



# *Investing in Local Leadership to Advocate for Equitable Climate Resilience*



URBAN WATERS  
LEARNING NETWORK







*We are a peer-to-peer network of people and organizations working to conserve, restore and revitalize America's urban waterways, supporting our members' work through tools, training, mentoring and financial assistance.*

LEARNING SERIES

## Building Water Equity & Climate Resilient Communities for ALL

Six webinars hosted by the UWLN



Investing in Local Leadership to Advocate for Equitable Climate Resilience

Wednesday 10/18 | 1pm ET



planning  
equity  
heat resilience  
leadership  
community-driven  
community-centered  
recovery  
workforce  
plans  
hub  
drought  
extreme  
flooding  
disaster

3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday  
of each month  
thru  
Jan. 2024



# MEET YOUR PRESENTERS



**Jenny Mercado**  
*Nuevas Voces  
Coordinator*



**Maria Jose  
Gutierrez Paz**  
*Nuevas Voces  
Coordinator*



**Carmen Cavezza**  
*Climate Justice  
Community Organizer*



**Myrtala Tristan**  
*Climate Ambassador*



**Hannah Mico**  
*Resilient Communities  
Manager*

**Woonasquackett River  
Watershed Council**  
*Providence, Rhode Island*


**Coalition for Environment,  
Equity, & Resilience**  
*Houston, Texas*

**River Network**

# TOOLS FOR EQUITABLE CLIMATE RESILIENCE

TOOLS *for* EQUITABLE CLIMATE RESILIENCE


FOSTERING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP



**river**  
NETWORK  
connecting people · saving rivers

TOOLS *for* EQUITABLE CLIMATE RESILIENCE

FOSTERING COMMUNITY-LED RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE



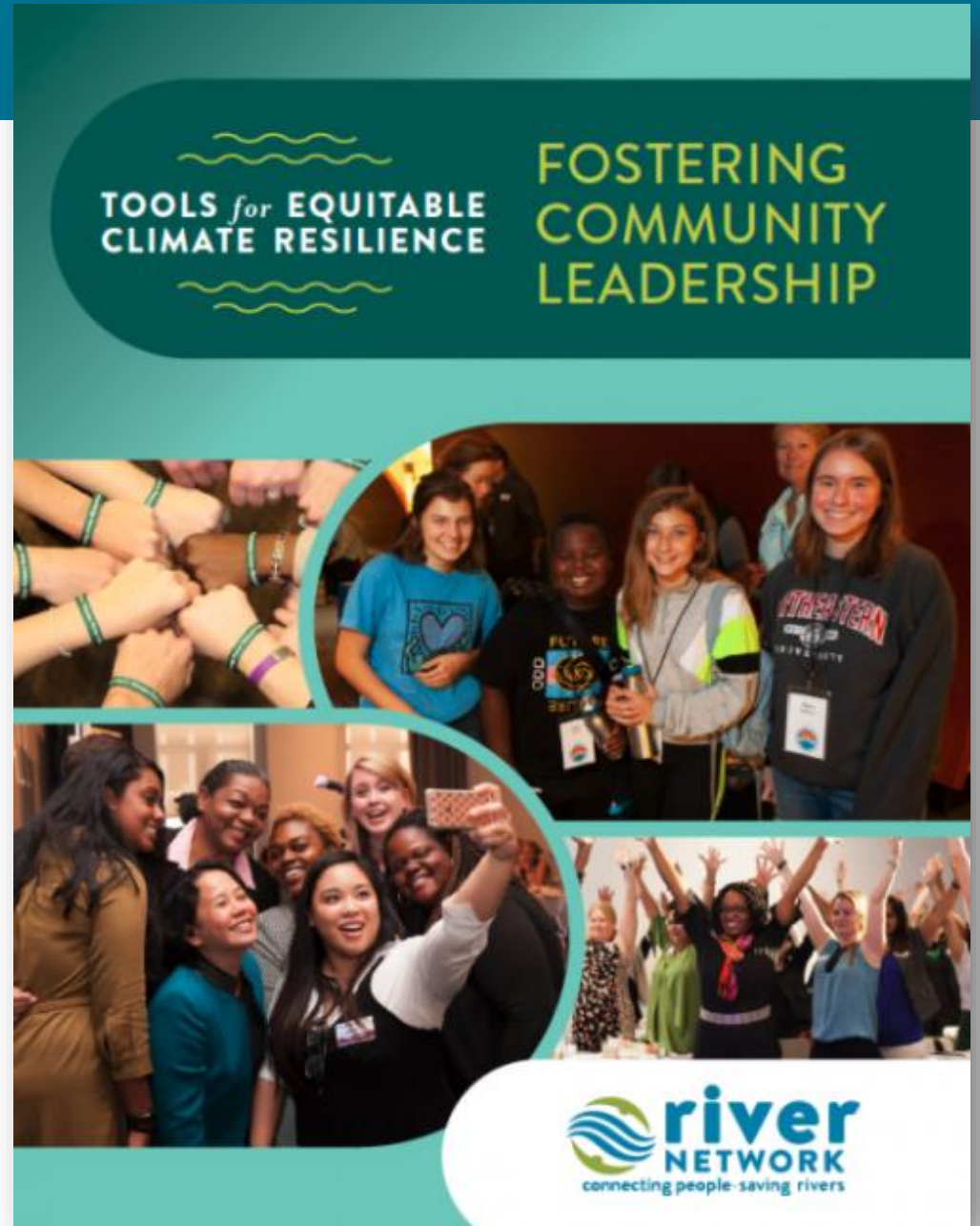
ONE Neighborhood Builders

**river**  
NETWORK  
connecting people · saving rivers



# Fostering Community Leadership

- Makes the case for leadership development programs as critical components of resilience
- Highlights 20+ programmatic case studies from across the country
- Features step-be-step guide to building a program
- Includes recommendations for designing inclusive programming



# Benefits of CLD Programs

- **Equitable representation and outcomes**
- **Cohesive and effective coalitions**
- **Meaningful civic engagement**
- **Long-term and multi-generational community engagement**
- **Elevation of local knowledge and experience**



# Leadership Roles

There are formal and informal leadership positions in communities across the country that can benefit from diverse perspectives and the expertise of lived experience.

