

4th webinar of the CIRGE series:  
Committing ourselves to social justice

## The Habitable City: Centering Climate Justice in Research-Based Education

**When:** January 26th

**Time:** 9:30 am Pacific Time | 2:30 pm Brazil |  
7:30 pm South Africa

**Register here**

**Learn more about this webinar**



Co-sponsor:  Center for Studies in  
Higher Education



### Speakers:

**Lorena Nascimento** is a Ph.D. candidate in Urban Studies at Portland State University and a Geographic Information System instructor at Portland Community College. She has been working with local nonprofits and public administration agencies in environmental education, community-based learning, urban mobility, policy review, and urban forestry projects in Portland (USA) and Brazil.



**Vivek Shandas** is a Professor of Climate Adaptation and Director of the Sustaining Urban Places Research (SUPR) Lab at Portland State University. By examining the assumptions about our built environment, Dr. Shandas supports historically disinvested and marginalized communities in improving their adaptation from climate stressors, including extreme events such as urban heat, air quality, and storms.



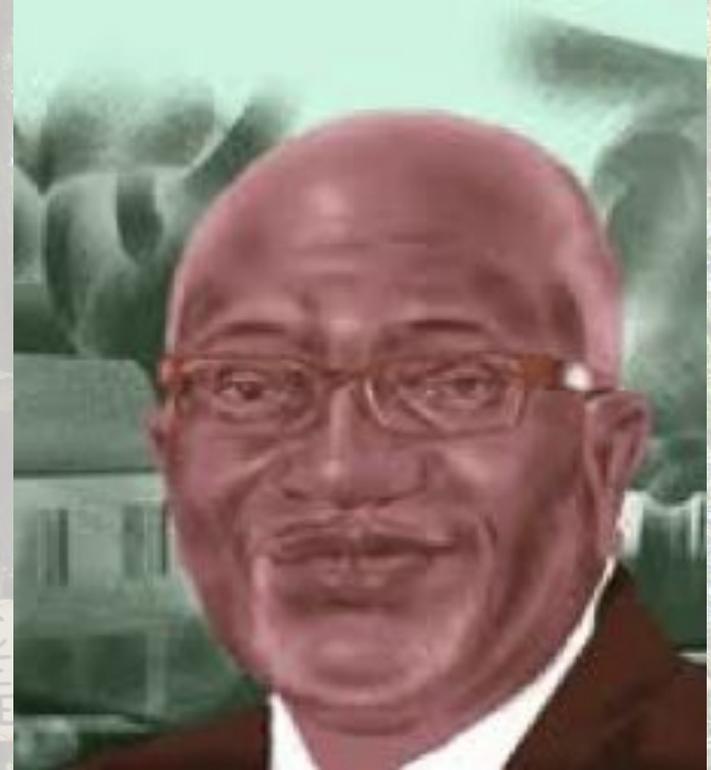
# Outline

- Central Question: In what ways can doctoral research in environmental sciences and urban ecology better integrate social justice?
  - What processes help to advance the argument [for] into practice [in]?
- Environmental Justice -- brief background (vis-a-vie ecosystem services)
- Current challenges facing environmental organizations
- Case studies
- Discussion



# General Overview Environmental Racism (U.S Perspective)

- ❖ • People of Color (especially poor) are disproportionately impacted by a wide range of environmental effects
  - • Negative ones- more exposure to burdens of industrialization- e.g. pollution, hazardous land uses
  - • Positive ones- less exposure to full benefits, e.g. parks, street trees, bike paths
- ❖ • *"...any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color"* (Dr. Robert Bullard)



# Social Justice Research Frames Environmental Decisions

Decision in the 1980s that buried over 30,000 cubic yards of PCBs in a predominately (85%) African American/Black neighborhood in Warren County, NC.

