Marie Harrison walked slowly to the podium in the grand legislative chamber at San Francisco’s City Hall, pulling a wheeled, portable oxygen tank. “This hearing is long overdue,” she said to a packed audience. The 2018 hearing before the city’s board of supervisors centered on recent findings that a firm contracted by the U.S. Navy to clean up the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, Tetra Tech, had falsified data on some of its soil samples. The former military base was contaminated with over half a century of industrial and military waste, including the by-products of a Cold War-era radiological laboratory, and it abutted Bayview-Hunters Point, a mixed industrial and residential neighborhood in the southeastern corner of San Francisco where Marie, a Black woman in her sixties, had raised her children and spent much of her life.

Many Black residents in Bayview-Hunters Point had family connections with the shipyard. Military industrialization during World War II had drawn them, or their parents, to the Bay Area to participate in and benefit from the wartime economy. From the military base’s opening in 1941 until its closure in 1974, it provided thousands of jobs to local residents and supported neighborhood businesses. In the 1980s, with public revelations about the extent of radioactive waste and other contaminants
at the shipyard, residents began to identify the military base as part of a broader landscape of environmental and racial injustice in Bayview-Hunters Point.

A few weeks before the hearing at which Marie spoke, two of Tetra Tech’s employees were charged with the data falsifications and sentenced to eight months in prison. Yet many people in attendance at the hearing that afternoon saw the tampering with soil samples not as isolated infractions but as another example of racialized environmental vulnerability in the neighborhood. Moreover, they saw environmental remediation at the shipyard as much more than a technical project of reducing and managing toxic risk. Rather, they sought a more expansive form of social and environmental repair for past harms linked to the military base and its afterlives.

Marie Harrison had a long, established career organizing for housing and environmental justice in southeast San Francisco and was known to neighborhood residents and city officials alike. She was closely involved with community oversight of remediation at the shipyard. Although her health had declined, when she stood at the microphone that afternoon, her words were pointed and precise. Marie demanded a “comprehensive cleanup” of the shipyard, which she qualified as cleanup “not just for the new folks that can buy the new homes.” Postremediation redevelopment plans for the old military base include thousands of homes, millions of square feet of office space, and waterfront parks. At the time Marie spoke, several hundred people lived in new townhomes on part of the base, even as the navy’s remediation work continued throughout the rest of it. Yet the redevelopment of the shipyard and nearby waterfront properties had generated dust and other particulate matter that, some residents argued, contributed to existing respiratory health problems. They felt disposable in relation to new, high-end residential projects in their neighborhood and exposed to the by-products of redevelopment. Dust and airborne particulates from remediation and new construction added to existing industrial emissions in Bayview-Hunters Point, from a sewage treatment plant, open-air industrial facilities, idling diesel trucks, and two broad freeways that run down the length of the neighborhood. Marie admonished city officials for ignoring the concerns of longtime Bayview-Hunters Point residents. “Listen to people in the
neighborhood, they know what is going on. They live it, breathe it, every single day,” she told them. For Marie, the falsified soil samples were only the latest environmental injustice in Bayview-Hunters Point. She had spent the 1990s and early 2000s organizing against power plants in the neighborhood and was increasingly concerned with the impacts of environmental cleanup and urban redevelopment on some of San Francisco’s poorest residents. “I get angry,” Marie told the packed crowd, “when I see a three- or four-year-old with asthma. Is that by design for our community?” Marie articulated a desire for remediation at the shipyard and throughout the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood as a form of justice for past and ongoing harms—her demands for environmental repair were part “grievance and grief.” Marie ended her remarks by saying, “I’m tired, but I want to be made whole. I have lost way too many people.”

*Toxic City* studies the politics of environmental remediation and urban redevelopment in Bayview-Hunters Point—a neighborhood produced through histories of industrialization, militarization, and state abandonment, and also through the everyday and extraordinary work of neighborhood organizers and residents like Marie to make the neighborhood a better place to live. For more than half a century, Bayview-Hunters Point residents have navigated and resisted the harsh effects of the loss of manufacturing, maritime, and military jobs; racialized neglect by state agencies; industrial pollution; and the toxic legacies of war. Today, the historically Black neighborhood is in the path of gentrifying redevelopment that extends from the city’s financial district southward to the Hunters Point Shipyard. Throughout San Francisco’s southeastern waterfront, state agencies and private companies are cleaning up and redeveloping former industrial piers, power plants, and other contaminated sites (the five-hundred-acre shipyard is the most notable) as a high-end waterfront that emphasizes consumption, nature, and a particular, market-oriented version of urban sustainability. San Francisco is a case study of post-industrial greening—an urban process most often found in cities across the Global North, where industrial economies have restructured around service, finance, and tech capital. These sectoral shifts have rendered industrial built environments obsolete and available for new development, at the same time that greening and sustainability have become, as sociologist
Miriam Greenberg puts it, “instrumentalized to support broader goals of economic growth.”

