

SEWAGE CANYON:
A SOCIAL-HISTORICAL LOOK AT ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN FLAGSTAFF,
ARIZONA FROM 1900-1960

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ABSTRACT

SEWAGE CANYON: A SOCIAL-HISTORICAL LOOK AT ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA FROM 1900-1960

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The social-historical analysis will examine an act of environmental injustice that took place in Flagstaff, Arizona from 1900 to 1960. The investigation of racial segregation and environmental injustice is necessary due to the ongoing racial disparities both nationally and locally. First, Flagstaff documents from a local engineering company, Taylor & Taylor, report on an ongoing racially divided community for over sixty years. Second, the Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities in Flagstaff, who still reside in the areas segregated years ago, have yet to heal from the racial trauma caused at the intersections of segregation and environmental injustices. Current literature identifies how racialized spaces lead to racial injustices, and Flagstaff is no exception despite minimal efforts to address racial problems. Thus, this current project hopes to contribute to the identification of racial injustices among a community by decolonizing a racist history.

KEYWORDS Environmental Justice, Racialized Spaces, Sewage Infrastructure, Flagstaff, Arizona, Historical, Segregation, Racism

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction	1
Purpose and Thesis Statement	3
My Stance on Historical Research and My Personal Motivation	5

Chapter 2

Introduction	6
Critical Race Theory.....	6
Racialized Spaces	13
Environmental Justice	21

Chapter 3

Research Methods.....	29
Historical Analysis Through Sociological Lenses.....	32
Limitations.....	33
Decolonizing Research	34

Chapter 4

Introduction	36
The Formation of Racialized Spaces in Flagstaff	36
Environmental Injustice in Flagstaff.....	41
Flagstaff Sewage Emergency Zones and Sewage Canyon	44

Chapter 5

Findings	51
Formation of Racialized Space Through Unfair Housing Policy.....	52
Formation of Racialized Space Through Legalized Segregation	53
Racialized Space in Flagstaff	53
Sewage Emergency Zones as an Act of Environmental Injustice	54
Sewage Canyon as an Act of Environmental Injustice.....	55
Results.....	55
Conclusion	58

Chapter 6

Directions for Future Research	59
Possible Solutions Towards Ending Racialized Spaces	59
Possible Solutions Towards Environmental Justice.....	61
Final Thoughts	63

Northern Arizona University sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans throughout the region. We honor their past, present, and future generations for millennia who will forever call this place home.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The United States has a profoundly documented history. This unquestioned history has been taught for decades in schools and in society. More recently, different perspectives and stories from history are being told and challenged at an increasingly high rate. The largest argument against teaching different historical perspectives is that they fall under what is called Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory is defined as a set of ideas that racial bias is inherent in many parts of western society, especially in legal and social institutions. In history, this is an obvious factor as things like Jim Crow Laws, segregation, and other factors treated many minorities as second-class citizens. However, thirty-six states in the United States have passed laws or policies to restrict teaching about race or racism in their schools. For this reason, many cities and states around the country are not aware of racial division within their own cities. Many people are also unaware of the acts of environmental injustice that have taken place in their own backyards. To heal historical trauma that has not been properly addressed, perspectives and representation are crucial when teaching history.

Throughout the United States, the formation of racialized spaces has been systematic and planned through government policy and law. Racialized space for the purposes of this project will be defined as the separation of racial groups through policy, physical barriers, and perceptions. In the South, Jim Crow laws separated Black people from society and forced them into their own separate spaces. Throughout the rest of the United States, unfair housing policies led to the separation of each race into their own separate spheres. Schools in the United States have been segregated by race and often are imbalanced even today in their resources. Racial

minority spheres often suffered from neglect and a lack of resources leading to exploitation and injustice. A racial minority for the purposes of this paper is defined as a racial group that is a non-dominant race within a group. Through redlining policies, white flight, and intimidation, the United States started to form its racialized space and this separation of spheres led to exploitation.

Cities across the United States have had a history of environmental injustices caused by the formation of racialized spaces and the neglect and exploitation that follows. Acts of environmental injustice are defined for the purposes of this paper as a group of actions that leads to racial minorities and those of lower socio-economic status being more adversely affected by environmental hazards than other groups. Landfills, toxic waste facilities, exposure to natural disasters, and other negative environmental impacts are often found more concentrated in lower-income neighborhoods, often of which are non-white. These acts of injustice are often caused by government policies historically and today.

Flagstaff, Arizona has a deeply documented history about how the city was founded and how it rose to where it is today. History documenting the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff is not as heavily documented. Although there are a few ongoing projects to document segregation and racism within the city, Flagstaff still has a long way to go in documenting its history from other perspectives. A few projects have highlighted acts of environmental injustice within the city, but there are many events that have never been talked about in Flagstaff's history. Several of these events will be discussed throughout this paper. One of these events is called Sewage Canyon. This project will look at how Sewage Canyon formed and why it persisted for so long.

Purpose and Thesis Statement

This project will study an event in Flagstaff history that occurred from 1900-1960. This event is termed in official government documents as Sewage Canyon. This event will be studied through two sociological lenses: environmental justice and racialized spaces. The documented history that will be studied will describe Flagstaff's relationship between segregation and its sewage system and the inequalities that took place from 1900-1960. The combination of city documents and newspaper articles will come together to provide an overall look at Sewage Canyon and the infrastructural and racial inequalities that took place in Flagstaff. The primary question is *How is Flagstaff's historical sewage infrastructure affected by racialized space? Was Sewage Canyon an act of environmental injustice and racism?*

This project is an analysis of historical documents and newspaper articles which show how Flagstaff, Arizona was racially segregated and how that allowed exploitation and inequality to take place in different sections of the city. The investigation follows an event known as Sewage Canyon, where raw sewage was being dumped into the city just outside the segregated non-white neighborhood. Southside neighborhood (because it lies South of the railroad tracks) was home to approximately 60% of the Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) residents. North of the tracks was where most white residents lived. This division allowed the Southside neighborhood to experience inequality when it came to the sewage infrastructure in the city. Although Flagstaff, Arizona has a deep history written, many of these events have not been studied out extensively by academic research. This project will allow the voices of those who have been ignored for decades to be heard and their experiences validated.

This project is important because it is a look at the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff and the exploitation and neglect that followed in the Southside community. With a

more diverse understanding of history and experiences, cities can change their patterns of injustice and unfairness.

The next chapter in this paper will focus on the vital role that critical race theory plays in history. The chapter will outline where critical race theory began to take place and how it has evolved over time. It will talk about why critical race theory is important in telling history from all different perspectives of people.

The chapter will then focus on the formation of racialized space around the United States. It will outline how the United States created racialized space through government policy, intimidation, white flight, and redlining. The chapter will also outline how the formation of these racialized spaces has created opportunities for the neglect and exploitation of lower-income racial minority neighborhoods.

This exploitation and neglect eventually lead to environmental injustice. The origins of the Environmental Justice Movement will be discussed as well as how the movement has transformed over time. The chapter will highlight several examples of environmental injustice throughout the United States in urban and rural contexts.

The following chapters will discuss the formation of racialized space in Flagstaff, Arizona through similar patterns as other cities in the United States. It will also discuss acts of environmental injustice that have taken place in Flagstaff historically as well as recently.

The remaining chapters will conclude with my findings about Sewage Canyon through the sociological lenses of racialized space and as an act of environmental injustice. It will also look at the “emergency zones” found within the Southside neighborhood and analyze those with the same sociological lenses.

My Stance on Historical Research and My Personal Motivation

Historical research is necessary and important because if society doesn't understand what happened in history from all points of view, it will continue to make the same mistakes into the future. Sewage Canyon is an example of history not being fully written. This paper aims to bring to light what can happen in a community when the community does not hear the voices of those people who are ignored and oppressed. Flagstaff has repeatedly encountered problems of environmental injustice and continues to fail in addressing the issues in a fair and equal manner. A few of these examples will be highlighted throughout this paper. If we can truly grasp what happened in history and empathize with those who endured acts of injustice, then we can make better informed decisions in the present and continuing into the future.

Living in the state of Utah, I happened to live in relative proximity to areas of historical pollution including historical dumping sites for toxic waste from the local steel and energy companies. However, due to the privileges that I enjoy coming from a higher-income white family, I never had to experience any negative effects despite the proximity. Other populations do not enjoy the same fate as I have. I believe that no person should have to endure less than adequate environmental conditions. All people deserve the same healthy standards that the majority of the middle and upper-class enjoy. The motivation of this project is to allow the voices that have so often been ignored to be heard. It is important to learn history from every point of view so that historical trauma can be validated and healed.

The next chapter will discuss the sociological lenses used to analyze the history that will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This project focuses on three different sociological lenses and theories. The first is critical race theory. Critical race theory is applied to find different historical perspectives than those that have already been recorded in Flagstaff. It focuses on giving a voice to those who have not been heard thus far and helping to heal historical trauma that may have been experienced from a lack of acknowledgement from the city.

The second sociological lens that will be discussed is racialized spaces. Racialized space is the idea that different people are separated spatially by their race. Racialized spaces are formed over time and this section will focus on how racialized space was formed and cultivated in the United States. The paper will talk about how it has shifted overtime as well as the consequences that follow.

The last sociological theory that will be analyzed in this project is environmental justice. Environmental justice is a movement and a framework that originated in the mid-1900s. This paper will talk about its origins as well as how it has changed over the years and how it applies to this research.

Critical Race Theory

To fully understand what it means to be critical about history through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens we must understand what CRT is. CRT is concerned with studying the relationship among race, racism, and power. CRT is concerned with many of the same issues as conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses discuss but it places those discourses in a broader perspective that encompasses economics, history, self-interest, and emotions (Delgado

and Stefancic 2017). CRT has expanded to include Asian American experiences, Latino-critical discourse, LGBT groups, as well as Muslim and Arab experiences.

Critical race theory began in the 1970s as many lawyers, activists, and scholars realized that the advances of the civil rights movement from the 1960s had begun to lull and in many cases, things were beginning to go back to the way they were (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Early scholars such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado held a workshop near Madison, Wisconsin in 1989. Derrick Bell became the movement's father figure and authored many of its foundational writings (Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

Critical race theory maintains a drive towards activism. CRT is not only about understanding our social circumstances but also how to change them. CRT theorists believe a few basic things (however it is important to note that this varies from scholar to scholar).

First, racism is a common everyday experience for most people of color in this country. This means that racism in an everyday context is the norm and not the exception. This racism can be through micro-aggressions which are subtle, often unintentional forms of prejudice to more overt forms of racism like blatant discrimination or police brutality.