- **Elected Official**
- **Public Board/Commission Seat**
- **Member of Nonprofit Board of Directors**
- **Community Steward/Volunteer**
- **Community Policy Advocate**
- **Neighborhood Ambassador**
- **Trainer/Educator**

*“Any job that you hold, and any identity that you hold, makes you enough for the position you want [to run and campaign for].”*  
- Maria Elena Garcia  
of VoteRunLead





# Methods for CLD Programs

TABLE 3: Description of Training Methods Deployed by Leadership Development Programs

TRAINING METHOD	TRAINING METHOD EXAMPLES & DESCRIPTIONS
Classroom-Style/Workshops	Lectures, simulations, worksheets, games, and other traditional teaching methods.
Field Trips & Volunteering	Exposure to real-life examples of issues, their related impacts, and/or effective and functional solutions; sometimes incorporates learning-by-doing in a volunteer capacity to gain entry-level expertise in specific topics.
Project-Based Learning	A culminating project to apply learned skills, similar to a capstone project or academic thesis.
Job-Based Training	Paid, on-the-job training and certifications to advance individuals beyond entry-level experiences.
Hands-On Civic Engagement	Participation in the legislative process, including calling/meeting with elected officials, delivering testimony, canvassing, etc.
Summits	Conference-style learning that allows individuals to network outside of their training program with other program alumni or community members; provides a venue to showcase their own learning.
Local Expert Panels	Panels in which local leaders and experts share their own knowledge and experience in a discussion-based forum.
Mentoring/One-on-One Coaching	Matching trainees with issue-area experts for individual and customized attention to trainees' growth.
Alumni Networks	Utilizing program alumni as real-life examples of success, inspiration, and accessible storytelling.

# River Network Support for CLD



**1. Defensores de le Cuenca:  
Cheverly, MD**

**2. Partners for Environmental  
Justice: Raleigh, NC**

**3. Wellington Water Watchers:  
Guelph, ON**

**4. Huron Pines: Grayling, MI**

**5. Plaster Creek Stewards: Grand  
Rapids, MI**

**6. Verde: Portland, OR**

**7. Lower Ninth Ward Homeowners  
Association: New Orleans, LA**





**WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER  
WATERSHED COUNCIL**

## **Urban Waters Learning Network**

**Session #3: Building Water Equity & Climate Resilient Communities for ALL**

**October 18, 2023, 1PM**

# **Investing in Local Leadership to Advocate for Equitable Climate Resilience**



**Jenny Mercado – WRWC Nuevas Voces Co-Facilitator**

**María José Gutiérrez Paz – WRWC Nuevas Voces Co-Facilitator / CAMPEONES Facilitator**



# Co-Facilitators

## Maria Jose Gutierrez

- Moved from Bolivia a few years ago
- Professional nature tour guide and French teacher in Bolivia
- Amazing designer of interactive programming
- Currently learning English as second language and improving daily.
- Leader of various community events



## Jenny Mercado

- Native Nicaraguan, lived in RI for over a decade
- Professional in the health field as an Emergency Room Certified Nursing Assistance at Hasbro Children's Hospital
- Fully Bilingual
- Mother of 2
- Founder and Director of a non-profit organization “Hermandad por Nicaragua”





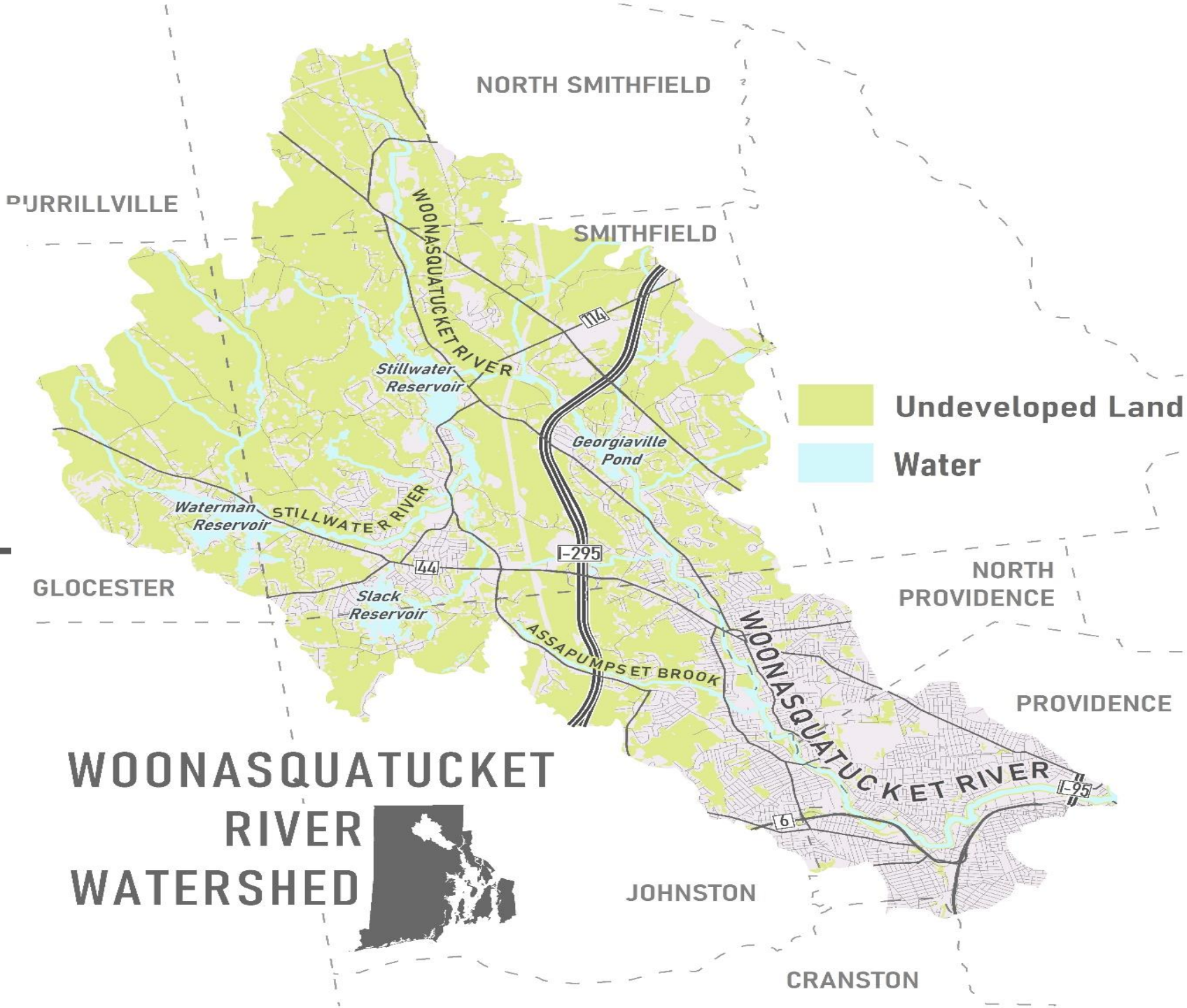
WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER  
WATERSHED COUNCIL