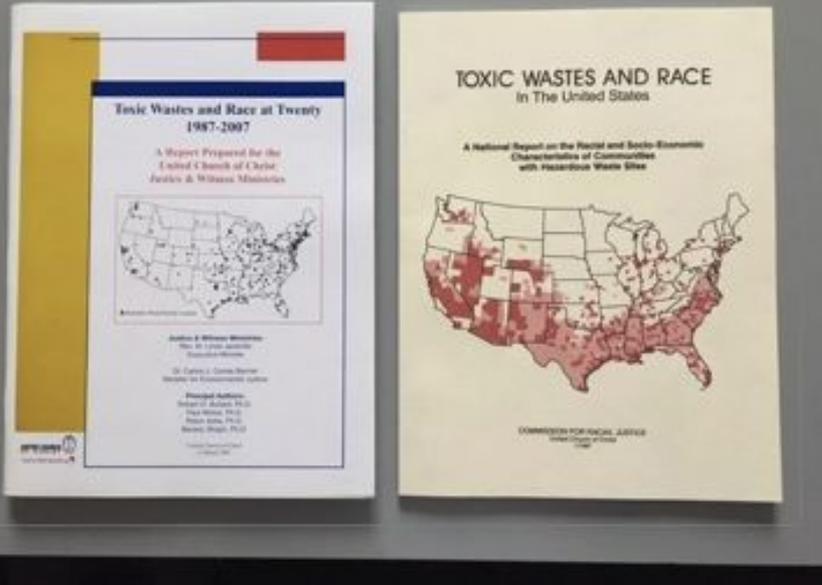
Despite protests by the local community...

- The contaminated soils remain today, and leaks into the drinking water
- Environmental justice and public health

Zip code becomes and remains one of the most important determinants of human health in the United States



