



**WE'RE  
NOT  
SOFTENING  
OUR  
RESISTANCE**

# THE BRONX MUSEUM

**bronxmuseum.org**

The Bronx Museum  
1040 Grand Concourse  
Bronx, NY 10456

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Council on  
the Arts



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**S**SOCIAL PRACTICE**PCUNY**

*It is essential to our struggle for self-determination that we speak of love.*

*For love is the necessary foundation enabling us to survive the wars, the hardships, the sickness, and the dying with our spirits intact.*

*It is love that allows us to survive whole.*

bell hooks



## **Pedagogy of Green Space:**

### **Community Control towards Land Back and an Abolition of Property**

*"Under capitalism, Mother Earth is converted into a source of raw materials, and human beings into consumers and a means of production, into people that are seen as valuable only for what they own, and not for what they are. Capitalism requires a powerful military industry for its processes of accumulation and imposition of control over territories and natural resources, suppressing the resistance of the peoples. It is an imperialist system of colonization of the planet. Humanity confronts a great dilemma: to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation, and death, or to choose the path of harmony with nature and respect for life."*

*People's Agreement of Cochabamba*

*"The Issue of property sits at the centre of Black people's relationship with policing both past and present,...an abolitionist future is not possible without the abolition of police. And it is my contention that this is not possible without the abolition of property."*

*Rinaldo Walcott*

#### **Preamble:**

**WE ARE GUERRILLAS OF RADICAL OPTIMISM** and write this from within the margins of New York City. From within the center of the international empire. The fifth world. From within sites of repression and sometimes isolation, where the sky at times is our only connection to the planet and universe. We write this understanding that living in hard concrete and cold steel has become comforting to many Black and Brown people living in cities. Where gunshots, sirens, and traffic are sounds we have grown accustomed to as they gradually melt our nerves.

It is how we grow up in cities. And we can no longer live numb. The woods, with their legacy of lynch mobs and now, as real estate gems displacing us, do not seem like spaces of healing, but of grief. Synthetic digital worlds are severing our interpersonal and inter-natural experiences. WE live disconnected from anything green. Long work hours keep poor workers from their families, community and rest. Rents rise. Debt follows. Keeping up with the cost of living prevents us from creating time to think, dream, and reimagine our lives and purpose.

Parkland and gardens established as a "public good" feed off of displacement. Green spaces in affluent neighborhoods, national parks and beaches—all of which were central to the project of "greenwashing" colonization and land theft—become prizes for those with privilege maintaining the system. Living next to a park becomes a reward for participating in the displacement, confinement and repression of the poor. The funding of park alliances keep stolen land in the hands of the affluent for their lucrative networking and business deals. The funding enables rules, which bring policing and surveillance of Black and Brown people in order to keep them out. Multinational-corporations, allegiances and governments have become more repressive and brutal. They thrive on racist laws and anticipated violence. "Keeping people safe" means surveillance, becoming more extreme and under-detected everyday. The police and military have become the biggest threats to the climate as their only aim is to protect the property and investments of the rich. The police come in many forms. From the DOE, MTA, DOT and NYPDR to museums and BIDs. They instill rules, hurdles, and guidelines of proper behavior. It is a slow war.

The wealth extracted from the global south is funnelled through the Wall Street stock exchange while our relatives abroad are robbed of their territories, invaded, and left in drought. They train us in school to believe in the system of consumption and to die for it. And all the "rewards" that

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The wealth extracted from the global south is funnelled through the Wall Street stock exchange while our relatives abroad are robbed of their territories, invaded, and left in drought. They train us in school to believe in the system of consumption and to die for it. And all the "rewards" that come from it have a reaction: the cost of lives deemed less valuable anywhere around the world.

We get our power back by understanding that we are innately and integrally connected to the earth. We get our power back understanding that we exist to preserve the earth, keep it in balance as we keep ourselves in balance. Our resistances are a fight for land liberation- People's right to community control, towards land back and the abolition of property.

A Pedagogy of Green Space is a living archive for community control towards the principle of Land Back. It is a psychic blow that opens up the possibility of liberation. There is no "ownership" of stolen land - this is unceded Lenni-Lenape territory. As temporary caretakers of the spaces we are stewarding, we recognize the rightful laws of the people of this land. We will not abide by the laws of the settler state or their non-profits. A Pedagogy of Green Space is land-led; the land's need to shape our work together. The fight for community control necessitates that we love the land, and love each other, differently – for a long-term fight that we cannot win without each other.

We fight to end property driven economies. We fight for Black liberation and an end to police terrorizing Black people. To continue to keep the pressure on and uncover injustice. To erase the idea that justice looks like consumption and public-private partnerships. To strike out the lie that the neoliberal imperial state will save us.

We steward to return the land. We steward to live autonomously. We steward to close prisons and end the carceral state. We steward because it is our moral duty to defend the oppressed against the oppressors. We steward against confinement and disconnection. We steward to stop the murder of QTBIPOC folk. We steward to abolish rent and landlords and ensure everyone a dignified place to live. We steward for strong and free public education. We steward to abolish debt. We steward the land to abolish borders and end detention centers. We steward to end occupations everywhere. We steward for clean water. We steward to rest. We steward for life.

With Love, The North Bronx Collective

(written by collective members Alicia Grullon and Vani Kannen)

## Why Can't We Breathe?

### **No more sacrifice zones!**

For decades, New York City has located its highways, bus depots, peaker plants, warehouses, waste transfer stations, and other polluting infrastructure disproportionately in the city's Black and brown neighborhoods. City elites have turned working class communities of color into fossil fuel sacrifice zones.

Sacrifice zones are places in the country whose residents die of cancer and other illnesses more often, and earlier, than people in surrounding communities. Places are turned into sacrifice zones because dirty infrastructure that benefits people living elsewhere is disproportionately dumped in these neighborhoods. Wealthy and powerful people are essentially shunting the most toxic aspects of modern life onto the backs of others.

Why can't we breathe? Because we're being strangled by dirty infrastructure.

**We Demand More Green Space and Less Fossil Fuel Infrastructure.**

The triangle connecting the South Bronx, western Queens, and East Harlem is one of New York City's prime toxic hot spots. The South Bronx exemplifies the history of racist urban planning in working class communities of color that produces sacrifice zones. From Robert Moses's construction of the Cross-Bronx Expressway – which he likened to hacking his way through the city with a meat ax – to the building of the three other major highways that funnel traffic into and out of Manhattan, the Bronx has been subjected to urban “development” that pulverized communities and concentrated fossil fuel infrastructure in neighborhoods like Mott Haven and Port Morris [figure 1]. Three hundred diesel trucks rumble down the Cross Bronx Expressway every hour, spewing toxic contaminants into the air. This pollution is generated by infrastructure that mainly benefits more affluent people living in other boroughs.

In addition to these highways, the city also decided to locate a group of traffic-intensive operations in a 106-acre lot called the Harlem River Yards on the Port Morris waterfront. This facility includes a shipping center, a municipal waste management city for the entire borough, and a printing plant for a major newspaper. The South Bronx and western Queens are also the location of the majority of the city's oil-burning peaker power plants. In 2018, food delivery company Fresh Direct opened a 400,000 square foot warehouse here despite deep local opposition, putting many more trucks on local roads.

Fossil fuel infrastructure also makes the South Bronx hotter than the rest of the city. How much hotter? A recent block-by-block heat assessment found that temperatures in the South Bronx can run eight degrees higher than in high-income neighborhoods like the Upper East and Upper West Sides of Manhattan [figure 2]. Heat is already the number one cause of weather-related deaths in the nation. As climate change drives temperatures in the city higher, these inequalities are likely to get even more deadly.

Because of this dirty infrastructure, residents of the South Bronx suffer from the cumulative impact of multiple major sources of pollution. Traffic-related air pollution contributes to some of the nation's highest levels of asthma, as well as hypertension, heart attacks, and strokes. With just 17% of NYC's population, for example, the Bronx sees 95% of the city's asthma hospitalizations.

And, according to recent studies, traffic congestion in the area is getting worse. Some of this is a result of increased driving during the pandemic. But ironically plans to reduce traffic and pollution through congestion charges for vehicles entering Manhattan south of 60th street are predicted to worsen pollution significantly in the Bronx. Essentially, toll-avoiding drivers would avoid Manhattan by cutting through the South Bronx, western Queens, and Staten Island. Projections by the Metropolitan Transit Authority suggest that congestion tolls might lead to 700 extra trucks a day on the Cross Bronx Expressway.

To make matters worse, neighborhoods in this toxic triangle also have far less access to green space and waterfront parks than wealthier neighborhoods. Across NYC, the average park size in predominantly Black neighborhoods is 8 acres, while the average park size in predominantly white neighborhoods is 30 acres. The South Bronx has only one park for every 60,000 residents. The ratio is even worse for parts of Queens. In many wealthy neighborhoods, streets themselves become park-like as a result of the canopy of trees that line them. Not so for the asphalt-dominated streets of the city's sacrifice zones.

But residents of these neighborhoods are not taking these injustices lying down. In fact, some of the city's most dynamic struggles for environmental and racial justice are unfolding in these areas.

For example, residents of the South Bronx have drawn up the Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan, a proposal to provide 100,000+ people access to a waterfront that has been shut off to the public for decades [figure 3]. The plan is anchored in a community land trust scheme proposed by the environmental justice organization South Bronx Unite. Opening up the waterfront to communities long deprived of healthy open space in the city, the plan also provides a logical solution to flood-prone parts of the city through the construction of water-absorbing green infrastructure along NYC'S coastline.

Activists have also developed plans to cap the polluting Cross Bronx Expressway with a deck park. The deck would include filtered vents that would scrub exhaust from trucks and cars, significantly diminishing the roadway's dirty emissions. Building such a park atop the highway would help transform the Cross Bronx Expressway from its current status as a preeminent symbol of urban blight and racial injustice.