*WRWC Mission:  
Create positive environmental, social and economic  
change by revitalizing the Woonasquatucket River, its  
Greenway and its communities.*



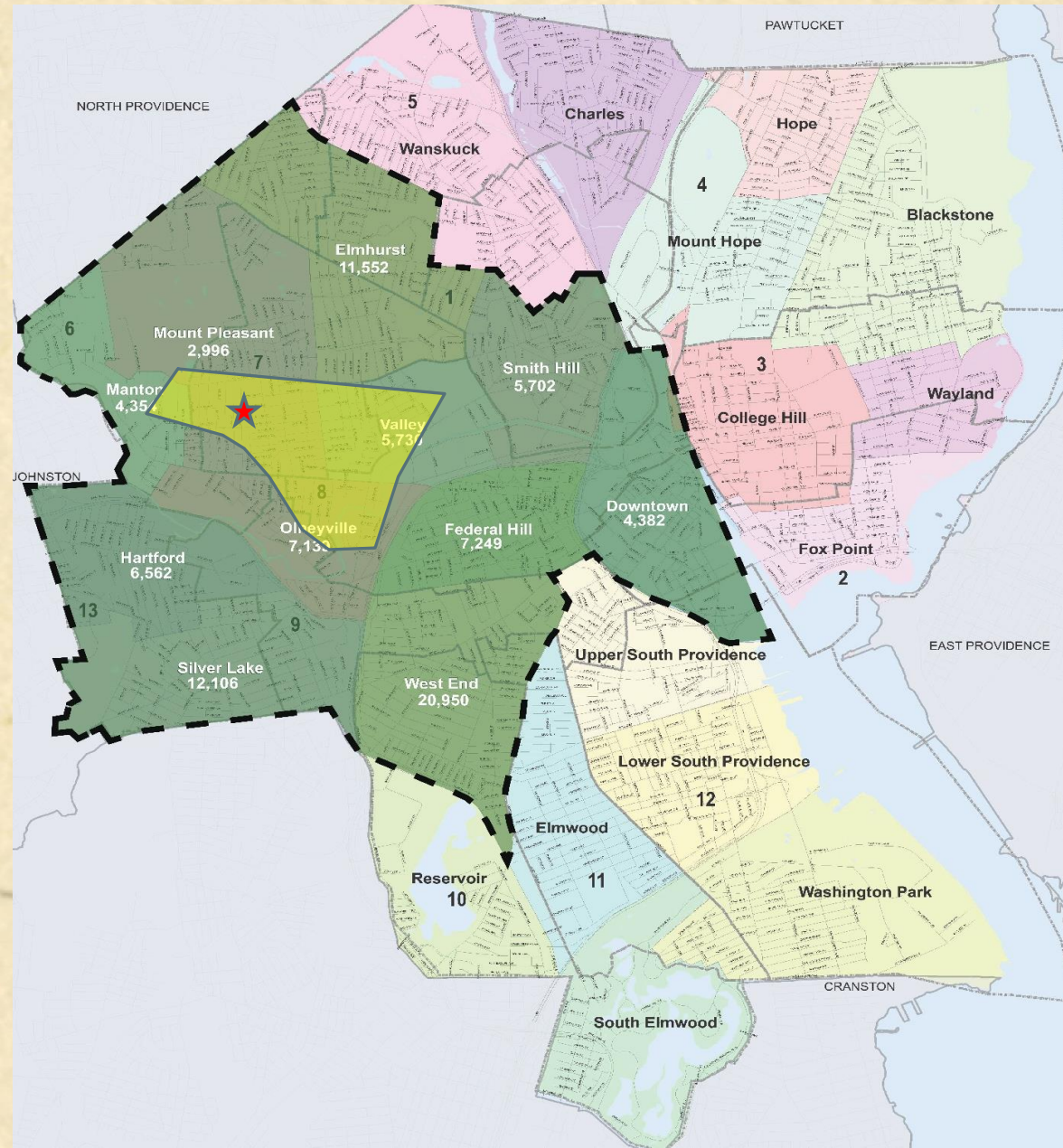
**283,757 total population**  
(27% of RI)

COMMUNITIES IMPACTED BY  
**WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL**