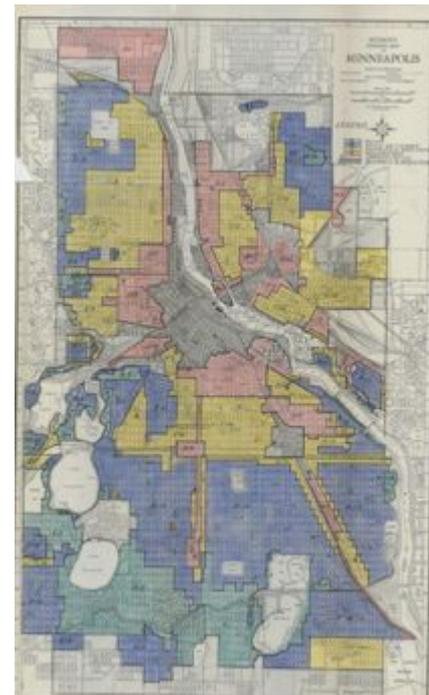
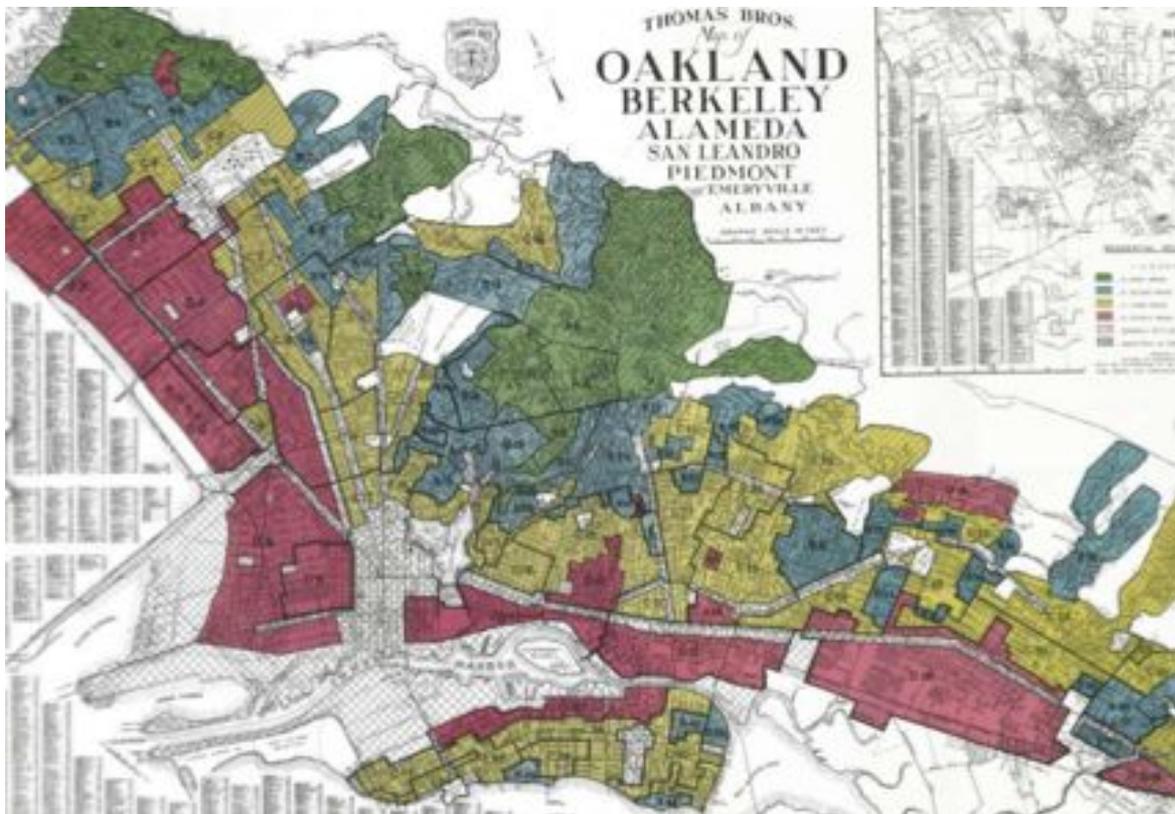
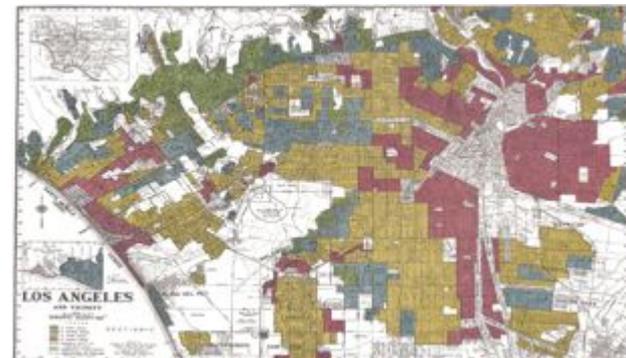
# Beginnings of the Modern Environmental Racism Movement



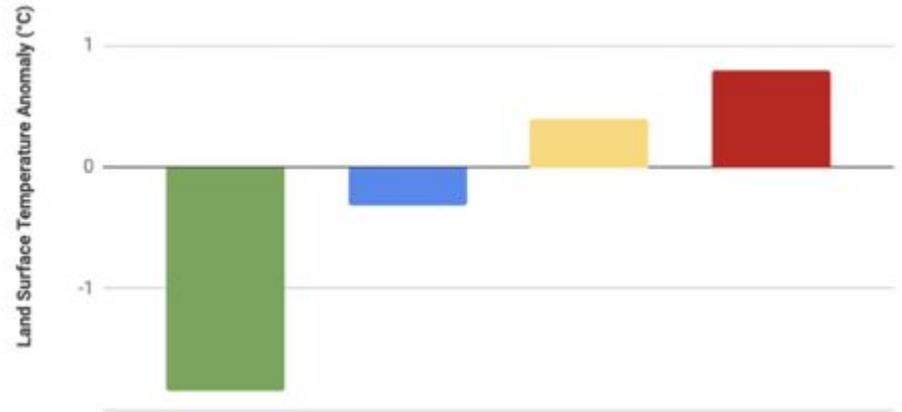
- ❖ • Concerned with inequity, power and struggle
- ❖ • Movement to respond to these kinds of problems, broader than environmental racism (any different ways in which environmental inequality is being reproduced)
- ❖ Critique mainstream environmental movement
  - Preoccupied with questions of wilderness
  - Lacking the lived experience urban residents and historic inequities