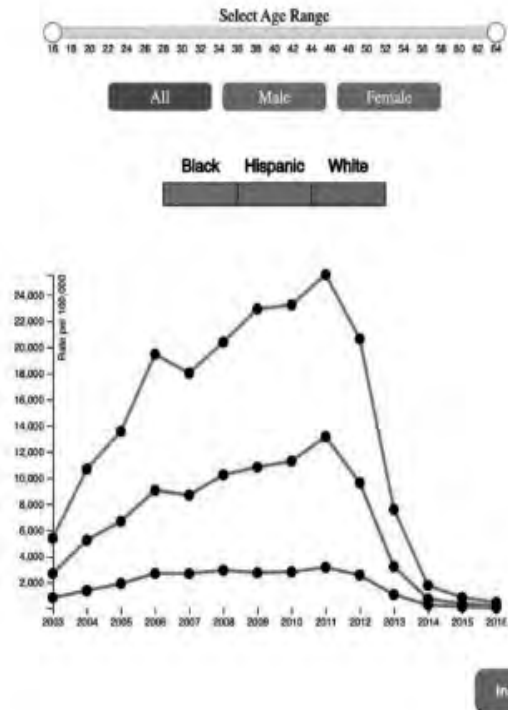
Lastly, abolitionist activists have developed a plan to shut down the deadly Rikers Island penal colony and convert the island into a large-scale solar energy generation and battery storage facility. The plan would link this new renewable infrastructure to the removal of dirty peaker plants in nearby environmental justice communities in the South Bronx and Western Queens. Grounded in recognition of the common roots of anti-Black policing and environmental injustice, Renewable Rikers will be an important example of restorative environmental justice.

We refuse to allow more construction of dirty fossil fuel infrastructure in communities like the South Bronx, western Queens, and East Harlem. No more sacrifice zones! We demand reparative justice in the form of more green and blue space. -Ashely Dawson

**View of projected battery farm & stacked solar panels on Renewable Rikers:**



## NYC's Stop & Frisk Zones:



## Asthma Rates across NYC:

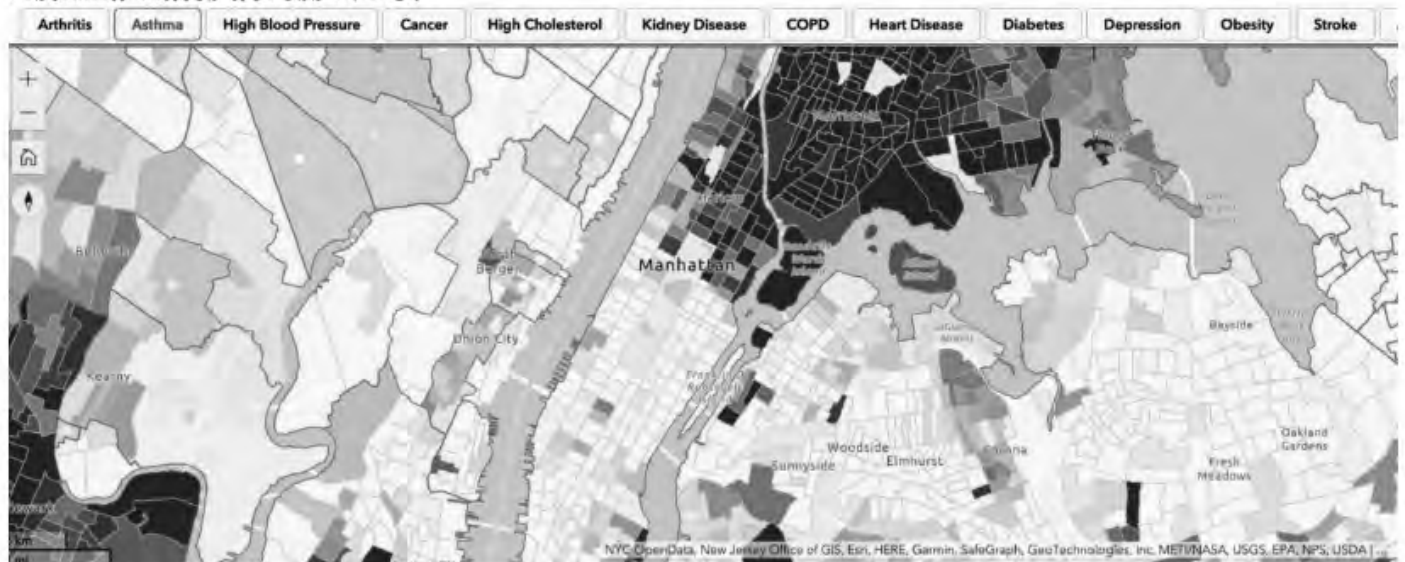
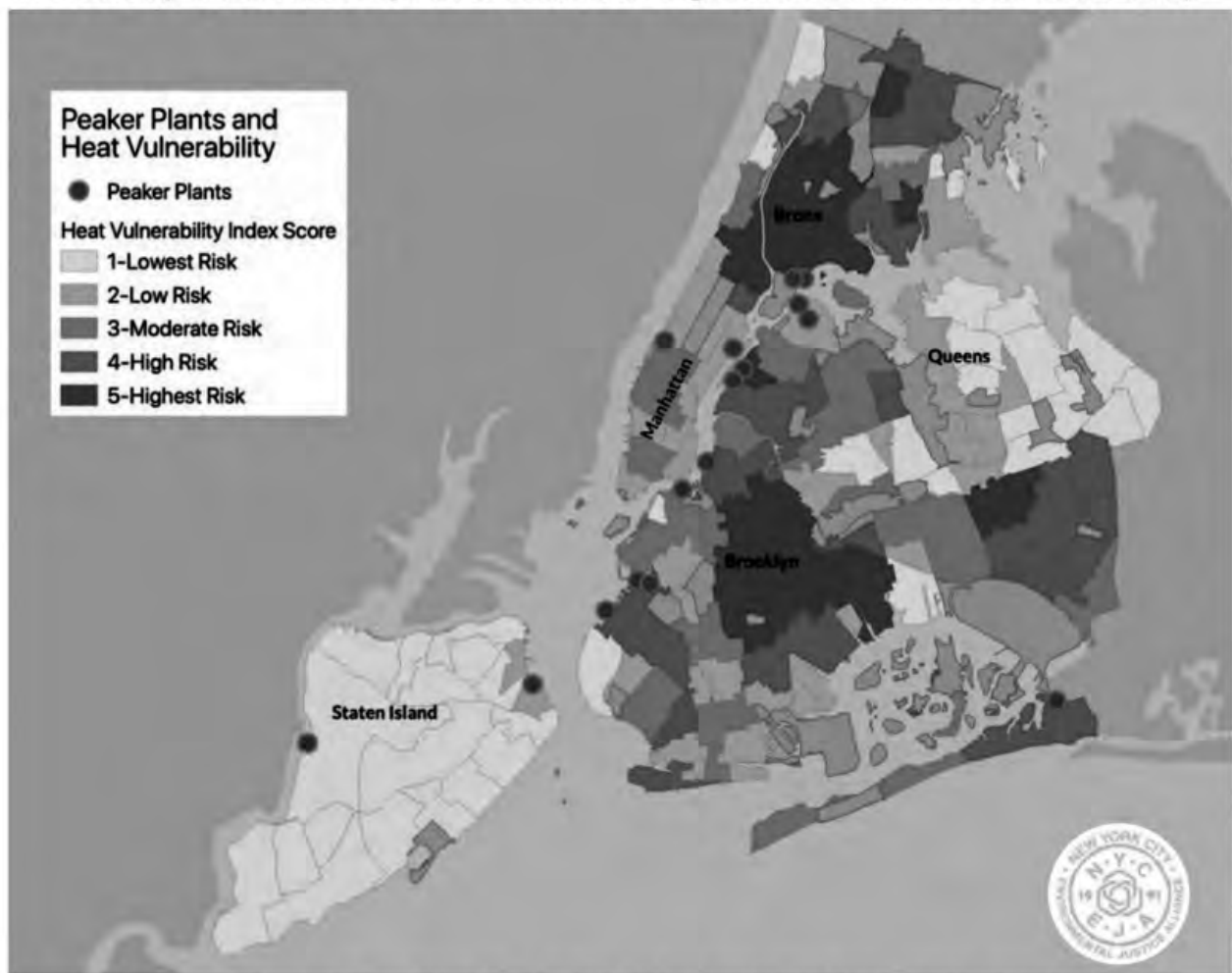




FIGURE 2: Map of New York City Peaker Plants and Neighborhoods Prone to Heat Vulnerability



Source: NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (Using data from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and the New York Independent Systems Operator)

Peaker plants are intended to be fired up only when demand is at its highest – for example, during hot summer evenings when many city residents turn on their air conditioners. The majority of NYC’s peaker plants were built many decades ago, before the Clean Air Act. As a result, they spew out particulates, nitrous oxide, and other pollutants. But the city continues to operate them today, arguing that we need to “keep the lights on” and never mentioning the devastating impact of dirty power on the communities where these polluting facilities are located.

Peaker plants make big money for their operators since the city pays them top dollar to keep the plants on standby. Over the last decade, peaker plant owners made \$4.5 billion in such “capacity payments.” Little surprise, then, that NYC peaker plants are owned by über-capitalist organizations like Boston-based hedge fund ArkLight Capital, Houston-based fossil fuel company NRG, and New Jersey private equity firm LS Power Group.

The Renewable Rikers Act was design to reverse these intertwined histories of unjust criminalization and environmental injustice. As a form of intersectional abolition, it explicitly links closure of the Rikers prison with the removal of noxious fossil fuel infrastructure in communities of color.

Grounded in recognition of the common roots of anti-Black policing and environmental injustice, Renewable Rikers will be an important example of restorative environmental justice.

## **We Demand Abolition of Jails & Fossil Fuels**

### **Abide by the law, Mayor Adams – shut down Rikers Island penal colony**

In 2019, the New York City Council voted to shut down the notoriously abusive Rikers Island jail. The council vote ruled that the island can no longer be used for incarceration by August 2027, but also mandated that the Department of Corrections must surrender any land not being used to imprison people in the period prior to 2027. With these two laws, NYC legally mandated a dual abolition: the closure of its worst jail and the shutting down of noxious fossil fuel infrastructure in surrounding communities of color. The liberated land will be used to establish Renewable Rikers, a solar energy generation and storage facility.

Mayor Adams has ignored 2 deadlines to turn land over. He is breaking the law.