# Olneyville, Providence RI



Almost 7,000  
people live in  
Olneyville

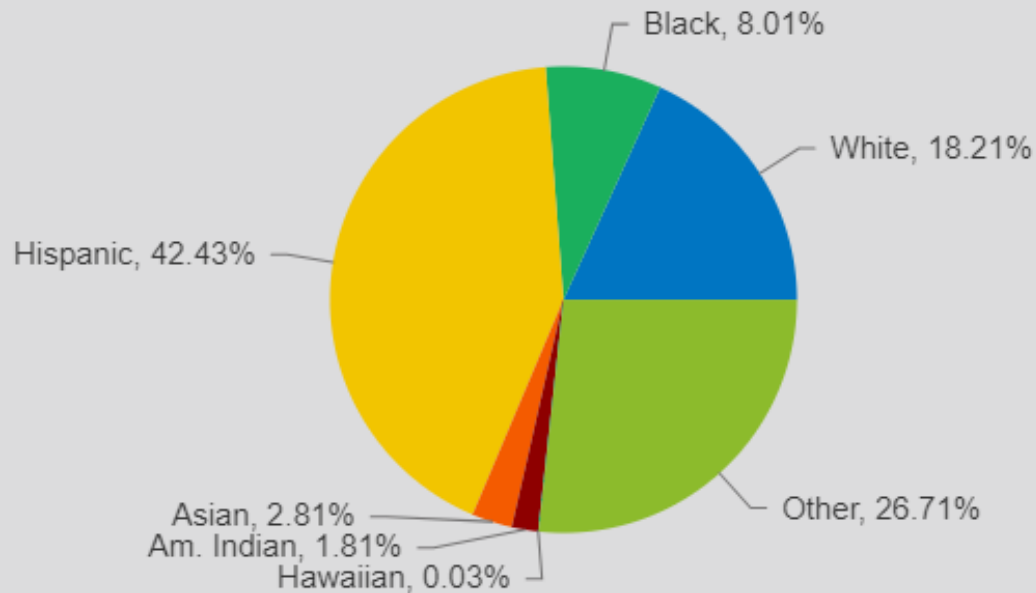
# Demographic details of Olneyville, Providence RI

Pie Chart & Table

Comparison Bar Chart

## Population by Race

Population by Race: 02909



White Population:	12,283	18.21%
Black Population:	5,405	8.01%
Hispanic Population:	28,625	42.43%
Asian Population:	1,893	2.81%
American Indian Population:	1,224	1.81%
Hawaiian Population:	18	0.03%
Other Population:	18,022	26.71%



# Flooding



**Olneyville Flood March 2010**



# Project Goals

- **Cultivate Engaged Climate Resilience**
- **Build Climate Justice Literacy**
- **Develop Leadership Capacity**
- **Frontline Resident Co-Governance**



# Initial Surveys

## Door to Door Canvassing: Bilingual (Spanish/English) Well Known in the Community (paid \$25/hour)

Shirley Fuertes – Local Community Member, Leader of English for Action, Native Spanish Speaker

Virginia Morgan – PTA Lead Parent at William D'Abate Elementary (neighborhood school)

### WRWC River Ranger Raz

- Former Clean Water Action canvasser
- Wearing WRWC Identifying Clothing
- Work in pairs with another Ranger on same block





# RESULTS

## Knowledge/Perceptions on Climate Change

- How much do you know about CC? – **50%** little or nothing
- Is climate changing in OV? – **63%** Yes, 28% Not Sure, 9% No
- If yes, what risks are there in OV?
  - Major Themes Identified:
    - Flooding
    - More Extreme Weather
    - Illness/Flu/Fever
- How likely is a disaster here? – 71% somewhat to very likely
- How severe would the impact be to you? – 75% somewhat to very severe



# Are You Ready for the Flood?

vimeo [Join](#) [Log in](#) [Pricing](#) [Product](#) [Watch](#)  [+ New video](#)

y vi que había agua en todas partes. Totalmente inundada.

02:33

[https://vimeo.com/359888817/6c75fdddfe?fbclid=IwAR3jdSAkxodmMOafzGqU1oWUBH9cai pose5wYT71G7sGX72OX72crqKx4Wo&mc\\_cid=92c08db8a6&mc\\_eid=761d977642](https://vimeo.com/359888817/6c75fdddfe?fbclid=IwAR3jdSAkxodmMOafzGqU1oWUBH9cai pose5wYT71G7sGX72OX72crqKx4Wo&mc_cid=92c08db8a6&mc_eid=761d977642)

# New Voices/Nuevas Voces is Born

Recruitment and program development by resident leaders

Delia Rodriguez-Masjoan



- Longtime community immigration rights advocate
- Immigrant from Argentina
- Radio personality
- Total powerhouse

Jennifer Recinos



- Grew up in Olneyville
- Family is from Zacapa, Guatemala
- WRWC River Ranger
- Current WRWC Board Member



# **Nuevas Voces 2023 – 25 People Enrolled!!!**





# New Voices / Nuevas Voces Learning Cohort (2021)



- 20 cohort members originally recruited
- Compensation (\$25 an hour)
- Translation & Interpretation
- Transportation and Childcare for In-person Activities
- Technology & Digital Content Accessibility (Computers and Wi-Fi)



# ¿Qué es Nuevas Voces?/ What is New Voices

## **Misión:**

**CREAR CONCIENCIA AMBIENTAL PROPORCIONANDO CONOCIMIENTO HISTÓRICO, CIENTÍFICO Y AMBIENTAL DE NUESTRA COMUNIDAD PARA ENTENDER Y TOMAR ACCIONES PARA SU PROTECCIÓN Y CONSERVACIÓN PARA QUE LAS GENERACIONES VENIDERAS PUEDAN SEGUIR DISFRUTANDO DE SU MEDIO AMBIENTE**

## **Objetivos**

1. Fomentar la conciencia sobre los problemas ambientales locales.
2. Comodidad para discutir temas ambientales.
3. Construir conexiones comunitarias a largo plazo.
4. Desarrollo de habilidades y oportunidades de liderazgo.

## **Mission:**

**CREATE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS BY PROVIDING HISTORICAL, SCIENTIFIC & ENVIRONMENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF OUR COMMUNITY IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND AND TAKE ACTION FOR ITS PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION SO THAT THE GENERATIONS TO COME CAN CONTINUE TO ENJOY THEIR ENVIRONMENT.**

## **Objectives**

1. Foster consciousness around local environmental issues.
2. Comfortability discussing environmental issues.
3. Build long term community connections.
4. Development leadership skills and opportunities.

