

# Fighting Racism at its Root: An Examination of San Diego's Community Gardens

Jane Henderson

Dr. Jesse Mills // Ethnic Studies

University of San Diego // McNair Scholars

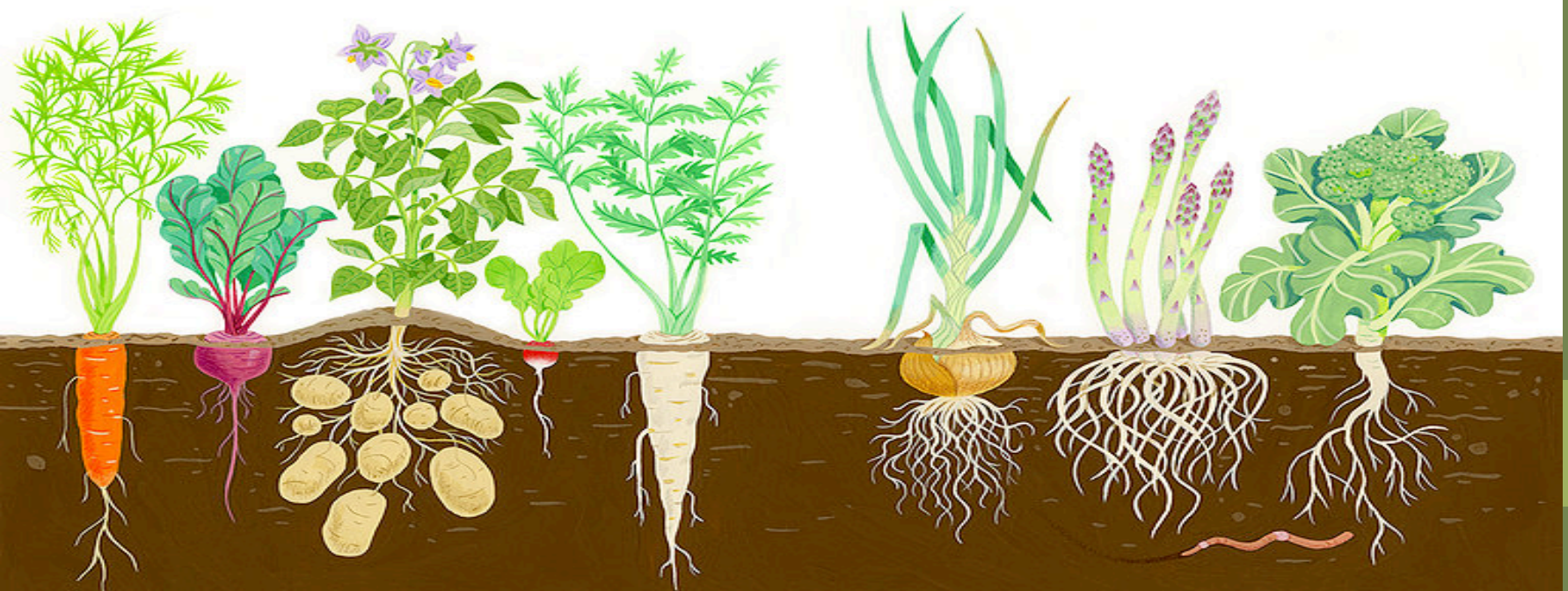


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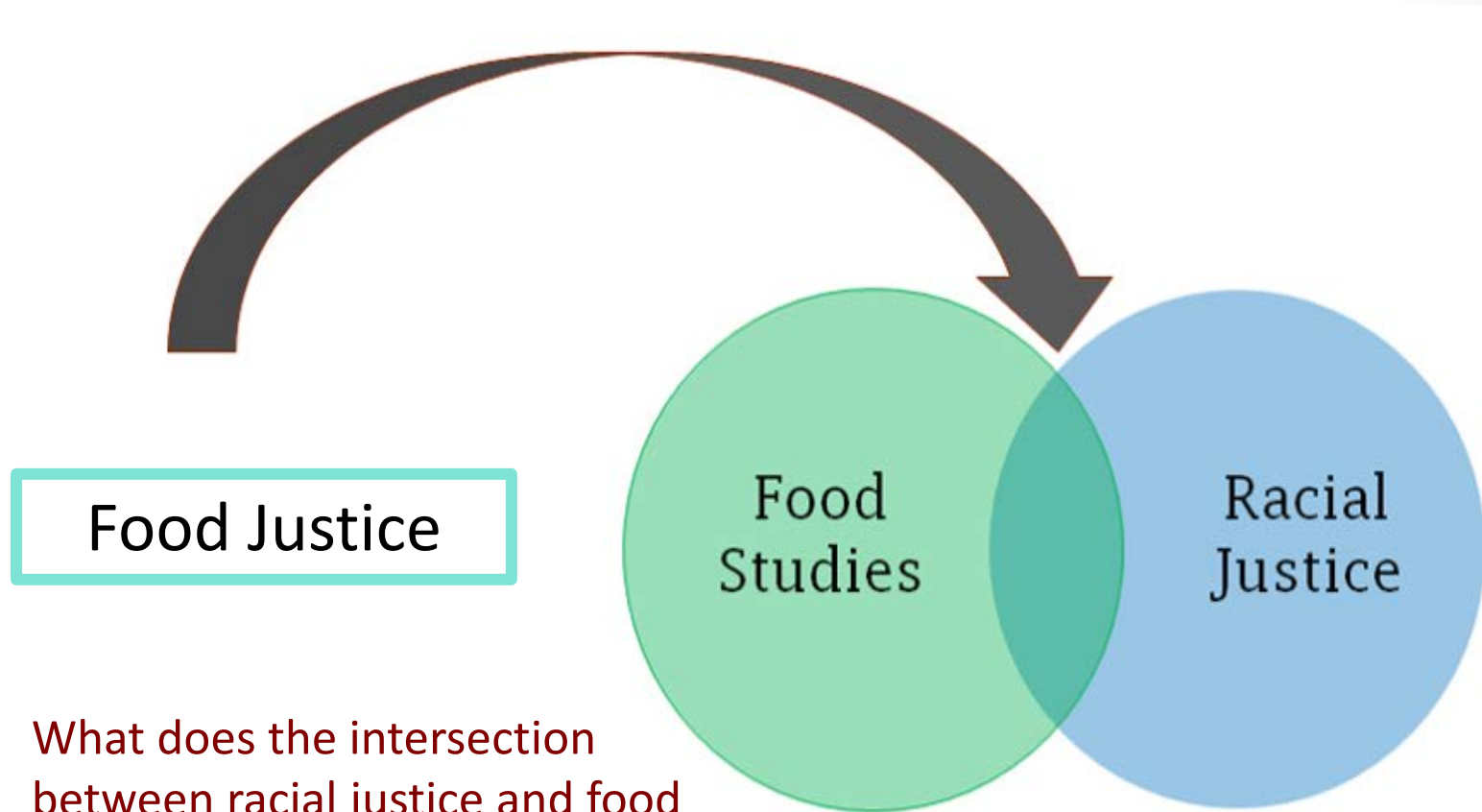
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# Outline

- Background
- Research
- Summary of Findings
- Next Steps



# Framework



What does the intersection between racial justice and food studies/food systems look like?

# Food Justice

- The right of communities everywhere to produce, process, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion or community.
- It includes:
  - freedom from exploitation
  - ensures the rights of workers to fair labor practices
  - values based: respect, empathy, pluralism, valuing knowledge
  - racial justice: dismantling of racism and white privilege
  - gender equity
- (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 2012 )



# Research Questions

- How do racial disparities manifest in San Diego's food systems?
- Do community gardens function as tools for anti-racism and resistance?