We demand the immediate surrender of disused land on Rikers Island, according to the legally mandated timeline in the Renewable Rikers Act. We insist that the city move forward with the plan for a renewable, restorative, and regenerative post-carceral Rikers Island.

Rikers Island embodies the most repugnant injustices of the US system of mass incarceration. Built out of NYC's toxic waste by forced prison labor, Rikers has become notorious as one of the country's 10 worst prisons. The vast majority of those held at Rikers are pre-trial detainees. These people have been convicted of nothing and are behind bars only because they are too poor to afford bail. Although these people are still innocent according to the law, they are regularly subjected to horrifying forms of extreme, gratuitous violence while in detention at Rikers. These unjust carceral policies are a manifest economic disaster: in 2021, according to the city comptroller, it cost \$555, 539 to keep a person in a cage for a year in NYC.

A large percentage of the people held at Rikers come from the surrounding neighborhoods of the South Bronx, East New York, and Harlem, as well as other working-class communities of color like Brownsville and Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn. These neighborhoods have been subjected to systemic economic marginalization for decades. Their residents have been targeted by the NYPD's unlawful "stop and frisk" policy for many years. Finally, New Yorkers living in these neighborhoods are exposed every day to some of the city's worst environmental injustices.

The intersection of state-sanctioned carceral and environmental violence has turned parts of the city into de facto sacrifice zones in which citizens are subjected to both open and insidious forms of violence. Compare, for example, maps of neighborhoods targeted by "stop and frisk" with the zones of the city where surface temperatures are highest [figure 1 on page 33], imperiling vulnerable citizens like the elderly and those without enough income to afford air conditioning – including residents of public housing, only about half of whom have access to cooling. It is no coincidence that people who have been systematic criminalized and subjected to carceral violence also find their lives imperiled by climate change-related health risks.

But it's not just that working class people of color can't afford to live in neighborhoods with lots of trees and parks. It's also that the city has a history of locating toxin-spewing fossil fuel infrastructure in neighborhoods populated predominantly by Black and Latinx people. This is a form of slow violence against communities of color.

Compare where fossil fuel infrastructure like the city's dirty oil-burning peaker plants are located to the parts of the city with the highest dangerous heat index and the highest rates of asthma [figures 2 & 3].

Renewable Rikers would convert much of Rikers Island to a large-scale solar energy generation and battery storage facility, linking this new renewable infrastructure to the removal of dirty peaker plants in nearby environmental justice communities in the South Bronx and Western Queens.

In addition, Renewable Rikers would allow the relocation of noxious waste treatment plants currently disproportionately located in working class communities in the South Bronx and Western Queens. This would give these communities access to the waterfront green space that they've spent many years fighting for [figure 5]. Renewable Rikers would liberate space, promoting social cohesion and invaluable connections with the city's most beautiful natural areas.

But despite all these positive outcomes, NYC Mayor Adams has failed to abide by the legal requirements of the Renewable Rikers Act. Two deadlines have passed without any city response to the Act's timetable of progressive closures of disused facilities on Rikers Island.

Rikers Island's Otis Bantam Correctional Facility sits empty today. The Department of Corrections must surrender it.

Why is Mayor Adams refusing to abide by the law? His administration claimed during the pandemic that it could not close the Otis Bantam jail because the space was needed to spread incarcerated people, thereby protecting them from infection. Yet the Adams administration has overseen a dramatic deterioration in health conditions in the city's jails.

The mayor continues to argue that he anticipates numbers of incarcerated people going up steeply, and that there needs to be some Plan B if Rikers is to be closed. Right-wing media outlets like Fox News are more than happy to go along with this line, stoking fear and popular authoritarianism with false reports of high crime levels.

By refusing to comply with the Renewable Rikers Act, Mayor Adams and his administration are breaking the law and stoking Right-wing backlash in NYC and beyond.

We demand that the mayor and the city comply with the terms of the Renewable Rikers Act. We must abolish fossil fuels as we want to preserve a habitable city and planet. We must stop wasting money and lives by putting innocent people in violent cages.

We demand a Renewable Rikers.

-Ashely Dawson

(continued from Abide by the law, Mayor Adams)

## NYC's Extreme Urban Heat Zones:



### Initial Observations

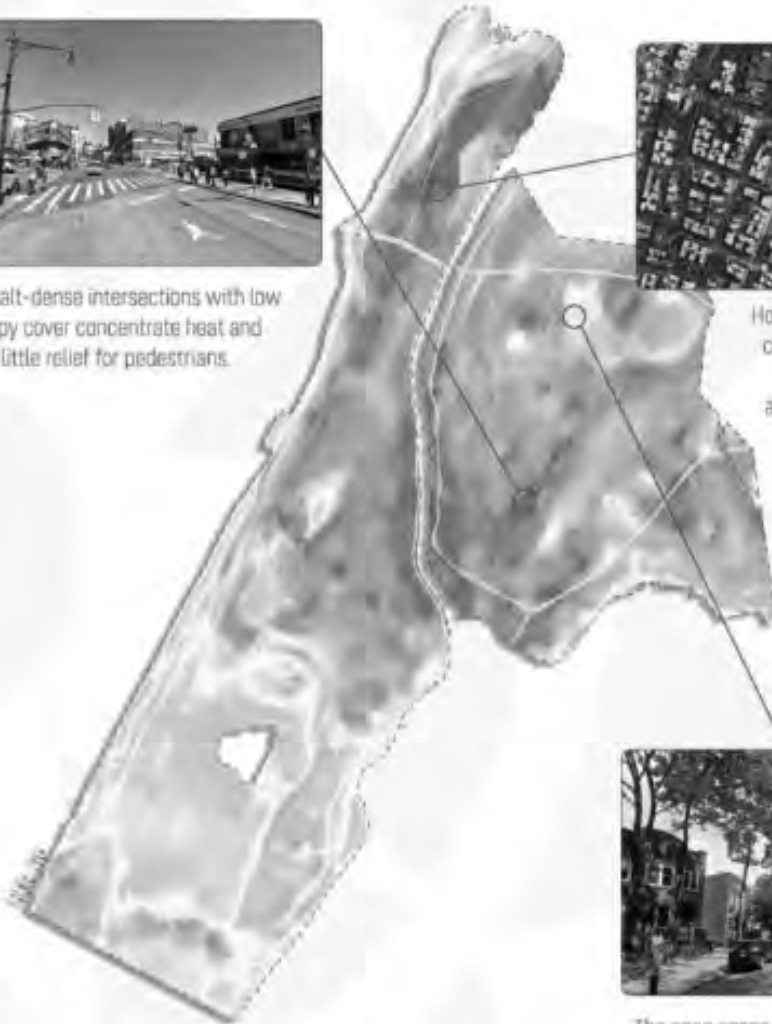
The distribution of heat across a region often varies by qualities of the land and its use. Here are several observations of how this phenomenon may be occurring in your region.



Asphalt-dense intersections with low canopy cover concentrate heat and offer little relief for pedestrians.



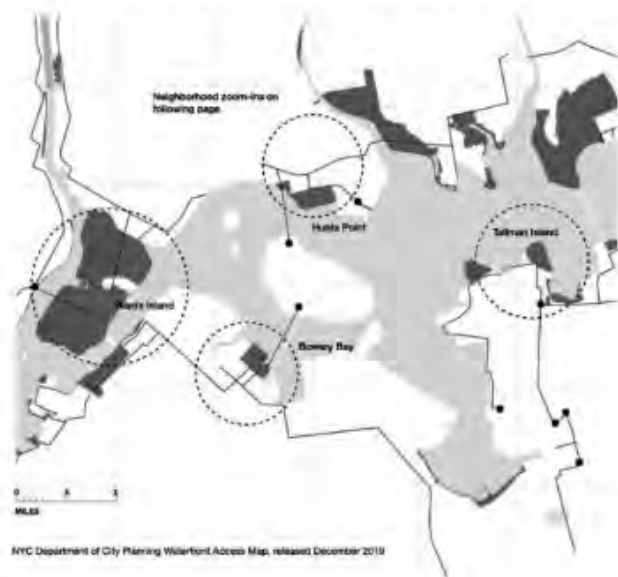
Homogeneous building types can restrict air from mixing, keeping these residential areas warm throughout the day and night.



The open space and shade of large parks keep some surrounding residential blocks relatively cooler in the peak heat of the day.



## Liberated Space and Waterfront Connections



(A) Energy and wastewater infrastructure limits waterfront access in Astoria. Photo by author.  
 (B) Pedestrian access from the Bronx to Randall's Woods Island. Photo by author.  
 (C) Banerjee Point Park is one of only two parks located in Hunts Point. Photo by Roy Smith via Wikimedia Commons (Creative Commons Attribution 4.0).

Aside from cleaning up the nearby waterways and reducing sewage back-ups on streets, the consolidation also has the potential to free up the formerly occupied WRRF properties, which together total 182 acres, for community redevelopment. The ongoing DEP feasibility study will determine how much space, if any, must be reserved for continued wastewater functions, such as pump stations or wet weather facilities.<sup>9</sup> Of the acres that are ultimately redirected for public benefit, community driven planning processes should determine the best use of land, whether that is open space, affordable housing, green infrastructure, or other functions to meet neighborhood priorities and that take into account sea level rise and localized flood risks.

Given that high level storm sewers already connect Bowery Bay and Hunts Point WRRFs to Rikers Island, these plants will likely be the first to be decommissioned. Northern Astoria and Hunts Point are two environmental justice communities that, as the maps on the following page convey, sorely lack open space or community focused facilities—which this plan has the potential to redress. In a second phase, Wards and Tottenville WRRFs could be retired following the construction and connection of force mains to Rikers Island. This liberated space would expand

9. NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

Figure 3: Bronx Blueway



**WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR**, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to ensure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice.

## **The Principles of Environmental Justice (EJ)**

1) **Environmental Justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2) **Environmental Justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3) **Environmental Justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4) **Environmental Justice** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5) **Environmental Justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6) **Environmental Justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.