Second, the current system of white above color serves a purpose for the dominant group. In this system there are several features including that racism is difficult to address because it is often ignored. Color-blind stances for instance can only cure the most blatant forms of discrimination like unfair housing practices such as redlining, but it often misses the more subtle forms of discrimination like microaggressions, discrimination in the workplace, and other systemic issues. Another feature of this system is called “interest convergence.” This means that racism works to advance the interests of both white elites through the material and working-class

whites through the psychological. This leads to little inaction or incentive to remove racism from society (Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

Another theme of Critical Race Theory states that race and races are a social construction. Race is not fixed, nor does it respond to a biological or genetic reality. Races are categories that society has invented, and they often get retired when convenient. Although people who share a common origin share traits such as skin color and hair texture, these things are very insignificant differences compared to what humans have in common. Race also does not affect things such as personality, intelligence, or moral behavior. Society tends to ignore these scientific truths and continues to create races, also giving them stereotypes which CRT seeks to dismantle (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Stereotypes are often assigned to race through the media. The media can sway opinions on what a particular racial group “is” or “isn’t.” For example, when an 18-year-old Black male was shot by police, the New York Times had this to say about it:

“Michael Brown, 18, due to be buried on Monday, was no angel... He lived in a community that had rough patches, and he dabbled in drugs and alcohol. He had taken to rapping in recent months, producing lyrics that were by turns contemplative and vulgar... (Eligon 2014).”

The article did not mention how he was an unarmed Black teenager who was shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. This message and attempt to justify the violence was replayed through the media influencing public opinion.

Critical race theory looks to dismantle the stereotypes often replayed through the media. These types of descriptions are not an anomaly (Reinka and Leach 2017). They happen quite

often and frequently lead to victim blaming rather than addressing the actual issue of police violence (Dukes and Gaither 2017).

Society has often chosen to racialize different groups of people in response to changing needs. For example, Muslims for the longest time were considered peaceful and different within the context of the United States. Once 9-11 happened, Muslims appeared as constant security threats through generalization and popular stereotypes. Similarly, Asian Americans were often ignored in the United States context, however when COVID-19 pandemic happened their stereotypes shifted to being medical threats and Asian hate crimes rose significantly within the US.

The last factor of critical race theory is that people of color are the ones who can truly voice their own experiences and are essential to the field of academia and beyond. Minority status brings the ability to frankly speak about race and racism, something that a white person can never fully understand. This is important because in every epoch of American history, Black and other people of color's voices have continuously spoken constructively to reinvigorate the United States' obligation to fulfill its core democratic values of freedom and equality.

This has often been met with extreme opposition. An example of silencing Black voices is historical and modern voter suppression. Historically voting was illegal for Black people to take part in. However, once it was made legal in the United States in 1870 for some states, the oppression continued especially in the South as voters were often threatened with violence and killed. In the 1900s poll taxes often barred Black voters from voting as they couldn't afford the tax. Literacy tests were often employed to stop those who were "uneducated" from voting. These tests often discriminated against Black voters (Smith 2020). White men who could not pass the literacy tests were still allowed to vote because of the "Grandfather Clause" meaning that if their

grandfathers voted by 1867, they could also do so. Black people at the time could not qualify for the Grandfather Clause because their ancestors were not allowed to vote.

Today, voting oppression looks different. However, the idea behind it is the same. In Texas, the state required voter identification in its 2014 election. In North Carolina, officials dropped same-day registration and scaled back the early voting period and implemented a photo identification requirement (Smith 2020). These newly enforced laws disproportionately affect people of color at the polls. Taking away same day registration and early voting often means that those who can't afford to miss hours of work cannot make it to the polls. Photo identification laws often suppress minority voting because Asian, Black, and Latino Americans are more likely to not have a valid ID while white people are virtually unaffected (Hajnal et al 2017).

The silencing of Black voices is also clear in the banning of books across the United States. Authors of color are often targeted on this list of banned books. In a recent study by PEN America, a nonprofit that advocates for freedom of speech, it was found that 1,586 books in school have been banned in the last nine months. 40% of these books featured prominent characters who are people of color. 41% of these books are banned due to protagonists or secondary characters being part of the LGBT community. Many argue that the books are banned because of sexual-content, however only 22% of the total books are banned due to sexual-content and this does not apply to the 40% or the 41% banned for including people of color or the LGBT community (Friedman et al. 2022).

For example, activist Ruby Bridges wrote a children's story about the integration of a New Orleans school that has been targeted to be banned.

She said, “Our babies - all of them - need to see themselves in our books, particularly in school. Representation doesn’t just matter; it’s vital, especially in the pages of the books that we teach from.”

The silencing of voices of color has been happening for hundreds of years. Critical race theory is under fire not because it is dangerous, but because it looks to share experiences that have been silenced for years. An argument to banning books that talk about the experiences of people of color is that it makes other children uncomfortable. One author named Jerry Craft has this to say about the experience:

“The fact that you’re banning my book is the reason I’m writing these books. If I didn’t grow up uncomfortable, I would never make these books in the first place because I wouldn’t have anything to base these stories on.”

One experience shared in his book is Craft’s discomfort as a Black kid in a room full of white students learning about slavery and Jim Crow. His unease was shocked into high alert when the kids joked later that day that he needed to sit in the back of the bus on the way home from school (McLaughlin, Elliott 2022). Jerry Craft writes these books because he has been uncomfortable many times in his life and by sharing these experiences, he can help other children in similar situations know that they are not alone and maybe educate other kids that doing those types of things should not be acceptable.

Critical race theory looks to dismantle the discomfort and allow these experiences and voices to be heard. When these experiences are ignored, our present and our future cannot be improved or healed.

Critical race theory is not about teaching children to hate America or to hate being white. It’s about sharing the experiences of those who have been oppressed and silenced overtime.

Those that look to understand the true experiences of those who are different from them can experience the desire to change society and to make it a better place. There are things to be proud of in our history and things to not be proud of, but both sides need to be told for our society to experience true healing. When the bad is ignored, society risks making the same mistakes. When the bad is ignored, those who experienced the bad cannot fully heal from those experiences and this causes generational damage to the people living today.

A sub-theory within CRT that will be focused on and was briefly stated before is known as Interest Convergence Theory. Interest Convergence Theory suggests that a divergence of interests between white and Black people make integration less feasible (Bell 1980). When the interests between races converge decisions advancing more equal circumstances are passed. This is how *Brown v. Board of Education* took place. At the time in 1954, when *Brown v. Board of Education* passed in the Supreme Court to end segregation in schools, convergence theory suggests that there was no conflict of interests at the time, and therefore the decision was approved (Bell 1980).

Similar situations to this are things like Jim Crow Laws in the South. Those who held most of the power at the time, being white people, started to receive large amounts of pressure from foreign countries questioning the United States' humanity in the way they were treating Black people. It was in the United States' best interest to shift away from these inhumane acts and in this, convergence of interests aligned to attempt to rectify the situation.

Critical race theory is important for this project because it highlights the experiences of those who have not been told thus far. It is important to this project because it highlights the relationship between race, racism, and power in Flagstaff, Arizona. It supports the notion that racism historically was an everyday experience for people of color in the city. It also is important

for highlighting how race shifted overtime in Flagstaff beginning as a mutual relationship between lumber works and eventually becoming a separation of spheres. CRT is important for understanding how racialized spaces are formed and how they were supported for decades and the problems that it caused for residents along the way.

Racialized Spaces

Racialized spaces have been forming for hundreds of years. They were formed along with the very idea that one race was inferior to another. This idea originated as early as the 1600s with the rise of the slave trade. The rise of the slave trade was the greatest factor in the social creation of racial inferiority. To justify the enslavement of Africans, white people searched for justifications through different means including, biological science and religion. This was the beginning of the creation of racialized spaces. By 1723, even freed African Americans were denied the right to vote and exercise civil rights (Smedley 2021). The scientific community continued to separate non-white races as inferior until the mid-20th century (Smedley 2007). However, when one door closes, another one opens. Racism does not ever go away. In fact, it continuously adapts to the environment that it finds itself within.

Segregation has played a key role in the creation of racialized spaces. Segregation has been able to take hold on society through policies and laws passed by the government as well as through the individual biases of society. There are two types of segregation that lead to the creation of racialized space. The first type of segregation is known as de jure segregation. De jure segregation is the legally allowed or enforced separation of groups of people. “De jure” means “according to law (Longley 2021).” An example of de jure segregation would be the passing of Jim Crow Laws that enforced racial segregation post-civil war in the South.

The second form of segregation is known as “de facto” segregation. De facto segregation occurs “by fact” rather than enforced by laws (Longley 2021). This form of segregation is more present today than de jure segregation, but it also played a significant role in the formation of racialized spaces. An example of de facto segregation would be “white flight” where white people chose not to live in proximity to people of color and moved away from areas creating segregation in neighborhoods that persists in the modern day.

There is no exploitation or inequality without racialized spaces. Racialized space is the idea that communities of color and poor neighborhoods are spatially designated as inferior (Washington et al. 2006). Communities of color are often seen as dangerous, poor, and without resources by white communities. Through de jure and de facto segregation, pockets of vulnerability are formed to house less desired populations. Unfair housing practices, predatory loans, and redlining have caused people of color to move into these pockets of vulnerability.

Jim Crow Laws throughout the United States codified discriminatory practices and led to the creation of a legal framework against African Americans (Edwards and Thompson 2010). By passing these laws, there was an intentional creation of “raced space.” In this case, space was divided up into almost all facets of life. Schools were segregated, theaters were segregated, churches were segregated, and bathrooms and drinking fountains were segregated. The creation of legalized race space was not permanent as Jim Crow Laws were deemed illegal in 1954. However, they have had lasting impacts on society (Edwards and Thompson 2010). Jim Crow Laws were not the only factors in creating racialized spaces. The federal government was also largely responsible for its creation.

During President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s tenure, he passed his New Deal legislation in 1933. This series of programs were to supply economic and social relief to the citizens of the

United States. In 1933, there was a major housing shortage and so in response, the New Deal created the nation's first public housing. Race was the leading factor in deciding where these projects were to take place. Black and white tenants were separated into different projects, buildings, or sometimes excluded from the housing altogether (Rothstein 2017). The United States of America was officially creating racialized spaces through government policy.

Systematic segregation of Black Americans and other people of color leads to the creation of underclass communities. When extreme segregation takes place, social and economic conditions tend to deteriorate for the minority groups (Massey and Denton 1998). When there is a racial divide in our communities, one group tends to thrive at the detriment of the other. For example, the Black ghetto was created by white people through government policy in the first half of the twentieth century (Massey and Denton 1998). Public housing originally was not for the poor, but for those who couldn't find decent housing because it wasn't available. Black Americans were increasingly evicted from their homes through unfair housing practices. This led them to double up in neighborhoods where Black Americans were already living in segregated areas. A result of the government's unfair housing policies is that the increased population density turned many Black American neighborhoods into slums (Rothstein 2017). What once were projects to ensure families had a decent living place eventually fell into disrepair as the white people controlling the government withheld resources from those neighborhoods and focused on their own interests. This neglect through government sanctioned policy eventually led to what is known as the Black ghetto today (Rothstein 2017). White people eventually transitioned to the private housing market. However, because of the same racist housing policies, Black people often could not find private housing options, and many were forced to continue

using public housing projects. The creation of these racialized spaces led to exploitation and neglect of one community over another.