# Diane Moss

- 57 years old
- Lived in San Diego since college; currently living in Lemon Grove
- Passion for social justice
  - Philosophy of relationship building
- *“[...] we could use concepts from civil rights training to move the agenda around food; that we had a right to good food. [...] I looked around the room and didn't see anybody from my neighborhood, I saw very few people of color; I thought “I think I found my niche”.*

~ Ms. Moss



# Diane Moss

- Director of Project New Village
  - Non-profit corporation 501©3
  - Promote personal, community and communal wellness
- Committed to systems change
  - Collaboration with government, non-profits, community members to implement new policies

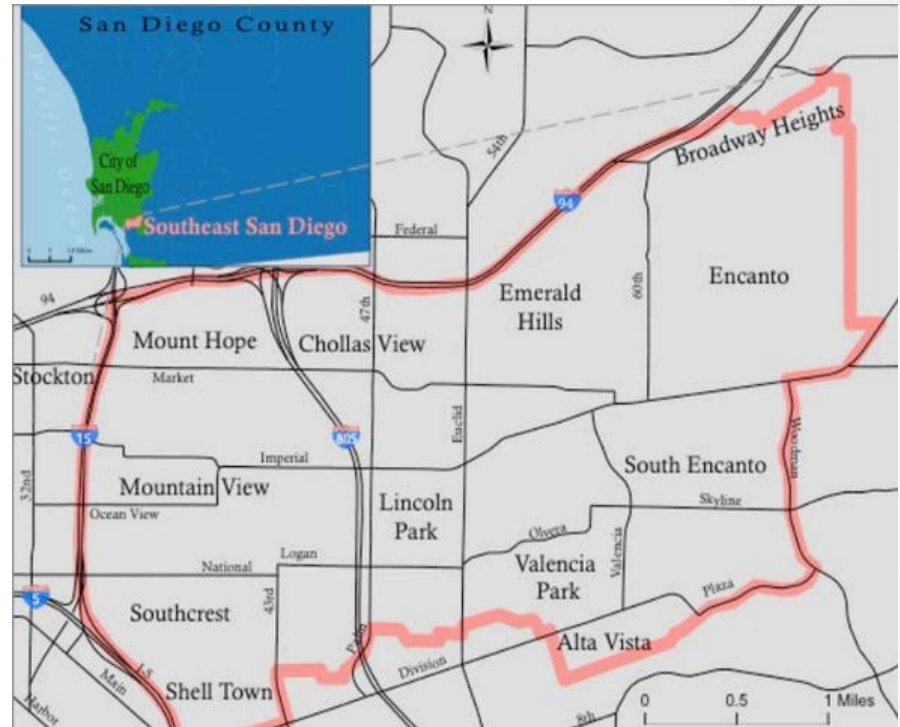


*“So we’re used to being right in the front cutting edge, because we talk to people, we listen to people, we hang out in the garden and just hear what people have to say and then that becomes part of the questions we raise and we ask.”*