7) **Environmental Justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8) **Environmental Justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9) **Environmental Justice** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

10) **Environmental Justice** considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

11) **Environmental Justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

12) **Environmental Justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13) **Environmental Justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14) **Environmental Justice** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15) **Environmental Justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16) **Environmental Justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17) **Environmental Justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

**More info on environmental justice and environmental racism can be found online at [www.ejnet.org/ej/](http://www.ejnet.org/ej/)**

*Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24-27, 1991, in Washington DC, drafted and adopted these 17 principles of Environmental Justice. Since then, the Principles have served as a defining document for the growing grassroots movement for environmental justice.*

**POWER**

**AND**

**EQUALITY**



## Composting the Anthropocene –gil lopez

***Nothing is waste, until it is wasted. Only we humans make waste that nature can't digest.***

–Captain Charles J Moore, oceanographer, who first brought the world's attention to the Great Garbage Patch, (one of five plastic gyres)

***If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production.***

–from the song Garbage by Pete Seeger, late American singer and social activist.

***There is no such thing as 'away'. When we throw anything away, it must go somewhere.***

–Annie Leonard, executive director of Greenpeace USA

***If we acknowledge that the waste issue is more important than the convenience it offers, we begin to understand that a plastic pollution free world is not a choice but a commitment to life and commitment to future generations.*** –Amit Ray, Indian author and spiritual master

–1–

To make compost, you'd need to combine organic material high in nitrogen (like kitchen scraps) with high carbon material (like dry leaves). After some time, agitation is helpful to speed the process along. Water and oxygen are key. So, I ask you to breathe and stay hydrated as you digest these nuggets of information. Make time for rumination because time is absolutely necessary when creating fertile ground for future growth.

The Lenape peoples, native to Lenapehoking (aka NYC), produced mounds of debris called middens. These piles of discarded pottery shards, food scraps, bones and other pre-industrial materials broke down to create fertile soil for future generations to walk upon and cultivate.

In modern day NYC, one-third of our waste is still organic, but we send over 90% of that to landfills in poor countries particularly to Africa and China or incinerators located in predominately working poor communities those of which are largely Black, Brown and Indigenous. This practice ensures that the air, land and water will continue to be poisoned for generations to come.

City officials, like in NYC, still debate whether or not to mandate compost. In the US, plastic comprises one-third of all waste annually– 40% of this is packaging. Plastic takes between 500-1000 years to break down. Globally, we produce over 335 megatons of plastic per year.

Around 8,000,000 tons of plastic enters the oceans each year, by 2050 plastic will outweigh fish in the oceans. While sea animals die with bellies full of plastics, microplastics (<5mm in size) are eaten by zooplankton, which are eaten by small fish, oysters, crabs and predatory fish. The microplastics (and other toxic waste) hyperaccumulate their way up the food chain. Microplastics have been found in almost all adults and 80% of babies.



(continued Composting the Anthropocene)

*Questions for reflection, Use this space to write down your thoughts:*

*How many generations will walk upon our post-modern middens? What will they cultivate here? How will their bodies assimilate to life in a plastic world where babies are born with plastics in their cellular structure? Is this ethical?*

–2–

**Zero Waste cannot be implemented by consumers alone.** Keep America Beautiful is a nonprofit founded in 1953 with a goal of reducing litter. Anti-litter PSAs made “litterbug” a household phrase, successfully foisting the responsibility of pollution onto the consumer and away from corporations. Keep America Beautiful founders included some of the world’s largest can and bottle manufacturers.

In 2022, the NYC Department of Sanitation’s (DSNY) budget included \$33 million for waste export and recycling processing of residential waste. A large percentage of this is packaging and single use plastic. Externalized costs are costs generated by corporations, but paid for by taxpayers at large like you and me.

In 2020, scientists reported that rainwater around the world contained unsafe levels of Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), which are linked to cancer. These “forever chemicals” degrade very slowly and are widely used in products from food containers to fire retardants.

*Questions for reflection, Use this space to write down your thoughts:*

*Is the global water cycle at large worth the profits gained by companies that manufacture and profit from PFAS as they externalize these costs? Because externalizing these costs is legal, even mandated by corporations’ legal fiduciaries in order to increase investor profits, does that make it okay?*

**Waste is a high value concept for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of western civilizations.** Capital is extracted at every step of global industrial processes and waste is a key feature of each step. Externalized costs increase the GDP when taxpayers pay for healthcare related to environmental pollution and a myriad of others.

Due to the decisions made by government and corporations, we become complicit in supporting a legacy of wasteful industries by simply eating, clothing ourselves and living in urban environments. For some living privileged lifestyles, becoming active in waste related issues are for their quality of life or aesthetic concerns where they live. For the rest of us it is a matter of life or death.

Manufacturers design products to break or become quickly outdated, so you will inevitably throw them away and buy new ones. This is called designed obsolescence. This tactic guarantees that the current version of a given product will become outdated or useless within a known time period. This proactive move guarantees that consumers will seek replacements in the future, thus bolstering demand and driving up a corporation's profits.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a strategy to place a shared responsibility for end-of-life product management on corporations, instead of the general public, while encouraging product design change that minimize negative impacts on human health and the environment at every stage of the product's lifecycle. The costs of processing and disposal are also incorporated into the *actual* cost of a product. EPR places primary responsibility on the corporation or brand owner, who make design and marketing decisions.

*Questions for reflection, Use this space to write down your thoughts: Are we ready to release modern conveniences in order to ensure future life? Can you imagine a positive possible future without all the packaging, single use plastics, carcinogenic chemicals and contaminated water? Can you refuse plastics and other pollution in your personal life while also advocating for changes at a policy level?*

Excerpt from **Notes of an Artist: From Climate Change to Pandemic in the Bronx**  
presented at The Feminist Art Project's TFAP@CAA 2021 Day(s) of Panels, Ecofeminisms, February  
12 & 13, 2021 at Rutgers University

## As part of the western hemispheric settler-colonial plantation

**structure**, real estate development, gentrification and over-policing in NYC where the majority of my projects take place, alter the relationships BIPOC communities have with outside spaces to the point where leaving one's home becomes a political act. Where barbecuing, playing music or bird-watching in a city park while Black, opens opportunities for the police to be called. In her book **Black Faces, White Spaces** anthropologist Carolyn Finney illustrates that picturing black and indigenous people in a contemporary natural environment (which could be forested, fecund, mountainous, arid, and/or vast) is challenging. Finney proposes how this has come about as a result of the semiotic choices made by advertising executives in the mass media for multiple decades. Often people seen hiking, camping, enjoying the view, or rescuing the environment have been by and large white-European facing people. Another way to consider this is through public statues like Christopher Columbus' where figures stand with outstretched arms looking onto the horizon and land as anointed caretakers of the earth. Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter writes about how modern society has been conditioned through Judeo-Christian traditions to see the white European cis-male as the ideal human. Such modern conditioning makes it difficult for anything outside this mold to be related to the land and natural world. Whenever non-white faces are seen in the natural landscape or in open spaces they are often in a fossilized archaic state, doing manual labor or about to commit a crime. And I start with these ideas to pull the focus of my notes from an artist, towards the basis of my work as well as to highlight the need to persist in these discussions surrounding the environmental crisis and look to the places where we find ourselves, to examine how we have come to relate to the environment and as Indigenous scholar and anthropologist Dr. Kim Tallbear describes to the more-than-human beings on the planet.

Power relations are out of balance. Erasure and appropriation of indigenous relational ecologies have turned into a "western notion of holism" placing the Anthropocene (defined in Sylvia Wynter's terms) at the center. Black and Indegenious relational ecologies and ways of relating with the environment, "do not accord final moral value to nature, the ecosystem, or the environment". Rather they are analogous to kin relationships, in which each individual part— humans, soil, plants, lands, waters— are cared for and nurtured by the community and families. The ecologies of formally enslaved Africans brought to the western hemisphere, "were ethically grounded in precolonial, indigenous sub-Saharan African views of the natural world." (Haymes, pp. 36) where "consonance between all parties involved, is proof of the well-being of the state of life and if threatened, the community worked to rebalance it. Community defended it the natural world.

-Alicia Grullon





## **Making Sense: Data and Stories in a Changing World**

**Whether through watching radar maps of giant hurricanes on the news** or the unsettling feeling of a warm winter day, most of us are noticing the Earth is changing. When we're faced with change or uncertainty, we usually like to gather as much information as possible to make decisions. Sometimes this data or information comes through our feelings and perceptions like if we feel calmer in a green environment with trees. Sometimes we rely more on measurements like how long it will take us to get somewhere on google maps or checking the day's weather on an app. Whether through dots on a graph or the feeling of air in our lungs, both these methods of data collection are powerful and useful for understanding the complex world outside and within us. With each however, comes the task of knowing which are reliable for different needs and how to fine tune the processes of collection whether they be technological, emotional, physical or spiritual.

Some of us feel intuitively how the world is interconnected, how our bodies and our actions are in relationships with the elements of earth around us. However, even with these feelings we can't always sense the more nuanced effects of a possibly polluted water source or particles in the air we breathe until years have past and it becomes too late. For this reason using science and technology to be our deeper seeing eyes and senses can safeguard us, act as early warning signal and tell stronger stories to those that need to be held accountable. It's reasonable to be wary of science and technology. Much of it has developed through oppressive and extractive cultures and systems. Therefore it is ever more important that we implement and engage with it through a lens of undoing harm and seeking deeper healing.

Environmental sensing and data tracking is growing very quickly as the technology becomes more affordable, smaller and easy to deploy on a hyper local scale. This is good as it allows for a more accurate view on how certain communities may be more impacted by environmental hazards. 2 examples, as of 2023 in New York City, include Floodnet, an initiative to deploy 500 flood sensors across 5 boroughs as a result of increased flooding, and The Community Air Monitoring Initiative to collect street by street air quality data via a hybrid vehicle. Floodnet is a consortium sponsored by the mayor's office of academic partners including CUNY and NYU. The Community Air Monitoring Initiative is a state supported partnership through the Department of Environmental Conservation and a private company known as Aclima. Some communities have taken the data collection into their own hands with citizen or community science initiatives. Many of these groups have turned to technologies such as Purple Air Sensors an off the shelf available air quality sensor that monitors particulate matter(PM2.5) which are fine particles generated from car exhaust or construction. These Purple Air sensors have an online interface where data can be livestreamed and publicly available. My group at CUNY's Community Sensor Lab is also learning to build our own sensors. Through these many initiatives, with different stakeholders and methodologies, we have to ask how can these practices and technologies remain equitable, transparent and accountable to those who are most at risk.

