

Anonymous 2

April 20th, 2024

Summary: This is a short interview with an anonymous attendee of the "The Air We Breathe" event hosted by EmPower All at Zion Baptist Church in collaboration with the Repair Lab. In the brief interview, this person describes his memories of coal dust as a child visiting Newport News, his efforts to learn more about the dust as an adult living in Newport News and the discomfort and expense the dust has caused him. This is an informal interview at a public event, so there is considerable background sound, as well as brief exchanges between the interviewee, his wife and another event attendee. [00:00:00]

Anonymous-2: Um, I lived in Hampton. My grandmother stayed in Newport News. I would come down for the weekends because that's what, I don't know, that's what happened. So I come and I would stay with my grandmother over the weekend. And, uh, even then I noticed even in the house, uh, there was a, you know, everything, it was dark, dark lit because the lights were, it wasn't real well lit. But I noticed even then, the coal dust. It's like the soot from the, it was on the walls a little bit. And I remember that. Uh, fast forward, fast forward, I grew up, you know, and matriculated, came back. Uh, now I live in Newport News. I live, I live on 18th street. Had I known, uh, we bought a new house, it was a newly built home. Had I known about the coal dust, I wouldn't have moved there.

But, uh, it's, for me, it's, uh, it's a nuisance for me. It's like, for me, I'm sure even, even it Being a nuisance, there are some health implications with that as well, I'm sure. But for me, it's a nuisance.

My house is white and blue. So, um, I deal with having to power wash my house at least four times a year. At least. I mean, that's the minimum. you can do it more, But it's coal. It's like, yeah, I'm not going out in the coal powder, but it's like, it's, it's, it's a nuisance.

It's like, it gets on everything, your cars. It's, and again, my house is white and blue. Um, so the mailbox is white. And so you have to, it's like, it's a constant battle with coal dust, keeping it off, if it's, it gets on everything. It's just, it's a nuisance for me because I can't. I want to do more to my house, the outside, but what for? It's like more things you do or if you want to add furniture here, you have to, you know, you got to cover stuff up. You got to, it's like, it's a, it's a, it's a, it's a never ending battle dealing with that. You want to, you want to improve

the amenities of your home. I want some things I want to do. I'm like, there's more stuff I got to clean. It's like it's more stuff you have to monitor. It's like, I shouldn't, it's just, it's a pain for me. It's a pain. It's just a pain. It's like, I just, I'm like, they need to do something about this.

It's just, and it can get in your house. It gets in your house as well, depending on how well filtered your HVAC system is. You know, you know, you have to, so I have to make sure I'm getting the highest filtration filter, if you will, to make sure that it captures the smallest particles it can so that you won't, you won't see a lot of dust. Because you can see it in the wind in the windshield and the windowsills and you open your blinds and like, and it's like stuff is just everywhere. It's everywhere.

So for me, it's a nuisance. It's just, and I guess my question like with this, and I know my questions, um, can't be really answered. I've gone to several, meetings they would have in the city about the East End. And my question is always, what ya'll doing about the coal dust? You know, because I know that coal, that's money. The bottom line is its money.

Adrian: What kind of answers have you gotten?

Anonymous-2: Sometimes there is no answer. Sometimes they take my name and we'll contact you. You think I get contacted? No.

Adrian: And who have you asked?

Anonymous-2: So what I did, I went online and I got some information about coal dust. There was a, they did a study years ago. They did a study on coal dust. Not only here, but also there's another coal depot in Norfolk someplace.

Adrian: Yes, that's right.

Anonymous-2: They have to deal with the same thing. Yeah. So I, I was, it was, I was, I was interested.

I'm like, wow. Okay. I said, you know, this is, you know, this is big. Remember when we went to Dunbar? That last meeting?

Anonymous: Achievable dream, Some call it Dunbar.

Background Voice: I've been. Dunbar.

Anonymous-2: Achievable dream. Achievable dream. You remember when we went to Achievable Dream that time.

Anonymous: Uh huh.

Anonymous-2: When was that? That was like two years ago. About a year ago?

Anonymous: It was, it was after COVID.

Anonymous-2: Right.

Anonymous: So it had to be like either 2020, 2021. Where were we at? 2020, you went forward.

Anonymous-2: Forward, right.

Anonymous: Maybe 2022.

Anonymous-2: Thank you.

Adrian: Do you remember it was, do you remember if that was with the Department of Environmental Quality?

Anonymous: It was about Environmental Quality. That's what they talked about and then they had, they showed us like different, um, like different, um, what's the word I'm looking for?

Adrian: Different sizes of dust? Or different kinds of monitors ?

Anonymous: Well, yeah, they, no, they had like airflow, like different presentations around the room. So, yeah.

Anonymous-2: Yeah, okay, but that's not what she was asking. Yeah, that's the last one we went to.

And I took my, my information and the young lady, she was very receptive. She was like, and I was like, yeah, this is what I, this is what I found online about coal dust. You know, and you know, just online about its effects on health and the environment, if you will, and she, she took it and I gave it to her and I don't know. I don't know her name. I can't remember.[00:05:00]

Adrian: No worries.

Anonymous-2: I am bad. I am bad with names. I am bad with names.

Adrian: Okay, that's fine.

Anonymous-2: Yeah, I'm bad with names. I am . But yeah, I remember we were, we were talking because that's always my, when we go through these things, my thing is this. What is the city going to do with the coal dust? Because I know it's money. I know the bottom line is that's millions of dollars over there.

Adrian: Can I ask you about how much you spend? Like on power washing, on your HVAC system? Any idea?

Anonymous-2: How much do I spend?

I don't know. I just do it. It's like, I don't, I don't look at the cost. I just do it in angst. Because I do it in angst. I'm like, I ain't got some, I'm sick of this. You know, it's, it's, and for me, I just want to know if they're not going to do anything about it. Let me know. It's like, okay, fine.

I just know. It's like, I know I have to do something because they're not going to. That to move that is going to be, you know, that's millions of dollars. You're talking about billions of dollars to move that someplace else. Which it can be moved someplace else, I'm sure it can, but it's been there for so long.

And you know, the city has, I don't know. It's like, had I known again, had I known, I wouldn't have moved here. Period. I've lived up in Newport News. Yeah, but I, what our house is, what, 16 years old? 15, 16 years old. I don't know, I'm asking a question. I don't know.

Adrian: its okay.

Anonymous: It was built in 20, 2006.

Adrian: Oh, nice!

Anonymous-2: Yeah. Yeah. So,

Anonymous: 2006

Anonymous-2: yeah.