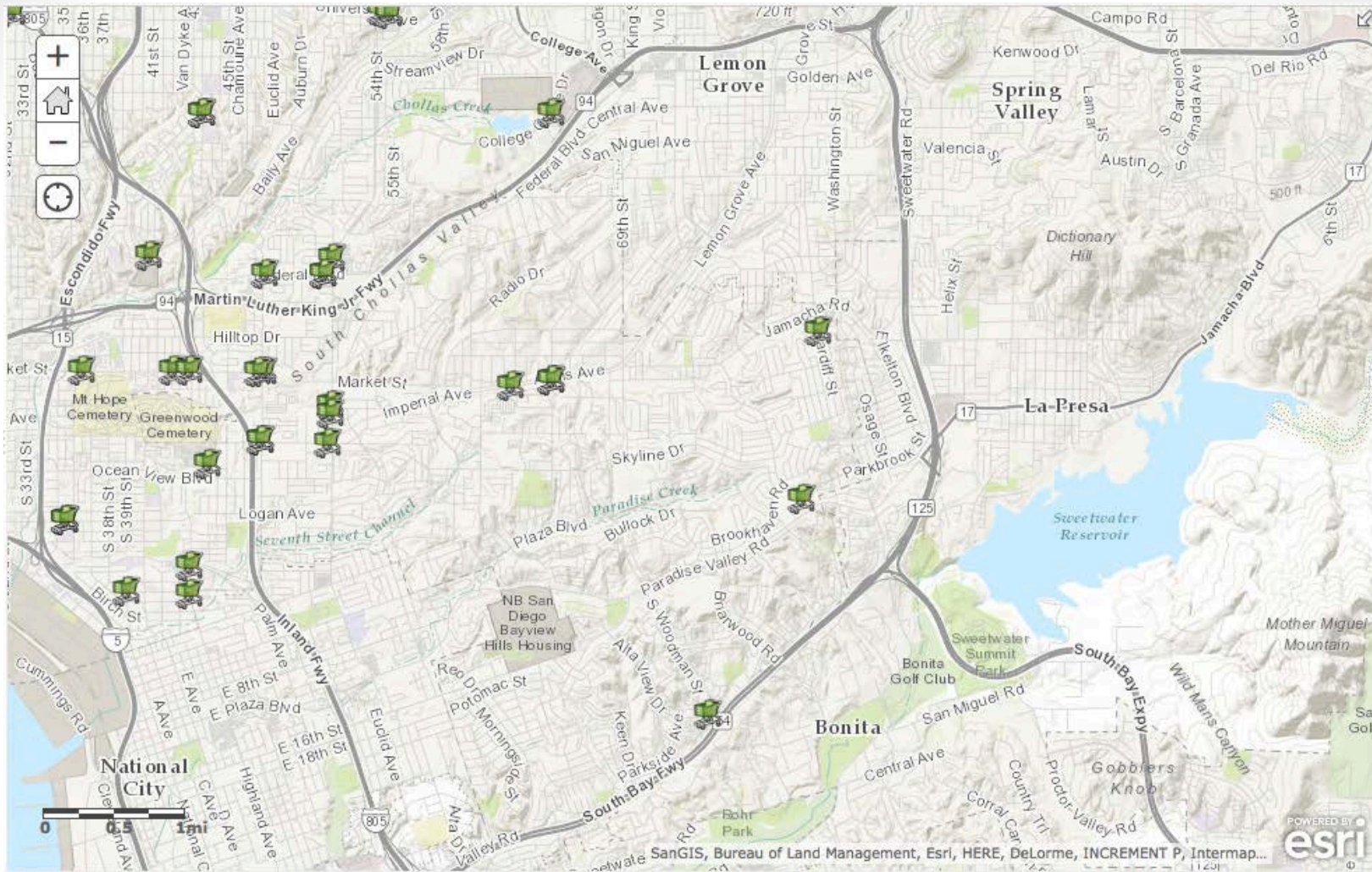
~ Ms. Moss

# Southeastern San Diego

- SESD Food Landscape Policy Report 2014
- Food Desert or Food Swamp?
- Challenges
  - 1 Food 4 Less in the community
  - *“Imma say the people making decisions are probably not the people who live here, and are probably not people of color”.*  
~ Ms. Moss
  - Food subsidies
- 70% home ownership