Large-scale remediation and redevelopment in Bayview-Hunters Point ought to be a socially, economically, and ecologically reparative process. Instead, as Marie alluded to in her speech, remediation and redevelopment are complicated and uneven in their social benefits and have contributed to new forms of dispossession, marginality, and environmental harm. For example, urban restructuring in southeast San Francisco has occurred in tandem with, and has exacerbated, a decline in the city’s Black population. In 1970, one in seven San Franciscans, or close to 14 percent of the population, identified as African American. In 2020 that number was 5.4 percent. Since 2010, moreover, most of this population decline has been traceable to Black residents leaving Bayview-Hunters Point. These socio-spatial changes raise questions about the place of Black residents in San Francisco’s green urban future.

*Toxic City* also examines the domestic impacts of militarization through the lens of a neighborhood and city negotiating the future of a contaminated military base. Geographer Shiloh Krupar defines militarization broadly as “the social processes by which society composes itself for the production of weapons and national defense.” Militarization is also a spatial process; domestically, it builds up cities and local economies, creates new geographies of migration and displacement, and produces toxic landscapes through nuclear and chemical weapons production as well as other harmful by-products of mobilizing for war. Cycles of militarization built up and contributed to the economic unraveling of Bayview-Hunters Point; while the military and the Cold War–era radiological laboratory also left the marginalized neighborhood to the environmental legacies of war and nuclear weapons development. The politics of remediation and redevelopment in Bayview-Hunters Point thus involves negotiating the social and ecological impacts of war. It also broadens scholarly and activist understandings of the scales of environmental injustice in the United States, which are generally domestic in focus, to include geographies of U.S. imperialism.

Bayview-Hunters Point residents have not just been impacted by these dynamics. In the nine years I spent volunteering with organizations, attending meeting and events, interviewing people, and reading through
archives, I saw the myriad ways residents critiqued and resisted exclusionary urban development and environmental injustice and organized around alternative visions of urban environmental repair. Generations of residents have worked to rebuild dilapidated public housing units and transform weedy, trash-filled lots into gardens. They have chained themselves to the gates of power plants, organized protests and marches, and advanced their own definitions of toxic risk. Their critiques, demands, organizing strategies, and everyday practices, over many decades, have made the neighborhood a better place to live, work, care, and play. In the process, residents have drawn connections between the slow violence of environmental toxicity and histories of racial capitalism, militarization, and uneven development, and have employed multiple tactics—working through, against, and beyond the state—to realize their goals. Their desires for a just remediation at the Hunters Point Shipyard were not about

Map 1. Current (2020s) map of select neighborhoods in San Francisco. Source: Created by Alicia Cowart.
replicating a premilitarized ecology, for example. Rather, they sought acknowledgment of and amends for past and ongoing harms related to the military base, in the context of broader, long-standing goals of creating a better, safer, and healthier future for Bayview-Hunters Point residents, and especially Black residents, many with family histories connected to former slave states in the U.S. South. Organizers like Marie sought a form of urban environmental repair that acknowledged these histories and lived experiences and aimed to build a different city and a different world.

Urban Restructuring in Southeast San Francisco and Memories of Redevelopment

Environmental justice in Bayview-Hunters Point is connected with the history and politics of urban development in San Francisco—in short,
with struggles not just to improve a place but with the capacity to stay in place. Marie’s concern that cleanup at the shipyard should not simply benefit the “new folks who can buy the new homes,” for example, speaks to the backdrop of gentrification in the politics of environmental remediation. Understanding the connection between environmental justice and urban development in Bayview-Hunters Point requires some political-economic, geographic, and historical context.