Redlining was another means of legalized segregation. During the same period, the government created two housing authorities. The Homeowners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). The HOLC and FHA created neighborhood appraisals to decide investment risk. Those that were high risk were marked in red, becoming the infamous term redlining (Swope 2022). These high-risk neighborhoods took into account the race of the residents. The less white a neighborhood the higher risk the neighborhood was considered. In non-redlined areas, Black people were not allowed to buy loans. In redlined areas, white people were discouraged from buying homes there (Rothstein 2017). This created the legalized precedent of the division of race in the United States and the creation of racialized spaces.

State-sanctioned violence was employed to further the rift between racial spaces. In countless cases, when African American families moved into white neighborhoods they were soon met with violence if they refused to leave. Mobs would burn houses to the ground, burn crosses on lawns, throw bricks through windows, and scream obscenities from the street (Rothstein 2017). No protection would come from the police and many times they were directly involved in the violence themselves. For example, from 1917 to 1921 there were 58 fire bombings of homes in white border areas in Chicago where African American families had moved in. Even though two African Americans died, no arrests or prosecutions took place (Rothstein 2017). Many families were forced to rebuild their homes after they were burned to the ground. Some families were never able to recover from the economic blow and were forced to

leave the neighborhood. However, many families pushed through the destruction and abuse, and this led to another form of exploitation called white flight.

White flight is when white people would move away from areas that were starting to gain larger populations of minority residents. Historically, it was the movement of white people away from urban areas to more suburban areas. White flight played a key role in the division of space by race. White flight began through greed of real estate agents. Blockbusting was employed in white neighborhoods in which speculators bought properties in borderline Black-white areas. They then sold these properties at an inflated price to African American families and persuaded white families that their neighborhoods were turning into slums and that if they didn't sell soon their home values would plummet (Rothstein 2017). Agents would then sell these homes to African American families at unfair prices leading to the encouragement of the continuity of this practice. This heavily discouraged the desegregation of neighborhoods and led to heavier segregation than before.

Racialized spaces do not only apply to just Black and white people alike, but it also applies to every other race in the United States. Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans have experienced the trauma associated with exploitation and segregation. Many neighborhoods and housing policies also excluded other people of color from moving in. In California, law prohibited Asian immigrants from owning land or working certain jobs in the state. In 1942, Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps (Brooks 2012). Native Americans were forced onto reservations as early as 1851 and were denied formal education and a place in society. Many Latino children were denied access to formal education and were forced into segregated schools (Contreras 1994).

The formation of these spaces historically has carried over even to today. Segregation between white and Black people has declined since 1980, however it still is higher than any other division in the United States. Segregation between white, Asian, and Latino people has not changed much in the last 30 years (De la Roca 2014). Racialized spaces still play a key role in the exploitation and creation of policies in our society today.

Racialized spaces are invisible, and policymakers fail to see the needs of the lower class and people of color population formations. Many of those in power are white, and therefore have low stakes in defending and protecting these vulnerable communities. These spaces are marked by substandard resources like hospitals and schools, as well as inadequate municipal services such as sanitation, parks, and medical facilities (Washington et al. 2006). The voice within racialized spaces is often unheard and therefore change takes longer to take place within these communities. Those in power in many communities are white and have no personal commitments in these communities. This makes white voices amplified while the voices within racialized spaces are diminished. On the other hand, racialized spaces can lead to hypervisibility, which means that when there is a high density of racial and ethnic minorities these communities become highly visible to outsiders, and this reinforces stereotypes. All these beliefs make environmental racism and injustice possible by allowing unhealthy living conditions to form and to persist longer than they should (Washington et al. 2006).

In public spaces, who we are and who we think we are is shaped by space (Wiley and Shiffman 2012). The neighborhoods you grow up in, the schools you attend, as well as the community you're surrounded by all have a role in forming who you are as a person. All these things are considered spaces. If your spaces are highly segregated, then it can be difficult for you to understand experiences outside your own. Minorities must fight to be included in real

discussions about space: what it's for, and how it is used to solve problems. For example, if minorities are not involved in the decision-making process about space, then not only will segregation be made possible, but there will be a fragmented social community to mend as well (Wiley and Shiffman 2012). Racialized spaces are a dangerous problem because they can cause inequality within a city's infrastructure. When one group of people have all the power, they can use city funds to benefit themselves and ignore the needs of those who are excluded from that space. This often leads to instances of environmental injustice. Those in power take care of their own spaces and often abuse the spaces that they are not involved in by putting dumping sites, pollutants, and other damaging things into the spaces that are outside their own.

The construction of highways severely affected the social geography of many cities by creating physical barriers between white and non-white neighborhoods (Hernandez 2009). This created physical boundaries between spaces and created divisionary lines that are still in place today.

The motivation behind forming these racialized spaces is simple. It is for the manipulation and the control over the construction of race and the racial hierarchy (Bonam et al. 2017). For example, to save money, Flint, Michigan switched its water source from the Detroit River to the Flint River leading to contaminated water that was undrinkable. This was only made possible by systemic racism from two different branches: implicit bias on the individual level, and spatial racism on the structure level (Bonam et al. 2017). Implicit racial stereotypes about the predominantly black community in Flint, Michigan triggered a "too little, too late" response. Residents in the surrounding areas on the individual level used their implicit biases to ignore the issue and allowed it to persist for a long time. The crisis itself was caused by housing policies that systematically disenfranchised Flint's Black residents to begin with (Bonam et al 2017).

Racialized spaces cause stereotypes and implicit biases that lead residents in neighboring areas to ignore the issues because “it’s not their problem.” Racialized spaces are all about control and power, and it often leads to the exploitation of residents for the economic gain of those in power.

Much more goes into the creation of racialized spaces, but the consequences of those spaces are still felt today. When you have racialized spaces in the United States for different groups of people, it is inevitable that inequality will be present within those spaces. For hundreds of years, racialized spaces have created inadequate conditions for one group of people while helping the other.

Racialized spaces are directly tied in with power dynamics. For example, in a city there are divisions between racial lines and there are inequalities accompanying those racial lines. Due to redlining in the 1930s in cities like Baltimore, patterns of social and environmental inequalities have occurred in lower income communities. As a result, inequalities such as the distribution of negative environmental impacts such as pollution, heat islands, and exposure to flooding have all come from the inequality perpetuated by racialized spaces (Grove et al. 2018). Racialized spaces also lead to the unequal distribution of resources such as parks and trees, which directly lead to acts of environmental injustice. Racialized spaces are a leading factor in inequality and must be addressed to overcome acts of environmental injustice.

The idea of racialized spaces is important to this research because if there is a division across racial lines within a city, then it is very possible that there is also an imbalance of resource allocation, infrastructure, education, and environmental threat. Flagstaff, Arizona is no exception to these phenomena. The city being separated along racial lines also inevitably leads to inequality infrastructurally as well as all the other things forementioned.

Environmental Justice

Sewage Canyon is an act of environmental injustice. However, to understand what environmental injustice is, we must understand the movement and theoretical framework of what environmental justice is. The concept of Environmental Justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all population formations regardless of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. For instance, fair treatment means that no group of people should be disproportionately affected by negative environmental consequences resulting in industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or by the enforcing of federal, state, and local policies (Bullard 2015). Environmental Justice is a movement and a conceptual framework that arose from the failed attempts to address social injustice in the spheres of environmentalism in the late twentieth century (Jennings and Gaither 2012). This concept is inequitable distribution of environmental benefits and hazards. Those who are already vulnerable are at increased disadvantage to these unhealthy living conditions. This should illustrate to society that environmental decisions make a significant impact on people's lives and this needs to be factored into any policy or practice for society to be truly just (Jennings and Gaither 2012).

The conceptual framework of environmental justice is just as important to understand for the purposes of this paper. Environmental justice can be seen as a claims-making activity. Claims-making is a form of interaction, where one party demands to another that something be done about bad living conditions (Capek 1993). Contaminated communities often face many structural obstacles that impede their ability to fix environmental problems that affect their lives. Those that are most affected negatively by environmental injustice are those of lower socioeconomic status. They also have a high chance of being racial minorities (Capek 1993). Those that take part in the movement reflect the same racial stratification. Those that speak out

against acts of environmental injustice often have less access to political and legal resources than those they are fighting against (Capek 1993). Whenever a group of people bring voice or complaints about unhealthy living conditions, they are following the environmental justice frame. An act of environmental injustice happens when those complaints are ignored, or when the issues that cause the complaints last for years with no real action to correct the problem. The reasons for fixing the problem also need to be taken into consideration. If the main reason to fix the problem has to do with economic gain, then it cannot be seen as a genuine step towards justice. If the reason to fix the problem is for the benefit of the people who have been exploited and negatively affected, then steps towards justice are taking place.

Many claim that the origins of environmental justice activism began in Warren County, North Carolina. Most residents living in this county were poor African Americans. Due to toxic contamination from liquid tanker trucks along the county highways in 1978, the county devised a plan to construct a landfill in Warren County. This decision by the state of North Carolina ignited protests from the county and after three years of battling against the state of North Carolina the county lost its legal battle. In 1982, the state was allowed to build their landfill (McGurty 1997). Residents in Warren County shifted from battling against the legal system to protesting. Many were worried that the toxic soil would lead to threats to their groundwater supply. Residents felt that Warren County was chosen specifically for the landfill because the residents were primarily poor and African American. One resident said:

“The community was politically and economically unempowered; that was the reason for the siting. They took advantage of poor people and people of color (McGurty 1997).”

Residents gathered support from civil rights groups and organized protests daily during the six-week construction period. Although the landfill was ultimately delayed in its construction, the state did not back down, and the landfill was ultimately built in Warren County.

Although the residents were unsuccessful in abating the creation of the toxic waste landfill in their city, this event has influenced modern environmental activism. Many claim that the events in Warren County were the birth of the mainstream environmental justice movement (McGurty 1997). However, civil rights groups have been battling environmental injustice long years before. Many environmental groups during the time were considered as elitist and many lower-class social groups were not included as participants. Many point to the Warren County event as the turning point for environmental injustice and environmental groups in that they began to work together to promote environmental justice and equality (McGurty 1997).