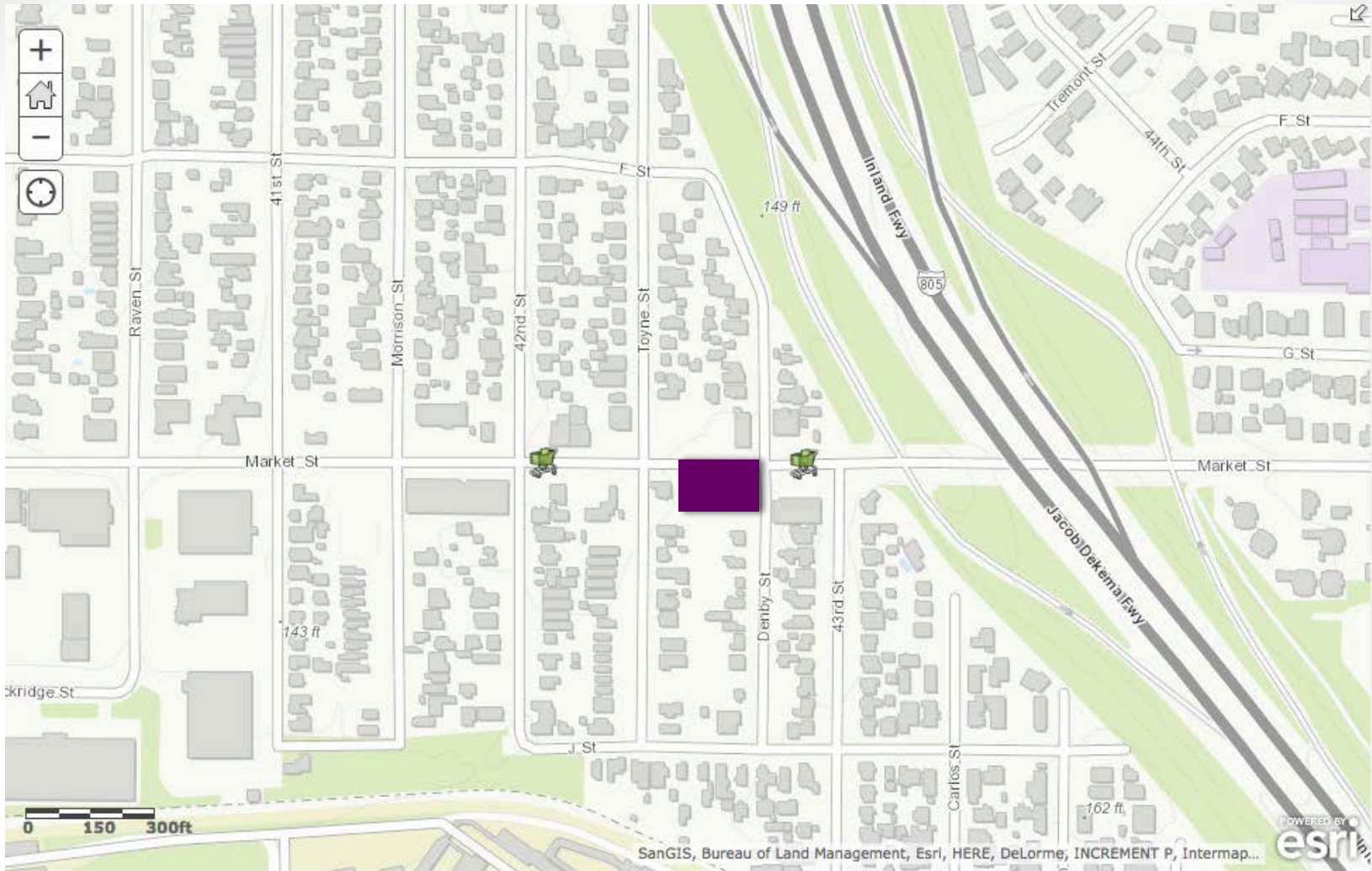






## Southeastern San Diego Food Outlets

SanGIS Bureau of Land Management



# Mount Hope Community Garden

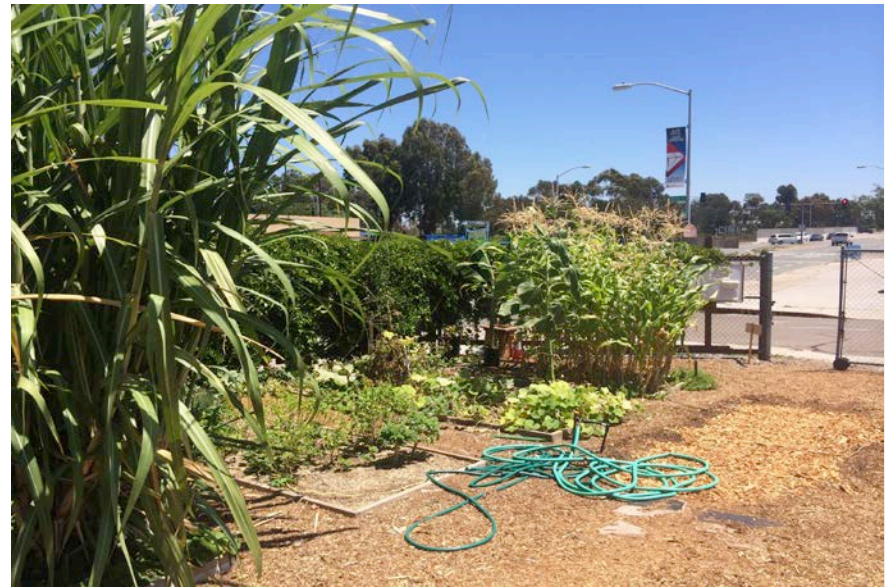
SanGIS Bureau of Land Management



# Mount Hope Community Garden



- 40 plots
- Majority people of color garden there



# The garden making other gardens possible



- 1 year to find land
  - Rigid zoning policies
- Pushed the agenda making community gardens accessible
- Project New Village spends \$50,000

***“Let me just say the tone there was ‘this is the people’s agenda’; we the people. It was not on the agenda for the people who make policy.”***

~ Ms. Moss



# Defining Anti-Racism

- *“Many contemporary black folks [...] see ecology and the struggle to end racism as competing concerns [...] black people must reclaim a spiritual legacy where we **connect our well-being to the well-being of the earth**. This is a **necessary dimension of healing**.”*

bell hooks, *Sisters of the Yam*

- “Anti -racist practice would require nonprofits to know what issues are of concern to communities and then to evaluate whether these concerns are being addressed by their work. Organizations would then attempt through **resource allocation, rhetorical practices, policy advocacy** and so on to shift the balance of power toward historically oppressed groups in order to enable problem identification, leadership and solutions to develop within these communities.” (Slocum, 2006)

# Findings

## Racial disparities in Southeastern San Diego

- Food desert/food swamp
  - 1 grocery store
    - Food 4 Less with no organic brand
  - Economic leakage due to food