Since the late nineteenth century, southeast San Francisco has been an industrial, working-class area, where the city effectively pushed most of its noxious, waste-producing industries and racialized, working-class populations. In recent decades, however, state and private investment has remade much of the southeast waterfront, especially areas closer to downtown San Francisco, such as Mission Bay, South Park, SOMA (South of Market), and the Dogpatch. The influx of capital and subsequent reshaping of these mixed industrial and working-class neighborhoods began with the ending of the Cold War in the 1980s and the conversion of research and development industries in Silicon Valley (located about forty-five minutes south of San Francisco, by car) from defense contractors to computer and internet technology (IT) companies. The accumulation of tech capital in Silicon Valley led to the first “dot-com boom” in San Francisco in the second half of the 1990s, as well as to the gentrification of working-class neighborhoods, such as the historically Latinx Mission District as well as SOMA and South Park, along the southeastern waterfront, north of Bayview-Hunters Point. In the 2010s, the success of newer tech companies such as Twitter, Salesforce, Facebook, and Google led to the “tech boom 2.0,” which contributed to what anthropologist Manissa Maharawal has called “hyper-gentrification” in the city, especially in the southeast. The tech boom 2.0 also coincided with a construction boom in Mission Bay, beginning with the University of California’s new hospital complex and, subsequently, a biotech corridor. (Genentech Hall, University of California, San Francisco’s [UCSF]’s first research building in Mission Bay had opened in 2003.) Formerly a landscape of warehouses and railyards, today, in addition to the hospital campus and biotech companies, Mission Bay and the adjacent Dogpatch neighborhood are the location of high-end condominiums, trendy restaurants, and boutique shops selling eclectic, pricey wares. Property values throughout the southeast have also increased as a result of a new municipal light rail line, the
T-Third Street, which began running in 2007. The new rail line traces the length of the southeastern waterfront, from the financial district, downtown, to Bayview-Hunters Point. The light rail line addressed a historic lack of public transportation in the southeast, yet the project met with heavy criticism from Bayview-Hunters Point residents for failing to hire local workers and for disrupting businesses along Third Street, the main commercial corridor of the neighborhood.

The influx of tech capital and the transformation of the industrial, working-class waterfront in southeastern San Francisco also coincided with the U.S. military’s decision to transfer the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard back to the city, and thus with the availability of land—a scarce commodity in a city bordered by water on three sides. This too was an outcome of the end of the Cold War. At the same time that defense research firms in Silicon Valley morphed into an IT industry in the 1980s, the military began rethinking its geopolitical strategies, which involved restructuring its physical footprint, both domestically and abroad. Military bases and nuclear production facilities had “mushroomed” across the United States during and after World War II, some of them resembling small cities.

During the Cold War, defense spending continued to produce military-industrial regions in New England, the Southwest, and California, especially the San Francisco Bay Area. With the end of the Cold War, the military began the process of shuttering hundreds of bases—now considered “surplus” properties—and transferring the land back to states and municipalities through the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC). The navy announced it would return the Hunters Point Shipyard to the city of San Francisco in 1991, two years after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the military base a Superfund site—a regulatory term for the most contaminated sites in the country. In a move that reflected the city’s political-economic shift to a service, financial, and tech-centered economy, in 1999 the city selected Lennar Corp., one of the largest residential real estate developers in the country, to redevelop the shipyard.

Along with the transition of parts of southeast San Francisco from a working-class, industrial waterfront into a gentrified tech hub, private, nonprofit, and state entities have pursued myriad forms of postindustrial greening projects in the area. One of the most ambitious of these
in southeast San Francisco is the Blue Greenway—a thirteen-mile network of small greening projects which have transformed, or aim to transform, abandoned contaminated piers and irregular parcels of land into wetlands, small parks, and kayak landings. The Blue Greenway imaginatively assembles these sites into one greenbelt running down the southeast waterfront, connected by a bike lane. The stated goal of the Blue Greenway is to “connect neighbors to their waterfront and serve as a catalyst for community building, employment opportunities, and economic vitality.”

This rhetoric reflects how urban greening projects are usually carried out, and often received, as well-intentioned public goods. Yet they are also known to increase property values and—in the absence of robust affordable housing policies—contribute to what scholars term “green gentrification.” Indeed, the Blue Greenway follows the trajectory of gentrification down Third Street, from China Basin (north of Mission Bay) to Candlestick Point State Park, next to the Hunters Point Shipyard.