Part of the practice, I believe, is along with the data, continuing to maintain the value of our senses, of our lived experiences and the knowledge that gets passed down through generations of observing the land and the elements. How do we do this? Floodnet has partnered with an organization called Floodwatch which allows residents to upload photos and stories of their experiences of flooding to help tell a more holistic story. In our workshops with the Community Sensor Lab we also learn about fine tuning our sense perception and reconnect with the wisdom of our bodies. As for other state/industry initiatives, community meetings and town halls become the spaces folks must share stories and add to the bigger picture of what's actually happening in

our neighborhoods and with our communities. Also, as individuals we can start to investigate our own data collection processes. How do you experience the changing world and gather information through your body, the news or from technology? I believe it is also imperative that institutions and communities invest in education on data literacy and how to connect the dots with our lived experiences and community wisdom. By learning to weave these data streams together we can better target causes of harm and learn to heal the damage done in our interconnected world between the environment and ourselves.

-Kendra Kruger

For more links to projects and data sets referenced:  
[linktr.ee/makingsensedatastories](https://linktr.ee/makingsensedatastories)

Links to Referenced Project:

<https://www.aclima.io/new-york-launch>

<https://www2.purpleair.com/>

<https://comsenslab.commonsgc.cuny.edu/>

A few other, but not exhaustive, list of environmental data collection initiatives currently underway in New York City:

<https://dataviz.floodnet.nyc/>

FloodNet.NYC, a growing network of flood sensors and real-time data dashboard created and maintained by a consortium between CUNY, NYU and the mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation and Office of Climate and Environmental Justice

<https://srijb.org/jbfloodwatch/>

FloodWatch, a community flood monitoring project which allows for lived experiences to be shared through photographs and stories.

<https://newlab.com/articles/numina-circular-city/>

Numina, a brooklyn based company contracted by NYC to monitor flows of people, bicycles and vehicles throughout New York City streets.

Other NYC Air Quality Data

<http://www.nyaqinow.net/>

<https://nyccas.cityofnewyork.us/nyccas2022/report/3>

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8406.html>

Community Meetings, Workshops & Working Groups on Air Quality

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/125320.html#Involvement>

<https://climate.ny.gov/resources/climate-justice-working-group/>

<https://www.weact.org/home-3-2-2-2/getinvolved/membership/cjwg/>

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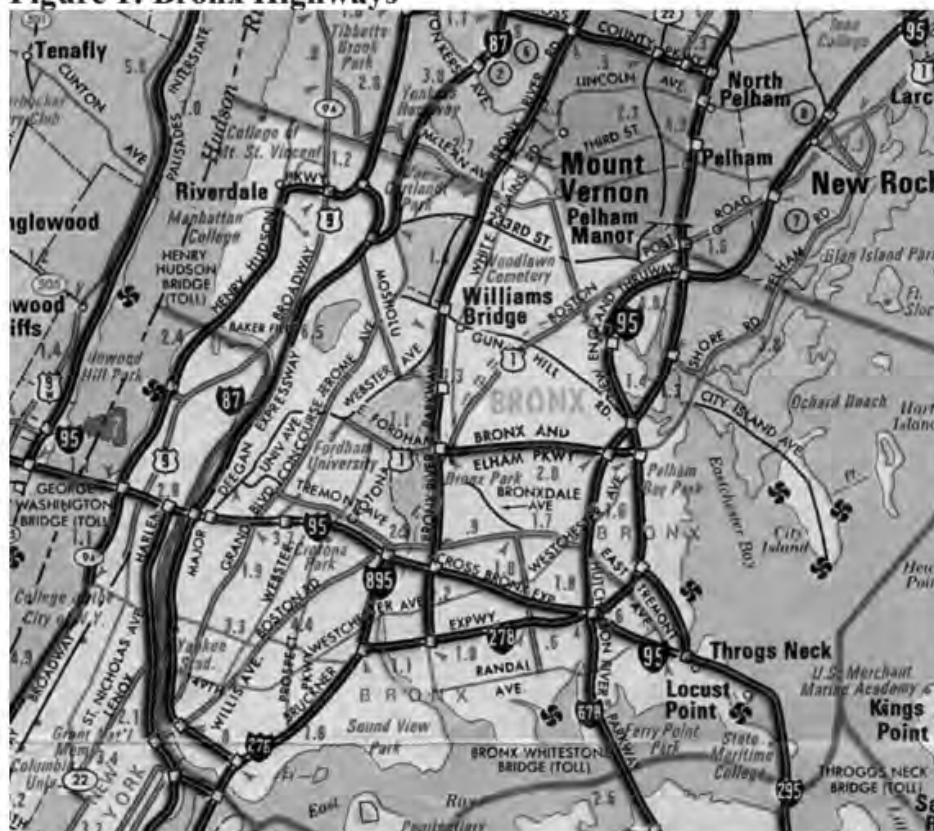
New York City Council, Park Equity and COVID-19, <https://council.nyc.gov/data/data-team/park-equity-covid-2022/>

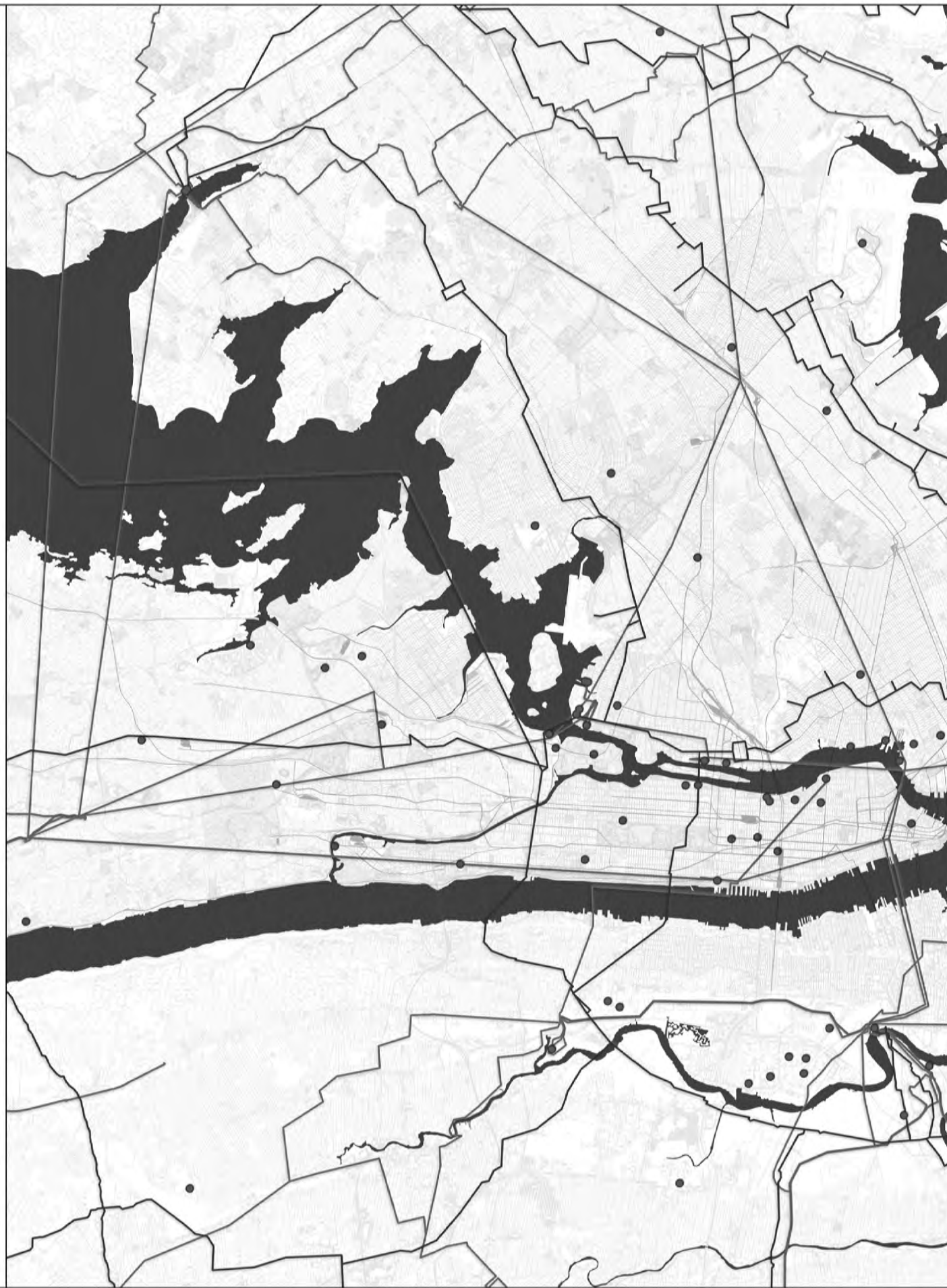
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South Bronx Unite, Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan, <https://www.southbronxunite.org/mott-havenport-morris-waterfront-plan>