# **NV Program Sessions**

## Total of 8 Sessions (Monthly)

1. History and identity of the neighborhood, relationship to the river and history of Providence
2. Understand climate change and environmental hazards
3. Emergency Preparedness – Code Red & Emergency Kits
4. Environmental Justice – Meaning, Where we Fit
5. Political System – Meeting our Reps
6. Community Organizing
7. Next Steps for Leaders
8. Graduation



# Interactive and Collaborative Structure



## Example: Climate Change 101

- Guest speaker Narragansett Bay Research Reserve
  - Very image-based presentations
- Shareback – What parts of Climate Change are Most Important in our Community

**Interpreter-** translates for English-speaking guests



# Stipend Payment System

- \$25 an hour stipends
- Payment system needs to be explained clearly!
- Choice between Visa Gift Card and Check
- Sensitivity around documentation status, \$600 tax limit
- Make sure everyone has all the info needed to make their decision!

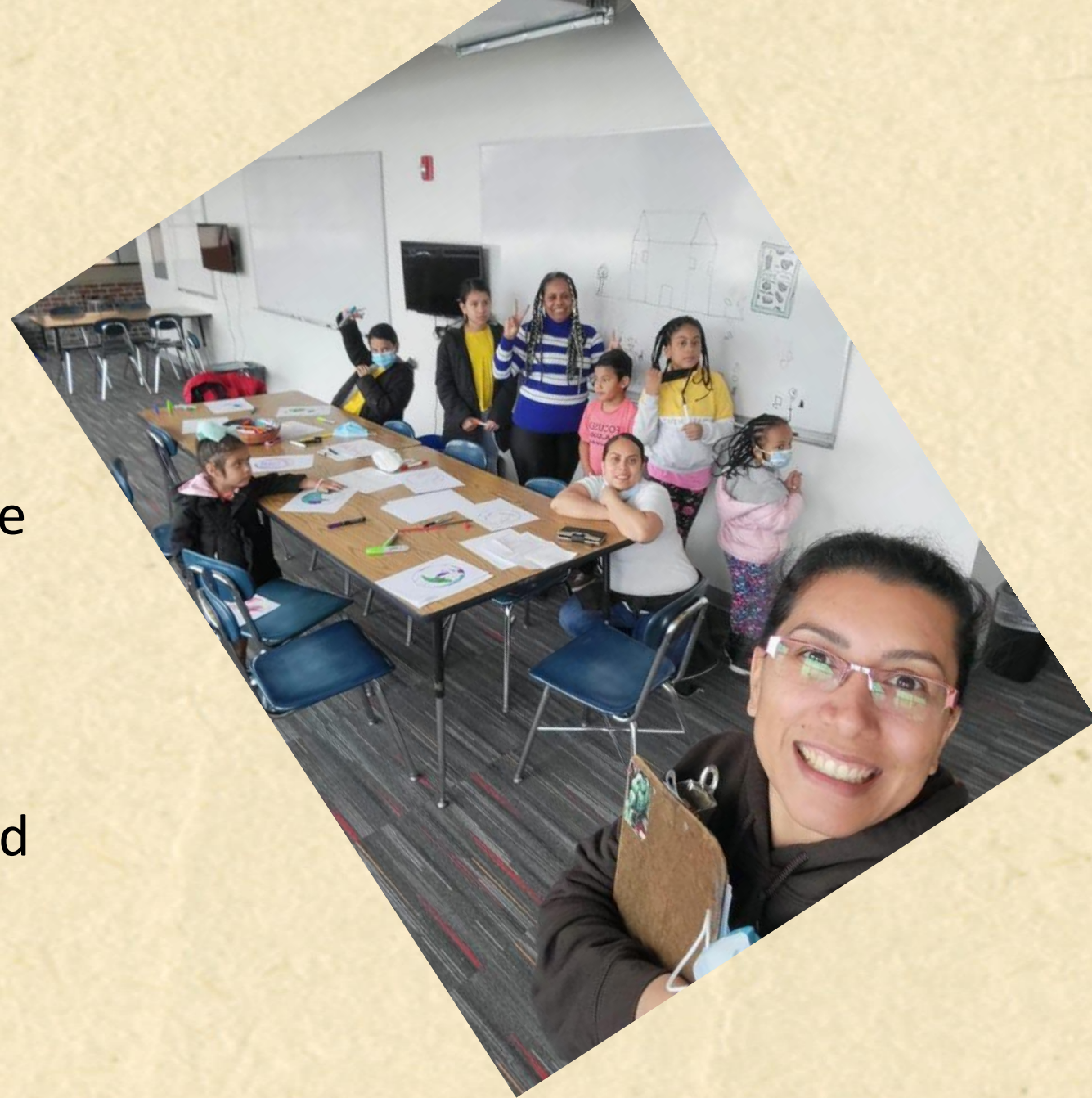


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PAY TO THE ORDER OF _____	\$ _____	
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# Childcare

- In-person meetings require childcare!
- We put out a call to former NV participants and family members the week prior to every session
- Childcare is compensated at \$25 an hour, through gift card or check stipend system
- Bring art supplies, games, water, and snacks!









# Communication

- **Official Electors**
- **Community Members**
- **Program Participants**
- **Other**





# Learning Between Sessions – Neighborhood Canvassing



Environmental Justice Conversations, but also gathering information on community needs



# August Graduation – Mayor Elorza, Office of Sustainability, REJC



16 out of 20 completed the program. Received citations from the Mayor.  
Met with Office of Sustainability and Racial and Environmental Justice Committee



# End of Year 1 Results

## Transferring Power:

- Two NV Graduates Facilitate 2022 NV Cohort
- NV Graduate Appointed to Represent Olneyville in Providence Human Relations Commission
- NV Grad Leads Olneyville Neighborhood Association
- NV Grad: WRWC Community Programs Director
- Grads Recruited Future Cohorts
- NV Grad is WRWC Environmental Educator
- WRWC Board & Staff Actively Soliciting Membership from NV Grads