The United Church of Christ created a report titled *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*. In this study they found that most toxic waste facilities were found in neighborhoods with the smallest percentage of white people (United Church of Christ 1987). Undesirable facilities like sanitation plants, landfills, toxic waste sites, and prisons are often found in the communities who are ignored. When there are two separate spheres available, created through policy, the communities who are oppressed and exploited receive these undesirable sites. In the same report, sewage was also studied. In the 1850s urban areas were forced to create sewage systems for their rapidly growing populations. Those without plumbing in more rural areas had to dump their wastewater into pits in their yards. However, the need to end these dump sites arose due to health risks. The new sewer systems were designed in most cases to dump raw sewage into nearby rivers, streams or harbors. In many cases these dump sites were nearer to the poorer areas of town, which in many cases also coincided with higher percentages of racial minorities (United

Church of Christ 1987). A common theme in early cases of environmental injustice is that those who were able to escape unsanitary, unsafe, and toxic conditions were the wealthy and often white residents.

In the city of Baltimore, practices of social exclusion also produced patterns of environmental inequality and racism (Grove et al. 2018). In other words, the creation of racialized spaces also brings patterns of environmental injustice. Within the city between 1940 and 2000, a study was conducted on the variances associated with environmental disamenities. They found that race and the distance to disamenities were correlated: The higher the percentage of African American residents, the closer to disamenities, and the higher the percentage of white residents, the farther away from disamenities (Grove et al. 2018). There are several reasons for this. First, redlining led to the acceptance of zoning variance approvals. Second, businesses purposely sought to put their operations in African American neighborhoods because in their eyes those neighborhoods had no voice and were unlikely to resist. However, when African American neighborhoods did resist and could afford a lawyer, they had a high rate of success in taking down these corporations (Swope et al. 2022).

In Miami, Florida, a study was conducted from 602 residents from the tri-county Miami Metropolitan area. They measured three different environmental hazards, including: 100-year flood risk, acute chemical accidental releases, and chronic cancer risk from air toxins. They found racial/ethnic minorities were significant predictors of higher exposure to all three environmental hazards (Grineski et al. 2017). However, in this case higher SES was linked with greater odds of residence in a 100-year flood zone. This could be due to proximity to water being seen as a universal phenomenon in Florida. Lower SES and minority variables were linked with having significant exposure to cancer-causing HAPs. They found that the best way to avoid

environmental injustice was to take down racialized spaces by not lumping diverse groups of people together (Grineski et al. 2017).

Environmental injustice does not just take place in big cities. It happens in rural areas as well. Rural communities of color suffer from both spatial and racial marginalization. In 1962, Congress passed two water projects to divide the San Juan River between the Navajo Nation and New Mexico. The first project was known as the Navajo Indian Irrigation project (NIIP) and the second was called the San Juan-Chama Project (SJCP). The NIIP would develop family farms on the Navajo Nation while the SJCP would divert water into the Rio Grande Basin for urban use. The SJCP, however, was completed all the way back in 1973, which was ahead of schedule. The NIIP however has still not been completed to this day (Bray 2020). This is a prime example of racialized spaces at work. Two projects were promised by Congress in 1962, however, only one project was ever finished, and that was the project that benefitted white space the most. The power dynamics involved in this case are clear. Native American tribes have large priority claims to western waters under federal law. However, the federal government routinely denied the Navajo Nation's legal rights to the San Juan River during negotiations over the NIIP (Bray 2020). This is an extreme example of racialized spaces. An entire nation of people, who had to live in a designated area for years, up against an urban, white-controlled space. The Navajo Nation was ignored and cheated to this day, for the benefit of the white-controlled space.

A big problem facing urban and rural areas alike is sewage infrastructure. Sewage is not a topic that many people think of when thinking about environmental injustice. However, it is a necessary topic that needs to be addressed. In Lowndes County, Alabama 73.4% of the population is Black. Lowndes County is known for its violent and racist history and its current environmental disparities are tied to its history of racial oppression. 35.2% of the population are

living in poverty, and there are huge disparities in the sewage system. Throughout the county raw sewage flows back into the buildings that have septic systems or at times runs on top of the ground (Flowers 2018). Although the public infrastructure throughout most towns in the county have treatment facilities for sewage, the mostly Black and poor residents are left to fend for themselves. The Alabama Department of Public Health has estimated that 40% to 90% of households in the area have inadequate or no septic systems (Flowers 2018). Most of the homes that do have the proper infrastructure experience failure in their septic systems. Alabama's response to the problem was to pass a law in 2002 that would force residents to buy new septic systems. When residents could not afford to buy them, the state began to prosecute. Public outcry and bad publicity caused the state to cease prosecutions, but residents have now refused to report sewage problems to local authorities out of fear (Flowers 2018). The fear with exposure to raw sewage is that it can cause homegrown cases of dengue and chikungunya from infected mosquitos. These are known as neglected tropical diseases and can be transmitted by parasites, worms, and mosquitos. These diseases affect around 12 million people in the US, most of which are found in impoverished areas of the country (Hotez 2012).

The concept of environmental justice is also concerned with the patterns of inequality produced, and how policy and resource exploitation decisions are developed in a city and location. Environmental justice is also focused on how groups of people are discriminated against and unfairly impacted by those decisions, which are concerned with the adverse health effects produced by such inequality (Walker 2010). In summary, the concept of environmental justice appeared in response to environmental and social inequities including threats to public health, unequal protection, differential enforcement, and disparate treatment received by people of-color lower socio-economic status. As a result, environmental justice leaders have struggled to

demand that no community, rich or poor, urban or suburban, black or white, should be allowed to become a ‘sacrifice zone’ or a dumping ground. This will likely only happen if racialized spaces are diminished in positions of power as well as in our neighborhoods.

Another good example of the environmental justice framework taking place is in Central Appalachia. Central Appalachia has befallen quite a few acts of environmental injustice. The presence of mining and coal in the region has caused flash floods, coal dust to cover the city affecting peoples’ lungs, and the pollution of drinking water of an entire community (Bell 2013). The area in question was considered by many residents as a “sacrifice zone” for cheap energy creation. In response to these acts of injustice, the Central Appalachian region has become a battleground for environmental justice. Working-class women overwhelmingly made up the leadership of the protests (Bell 2013). These brave women led an attack against the injustices they were facing.

Environmental injustice stems from the exploitation of groups that typically don’t have much of a voice. Money and economic gain are at the forefront of this exploitation. Environmental justice movements stem to overcome these giants of injustice. Often because of lack of resources and power these movements fall short, but there are instances of victory mixed in there as well.

As mentioned before, Flint, Michigan is another modern example of environmental injustice. The state government of Michigan had switched the city of Flint’s water supply to a source that was brought to residents through lead pipes. Residents complained about the horrible smelling water, most of which were Black. Their voices were not heard by the local government for months. Their voices were not believed credible, and it took eighteen months of activism to make the state admit that the water was indeed poisonous. By the time residents got through to

the state, twelve people died and many suffered long-term health effects following the crisis (Clark 2018). Environmental justice is a framework that helps identify voices that are often ignored. Often these voices are the racial minority in a city or state. Flint, Michigan shows that to counter acts of environmental injustice there needs to be accountability, a dissolution of racialized space, and an end to further exploitation.

What makes acts of environmental injustice so difficult to overcome for most groups feeling its negative effects is the lack of mobility. Disadvantaged populations or populations of lower socioeconomic status are more vulnerable to the long-term effects of environmental injustice because they are unable to displace the threats that cause them harm (Wright and Nance 2012). Lack of mobility is a big problem in escaping unsanitary conditions in a city or escaping natural disasters like hurricanes. This is because many people who live in unsafe environmental areas are of lower socioeconomic status. Many of them are unable to buy a house someplace else or even rent in a different area. When Hurricane Harvey hit Houston only 64.5% of Black Americans evacuated before the storm compared to 85.5% of white Americans. This gap is due to the lack of mobility that is experienced by not being able to afford to leave your home or by risking losing your job. Residents who experience pollution, hazardous waste and toxic facilities in their area, and health and wellness problems are often low-income and minority residents. These residents struggle with residential mobility and often do not have many options when it comes to housing (Taylor 2014). This is not a problem that can be achieved by encouraging residents to “just find housing elsewhere.” Environmental injustice is something that was created through unequal policy, and it must be reversed through policy for it to be overcome.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

This project is focused on seeing how racialized spaces influenced the creation of Sewage Canyon in Flagstaff and how acts of environmental injustice came to be because of the separate spaces.

I theorized that Sewage Canyon and the other emergency sewage zones contained in the Southside neighborhood were a direct result from a separation of space through racial lines, which led to neglect and exploitation in the Southside community. I predict that the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff follow a similar pattern to the United States in that they are formed through policy, intimidation, unfair housing practices, and segregation. I theorize that within Flagstaff there were massive inequalities between the sewage infrastructure in the white communities compared to the infrastructure of those in the Southside community. Due to the Environmental Justice framework, I also predict that there will be pushback from the community, but Sewage Canyon will stand for so long because of the imbalance of power dynamics and especially because all the power laid with white people in Flagstaff.

This project is primarily a historical analysis. Historical analysis is a method of examining evidence that brings an understanding of the past. Typically, historical analysis is applied to evidence contained in documents. The purpose of historical analysis is to gain some certainty about the facts of the past. Historical analysis typically includes what happens before an event, during an event, and after the event. For the purposes of this paper this historical analysis was focused on the events leading up to Sewage Canyon, what happened while Sewage Canyon was in place, and what happened when Sewage Canyon was extended away from the city.

This project is a historical case study. A historical case is someone or something in the past that can be conceptually aggregated and temporally limited (Petrina 2020). A historical case could be a person, couple, family, group, collaborative, community, network, controversy, event, discovery, invention, medium, phenomenon, or situation (Petrina 2020). These case studies are chosen and assembled with the purpose of demonstrating or contradicting a claim or thesis. These case studies are accompanied by evidence to help support the thesis or contradiction (Petrina 2020).

Historical case studies are conceptually more accessible to those outside of academia as well as students in training (Pleasants 2017). When working with a historical case study, sometimes when a small piece of the puzzle is focused on, it can illuminate a bigger idea or picture for the reader (Smulyan 1994). A case can be defined as a narrative, story or set of events that take place over time in a particular place (Shulman 1992).

Like most research methods, historical case studies have limitations. The first limitation is that the sources found within historical case studies may not always be completely reliable. To counter this, I tried to use a diverse set of sources to find multiple sites of evidence to support my claims.

The second limitation of historical case studies is that not all past events can be studied because a lack of evidence may be present. Fortunately, I was able to find ample evidence to support my thesis, however, where gaps are present interviews and a deeper search into the source material may be necessary.

The last limitation of historical case studies is that case studies cannot always be generalized to different spaces. Many case studies take place in a specific location so it is

important to acknowledge that the phenomenon taking place in a particular location might be different in another context.

Secondarily, this project supplies a historical events timeline. A timeline is placing events in history in chronological order. These events help to formulate a story of what happened in history and provide the reader with a clear picture of what took place.