Thus, the city’s partnership with Lennar to redevelop the shipyard, coinciding with corporate and state investment in Mission Bay, the new transportation route, the reimagining of the industrial waterfront as a site of nature and consumption, and the edgy, hip, yet upscale street culture and aesthetic emerging in the southeastern neighborhoods, has led to an increased interest and development pressure—in part by real estate speculators, but also by households priced out of other parts of the city—in Bayview-Hunters Point.

Contributing to this new interest in Bayview-Hunters Point real estate, in 2006 the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) designated the neighborhood a “Redevelopment Project Area.” Because of the SFRA’s history in both the Fillmore/Western Addition (a neighborhood that I will refer to simply as the Fillmore) and Bayview-Hunters Point, many residents had complex feelings about the SFRA’s project, with some residents opposing it entirely. In the late 1950s, the SFRA began evicting tenants and bulldozing entire streets in the Fillmore as part of a large urban renewal project. At the time, the Fillmore was the center of Black cultural and political life in the city. To this day, the SFRA’s project in the Fillmore—which took property by eminent domain, evicted thousands of Black households, and shuttered Black businesses—exemplifies the phrase popularized by the writer James Baldwin, that urban renewal meant “Negro removal.”
I heard this critique of redevelopment from longtime resident and organizer, Patricia. Patricia was in her late seventies when I first met her, at a navy-led shipyard remediation meeting in 2011. A widely respected community figure with a long career organizing in Bayview-Hunters Point, Patricia was a regular at the public meetings on both redevelopment and remediation in Bayview-Hunters Point that I attended during the 2010s. Dressed smartly, often in a colorful blazer and a hat, she would deliver eloquent critiques to city and navy officials, sometimes referencing events from thirty or forty years ago as a reminder that the contemporary politics of cleanup and redevelopment were part of a longer history of Black struggle in Bayview-Hunters Point. I introduced myself to Patricia on a chilly weekday evening in January, after the participants of that month’s remediation meeting had spilled out of the Bayview YMCA and stood huddled on the sidewalk, saying their goodbyes. She seemed pleased, though unsurprised, that a graduate student was interested in environmental politics in Bayview-Hunters Point. She gave me her card and told me to call her in a few days. I did, and we spoke for several hours. Patricia’s family had moved to San Francisco from Texas in the 1940s, and she lived “at the door of the shipyard as a kid.” Her organizing career began with the welfare rights movement in the 1960s and expanded over the course of her life to include housing, redevelopment, and in the 1990s, remediation. She was instrumental in establishing the Hunters Point Shipyard Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), which provided a forum for community oversight of the shipyard remediation process. As we spoke, she described how the neighborhood had changed over the course of her life, which brought her to changes currently afoot. She did not trust “redevelopment,” which she interpreted as a form of anti-Black racism. “Look at Hunters View,” she told me, referring to the redevelopment of a public housing development—historically, with a majority of Black residents. The public housing development, which was also known as West Point, had been unlivable for decades, and its residents were sorely in need of decent housing. Yet Patricia feared that the public-private redevelopment project—a denser, mixed-income, mixed-ownership housing development; half of the units would be sold at market rate prices—would replicate what had happened in the Fillmore. “It’s to get people out,” Patricia told me. She clarified, “Redevelopment comes
to get people.” Patricia’s take on redevelopment and the way she experienced it as linked with an effort, on the part of city agencies, to remove longtime Black residents from the neighborhood was not unique. “They’re fixing things up, but it’s not for us,” one Black resident told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 2008. His comment reflected widespread concerns that the myriad redevelopment projects taking place in Bayview-Hunters Point were not intended to benefit the longtime Black community.

Patricia’s was not the only perspective in Bayview-Hunters Point at that time, nor was it the only perspective among Black Bayview-Hunters Point residents. For other residents I spoke with in the 2010s, the SFRA’s promise of jobs and urban improvements represented a welcome and belated endeavor. Yet enough residents feared the impacts of SFRA-led redevelopment that a group called Defend Bayview-Hunters Point circulated a petition to put the SFRA’s designation to a referendum on the 2006 city ballot. The petition gathered enough signatures for inclusion on the ballot, but a court ultimately rejected the referendum due to a technicality (the petition voters signed did not contain the full text of the original sixty-two-page policy, which was the subject of the referendum). On September 27, 2006, the anniversary of the 1966 Hunters Point uprising, Defend Bayview-Hunters Point organized a march down Third Street—the main commercial corridor in the neighborhood—to protest the rejected ballot measure and the SFRA redevelopment plan. Demonstrators carried a wide banner that read, “We Shall Not Be Moved! 33,000 signatures demand to be counted.”