# Next Level Programming Climate Combat Champions/Campeones

- **Develop Climate Mitigation Understanding**
- **Frontline Resident Co-Governance in Siting and Designing Projects to Combat Climate Issues**



# Campeones de Combate Climático

Mark Pereira  
WRWC Civil Engineer  
Presents Overview of  
Restoration/Resilience  
Projects

March 8, 2023 Start



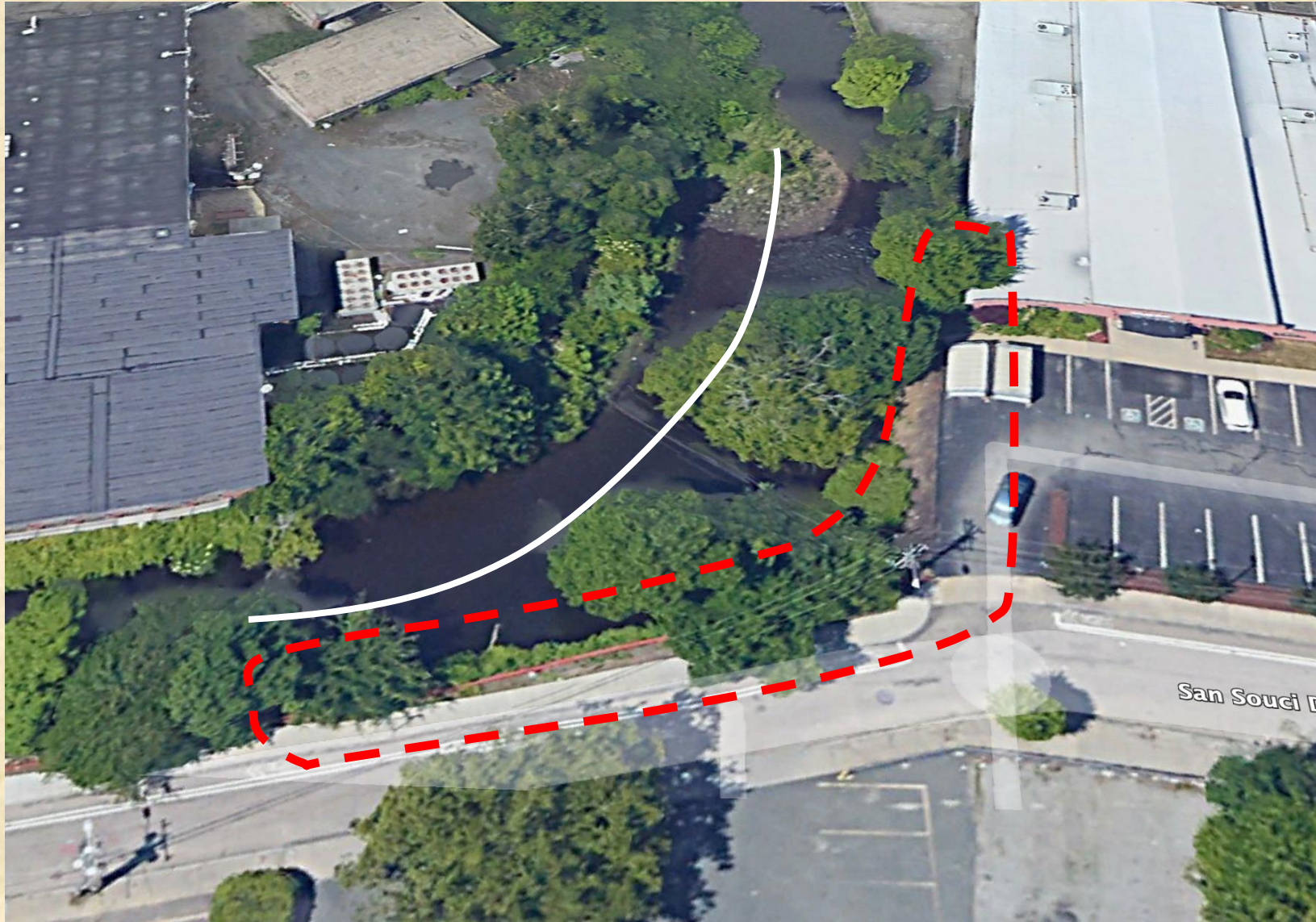


# San Souci Drive -Campeones Field Visit Completed Project





San Souci Drive  
Providence, RI





# Kickoff Meeting Streambank Restoration Project











# Climate Ambassador Program

October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023

CEER

COALITION FOR  
ENVIRONMENT, EQUITY,  
AND RESILIENCE





# Climate Justice Campaign Overview

4 Campaign Pillars



# An Overview of CEER's Climate Justice Campaign

## Climate Justice Campaign



**1. Climate Ambassadors**

**2. Northeast Community Meeting**

**a. Disaster**

**Shelter/Resilience Hub**

**3. Health Partners**

**a. Legacy and UT Health**

**4. Home Retrofit Program**

**a. Navigators**







# Climate Ambassadors.

- ❖ Created in 2020 during planning period- COVID
- ❖ Trained 12 residents on climate change to engage and advocate about health impacts
- ❖ Compensation through stipends
- ❖ Codesign a climate justice survey
- ❖ Educate their network
- ❖ Program developed organically





# Testifying on HB4556

87R1177 JXC-F

By: Anchia

H.B. No. 4556

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

relating to energy efficiency goals for electric utilities.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 39.905, Utilities Code, is amended by adding Subsections (a-1) and (a-2) to read as follows:

(a-1) In addition to meeting the demand goals provided by Subsection (a), each electric utility shall also meet an annual energy savings goal of:

(1) one-fourth of one percent annual energy savings in the 2022 calendar year;

(2) one-half of one percent annual energy savings in the 2023 calendar year;

(3) three-fourths of one percent annual energy savings in the 2024 calendar year; and

(4) one percent annual energy savings beginning with the 2025 calendar year.