In discussing the relationship between the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff I was able to see how exploitation began to occur in sequential order from 1902-1960. I was able to access historical engineering documents from Flagstaff City's Water Department that outline the need to be rid of the raw sewage dumping site known as Sewage Canyon. These engineering reports from the 1940s were requested every couple of years to evaluate various parts of a water system. These reports included predictions about the future in Flagstaff in regard to water systems and the sewage system. The report analyzes the current capacity of the system as well as current weaknesses or possible emergencies that would need to be addressed. The reports would also evaluate how much solutions would cost and whether the solution would need to be immediate, near-future, or distant-future. These reports were often requested by the city to make sure things were up to standard and to make sure no emergencies would take place going forward into the future.

The documents also outline the racial makeup of the surrounding community which is important for analyzing the racial spaces established during the time. I was able to spend 70 hours of time at the Water Department pouring through their historical archives including approximately 20 historical reports that pre-date 1980.

My second method of gathering data was the analysis of the Arizona Daily Sun newspaper and their historical archives through Newspapers.com. Through this method I was

able to gain access to thousands of newspaper articles from 1946-present. To lower the staggering amount of data enclosed in the newspaper archive I was able to search key terms and dates to help narrow down my search. In total, I was able to analyze three hundred newspaper articles that contained search terms including: Sewage canyon, sewer canyon, environmental injustice, segregation, desegregation, sit-ins, protests, etc. Through these search terms I was able to find key evidence of linking sewage canyon to the formation of racialized spaces as well as finding the relationship between segregation in Flagstaff and exploitation of sections of the city. Relevant articles to the study were then coded into distinct categories including racialized space formation, and sewer canyon.

Through these two methods I was able to generate a timeline of events that included the possible formation of Sewage Canyon, additions to other sewage sites, emergency health zones within the city and found out when Sewage Canyon was “fixed.” I was also able to find population density and population makeup of the Southside neighborhood as well as the racial makeup of the area closest to Sewer Canyon and in the “emergency zones.”

Historical Analysis Through Sociological Lenses

As mentioned previously, this project relied heavily on historical engineering reports and newspaper articles. My site of study was the Flagstaff Water Department. I was able to access hundreds of historical reports. Although the majority did not apply to what I was studying, I was able to find several reports that mentioned Sewage Canyon and other emergency health zones within historical Flagstaff’s Southside neighborhood. In total, I spent approximately seventy hours of time taking notes, and building a timeline, from the historical documents and newspaper articles. My site of study for the Arizona Daily Sun analysis was primarily online. Through

Newspapers.com, a site dedicated to the historical archiving of newspapers, I was able to access over three hundred articles through the searching relevant key terms. Secondly, I was also able to search through the microfilm archives at the Cline Library at Northern Arizona University, where I spent nearly twenty hours analyzing and recording data. What separates this project from a historical project, is that two sociological lenses were heavily applied to the subject material. The first lens was racialized spaces. Data collection on the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff focused on patterns. In the United States racialized spaces were formed through housing policies, intimidation, white flight, and segregation. Using these key factors, I was able to find similar patterns in Flagstaff that led to the formation of racialized spaces in the city.

The second lens was environmental injustice. Once racialized spaces are established exploitation often follows. Using maps and Google satellite imagery I was able to pinpoint exactly where Sewage Canyon took place. Through the same satellite imagery, I was able to see which communities would have been the closest and cross reference that with the historical archive census data.

Limitations

The biggest limitation to this study is time. Because I only had six months to fully dedicate to this study, I was only able to focus primarily on Black residents in the Southside neighborhood. Although Latino and Indigenous residents are mentioned in the project as a large population in the Southside neighborhood, I was not able to highlight their experiences as I would have liked to with more time. In addition to this, I was not able to conduct interviews with the Southside community who had parents and grandparents who lived through these experiences.

In addition to this, also because of time constraints, I was not able to paint a full picture to the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff, Arizona, nor was the depiction of the formation of racialized space in the broader United States complete. With more time I imagine entire books could be written on Flagstaff's Southside community and the formation of racialized space and environmental exploitation to follow.

Another limitation of this research is my positionality as an outsider. I am a white male in 2023 studying a topic that took place and started over a 120 years ago. Not only am I from an entirely different century, but I am an outsider to the Black lived experience in Flagstaff. I won't be able to ever understand fully what it means to be Black in America or what it was like living in the early to mid-1900s. However, I do believe it is important for all groups of people regardless of race and time to be aware of what happened in history and be part of the solution for change. White people created this problem within our current system, and they cannot take a passive response in finding the solution. This does not mean that I think white people should be at the forefront of the solution. Those who are negatively impacted must be the dominant group in dictating how things will change.

Decolonizing Research

Decolonizing research means to use an approach that helps challenge the Eurocentric research methods that undermine the local knowledge and experiences of the marginalized population groups that are studied. Decolonizing research means that the nature of the project is participatory (Zavala 2013). It's allowing the community that is being studied to drive the research forward through their own experiences, knowledge, and histories. Decolonizing research is important because it allows the researcher and the community to enter spaces of struggle and solidarity. Creating historically new accounts and practices that can respond locally

to colonialism and this can create spaces of recovery and healing (Zavala 2013). These spaces allow communities to reclaim their own research and provide those communities with the tools to continue to collect and analyze their own data.

Throughout my study, I recognized that dealing with historical data can sometimes be tainted or written from a biased perspective. Much of the data gathered were from reports written by white people in the 1940s-1960s. Although I believe the structure of the data to be correct, much of the full story is lost due to a lack of time in the study. With more time, to truly decolonize this study, it would have been essential to gain the perspective of those who lived through these events (many of whom have passed on) or those whose parents lived through these events and the stories that live through them. There are many residents in Flagstaff whose parents belong to the historical Southside neighborhood of which is discussed in this study. The major limitation of this project is that I was not able to speak with them in a timely manner and gain valuable insights on the subject of study.

Chapter 4

Introduction

Flagstaff is no exception to the patterns outlined earlier in this project. Racialized spaces took form in Flagstaff in similar fashion to how it took place in most urban areas around the United States. Intimidation, segregation, and unfair housing practices played key roles in how racialized space was formed throughout the city.

Flagstaff also has continuous patterns of acts of environmental injustice from as early as 1900 to as recent as 2018. The formation of racialized spaces throughout the city has opened pathways of exploitation and neglect throughout history.

The Formation of Racialized Spaces in Flagstaff

Flagstaff is no exception to segregation and racism. There are several factors that created racialized spaces in Flagstaff. The first factor that led to the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff is segregation.

Black people seeking escape from the racial oppression of the South and an opportunity for financial upward mobility, came to Flagstaff in the early 1900s. Timber resources in the south were depleting, which created opportunities out West where the timber industry was relatively untouched. Flagstaff became one of those timber towns and the industry started to boom, providing well-paying jobs for anyone willing to work with lumber (Cowan 2017:A1). As Black residents arrived, they were forced to live South of the railroad tracks. Only those who were white were allowed to live North of the tracks. In fact, Black people rarely went North of the tracks unless they had business there, worked as maids, cooks, or mechanics (Cowan 2017:A9). This slowly created racialized spaces within Flagstaff over time.

Photo 1: An African American lumberjack works in the forest near Flagstaff, AZ in the 1930s.



Source: (Williams Library Historical Photo Archive)

Although there are quite a few histories written about Flagstaff, not many of those histories talk about segregation. However, history does mention quite a bit about desegregation. The state of Arizona legalized and enforced segregation in schools officially in 1925 (Cline 1999). Flagstaff's Emerson school at first tried to only segregate its classrooms, but the state stepped in and said that it was against the law and that they would need to form a separate school (Cline 1999). The Dunbar school was created in 1926 to be a separate school for Black students and with that segregation was official in Flagstaff.

The second factor leading to the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff is restricted housing. On October 31st, 1947, a community North of the railroad tracks named Pine Park Manor completed their covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&R) paperwork. A CC&R refers to the rules and limitations of a planned community. These rules define what you can and cannot do with your property. Typically, the CC&Rs are put into place to protect the economic value of the properties in the area.

This specific CC&R found just North of Flagstaff's railroad tracks included the following statement: "Nor shall any part of said lots be assigned, or let, or demised to, or occupied by any person who is or whose spouse is of other than the Caucasian race..." The expectations and the law were clear in Flagstaff, Arizona. If you wanted to live North of the railroad tracks, you needed to be white.

This document is still given to buyers today with the exact language used in 1947 when it was last formulated. Although the stipulations are no longer officially or legally enforced, the language included in those documents are a haunting reminder of the forced segregation found within Flagstaff historically. To change a CC&R, community members must first propose the change, meet to discuss the change, vote on the change, gain approval from the community, and then amend the change. For this reason, racism and exclusion has persisted in Flagstaff's housing documents for nearly 80 years.

Restricted housing was not only found in large urban areas, but it was also prevalent in more rural areas like Flagstaff. Racialized spaces were being structured and formed throughout the United States in almost every community through restrictive covenants.

Because of these restrictive covenants in Flagstaff, banks often refused to pay or approve loans for Black homeowners seeking housing North of the railroad tracks. Many times, banks in

Flagstaff would refuse loans to any Black homebuyer in the area and it would force residents to seek financing in other cities outside of Flagstaff.

The Orpheum Theatre in downtown Flagstaff is another example of forced segregation in Flagstaff. Although Black people were allowed to attend the Orpheum, they were restricted to the upper balcony which the owner called “the colored balcony.” This applied to any attendee who was not white (Arizona Daily Sun 1983). However, it was widely believed that the Flagstaff Theatre was considered the theater for Black, Mexican American, Native American, and white people of lower socio-economic status attendees (Arizona Daily Sun 1983). This created separate racialized spaces for entertainment purposes. Black and white people were not to cross paths socially and the Orpheum Theatre is a prime example of this.

Segregation in Flagstaff was not met without protests. A prominent member of the community named Wilson C. Riles fought to end segregation in every facet of life. Wilson C. Riles enrolled at NAU (at the time Arizona State College) as the first Black student. Riles also served as the principal of the Dunbar School in Flagstaff from 1947-1954. Riles' efforts to overcome segregation in Flagstaff's schools proved fruitful in 1953 when the schools in Flagstaff were officially desegregated. This was one year prior to the Supreme Court decision of Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. The Dunbar school where Riles was principal was officially closed in 1954 and students from the segregated school were able to attend other community schools that fall. Riles also fought against segregation at the Orpheum Theatre and eventually the theater's racist policy was removed (Arizona Daily Sun 1983:39, 44). Wilson C. Riles and the citizens of the Southside neighborhood fought against the formation of these racialized spaces in every side of life.

Photo 2: Wilson C. Riles



Source: (Colorado Plateau Digital Collections)

Residents of the Southside neighborhood were heavily involved in protesting the formation and continuation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff. In September 1960, a Mexican Restaurant in Flagstaff called “El Charro” had a policy to not serve Black customers. In response the NAACP decided to use the youth to protest. These students who sat-in at the restaurant were refused service. However, because of their brave efforts to overcome segregation at the restaurant the NAACP and El Charro reached an agreement to integrate and allow Black customers to be able to frequent the restaurant. Many of these youth who helped to overcome the segregation policy at the restaurant were under the age of 16 at the time (Skabelund 2020).

