



The last couple of months have seen non-stop protests around the globe against police brutality and systemic racism



We also saw how a Black birder was threatened with a police call simply for existing in an urban green space, reminding us how closely racial inequality is reflected in green spaces and environmental rights.

Urban green spaces highlight some of these systemic inequalities powerfully. Decades of discriminatory urban zoning practices in many countries and cities have often limited green spaces to wealthier, predominantly white neighbourhoods...



While communities of colour are often pushed into concrete, treeless urban deserts

In cities that experience extreme heat, lack of shade in green spaces and can result in real health issues



Policing can also exacerbate this disparity when police insist that trees be removed or cut back so they can better surveil "high crime areas" (yep... code for targeting non-white communities). Ironically, research shows that presence of green spaces can actually help reduce crime rates!

So what do we need to be doing? It's clear there's a close relationship between racial inequality, policing, and access to nature. As ecologists, it's our responsibility to make sure green spaces and nature are open to everyone!

In addition to protesting or supporting protestors right now, this means...

1. Watching out for one another in green spaces
2. Advocating for the creation of more community-led green spaces in urban areas. Look to models that increase green space while protecting residents from green gentrification!
3. And supporting Black ecologists, like those at @BlackAFinSTEM

**FURTHER READING:**  
 Lincoln Larson & S. Scott Ogletree. (2019) "Can Parks Help Cities Fight Crime?" The Conversation.  
 Sam Bloch. (2019). "Shade" Places Journal.  
 Sigrid Ehrmann. (2018). "Green Gentrification and How to Avoid It." Foreground.

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