A few weeks before I spoke with Patricia I had met Louis, one of the organizers of Defend Bayview-Hunters Point. To get to Louis’s home office on Third Street, I boarded the T-Third Street rail line at Embarcadero Station, downtown. The T-Third initially follows the curve of the city’s waterfront, but after crossing Mission Creek, it hops onto Third Street for the remainder of its southbound route. When it reaches Bayview-Hunters Point, Third Street morphs into the commercial heart of the neighborhood. Along Third Street, in the 2010s, you could find Auntie April’s Chicken, Waffles & Soul Food and the Ruth Williams Memorial Theater, named for an important civil rights activist from Bayview-Hunters Point.

Third Street in Bayview-Hunters Point is both a commercial corridor and a boundary, a line between Hunters Point, to the east of Third, and the
Bayview district, to the west. Until World War II, Hunters Point was largely characterized by cattle yards, shipyards, and factories. Federal spending for wartime workers in the 1940s transformed Hunters Point into a neighborhood within a few short years, while in the postwar era, the San Francisco Housing Authority built so many units there that by the 1960s the neighborhood had the largest concentration of public housing in the city. Bayview, to the west of Third Street, is an older residential neighborhood, with more single-family houses. Before World War II, the Bayview district was primarily home to working-class, white ethnic communities. In the 1950s Black households started to leave public housing in Hunters Point and rent or purchase homes in the Bayview, and the two neighborhoods were increasingly seen as one. The new name, Bayview-Hunters Point, reflected an expansion of a Black sense of place in southeast San Francisco, even as the two neighborhoods are still seen as distinct places.

Toward the end of our interview, Louis brought me to a small outdoor porch just off the kitchen of his second-story flat to show me clusters of beautiful red strawberries, growing in wooden barrels. As I admired the berries, a large, coffin-shaped black box resting against a wooden fence on the grass below took me by surprise. Louis explained that it was a prop used during an antiredevelopment rally a few years before. For Louis, the SFRA’s designation of the neighborhood as a Redevelopment Project Area was undemocratic. “The only other city that has bigger land grab is New Orleans, and at least they had a flood,” he told me, referencing the entrepreneurial and exclusionary rebuilding of historically Black neighborhoods in New Orleans that followed Hurricane Katrina in 2006. The SFRA redevelopment project in Bayview-Hunters Point was not the same as the large, federally funded, and multisectoral remaking of New Orleans, which included the privatization of public schools. Nor was it the same as the SFRA’s urban renewal project in the Fillmore in the mid-twentieth century. The agency had no plans to evict tenants and raze whole city streets in Bayview-Hunters Point, for example, nor did it plan to take property through eminent domain. Still, for Louis these events were cut from the same cloth. Each involved urban land acquisition by outside actors and represented a form of accumulation by dispossession, predicated on or at least connected to the displacement of Black residents. And yet, in spite of the provocative symbolism of the coffin—suggesting the death of Bayview-Hunters Point as a
Black neighborhood—Louis was hopeful about the future. I asked where he saw the neighborhood in thirty years and he told me, “I think you’ll see an increase in the Black population. That’s why I’m telling people, look, whoever owns Third Street owns Hunters Point.” He was emphasizing the importance of local, Black-owned businesses as a bulwark against the growing pressures of gentrification.

Louis had been deeply involved in protesting SFRA’s redevelopment project in Bayview-Hunters Point, and he didn’t think much of Lennar’s massive housing project at the shipyard either. At one point during our conversation he waved in the direction of the shipyard. “Are you going to build something over there,” he asked, rhetorically, “or are you going to take care of these people over here [on Third Street] with some of that money?” A few moments later, he added, “I mean, you’re not doing anything but trying to run the people off. And you’re going to build on land that’s not clean?” Louis had attended shipyard RAB meetings in the 2000s, along with Patricia and Marie. Although he was uninterested in Lennar’s redevelopment project on the shipyard, he was involved in community oversight of the cleanup process. As I discuss in chapter 3, many residents felt strongly about toxic cleanup at the shipyard and saw cleanup as a form of environmental justice. At the same time, cleanup was connected with all the uncertainties of urban redevelopment in Bayview-Hunters Point and the question of who gets to benefit from the postindustrial, postmilitary transformation of the neighborhood.