At Flagstaff High School the parents of the white prom queen refused to let her be paired with the black prom king. Students at the school peacefully walked out in protest of the clear act of racism and division within their own community (Cowan 2019).

The third factor is intimidation and discrimination. Lynchings were common in the South, but many people do not know that lynchings took place across the entirety of the United States. In Arizona, thirty-one lynchings took place, however it is believed that all thirty one of those documenting lynchings were white people. However, in Flagstaff in 1888, a crowd appeared to see five men pulling a Black man named Swansy who was a porter at a saloon. They tied a rope around his neck, and many thought a lynching was going to take place. However, the five men eventually said that they were “just joking (Cline 1999).” Although a lynching did not officially take place, the fact that nobody stepped in to stop it is a telling sign that it could have happened at any moment. Intimidation was a common tactic in most cities around the country in creating and enforcing racialized spaces.

The formation of these racialized spaces allows a separation of interests. Those that held power decided where to invest in the community and where to ignore. White people had all the power and were the only voices listened to. This allowed for exploitation and environmental injustice to take place multiple times throughout Flagstaff’s history.

Environmental Injustice in Flagstaff

In academic research, acts of environmental racism and injustice are usually focused in urban spaces. However, rural and suburban areas like Flagstaff also follow the same pattern as urban areas in the formation of racialized spaces. Because racialized spaces open the possibility and likelihood of exploitation, environmental injustice is not too far behind for rural and

suburban areas. As stated before, the main deciding factors in the creation of racialized spaces and environmental injustice are power dynamics, economic gain, and self-interest.

In Flagstaff, Arizona, in the early 1900s, the city decided to reroute its main river, the Rio de Flag. The Rio flooded important landmarks like the Weatherford Hotel in 1903. The Rio was expanded twice by the City Council to help prevent flooding (Muchna 2016). This was to prevent flooding in Flagstaff's historic downtown center (Evans 2011). The re-routing of the Rio de Flag was a key factor in protecting economic assets like keeping the sawmill wood dry in a town that was heavily reliant upon its lumber industry. It was also rerouted to protect white families' homes and make sure that the river would not damage their own properties (Muchna 2016). The Rio was redirected into the Southside neighborhood. This new route for the river went directly through the racially segregated neighborhood. In rerouting the Rio through the Southside neighborhood, the community experienced a major flooding event on average every 5 years until 1993 (Muchna 2016). This has caused devastating damage to the Southside neighborhood including much of the neighborhood falling into disrepair. In 1983, Southside was declared an official floodplain by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (Muchna 2016). This act of environmental injustice opened the door to gentrification. Gentrification is "the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use (Zukin 1987)." In 2005, the City of Flagstaff passed the *Southside Plan* which moved the city towards trash removal, safety patrols, parking enforcement, and improvements in street lighting in the Southside neighborhood. Due to these things, the Southside saw an improvement of residential desirability but also elevated levels of gentrification which has forced out historic minority populations from the area for decades (Muchna 2016). This is another example of racialized space leading to environmental injustice.

Because the Northside and the Southside neighborhoods were segregated, the city used their power and voice to help their own space. In this case, they protected their own economic assets at the detriment of the racially segregated Southside neighborhood until it became vulnerable enough to profit from, and then the city forced out many of those residents through gentrification.

Flagstaff had another more recent act of environmental injustice in 2018. Snowbowl is a ski resort that sits on top of the San Francisco peaks of Flagstaff. Like other ski resorts, sometimes the snow is great and other times the snow is lacking. In 2018, the City of Flagstaff decided to renew its contract with Snowbowl in that the city provides the resort with treated wastewater to create artificial snow. This sparked a protest of over fifty people who demanded that the dumping of wastewater (including treated) was an act of disrespect to thirteen indigenous tribes who use the sacred mountain for ceremonies and religious purposes. The mountain, called Dook'o'oosliid in Navajo and Nuva'tukya'ovi in Hopi means "water is life." Although many have now begun seeing it as an example of koyaanisqatsi, meaning "corrupt life" in Hopi. Shouted during the protests was the saying "Water is Life! Stop supporting genocide! Protect sacred sites! Defend human rights! End the contract (Allen 2018)!"

One Arizona state representative named Eric Descheenie from Chinle said, "There are many, many places that we commune with that make us who we are. And we need them to make sense of ourselves, to endure our lack of humanity and to keep us whole." He added, "As Indigenous people, our identity and who we are is inextricably tied to a place. And we know this, consistent with our creation stories. There's one particular place in this world where we all call home, and it's entirely rooted in certain places and certain relatives like Dook'o'oosliid (Allen 2018)."

Many residents of Flagstaff do not see this as an act of unfairness or injustice. However, to the Indigenous tribes who were here first this is a disrespectful act of injustice and a destruction and desecration of culture.

Another resident added, “how much is our culture worth then? Snowbowl doesn’t drive the economy here, we do! This injustice has to stop (Allen 2018)!”

If the history of Sewage Canyon and the “emergency zones” in the Southside neighborhood were understood, then it is possible Flagstaff could have avoided the Snowbowl incident. At the very least, the City of Flagstaff could have had conversations with the Indigenous tribes that hold Snowbowl so close to their hearts and prioritized the culture of thousands of people over economic gain.

Flagstaff Sewage Emergency Zones and Sewage Canyon

In 1899, Flagstaff’s first sewage system was put into place including the installation of toilets and piped water. The problem of sewage disposal arose with the rise of water piping and plumbing. In most cases during that time waste was sent into cesspools dug into people’s yards and covered with timber and dirt. A group of railroad businesspeople formed a small company and a small \$8,200 system that carried Flagstaff’s sewage from a main line to a canyon Southeast of town which came to be known as “Sewage Canyon (Cline 1999).”

In 1902, the City of Flagstaff did not buy the already established, yet incomplete sewage system from a private company. The city had failed to pass a bond that would have bought the existing sewage system for \$9,200 (Cline 1999). This caused many issues because in 1900 the population of Flagstaff was about 1,271 people (Taylor and Taylor 1949). By 1920 the population of Flagstaff had more than doubled to 3,186 and the sewage system could no longer support the large influx of people who came to Flagstaff in search of jobs with the booming

lumber industry (Taylor and Taylor 1949). This forced the city's hand, and they were forced to buy the private sewage system in 1917 for \$20,000 (Cline 1999). For an added \$40,000 the city passed a bond that would bring improvements to many residents in Flagstaff. This brought indoor plumbing and toilets to many households throughout Flagstaff. However, World War I was on the rise and the community shelved the project (Cline 1999).

Due to the delay of war, the sewage system fell behind compared to the boom of the population during that period of 1917. In 1918 the Public Health Service urged residents to remove outdoor privies throughout the city to limit the spread of disease. In the spring of 1919, a project to move people to in-house bathrooms was complete (Cline 1999), this did not include many residents throughout the city and the problem of sanitation would persist for many years to follow.

In 1946 the City of Flagstaff had a population of 7,663 people. In Flagstaff the population was 45% Mexican, Native American, or Black with most of those residents living in the Southside neighborhood (Taylor and Taylor 1947). The Southside neighborhood made up 40% of the city's total population. The average person per dwelling in the Southside neighborhood was 8 people. In some cases, up to twenty people were found living in a given residence (Taylor and Taylor 1947). The people were described as living in "unsanitary conditions" and were "inadequately served with water and sewerage facilities (Taylor and Taylor 1947)." Most residents in the Southside had to rely on outdoor privies dug from pits in their yards.

For the most part, the rest of the city boasted a pretty robust sewage system during this time period. North of the tracks, most residents had access to an adequate, yet increasingly overworked, sewage system. The population of Flagstaff was growing, and predictions said by 1980, the population would grow to 37,369, which would cause major problems for the sewage

infrastructure. The City of Flagstaff were quick to hire engineering experts to evaluate their growing sewage problem.

In 1947 those experts recommended a \$35,000 city council bond to create sewage extensions to relieve the pressure on the city. The experts also recorded that there were “existing health hazards” in the Booker T. Washington subdivision. The report listed Booker T. Washington subdivision as the most pressing need for upgrades, but also mentioned that those upgrades and extensions would be difficult due to large boulders found underneath the ground that were difficult to move (Taylor and Taylor 1949). This neighborhood resides in the heart of the Southside neighborhood. The Booker T. Washington subdivision was home to over one hundred black families. The original subdivider George Babbitt Jr. sold the lots years before without provisions for water service and no sewer lines (Cline 1999). The Booker T. Washington subdivision and other areas of the Southside neighborhood were severely underserved.

In 1949, engineering experts were brought in again to provide a more comprehensive report specifically focusing on the sewage infrastructure upgrades needed to support the city. In 1948, the city had updated their boundaries bringing in an additional one thousand people from the surrounding areas (Taylor and Taylor 1949). This put a lot of pressure on the city to upgrade their sewage infrastructure to support the large population increase. The report listed several areas of “emergency extensions.” These areas included the Booker T. Washington neighborhood, the Brannen Subdivision, and Franklin Avenue, all of which were found in the heart of the Southside neighborhood (Taylor and Taylor 1949). These “emergency areas” were created and coordinated with the Arizona Department of Health as unsafe and unsanitary living conditions. These areas were classified in the report as “low rent” areas (Taylor and Taylor 1949). The areas were also home to the majority of Flagstaff’s racial minority population. In fact, the Brannen

Subdivision became so neglected by the city that in 1952, the city began a “slum clearance” project after it was declared a “critical defense” area the year prior (Arizona Daily Sun 1952:1).

In 1951, a housing survey conducted in Flagstaff found that out of 806 homes, 659 were classified as “substandard” meaning unsafe, rundown, or lacking in the ordinary plumbing facilities needed by a family. 79% of the homes were without bath or shower facilities. 437 homes lacked private inside flush toilets. Specifically mentioned in the survey as the highest need was the Southeast side of Flagstaff which at the time was Booker T. Washington and Brannen subdivisions (Arizona Daily Sun 1951).

Although these areas were listed as “emergency areas” for unsafe living conditions, the report concludes that Booker T. Washington would be classified as a “near future” project to wait for the proper funds to come through. Two other emergency zones were Armory Avenue and West Coconino Avenue. These areas lay North of the railroad tracks and were classified as “immediate action (Taylor and Taylor 1949).” The Booker T. Washington subdivision was classified as a “critical area of unsafe and highly objectionable sanitary conditions” but was also believed the costliest to fix (Taylor and Taylor 1949).