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# Case Study 1: Legacies of Planning's Past



# Thermal Inequity



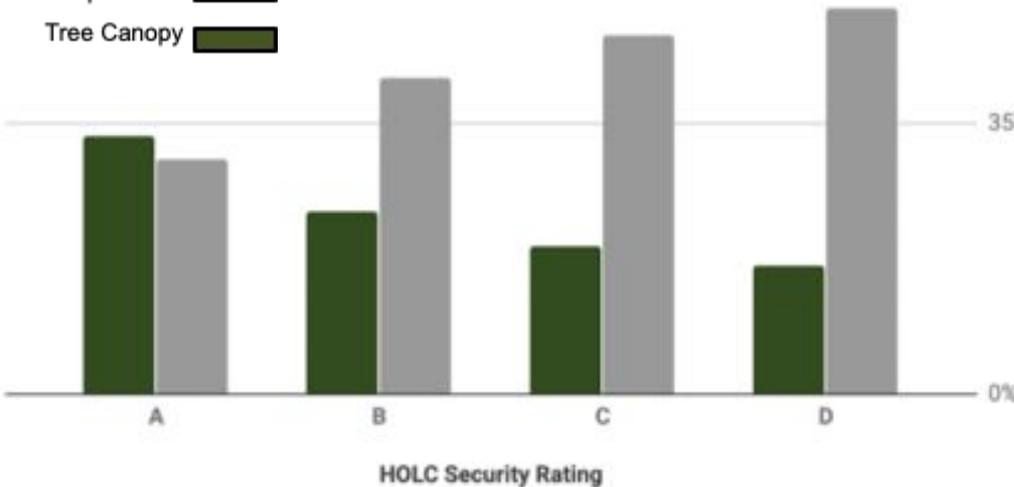
## Conscious and Deliberate Planning

1. Greater amount of asphalt & pavement
2. Highway projects and big box stores
3. Large-scale housing projects
4. Industrial facilities
5. Lack of parks and green spaces