SEEKING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE THROUGH, AGAINST, AND BEYOND THE STATE

Most scholars locate the origins of the U.S. environmental justice movement in a campaign against the siting of a hazardous waste landfill in a poor, majority Black area of Warren County, North Carolina, that began in the late 1970s. The threat of the hazardous waste landfill brought together a coalition of white and Black residents, who initially developed legal and technical arguments against locating the landfill in Warren County. When recourses to state institutions failed, residents shifted tactics. They reached out to local civil rights activists and Black church leaders, who
contacted nationally influential organizations, including the United Church of Christ (UCC) Commission on Racial Justice and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This institutional support and involvement of key figures from the civil rights movement elevated the struggle in Warren County from a local to a national issue. The evolving opposition to the hazardous waste landfill also coalesced around the argument that race and racism were underlying factors in the selection of Warren County as the landfill site. The new coalition adopted the civil disobedience and direct action tactics of the civil rights movement, such as lying down in the middle of the road to prevent trucks with hazardous waste from arriving in town.\footnote{32}

Although the hazardous waste landfill was eventually built in Warren County, the merging of the civil rights and antitoxics movements led the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Walter Fauntroy (who had participated in the antilandfill demonstrations), to commission a report by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) “to determine the location of hazardous waste landfills and the racial and economic status of surrounding communities” in the U.S. Southeast region.\footnote{33} The GAO report, published in 1983, indeed found a correlation between geographies of race and toxic waste, with three out of four hazardous waste landfills in the southeastern U.S. located in majority Black, poor areas. The GAO report was followed four years later by the UCC Commission on Racial Justice’s landmark study, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites*. The study, published in 1987, surveyed major U.S. metropolitan areas and found race to be the most significant variable in predicting the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities, and that three out of five Black and Latinx Americans lived in communities with uncontrolled toxic waste sites. The UCC report bolstered the GAO’s conclusion, as well as the arguments of protestors in Warren County, that Black and other minoritized communities in the United States were overwhelmingly exposed to industrial emissions, hazardous waste landfills, and other forms of toxic waste.

These empirical studies and the growing adoption of environmental justice as an organizing framework among a diverse range of long-standing social movements coalesced with the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, held in Washington, D.C. The summit included hundreds of delegates from across the United States,
including Puerto Rico and the Marshall Islands, and produced a document titled *The Principles of Environmental Justice*. These principles included “the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural, and environmental self-determination of all peoples”; “the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation”; “the rights of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care”; and an opposition to “military occupation, repression, and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.” The document advanced different political strategies and orientations to the state, reflecting the diversity of social movement actors at the event.

Recent scholarship offers a critical assessment of the environmental justice movement in the decades since the 1991 Summit. Geographers Laura Pulido and Juan De Lara, for example, lament that some of the radical political imaginaries articulated in the *Principles* “have slowly been replaced by more moderate appeals to the liberal state for inclusion and redress.” Yet, they argue, the state is not equipped to address the fundamental roots of racialized environmental inequalities in racial capitalism and colonialism. Indeed, as many scholars, including Pulido, David Pellow, Malini Ranganathan, and Julie Sze have argued, the state is part of the production and perpetuation of environmental injustices. The water crisis in Flint, Michigan, which national media outlets began reporting on in 2014, is one example of Pulido’s argument that environmental racism is not simply the “disproportionate exposure” of Black, Indigenous, and people of color to hazardous waste, as it is commonly defined in the academic and policy literature, but a form of state-sanctioned violence. Indeed, even as forty years of environmental justice scholarship has clearly detailed racial environmental inequalities as systemic problems, and even as the U.S. government mandates federal agencies to consider environmental justice in their programs and policies, environmental justice lawsuits regularly fail in the courts, environmental justice Title VI complaints are rejected to a degree that is “truly breathtaking in scope,” and government enforcement of environmental laws is consistently discriminatory. Moreover, as sociologist and geographer Jill Harrison demonstrates, within the EPA itself environmental justice is often seen as a performative “box to check” rather