(a-2) The commission by rule shall provide a method to establish each utility's annual savings goal under Subsection (a-1). The method must be based on the existing and expected usage of electricity delivered in a utility's service area that is required to pay the annual energy efficiency cost recovery fee. In adopting rules, the commission may provide for cost caps for the implementation of Subsection (a-1) and provide good cause exceptions for a utility that is unable to meet the goal in a cost-effective manner.

SECTION 2. The Public Utility Commission of Texas shall adopt rules to implement the changes made by this Act to Section 39.905, Utilities Code, not later than December 31, 2021.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.





# Program Redesign

## Revisiting our strategy

- 2021- Awarded 3-year implementation grant
  - Ambassadors wanted to continue collaborating with CEER
  - Eager to learn more
  - Connecting the dots of EJ issues with the big picture of climate change
  - Legislation and city council involvement
  - Become the backbone of the Climate Justice Campaign





# CEER's Theory of Change

- CEER recognize residents as experts
- Communities at the frontlines of climate change have the solutions to the problems
- Community voices need to be at the decision-making table to promote equity and resilience





# Creating Structure: Leadership Ladder Model

## **Volunteers**

Shares the same values as the organization or community. Joins and contributes at events.

## **Members**

Has a specific role in org and/or event. Joins org meetings, Recruits volunteers, and receives training

## **Leaders**

Leads Events or org. meetings, gives trainings, (Train the trainers)

## **Team Leaders**

Supervises and coaches Leaders





## Program Agreements

### CEER's Climate Ambassador Role Description & Agreement

#### Community Climate Ambassadors

As one of CEER's Climate Justice Campaign Community Climate Ambassadors, I will be tasked with meaningfully engaging my neighbors, friends, and existing networks. I am eager to spark authentic conversations between people on how they think and talk about climate change. Topics include but are not limited to: energy, transportation, flooding, extreme heat, pollution, food, and access to nature. I will advocate for better health and safety outcomes as they relate to climate and environmental issues.

#### To advance our work forward, Community Climate Ambassadors

##### will be financially compensated for the following tasks:

- Attending weekly Climate Ambassador Team Meetings on Monday evenings at 6:00PM CST either via Zoom or in-person.
- Participating in workshops and trainings to learn more about climate-related issues and contribute my thoughts to the conversations.
- Collaborating with CEER's full-time staff, partners, and members to coordinate the campaign into action.
- Educating the community on climate issues and interviewing people to better understand their challenges and opportunities.
- Inviting your network to participate in monthly Northeast Community Meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month as well as other public community events hosted by CEER.
- Identifying actions that the community wants to take together for a better future so that no communities are left behind and are protected from climate change.
- Contributing historical knowledge and/or lived experience to provide an accurate representation of Houston's northeast community
- Engaging a diverse set of residents and multiple generations of people to support CEER's Climate Justice Campaign

#### How much will Community Climate Ambassadors be paid?

This is a contract position expected to last at least until May 2024. Ambassadors will be paid a stipend each month for 20 hours per month @ \$18.00/hour. If you have difficulty meeting the requirements of the Ambassador role, please reach out to CEER Senior Climate Justice Organizer Carmen Cavezza at (209) 403-7505 or [carmen@ceerhouston.org](mailto:carmen@ceerhouston.org). If you are unable to meet the requirements of this contract position on an ongoing basis, CEER may terminate your position at-will.



# Campaign Goals & Milestones

## Grant Goals:

- Bring health partners as advocates
- **Build a pipeline of community leaders**
- Systemic change: Policy ordinance
- Develop a metric system to measure progress

## Policy Goals:

- Provide protections to the most vulnerable populations against climate change

## Movement Goals:

- Bring investments to frontline communities
- Bring equity on health and policy solutions





# Elevator Speech (10 min)

- An elevator speech is a brief opportunity (one minute or less) to answer the questions: “What do you do and why should I care?”
- The goal is to plant a seed of curiosity so as the elevator doors (real or metaphorical) open, the listener says, “Tell me more.”



# Elevator Speech Share Out (15 min)

Everyone takes about 1 minute to share their Climate Justice Campaign or Climate Ambassador elevator speech!