The lack of proper infrastructure within the city was not met without a fight. Residents of the Booker T. Washington subdivision stood before the city council and urged them to install sewers in their area in 1951. Wilson C. Riles was at the forefront of sewage infrastructure equality in these speeches to the city council. Physicians and columns of the Arizona Daily Sun often backed up what he had to say about the Southside and its fight towards healthy living conditions and a reliable sewage system (Cline 1999). The original request was made two years prior in 1949, but the area remained the only major part of the city that hadn’t been served. To pay the system, residents of the area would have to pay a city bond (Arizona Daily Sun 1951). It

wouldn't be until 1953 that construction of a proper sewage system in the Southside would take place (Arizona Daily Sun 1952). This was not the only pressing sewage problem on the city's hands.

Many of the houses relied on outdoor privies. Each year around 20 Flagstaff infants would die of gastroenteritis, an intestinal disease which doctors said is carried by flies. The two biggest factors contributing to the fly problem in Flagstaff were sub-standard garbage cans and outdoor privies. In 1952, there were 140 outdoor privies within Flagstaff's city limits. Only 41 one of those privies were in areas served by Flagstaff's sewage infrastructure (Arizona Daily Sun 1952). In 1957, outdoor privies were still an issue in Flagstaff as many could not afford to pay for the necessary plumbing to connect to Flagstaff's sewage system. The Coconino County Health Department was called in and found that flies were carrying many diseases to residents because wastewater was running out on the ground and outdoor privies were not airtight. The county's response was to charge residents with misdemeanors if they did not correct the unsanitary conditions themselves (Arizona Daily Sun 1957).

Three blocks East of the Southside neighborhood held a 47-year-old 12-inch outfall. An outfall is a point of disposal where sewage would eventually leave its piping and exit into an exposed area. This outfall was known as Sewage Canyon. This point of exit carried not only the raw sewage for the few residents in the Southside neighborhood that were served by the city's sewage system but also residents of the Northside neighborhood (Taylor and Taylor 1949). This caused complaints from residents as the smell and unsanitary conditions created an unsafe living environment.

Figure 1: Sewage Canyon Proximity



Map: (Google Maps 2023) Legend: (Author 2023)

Sewage Canyon was described as “a stream of solid matter” and as unsightly. It smelled of “rotten eggs” due to hydrogen sulfide gas that discharged from the raw sewage. It was a breeding plane for insects and bacteria, both unsafe for residents nearby (Taylor and Taylor 1949). Several solutions were proposed including a Southside treatment plant which received many objections because it was close to populated areas. In the end, the City of Flagstaff decided the best possible solution was to create a Sewage Canyon extension 2,300 feet away from the city (Taylor and Taylor 1949). A big motivation to extend Sewage Canyon away from the city besides the unhealthy living conditions is because the population of Flagstaff would continue to grow and expand and because Sewage Canyon lied just South of Route 66 it would hurt the economic expansion of the city (Taylor and Taylor 1949).

Photo 3: Sewage Canyon Today (No longer in operation)



Source: (Author 2023)

In 1950 construction of the Sewage Canyon extension began. “The council put wheels in motion for another large city project by approving plans of Taylor & Taylor, of Los Angeles, consulting engineers for a sewer project estimated to cost \$160,000,” it continues, “the project was set up in five units, including one covering a 2,146 [foot] extension to the present sewer canyon outfall (Arizona Daily Sun 1950).”

In 1955, voting began on a sewer bond which was “for the purpose of building a sewage disposal plant and extending the city’s present outfall sewer about two miles down Sewer Canyon to the site proposed by the plant.” It continues, “Health authorities have become more and more alarmed at the lack of a sewage disposal plant to serve the city and have repeatedly

urged construction of a plant as a health safeguard. At present all the city's sewage runs unchecked and untreated down Sewer Canyon (Arizona Daily Sun 1955)."

After the extension of the outfall, in 1956, a sewage treatment plant was put into operation to treat the raw sewage and provide the city with more sanitary conditions. "The plant will be sufficient to care for a population of 16,000 and could be enlarged to care for more than that number. The main sewer outfall, to be extended down Sewer Canyon to the site of the new plant, is large enough to care for a population of 25,000 (Arizona Daily Sun 1956)." This took the raw sewage 2 miles away from the city and began to treat the raw sewage. This means that Sewage Canyon, an unsanitary dumping site for raw sewage that laid just outside of the Southside neighborhood, stood from nearly 1902 to 1956, a period of nearly fifty five years.

This wasn't the end of Flagstaff's Sewage problem. In 1971, the city constructed another wastewater treatment plant in response to federal and state agency warnings about the quality of the wastewater discharged into the Rio de Flag. This plant supported three million gallons per day compared to the original plant of one million gallons per day (Cline 1999).

Chapter 5

Findings

The purpose of this project was to analyze the historical sewage infrastructure in Flagstaff, Arizona while focusing on several main events including Sewage Canyon and the emergency zones found in the Southside neighborhood. In doing so, we analyze whether racialized space and the allowance of environmental exploitation and injustice is something that took place in Flagstaff for over fifty years. This research finds historical patterns for racialized space formation as well as patterns of exploitation and neglect that lead to environmental injustice in Flagstaff.

Throughout the United States and globally, environmental injustice research is becoming increasingly important. Although it has been around for decades, most environmental injustice research is focused on large urban areas, rather than more rural cities like Flagstaff was historically. The creation of racialized space and the environmental injustice that follows is largely focused on urban contexts. This research shows that more rural areas like Flagstaff are also vulnerable to the same patterns of injustice as larger urban areas.

This research shows that the sewage infrastructural inequalities in Flagstaff were acts of environmental injustice caused by the creation and formation of racialized space through legal policy, unfair housing practices, segregation, and intimidation. To clearly show these findings, data will be broken into sections for analysis.

Formation of Racialized Space Through Unfair Housing Policy

Historically, Flagstaff was a truly diverse city. With the population of non-white people sitting at 45% in 1946 (Taylor and Taylor 1947), a booming diverse lumber town was taking place. Unfair housing policies kept white people and people of color separated in Flagstaff. Housing covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&R) in the Northside neighborhoods did not allow the occupancy of non-white residents North of the railroad tracks. In many cases people of color didn't even go North of the railroad tracks unless they had business to conduct there (Cowan 2017:A9). When financing homes, banks in Flagstaff would often not offer home-loans to people of color and they were forced to take out loans in other cities (Cowan 2017:A9).

This is a clear enforcement of separation by race. White neighborhoods had official rules and restrictions on who could live in proximity to them. Banks made sure that these rules were enforced by not giving home loans to people of color. However, this is not the only thing that created racialized space in Flagstaff.

Formation of Racialized Space Through Legalized Segregation

Segregation became the standard of housing years before segregation was forced upon the city through state policy. The division the railroad provided for the city became constructed barriers between white and minority residents. Similarly, the construction of highways and railroads created physical barriers between white and non-white neighborhoods across the United States (Hernandez 2009). This constructed barrier became the division between racial lines and created a precedent of inequality before legalized segregation took place in Arizona.

In 1925, the Arizona State Legislature passed a law requiring segregation in schools (Cline 1999). This created several segregated schools in Flagstaff including the Dunbar school which was for Black children to attend. This legalized separation of Black and white people in Flagstaff created a precedent to segregate not only the educational sphere but the public sphere as well. Places like the Orpheum Theatre were segregated (Arizona Daily Sun 1983) as well as local restaurants like El Charro.

The removal of proximity to groups outside of your own leads to dehumanization and indifference to people's circumstances. When a person becomes separated in every sphere of life there is an expectation that exploitation and neglect will lead to things like environmental injustice.

Racialized Space in Flagstaff

These two things were the leading factors that led to the separation of racial space in Flagstaff. Similarly, to the literature on urban areas and the creation of racialized space in those areas, Flagstaff followed a comparable pattern. Unfair housing policies as well as de jure and de facto segregation led to two separate racial spheres in the city which led to environmental injustice.

Sewage Emergency Zones as an Act of Environmental Injustice

When Black people and other people of color began to move into Flagstaff, they were almost always directed to live in the Southside neighborhood. These areas were often described as “unclean, hazardous to health, and with little to no sewage system (Taylor and Taylor 1949).” These areas were adequate living conditions for any human being, yet George Babbitt still sold these homes to Black families knowing that they did not have adequate provisions in place (Cline 1999). This indifference to humanity is an act of environmental injustice.

The Southside going without a proper sewage system for nearly 50 years is an act of environmental injustice. The Southside relied heavily on outdoor privies during that period which brought disease carrying flies to those neighborhoods and likely caused the death of babies throughout that time period (Arizona Daily Sun 1952). This is an act of environmental injustice.

Due to the lack of a proper sewage system in the Southside neighborhood, the presence of disease carrying flies brought on by unsanitary conditions brought death amongst infants and diseases to those in the Southside (Arizona Daily Sun 1952). The city required residents to fund their own connection to the Southside’s sewage system, and many could not afford to do so. Like Lowndes County, Alabama today, Flagstaff began to charge residents for misdemeanors when they could not pay to connect to the sewer system. Many of the residents in Lowndes County also suffer from diseases known as neglected tropical diseases that are transmitted by parasites, worms, mosquitos, and flies. The diseases are most concentrated in impoverished areas of the country (Hotez 2012). These events are acts of environmental injustice because they have disproportionately affected lower-income areas as well as people of color. An understanding of the past could prevent events like this from happening in the present as well as the future.

The biggest factor in these emergency zones being an act of environmental injustice is that they were mostly concentrated in the Southside neighborhood with a few exceptions (Taylor and Taylor 1949). Racial segregation and separation allowed this neglect to happen and state and local housing policies are to blame for that separation.

Sewage Canyon as an Act of Environmental Injustice

As mentioned before, sewage canyon was positioned just East of the Southside neighborhood. Whether that was intentional or through gravity flow this is still an act of environmental injustice. Raw sewage was allowed to flow freely above ground in this area for over fifty years. Starting in 1902, Sewage Canyon was not amended until 1953, despite regular complaints from residents and several warnings from the Department of Health. The question that should be presented is, *if Sewage Canyon was located just outside of a white neighborhood would it have been allowed to persist for so long? Or would it have been placed there in the first place?*

Results

Through the formation of racialized spaces in Flagstaff, Arizona, exploitation was allowed to take place in the Southside neighborhood. Through this exploitation, acts of environmental injustice have continuously taken place in Flagstaff's Southside neighborhood including the rerouting of the Rio de Flag, emergency sewage zones, and Sewage Canyon. The creation of racialized space whether it be urban spaces, suburban, or rural has led repeatedly to environmental injustice among other injustices across the United States.

The combination of a clear division of race in Flagstaff as well as the sewage infrastructural inequalities within the city clearly illustrate the environmental injustice, neglect, and exploitation that has taken place historically in the Southside neighborhood from 1902-1960.