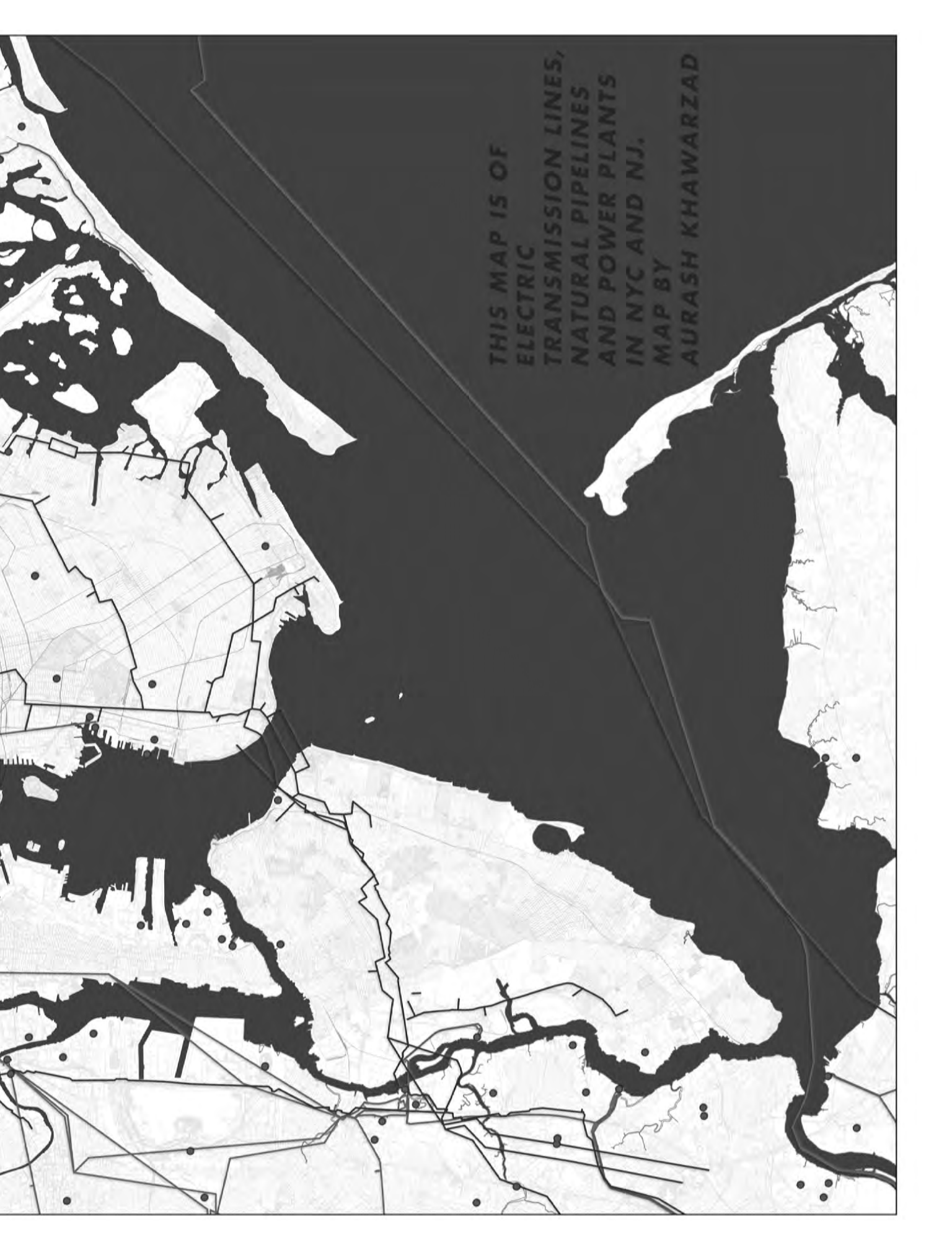
Walshe, Sadhbh, "Environmental Racism: Activists Decry Fresh Direct's Impact on Air Quality," The Guardian (March 9, 2015).

**Figure 1: Bronx Highways**









THIS MAP IS OF  
ELECTRIC  
TRANSMISSION LINES,  
NATURAL PIPELINES  
AND POWER PLANTS  
IN NYC AND NJ.  
MAP BY  
AURASH KHAWARZAD

**The Cypher ♦❁❁☒**  
**Canerows Hold Heirloom Seeds**  
**Norwood, The Bronx →↖↗←**

**Green spaces also means green plates.** Land liberation cannot come at the loss of healthy food and at the deaths of our non-human siblings and the land. Take note that it is mostly Black and Brown hands that are tasked to swing that ax against non-human necks. Veganism as a liberation praxis (practice and theory) is not new. This is a reclamation of our Indigenous ways of being and thriving. Rejection of oppressive practices also means rejection of the current agricultural facism that exists in this country and in neo-colonial structures worldwide. Decolonization means moving past speciesism in our fight for liberation. We must deeply examine our definitions of food and the pipelines by which food is moved or displaced in our communities.

These are just touchpoints in a centuries-long truth. These are truths that need to be shared with our peoples. We have always kept each other safe and whole. Move your work with clarity, intention and conviction. We, the thrivers in the cracks of this city can move these bodies that seek to govern us. We are not their politics. We know the truth.

From the edges of the margins comes The Cypher. A molotov cocktail of wildflower seeds bringing a pedagogy that is more dialogic than prescriptive - a street corner conversation. A body of work and knowledge that includes our traditional Indigenous, ancestral African philosophies that were so radical that they were dubbed myth by the embedded anti-Blackness of patriarchy. That is where the vegan ethos we work under spans from, that is the memory that our work aims to stir in our peoples.

This formation focuses on addressing gender equity, food insecurity, root healing, and has an overarching goal of celebrating the indomitable brilliance of TNBGNC and Queer Black femmes. This abundant space holds all QTBIPOC tight, but is rooted in the power of Black femmes. It addresses the needs of our communities by providing context for the ways in which justice for Earth and non-humans is bound up in justice for the most marginalized of us humans - this is a total anti-oppression framework. We build capacity and capital from the inside out. We focus on creating and holding a generous and joyful vegan space for Trans, Non-Binary, Gender Non-Conforming and Queer Black femmes. This is an intergenerational, multi-experiential space that pushes past common patriarchal settler-colonizer structures to embrace African ancestral ways of knowing from a diasporic lens. This formation holds Black space as sacred and necessary for survival - Black TNBGNC and Queer space even more so. This is where we find transcendent realities which move popular movements, culture, and the very understanding of the structures all of us who believe in anti-oppression practice hope to upend.

# Futurnomics of food

**Vandana Shiva explains the need for a new food production paradigm - one that ditches our reliance on oil and monoculture farming**



📌 Vandana Shiva: the economics of the future, is based on people and biodiversity, not fossil fuels, energy slaves, toxic chemicals and monocultures. Photograph: Rajesh Kumar Singh/AP

The economic crisis, the ecological crisis and the food crisis are all a reflection of an outmoded and fossilised economic paradigm - a paradigm that grew out of mobilising resources for war by creating the category of 'growth', and one that is rooted in the age of oil and fossil fuels. It is fossilised both because it is obsolete and because it is a product of the age of fossil fuels. We need to move beyond this fossilised paradigm if we are to address the current economic and ecological crisis.

Economy and ecology have the same root, oikos, an ancient Greek word meaning 'home' - both our planetary home, the Earth, and the home where we live our everyday lives in family and community.

But economy strayed from ecology, forgot the home and focused on the market. An artificial 'production boundary' was created to measure Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The production boundary defined work and production for sustenance as non-production and non-work, taking the position that if you produce what you consume, you don't produce. With one fell swoop, Nature's work in providing goods and services disappeared. The production and work of sustenance economies disappeared and the work of women, in particular, disappeared.

To the false measure of growth is added a false measure of 'productivity'. Productivity is output per unit input. In agriculture this should involve all outputs of biodiverse agro-ecosystems - the compost, energy and dairy products from livestock, the fuel and fodder and fruit from agro-forestry and farm trees, the diverse outputs of diverse crops. When measured honestly in terms of total output, small, biodiverse farms produce more and are more productive.

Inputs should include all inputs - capital, seeds, chemicals, machinery, fossil fuels, labour, land and water. But the false measure of productivity selects one output from diverse outputs: the single commodity to be produced for the market; and one input from diverse inputs: labour.

Thus low-output, high-input chemical, industrial monocultures, which in fact have a negative productivity, are artificially rendered more productive than small, biodiverse, ecological farms. And this is at the root of the false assumption that small farms must now be replaced by large industrial farms.

This false, fossilised measure of productivity is at the root of the multiple crises we face in food and agriculture. It is at the root of hunger and malnutrition, because while commodities grow, food and nutrition have disappeared from the farming system. 'Yield' measures the output of a single commodity, not the output of food and nutrition.



It is at the root of the agrarian crisis, too. When costs of input keep increasing, but are not counted when measuring productivity, small and marginal farmers are pushed into a high-cost farming model that results in debt and, in extreme cases, the epidemic of farmers' suicides that we have now witnessed.

It is at the root of the unemployment crisis. When people are replaced by energy slaves because of a false measure of productivity based on labour inputs alone, destruction of livelihoods and work is the inevitable result.

It is also at the root of the ecological crisis. When natural-resource inputs, fossil-fuel inputs and chemical inputs are increased but not counted, more water and land are wasted, more toxic chemicals are used, more fossil fuels needed. In terms of resource productivity, chemical industrial agriculture is highly inefficient. It uses 10 units of energy to produce just one unit of food. It is responsible for 75% use of water, 75% disappearance of species diversity, 75% land and soil degradation and 40% of all greenhouse-gas emissions, which are destabilising the climate. And according to a recently released report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), extreme events due to an unstable climate incur an average annual cost of US\$80 billion.

We need to move from these false and fossilised indicators to real indicators that reflect the true health of Nature and the real wellbeing of the economy.

In food and agriculture, we must transcend the false productivity of a fossilised paradigm, and shift from the narrow focus on monoculture yields as the only output, and human labour as the only input. Instead of destroying small farms and farmers, we at the Navdanya movement in India are working to protect them because they are more productive in real terms. Instead of destroying biodiversity, we are working to intensify it, because it gives more food and better nutrition.

Futuronomics, the economics of the future, is based on people and biodiversity, not fossil fuels, energy slaves, toxic chemicals and monocultures. The fossilised paradigm of food and agriculture gives us displacement, dispossession, disease and ecological destruction. It has given us the farmers' suicides and an epidemic of hunger and malnutrition. A paradigm that robbed 250,000 farmers of their lives, and millions of their livelihoods in India is clearly dysfunctional. It has led to growth of money flow and corporate profits, but it has diminished life and the wellbeing of our people. The new paradigm we are creating on the ground and in our minds enriches livelihoods, the health of people, and all ecosystems and cultures.

***This article appears in the January/February issue of Resurgence & Ecologist. For more information on the publication, please visit [www.resurgence.org](http://www.resurgence.org).***

**EN LAS CIUDADES CONDENADAS AL OLVIDO,  
SIEMPRE HAY ALGUIEN QUE SE ATREVE A RECORDAR!**

**CHICO BAUTÍ**



**Q: Accessibility and disability aren't always discussed in the environmental movement or sustainability curriculums. What do you wish those who want to be allies knew about these topics and how they intersect with activism and environmentalism?**

"It would be great if those who want to be allies to the disabled community could acknowledge the privileges and ableism that remains present in current environmentalism discussions. Eco-ableism creates a divide that 'others' disabled environmentalists—and considering the fact that at least 15 percent of the world's population lives with a disability, this is counterproductive to the idea of being an inclusive movement. Allies to the disabled environmentalist community should help advocate for accessible sustainable practices and materials that are considerate of disabled needs."