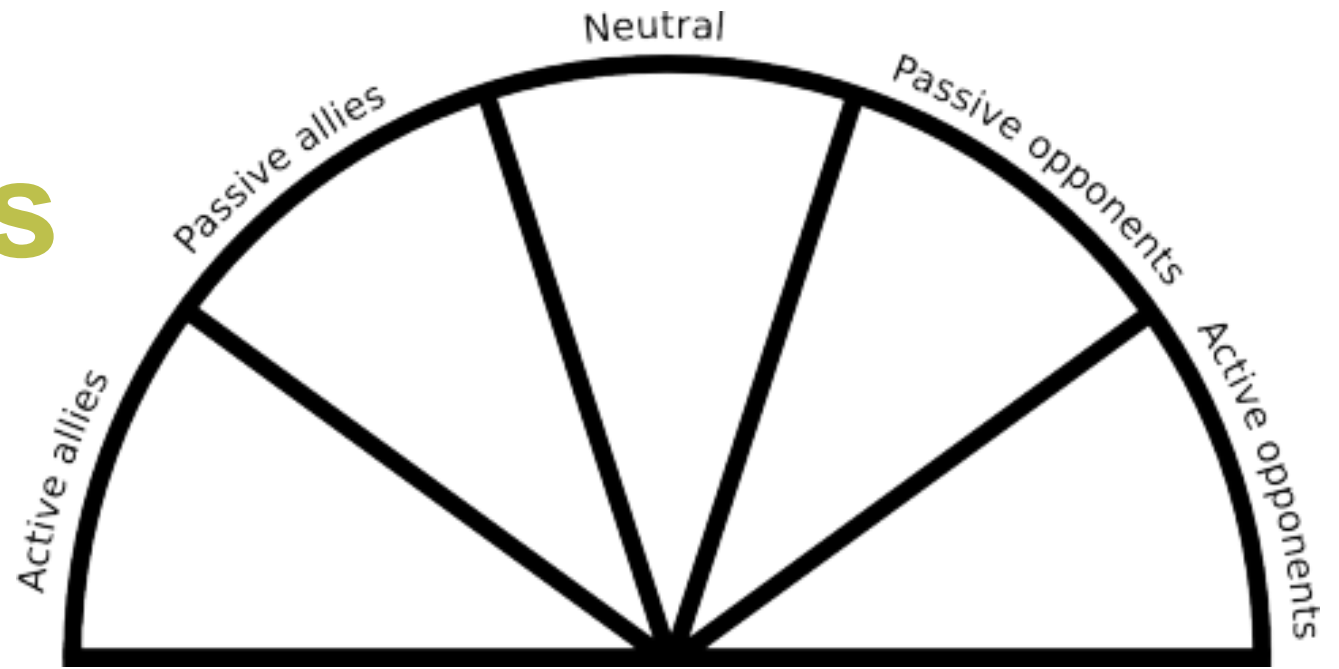
# Spheres of Influence

Our ability to make change is connected to how we have influence. Understanding the layers of our connections helps us to make a greater change and impact.



**SPHERES of INFLUENCE**

# Spectrum of Allies



- We often have the wrong idea that we need to win everyone to our side, or that we need to change the fossil fuel industry or the people actively fighting against us.
- This wrong idea invites despair or feeling defeated
- When we bring an optimistic attitude, instead of one of despair, to the work, it is a lot easier to get people on board.



# Preparing the Frontlines for a Climate Future through Holistic Weatherization



**We are working on a home retrofit process that significantly increases eligibility of low-income residents participating in the weatherization program.**

# 2023 CEER Navigator Program

- **Collaborative**
- **Co-Production Model - HARC + CEER**
- **Community Navigator Model – CEER**
  - ❖ Recruit and train 10 residents as Community Navigators
  - ❖ Co-design intake process with a focus on program access and outreach
  - ❖ Organize community events in person and invite residents to explain intake process
  - ❖ Marketing plan to recruit targeted participants





# CEER Community Navigators

Navigators will work as a liaison for residents to actively participate in the design, planning and implementation of the project.



# Community Navigators

Will be trained on home retrofitting/weatherization, deferred maintenance, energy burden, and how making our homes climate ready connects with the bigger picture of solutions to climate change.







# Myrtala Tristan: mi historia

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Soy Myrtala Tristan, residente de Houston por más de 45 años. La razón por la que estoy tan involucrada con CEER es que fui afectada terriblemente por el Huracán Harvey. La tormenta invernal Uri afectó mucho mi comunidad.

El ser embajadora de CEER me ha empoderado y me siento protegida. Ahora tengo el privilegio de ser una navegadora para ayudar a nuestra gente y seguir luchando para tener una mejor calidad de vida.

# CEER

COALITION FOR  
ENVIRONMENT, EQUITY,  
AND RESILIENCE

# Myrtala Tristan y CEER

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**MYRTLAL TRISTAN**

Climate Ambassador

Aprendí las conexiones que hay entre la contaminación en el aire, las fábricas y los vertederos de basura que afectan nuestras comunidades y nuestra salud.

Hablar de como es vivir al frente del Cambio Climate

Consecuencias de la inundacion de mi comunidad during Harvey

Problemas para acceder a recursos:

Solar,

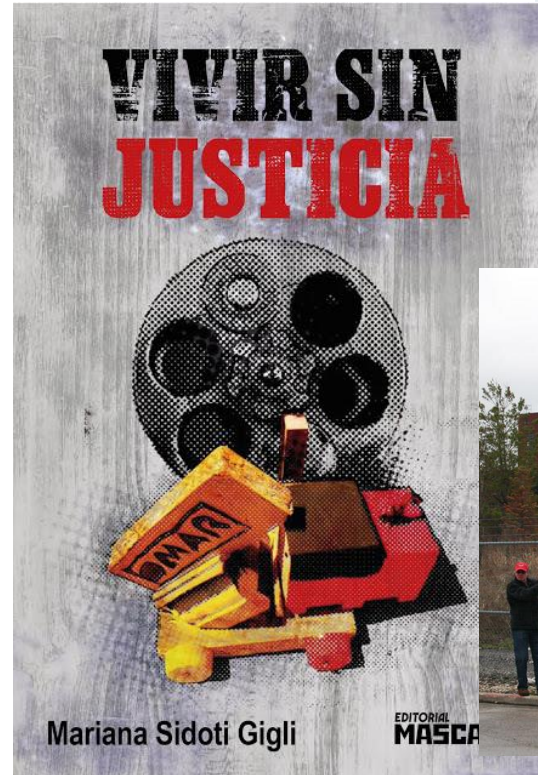
Fondos de FEMA,

Energia eficiente



# Myrtala y los latinos

- Cambio Climatico: Dificil conectar los problemas de EJ y el cambio climatico con Latinos.
- Las comunidades Latinas son usadas como basureros por las refinerias y carreteras, y estas comunidades van a sufrir mas con el incremento de gases (GHG).
- **Que hace a los Latinos reaccionar?:** Multar a las industrias que contamina
- Conectar EJ a gastos: renta, recibos, colegio, comida, salud.
- Trabajar resolviendo pobreza y contaminacion.
- Probando mensajes que funcionen: MFV



# Staying in touch

Carmen Cavezza

Senior Climate Justice  
Community Organizer

[carmen@ceerhouston.org](mailto:carmen@ceerhouston.org)

Myrtala Tristan

Climate Ambassador

[mtristan63@gmail.com](mailto:mtristan63@gmail.com)



[\*\*www.ceerhouston.org\*\*](http://www.ceerhouston.org)



# BEFORE YOU GO...

Do you want to connect with others on issues community-centered climate resilience?

Please complete the evaluation survey!

Register for next month's session

- #4 – Centering Those at Risk: The Power of Community-Led Research for Climate Resilience Investments (Wed., Nov. 15th, 1pm ET)

Federal funding applicable to this work

- EPA's Community Change Grants – Applications out this fall!
- Activities include *“facilitating the engagement of disadvantaged communities in advisory groups, workshops, ... public processes.”*



***Thank you!***



*Share your feedback via the evaluation link in the chat!*