- Health disparities/ food related illness
- Vacant spaces
- Heavy police surveillance

*“There could be a role for community gardens cause we’re always gonna need to eat. **But more than growing of the food, it’s the growing of relationships.**”*

*~ Ms. Moss*

## Resistance practices by Mount Hope

- Access to produce
  - *“Some folks say organic is too expensive, but not if you grow it yourself”*
    - *~Ms. Moss*
- Exercise and stress relief
- Creating growing spaces
- Community control of neighborhood

# The work continues...

- Budding movement to get Black people back to the land.
  - “ Because, this generation recognizes the power of how something as old as subsistence can be a tool for resistance” (Bowens, 156).



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FARMERS  
& URBAN  
GARDENERS**

CONFERENCE  
**THIS FALL**  
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*“A revolution is sweeping urban America, and if you haven't heard its voice, it's because you may not have recognized the sound of a hoe hitting a clod of dirt or a ripe tomato being freshly plucked from a vine.... City farming is a movement of "quiet resistance" to many things; the act of growing food uses soil as an ally in re-building neighborhoods.”*



Monica M. White PhD, Garden Griot



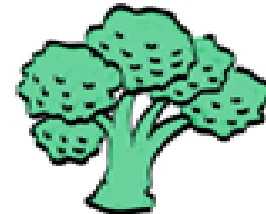
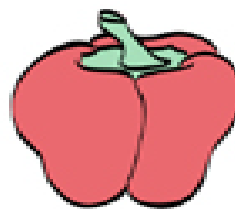
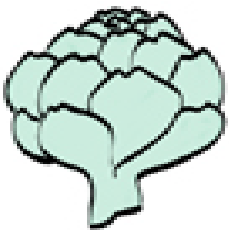
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The people at Mount Hope Community Garden for allowing me to get in the dirt with them.



T H A N K      Y O U

# References

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# Questions?