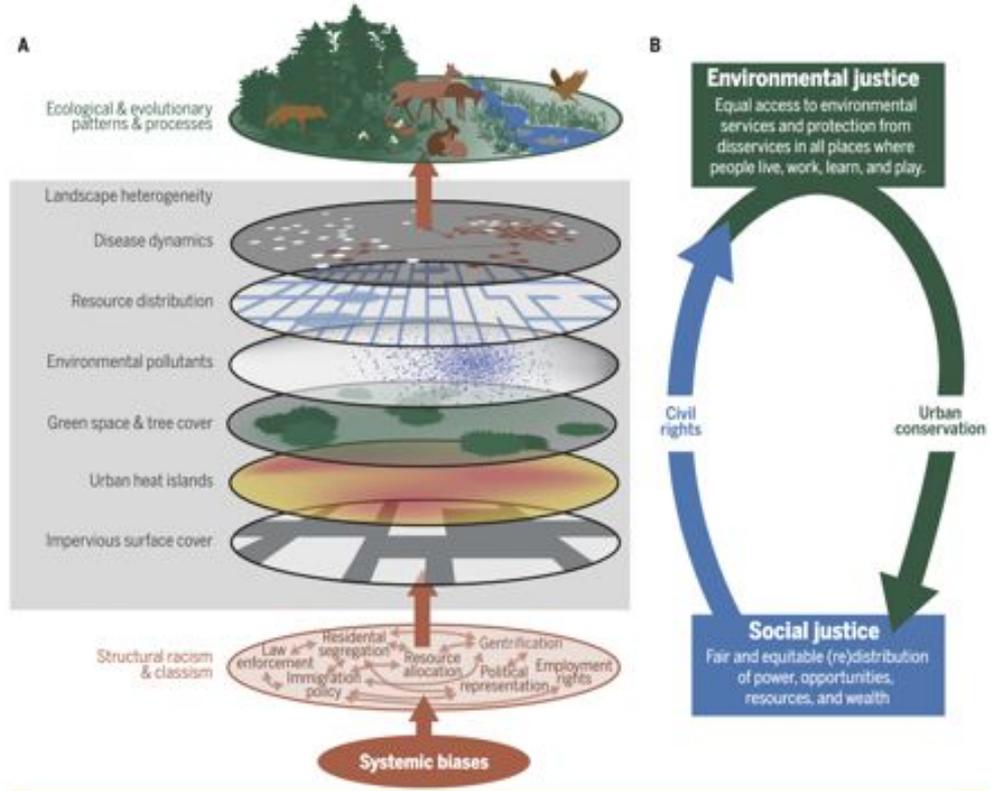
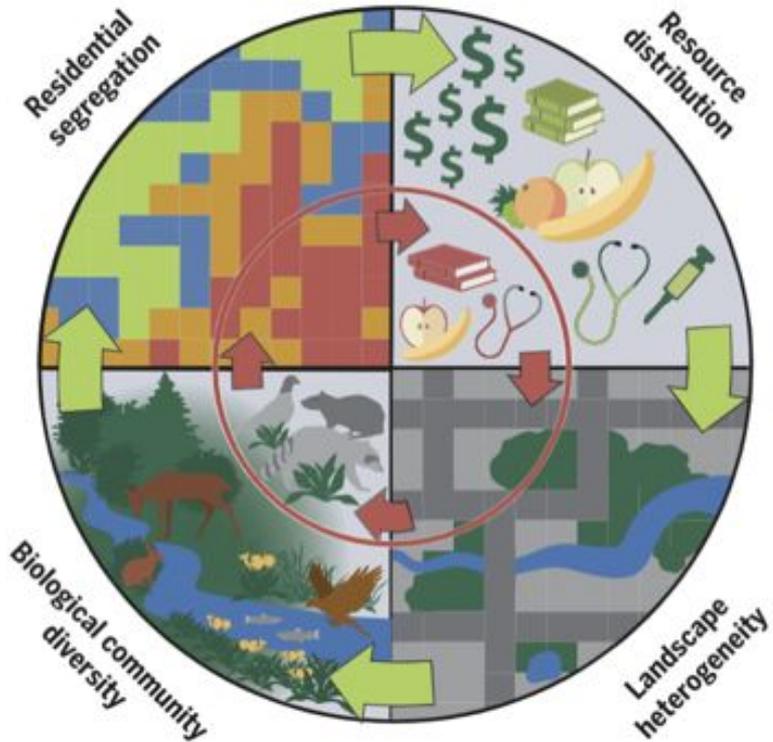
*Hoffman, Shandas, & Pendelton, 2020*



Impervious   
Tree Canopy 



# Interactions between Race-based Planning & Urban Ecosystems



# Environmental Justice & Cultural Ecosystem Services

- ❖ Concept of cultural ecosystem services
- ❖ Challenging metrics, but opportunity for reimagination of nature and land use
- ❖ Interpretation of nature from diverse perspectives
- ❖ Racial equity

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# Leadership & Cultural Sustainability

- ❖ Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in environmental studies
- ❖ Sustainable leadership
- ❖ Partnerships between higher institutions, governmental agencies, community-based organizations
- ❖ Cultural sustainability, diversity, and inclusion

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# Summarizing: Three 'Take Aways'

- ❖ Disciplines of environmental science/policy and urban ecology have struggled with incorporating social justice.
- ❖ Emerging knowledge about the legacies of racist urban planning practices offer insights about integrating civil rights with environmental justice.
- ❖ Cultural ecosystem services are a direct means for centering historically marginalized communities and practices in the planning and policy context.

# Discussion Questions

1. What are promising practices, datasets, and/or theories for advancing social justice research in higher education?
2. How have other fields integrated social justice into doctoral research and pedagogy?
3. In what ways might such practices vary by national, continental, or other socio-cultural contexts?