—Ambika Rajyagor, intersectional feminist and disabled rights advocate, cofounder of Disabled & Outdoors

**Q: What piece of advice do you have to the next generation of LGBTQ+ environmentalist?**

"Queerness exists in nature all around us. Nature never gives us binaries, either/ors, male or female, black or white, gay or straight. Instead, nature gives us queerness and fluidity, metamorphosis, change and magical infinite variety. So, my advice to the next generation of LGBTQ+ environmentalists is to first see your queerness as natural, then know that you are loved by this earth and utilize your unique lenses and queer identity as a special tool to create an even more intersectional and queer climate community."

—Wyn Wiley / Pattie Gonia, drag queen, intersectional environmentalist, photographer, creative director, and outdoorist



## **Q: How can ally communities help advocate for people + planet?**

"First is just taking time to really, genuinely listen. Not to argue, not to debate peoples' lived experiences, not to share fragility or try to defend yourself for the privileges you hold. White supremacy is like a poison: you have to purge it before you can get towards a place of healing. That purging is never comfortable, but it must be done to move forward and understand the many injustices BIPOC face."

—Sabs Katz, low-impact vegan activist, cofounder of Intersectional Environmentalist



# Community Convening: We're Not Softening Our Resistance

Saturday, April 29, 2023

1-4 PM

***When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money. Cree Prohcey attritubed to Chef Seattle (1786-1866)***

## BIOS

### Filmmakers- In order of appearance:

#1 **Donna Conlon** (b. 1966, Atlanta, GA) and **Jonathan Harker** (b. 1975, Quito Ecuador) live and work in Panama City Panama. They have been collaborating since 2006. Their videos playfully comment on national identity, mass consumerism, climate, and social behavior. They have shown their collaborations in exhibitions such as: Forecast Form, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2022); Tropical is Political, Americas Society, NY (2022); Stayin' Alive, Another Space, NY (2020); Museum der Moderne Salzburg (2020); Secret Passages, Kadist, San Francisco (2018); Prospect 4: The Lotus in Spite of the Swamp, New Orleans (2017); Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, Los Angeles (2017); Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (2014); and Geopoetics: the 8th Mercosur Biennale, Porto Alegre, Brazil, (2011). In 2009 they received a production grant from the Harpo Foundation. Their work is included in collections such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; the Tate Modern, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, the Kadist Art Foundation, Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporáneo, and the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection in the Museum of Art, Lima. With Casa Santa Ana, they lead Voces en Acción, a workshop for emerging artists in Panama centered on experimentation, constructive criticism, and community building. They are represented by Diablo Rosso, Panamá. [vimeo.com/conlonharker](https://vimeo.com/conlonharker)

*The Voice Adrift / Voz a la deriva*

2017

HD video, color, sound

We're each of us alone, to be sure. What can you do but hold your hand out in the dark? -Ursula K. Le Guin  
An imperceptible message is spoken into an empty plastic water bottle and set adrift on the currents of runoff that form during a tropical downpour. Swept away by the waters of chance and circumstance, the bottled message wanders and careens its way through a fleeting urban aquascape towards an unknown ear. Informed by the circular and episodic structure of Homer's Odyssey, The Voice Adrift is a tale of alienation and communion, hope and despair, and the frailty and resilience of human existence in the face of political, social and environmental crisis.

Camera: Raphael Salazar and Donna Conlon

Sound design: José Rommel Tuñón

Edit: Jonathan Harker y Donna Conlon

Image correction: Frank Zamora and Jonathan Harker

#2. **Sofía Gallisá Muriente** is a visual artist whose work resists colonial forces of erasure and claims the freedom of historical agency, proposing mechanisms for remembering and reimagining. She employs text, image and archive as medium and subject, exploring their poetic and political implications. Sofía is a past fellow of the Flaherty Seminar and has received support from the Smithsonian Institute, MoMA and the Puerto Rican Arts Initiative. Her work has been exhibited in the Whitney Biennial, the Queens Museum, ifa Galerie in Berlin, and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, as well as galleries Km 0.2 and Embajada, among others. From 2014 to 2020, she co-directed the artist-run organization Beta-Local, dedicated to fostering knowledge exchange and transdisciplinary practices in Puerto Rico.

*B-Roll*

2021

HD video, color, sound

B-roll is a film term that refers to supporting images used to illustrate ideas or hide cuts and camera

movements. In this video collage, promotional videos produced by the Puerto Rico Tourism Company and the Department of Economic Development are remixed to highlight the recurrent images used to market Puerto Rico to foreign investors and tourists. Daniel Montes Carro composed the music, which fuses audio from the videos with field recordings from the 2016 Puerto Rico Investment Summit.

#3. **Tanika I. Williams** (b. St. Andrew, Jamaica; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) is an award-winning filmmaker and performance artist. She investigates women's use of movement, mothering, and medicine to produce and pass on ancestral wisdom of ecology, spirituality, and liberation. Williams holds a BA from Eugene Lang College, New School, and an MDiv from Union Theological Seminary. Her films have been screened in national and international festivals and broadcast on American television. Williams has been awarded fellowships and residencies at NYU Tisch School, Wave Hill, New York Foundation for the Arts, Hi-ARTS, Cow House Studios, MORE Art, and BRIC. Her additional awards and appearances include En Foco Media Arts Fund, 99.5 WBAI, Art in Odd Places, Creative Time, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, Civic Art Lab, GreenspaceNYC, Let Us Eat Local, Just Food, and Performa.

*Sanctuary*

2021

10 minutes; 15 seconds

*Sanctuary* combines academic research, autobiographical expression, and archival interviews, to illustrate the aftermath of African-Caribbean mothers leaving their daughters to immigrate to the United States. The project highlights the plights of pregnancy and parenting faced by African-Caribbean immigrant women to convey the turmoil experienced giving birth in the US and actively managing the silent stress of leaving their children behind in their motherland.

S. Ez'rom Williams, Director

Andrew Trost, Cinematographer

#4. **Donna Conlon** (b. 1966, Atlanta, GA)

*From the Ashes / De las Cenizas*

2019

HD video, color, sound

The video opens with an abstract image, which is revealed to be a tiny hummingbird, lying in my hand, seemingly dead or dying. The little bird suddenly blinks its eye in a moment of "awakening" and elevates into a liberated flight, like the Phoenix of Greek mythology, which was reborn from its own ashes, or the hummingbirds of Aztec societies, which were believed to be resurrected warriors. As we collectively confront a mortal environmental crisis, this video questions the conflicted relationships we have with the natural world, and presents a hopeful image of the essence of nature: strong, tenacious and perseverant, in spite of humankind.

Sound design: Ingmar Herrera

Sound recording: Ingmar Herrera and Carlos Urriola

Director of photography: Alex Alba

Camera: Óscar Jiménez (Voltage Productions)

Ornithology: Jorge Medina, Pedro Castillo, Jay Falk, Brent Burt

Color correction: Tania Alvarado

#5. **Jeremy Dennis** (Shinnecock Nation)- Jeremy Dennis is a contemporary fine art photographer and a tribal member of the Shinnecock Indian Nation in Southampton, NY. In his work, he explores Indigenous identity, culture, and assimilation. Dennis was one of 10 recipients of a 2016 Dreamstarter Grant from the national non-profit Running Strong for American Indian Youth. His project, *On This Site*, uses photography and an interactive online map to showcase culturally significant Native American sites on Long Island.

Dennis received the Creative Bursar Award from Getty Images in 2018 to continue his series, *Stories—Indigenous Oral Stories, Dreams and Myths*. Inspired by North American Indigenous stories, he staged supernatural images that transform these myths and legends to depictions of an actual experience in a photograph. Dennis holds an MFA from Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA, and a BA in Studio Art from Stony Brook University, NY.



### *Ma's House: Living Reciprocity*

2022

HD video, color, sound

Jeremy Dennis (director)

Produced by: Taylor Hensel, Adam Mazo, Kavita Pillay, and Tracy Rector

Ma's House was once the heart of a community. As Ma's grandson, artist and photographer Jeremy Dennis is on a quest to restore the family home to its central role as a community gathering place for a new generation of diverse artists. Through personal mementos, intimate narratives, and a touch of celebrity gossip, Dennis and his family reveal generations of history and hope contained within the walls of their home.

#6. **Matt Kohn** is the director of the documentaries "Call it Democracy" which explored the Electoral College through the lens of the 2000 Election and "Our Tall Man" which explores the conflict of Sudan and South Sudan through the life of Manute Bol. Recently, he directed Luxe Hotel, a durational performance about trauma, revenge and witnessing. He is currently completing an experimental feature film with NYC performers from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Chile and Argentina.

### *Kelly Street Gardens*

2023

HD video, color, sound

The Kelly Street Garden film explores the core mission of the garden to provide healthy food and community programming to South Bronx residents free of charge. Through art workshops, Qi Gong, Yoga, cooking demos and herbal medicine, the Garden's programs created a space where the stressors of the community and daily life can be left at the door. Through a robust and free market, the garden's stewards directly provide a path to better nutrition. This film casts a light on the healing components of food, justice, equality, culture, coupled with the opportunity to improve mind and body in an oasis of healing in a community that has faced many challenges over the past several decades.

### **Panelists (alphabetical order):**

**Ashley Dawson** is Professor of English at the Graduate Center / City University of New York and the College of Staten Island. Recently published books of his focus on key topics in the Environmental Humanities, and include *People's Power: Reclaiming the Energy Commons* (O/R, 2020), *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (Verso, 2017), and *Extinction: A Radical History* (O/R, 2016). Dawson is the author of a forthcoming book *Environmentalism from Below* (Haymarket), and co-editor of the essay collection *Decolonize Conservation!* (Common Notions).

