders of racial and economic minorities and is a clear environmental justice issue.

Findings:
I’m using three variables to project the discrepancies of environmental impact upon minority populations. NEI (National Emissions Inventory) points reflect the tons of CAPs (Criteria Air Pollutants) that each plant emits. These are projected upon each map to represent the inequity of burden. It becomes clear that trends develop along the river and in the centers of both cities to indicate that a burden of harm is placed upon low income, poorly educated, African American communities, all of which tend to overlap.