**Rae Gomes** is a mother, writer, food justice organizer, and food equity consultant based in Brooklyn, NY. She is a founding board member and current board chair of the Central Brooklyn Food Cooperative. She supports food sovereignty work locally including working toward a Central Brooklyn Food Hub and has worked with Brownsville East New York Food Advisory Council. She's a community member of the Farmer and Community Advisory Committee for GrowNYC. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College. Her writing often includes issues of race and activism and has been published in *The Nation* magazine, *Civil Eats*, *The Counter*, *Colorlines*, and *The Root* among others. As an organizer, she works at the intersection of race and food justice to address health disparities in under-resourced communities. Employing a framework of community self-determination, she works with local residents to cultivate power and ownership over the systems that have failed to serve them. Gomes is a speaker and advisor on topics spanning the food system, appearing on panels for Slow Food USA, Rose Luxembourg Local to Global Grassroots forum, and NY State Health Foundation. She has consulted for Stone Barns Center for Agriculture, Food Education Fund, and GrowNYC. She also advised Studio Atao on "The Neighborhood Table: Combating Gentrification Through Intentional Hospitality" and facilitated a six-month process that lead to the "Diversity and Equity Working Group Report" for the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Gomes is a 2021 Urban Design Forum Forefront Fellow, focused on Food Equity, winner of the Food Policy

Pitch Day at CUNY Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center, and a "40 under 40" Food Policy Stars, class of 2019.

**Alicia Grullon** (facilitator & curator) Alicia Grullón is a Bronx-based Dominican-York artist, professor, writer and organizer who creates art about the environment, politics, and human dynamics. Grullón's works have been shown in numerous group exhibitions including The 8th Floor, Bronx Museum of the Arts, BRIC House for Arts and Media, El Museo del Barrio, and Columbia University among others. She has received grants from the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of New York, and Franklin Furnace Archives. Her activist work led her to be one of the organizers of People's Cultural Plan, a collective of cultural workers addressing inadequacies with the city's first proposed cultural plan. The PCP's 17-page plan is divided into 3 planks: Housing & Displacement, Cultural Funding Equity & Labor Equity. It launched in July 2017 at Artists Space and in September, PCP's response to the city's plan was published in Hyperallergic. Grullon has co-authored Op Eds about PCP for Hyperallergic and City Limits. Grullón's legislative art project PERCENT FOR GREEN created a green bill with Bronx residents looking at climate change from the perspective of environmental racism. This project contributed to her acting as one of the co-lead organizers in the Bronx for the People's Climate March. She has presented on this project at the Annual Art Historians Association's conference in London, United States Art Educators Association, The 8th Floor, Creative Time Summit 2015, The Pratt Institute, and The American Museum of Natural History.

**gil lopez** is an activist, green space steward, and co-founder of Smiling Hogshead Ranch, an urban farm in Long Island City. He is a current 2022 fellow with the Urban Design Forum and sits on the advisory boards for the Newtown Creek Alliance, Dutch Kills Loop, and the Queens Borough Waste Advisory Committee. Designing outdoor user experiences that alternately soothe and unsettle participants, gil's practice is rooted in land based movements. His connection to plants, seasonality, soil and the other elementals inform and inspire his work. From raucous compost carnivals to contemplative lunar celebrations, gil crafts impactful direct actions, engaging social experiments and other happenings for us to (re)connect with the net of light that holds all in loving awareness.

**Lupita Rodriguez** (Gloria's interpreter & panelist) is a born & raised Queens-based spreadsheet queen from a Maya K'ich'e family from Guatemala. By day, she is a data analyst and researcher. Beyond that, she's a delightful hilarious human being who loves to dance, travel, and build community abroad.

**Gloria Ushigua** is the co-founder of the Sápara women's organization Ashiñwaka, which defends Sápara people's ancestral land and environmental rights in Ecuador. Since 2010, Gloria has been actively defending her territory of untouched jungle in the Amazon, primarily against private and State-owned companies seeking to exploit oil deposits. When Sápara territorial rights were threatened by a government plan to open oil blocks in Ecuador's Southern Amazon, Gloria led successful efforts to keep the oil in the ground. As a result, she has been threatened, intimidated, judicially harassed, discredited on national television by high public officials and assaulted by law enforcement officers, along with other members of her family.

### **Workshop and Interventions Leaders (order of workshop activities):**

**Renee Keitt** is a grower, seed saver, and master composter. She weaves connection sharing knowledge and resources to create, engage, support, and maintain communities as a member of Chenchita's Garden, Lydia's Magic Garden, La Finca del Sur, New Roots, Garden Manager of Kelly Street Garden and steward of a rooftop garden, Seeds to Soil at Prime Produce - The Guild for Good. Renee is a graduate of Farm School NYC, and studies housing, community organizations and organizing, nonprofit leadership, and public policy at the CUNY School of Labor and Union Studies. Her interest is the intersection of food, housing, nature and the built environment.

**Frances Perez-Rodriguez**, The People's AgroEcology- Franes was born in Puerto Rico, raised in New

York City, and stands in solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world. Member and most recent farm manager of La Finca Del Sur Community Farm in the South Bronx, the Food & Land Education Coordinator for Woke Foods, and recent graduate-turned-Program Co-coordinator of Farm School NYC, Frances is deeply inspired by the reality of maintaining a healthy relationship with the planet and with one another through connecting with and freeing the land. Frances is a daughter, a landworker, a community organizer, and above all, seeker of truths.

**Miguel Braceli** is an artist, architect, educator. His practice is focused on participatory art projects in public space; working at the intersection of art, architecture, and social practices; exploring geopolitical and local conflicts. Most of these projects have been large-scale works developed in Latin America, Europe, and the United States; exhibited in galleries and institutions through photography, sculpture and film. He has led educational projects with institutions such as Documenta Fifteen, Washington Projects for the Arts, Matadero Madrid, among others. His most recent participations and recognitions include Skowhegan School of Painting (2022), Art Omi (2021), AIM Bronx Museum Fellow (2022), Fulbright Scholar (2020-2019), and Young Artist Award of the Principality of Asturias (2018). In 2021 He founded LA ESCUELA together with Siemens Stiftung International. In 2022 he received a commission by the Percent for Art program for a permanent public artwork in New York City, where he is currently living and working.

**Christina Freeman** (she/her) is an artist and curator whose conceptual practice emphasizes process and collaboration. Freeman's work has been featured in Artforum, Vulture, Hyperallergic, Art F City, Frieze, and Observer. She was a 2022 Bronx Museum AIM Fellow and her projects have received support from Creative Time (2019), Queens Museum (2018-2019), Culture Push (2018-2019), National Coalition Against Censorship (2018-2019), Danish Arts Foundation (2018), ABC No Rio (2017-2023), NEA (2017 + 2018), New York State Council on Arts (2017-2020), New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (2017-2020), Andy Warhol Foundation (2017), and Red House, Sofia, Bulgaria (2012). She was previously an artist-in-residence at ARoS Public in Aros, Denmark (2018), Flux Factory in Queens, NY (2016-2018), Heliopolis in Brooklyn, NY (2014), SOMA, Mexico City (2012), and Galería Pérdida, Michoacán (2012). Freeman teaches at Hunter College, CUNY for the Department of Art & Art History and the Department of Film & Media.

**Ronen Gamil** (b. 1980 in Brooklyn, NY) is a Brooklyn-based, Yemeni-Israeli artist raised in Israel. He lived and traveled extensively in Italy, Spain, and South America. Gamil's recent works have been colorful, immersive textile, metals, and plant installations engaging with issues of migration, ethnic identity, and housing and gentrification. Gamil had solo exhibitions at FiveMyles and Prospect Park and group shows at Socrates Sculpture Park and Summit Public Art, NJ. Trained in art and architecture, Gamil earned a BA in studio art and Master of Urban Planning from the City College of New York. He was a Bronx Museum AIM Fellow (2022), a Socrates Sculpture Park Emerging Artist Fellow (2018), was selected by Smack Mellon as a Hot Pick (2020), and was a finalist for a permanent public art commission in collaboration with the NYC Departments of Cultural Affairs and Homeless Services (2022). Gamil's first permanent public art work will be an educational collaboration with Congregation Beth Hatikvah in Summit, NJ, starting in fall 2023. His work was featured in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Public Radio International, BK Reader, and artdaily.com.

**\*\*Images on pages 25, 26, & 27 from *The Intersectional Environmentalist* by Leah Thomas. Voracious, Little, Brown and Company Press. New York. 2022\*\***

# FROM THE MILPAMERICA DECLARATION

Climate justice for all people means stopping the current ecocide and genocide, means defending those who are defending the territories, means taking the stolen land back, reclaiming ancestral science. Climate justice means planting a maize, going back to the cyclic times, to the celebration of life, to organizing parties for our neighborhoods and communities. Climate justice means solidarity with all displaced people, means creating our own means, means redistribution of food, it means planting forests, it means defending all the colors of our diversity. **Climate justice means making autonomies stronger, it means saying no to green capitalism. It means shutting down oil, it means finding those of us who have been made to disappear. Climate justice means to stop militarization, to derail megaprojects, to stop the mining companies, it means to annul the concessions, to shut down the beverage companies. Climate justice means to set the rivers free, to rise up for Mother Earth. Climate justice means justice for all people.**

This is our melody-turned-fight. Our languages are songs that become intertwined, songs that resonate beyond borders. **We don't seek unity, but a never-ending amount of ways to organize and reproduce life.** We face structural inequity and oppression systems. We learn from the maize to tend to our own diversity, interdependence, and life cycles. We heal the body-territory-spirit because that is the thread that embroiders us into the quilt of life.

There is enough water, food and land for all people and forms of life to coexist with dignity in this territory we call Milpamérica, in this common house we call Earth. We still have time to regenerate those life systems to which our future is linked. However, that change must be radical **because we don't want to go back to normal after each crisis. We want to go back to the land.**

## Therefore, we call upon:

- The people in resistance in Milpamérica to re-interpret this declaration from their own knowledge in order to braid a territory far beyond borders.
- The **people of all diversities claim this declaration as their own and join our collective resistance** in the defense of life and territory.
- **The climate justice movement to create spaces to reflect, organize and act upon climate justice with no intermediaries in order to center living solutions.**
- All other territories to organize in order to break structural inequities, strengthen autonomies and plant narratives that aid with the defense of life.

<https://futurosindigenas.org/milpamerica-eng/>

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