Because a clear division of racialized space took place, it allowed for dehumanization and neglect to take effect. Poor living conditions, flooding, hazardous health conditions, disease carrying flies, and no sewage infrastructure in the Southside are clear indicators that there was little to no care provided by the City of Flagstaff to the Southside neighborhood. A clear statement that the “Southside is not part of the community” was the attitude taken by the city for decades.

Similar studies conducted have pointed out the relationship between the creation of racialized space and the environmental injustice that follows. Like in the City of Baltimore, patterns of social exclusion often lead to acts of environmental injustice and racism (Grove et al. 2018). When segregation takes place social and economic conditions tend to deteriorate for the minority groups (Massey and Denton 1998). Because legalized segregation took place in the State of Arizona from 1926 to 1954, deterioration and non-investment took place in the Southside neighborhood.

Unfair housing policies across the United States often led to Black people doubling up in houses. This increased population often turned many Black neighborhoods into “slums” (Rothstein 2017). In Flagstaff, the Arizona Daily Sun newspaper described the Brannen homes area as “slums” because the same doubling up took place in Flagstaff due to unfair housing practices (Arizona Daily Sun 1952:1).

Racialized spaces are often invisible to white policy makers. This leads to these spaces being marked by substandard resources like hospitals and schools, as well as inadequate municipal services such as sanitation, parks, and medical facilities (Washington et al. 2006). In the Southside, this same neglect took place as the sewage system was virtually non-existent in the area.

Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all population formations regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Environmental justice means that no group of people is disproportionately affected by negative environmental consequences resulting in industrial, municipal, or commercial operations by the enforcing of federal, state, or local policies (Bullard 2015). For the Southside community, the experience was the opposite. Environmental injustice took place because the enforcing of state and local policies led to municipal sewage inequalities and negative environmental consequences.

Studies across the United States show that most toxic waste facilities, pollution, sanitation plants, and landfills are found in neighborhoods with the smallest percentage of white people (United Church of Christ 1987). In many cases, sewage dump sites were found in rivers or streams and in many cases were found in areas with higher percentages of racial minorities (United Church of Christ 1987). Sewage Canyon is an example of this with the raw sewage dumping site being found just outside of the Southside neighborhood.

Interest Convergence Theory

This brings me back to Interest Convergence Theory. Sewage Canyon and the emergency zones stood for a period of over 50 years. Why were they allowed to happen and why were they finally rectified? In 1902, a private Flagstaff company founded a sewage system in the city of Flagstaff. This sewage system was created to profit off of the residents within the city. However, they did not construct their sewage system in the Southside neighborhood. Racism was evident within the city of Flagstaff, but at this time interests did not converge to support a sewage system in the Southside neighborhood. This private company felt that it would gain nothing financially from their system in the Southside neighborhood and this led to the chain of events leading to the emergency zones and Sewage Canyon. Eventually Sewage Canyon and the emergency zones

were fixed, however it wasn't until interests converged between the Southside neighborhood and the white people in power in the city of Flagstaff. Sewage Canyon and the Southside neighborhood ran right along Route 66. The city felt that it needed to rectify the problem in order to support tourism and economic growth within the city. In this, interests between the Southside Neighborhood and the city converged. Both wanted Sewage Canyon and the emergency zones rectified.

However, it is important to note that although their converged interests were the same, the two groups' motivations were entirely different. The Southside Neighborhood wanted to protect their health and their livelihoods. The city wanted to protect and grow their economic assets. This tells a story of "two Flagstaffs." Wilson C. Riles and the Southside community fought for the welfare of the people within their community. The city of Flagstaff fought to protect their economic assets and expand tourism along Route 66.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the historical documents and newspaper articles analyzed paint a clear picture that the full history of Flagstaff has failed to be told from all different perspectives of the people who lived there. Flagstaff has a deep history of segregation and racial inequality that has not been fully discussed in literature up to this point.

Sewage Canyon and the emergency zones that took place in the Southside neighborhood are acts of environmental injustice created by the formation of racialized space through unfair housing policy and segregation in Flagstaff, Arizona.

As addressed previously, without being able to interview residents of the Southside neighborhood and their families, the full picture of what happened in the Southside neighborhood has not been given. With more time, other groups including the historical Latino,

Asian, and Indigenous communities in Flagstaff should also be studied to give other historical perspectives to this history of racialized space and environmental injustice.

Chapter 6

Directions for Future Research

Future research should focus on the lived experiences of these people in the Southside neighborhood. Many of these people or their families still live in the Flagstaff area, and those that have moved are not too difficult to track down. These lived experiences are important to record because they are a validation of a history that has been ignored for so long.

Other research should be focused on Latino, Asian, and Indigenous experiences in a segregated Flagstaff. Historical studies of Flagstaff are important to research because they help heal historical trauma that has taken place and persists today. When these perspectives are told through a critical lens, experiences are validated, and cities today can learn from past mistakes to help heal the present and the future.

This project was only able to focus on relatively the first sixty years of Flagstaff's history. There is much more of the story to be told. 1960 to the present needs to be explored to get a full picture of these experiences. The past sixty years of history in Flagstaff are important because there may be continuous patterns of environmental injustice taking place today.

Possible Solutions Towards Ending Racialized Spaces

Space will always be a phenomenon found within our cities and physical space is important to our social makeup. Space is typically exclusive, but people need to find ways of contesting that. Residents in a town need to have space to be able to come together and protest that exclusivity (Wiley and Shiffman 2012). This would be the first step towards action against racialized space.

Racialized spaces were created intentionally through government policy and therefore to be dismantled, must be reversed through government policy. For example, Evanston, Illinois became the first city in the United States to allow reparations to Black residents. Their city council voted 8-1 to distribute \$400,000 to eligible Black households. Each household would receive \$25,000 for home repairs or for down payments on property (NBC News 2021). The program is funded through donations and revenue from a 3% tax on the sale of recreational marijuana. The city then promised \$10 million dollars over the period of ten years. This policy was passed to directly combat the unfair and discriminatory housing practices in Evanston from 1919-1969 (NBC News 2021).

Policies like this directly work to undo the creation of racialized space. The idea that racialized space will naturally disappear is false because it was never created naturally. It was a conscious decision that took hundreds of years to create. Policies must address racialized space head on to reverse the damage that has been created for thousands of people.

Another example of this concept takes place in Manhattan Beach, California. Willa and Charles Bruce opened a lodge and dance hall for black beachgoers in 1912 after buying property on the beachfront. This success brought many other Black families to the area, and they built homes in the surrounding area. Eventually, the Ku Klux Klan began to threaten the family and when their threats did not scare the Bruces away Manhattan Beach seized Bruce's Beach by eminent domain in 1924 (Smith 2023). This took away millions of dollars of generational wealth from a Black family.

In September of 2021 Governor Gavin Newsom of California traveled to Manhattan Beach (now overwhelmingly white in population) to sign legislation to return the two lots of

stolen property back to the Bruce family (Smith 2023). In this sense, the family who legally bought the property in 1912 were given justice.

Thousands of Black Americans were deprived of the opportunity to own homes. Many had homes burned down, stolen from them, and were driven out, depriving their future generations of thousands if not millions of dollars of wealth. According to Plato's definition of justice "a man is a man in just the right place, doing his best and giving the precise equivalent of what he has received." This could be reconditioned to also mean that justice is receiving the equivalent of what has been taken away.

To dismantle the destruction that racialized space has caused, policy should focus on directly addressing those problems and providing justice to those from whom were unjustly stolen. In the case of Flagstaff, the city should dig deep into its history, looking for acts of injustice that have happened throughout the city and providing justice for the families involved. This would mean having conversations with residents who still live within the city and seeking out those who may have moved on.

Possible Solutions Towards Environmental Justice

Solutions that are one-size fits all are almost impossible to come by. However, it is important to talk about important first steps to overcoming instances of environmental injustice. The first step to overcoming environmental injustice is to first take down racialized spaces. Because racialized spaces typically lead to instances of inequality, it is important that they reformulate to make themselves more diverse and inclusive. Injustice takes place when one group of people has more power and a voice over another group of people. If there are geographical spaces where these groups do not coincide, then the group in power will exploit the other geographical space to their advantage. White people in power can ignore these spaces and

provide funds for their own benefit as well. Without the disintegration of these spaces, we may not see the end of environmental injustice. Self-interest is the main enemy against fairness and equality, and ending the separation would provide a diverse group of interests in the decision-making process that should help society as a whole.

Some might find the task of overcoming environmental injustice daunting or impossible. However, having simple conversations with people can make an enormous difference. Devils Tower in Wyoming is a sacred site to over twenty Indigenous tribes. Conversations between Deb Liggett, a former superintendent of Devils Tower National Monument, rock climbers, and Native Americans helped reduce climbing at Devils Tower by 85% (Mcleod 2001). In the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, Sharon Heywood, the Superintendent at the time, refused to allow a new ski resort on Mt. Shasta after hearing concerns from the Wintu tribe about the potential impact of the proposed development on the mountain's sacred sites (Mcleod 2001).

Overcoming acts of environmental injustice is more than just ending recreational activities or money gaining endeavors. It's about having real conversations with real people who have a deep cultural and sacred connection to the places that white people have colonized as their own. It is making sure that there is not a division in our communities within its resources, policies, and fair practices.

Environmental injustice is a global problem. But who is to blame? Corporations would have people believe that they can fix the problem through curbing their personal carbon footprint. For example, in 2005 an oil company named BP popularized the idea of a “personal carbon footprint” through an advertising campaign to shift the blame onto the individual. In the 1950s, industry groups that represented plastic packaging companies started the “anti-litter movement” to take away their own blame and shift government policy onto the individual

(Beecham 2020). Policy should be focused on holding companies, corporations, and cities accountable for their actions. Solutions should address not only how corporations operate but also how our public policies empower those practices.

Policymakers and activists should collaborate directly with communities affected by environmental injustice allowing the community to speak to what would be good solutions for overcoming these problems. Those who are privileged should educate themselves on what environmental injustice is and how it disproportionately affects those who are marginalized. Most importantly, those that experience environmental injustice should have their voices amplified by scholars, the media, and activists. When society hears the experiences of those who have gone through this injustice and acts on behalf of these people, only then can society truly heal from its past mistakes.

In Flagstaff, these solutions would mean directly collaborating with residents of the Southside neighborhood to address perhaps existing inequalities in the infrastructure of the city as well as anything further that could be improved upon. Having conversations with residents and learning about their experiences and their families' experiences living in the Southside neighborhood could go a long way in improving the city of Flagstaff and providing healing to many who may have been negatively impacted. These conversations are the first step in overcoming injustice and supplying healing to residents.

Final Thoughts

The formation of racialized space in Flagstaff, Arizona was caused by state and local policy and practices. Even if the consequences from these policies were unintentional, the policies themselves were intentional. To reverse the negative consequences of these policies, present and future policy making should be intentionally engaged in creating equal opportunities

for residents regardless of their race, class, religion, or sexual orientation. Policy making should focus on the advancement of those who are marginalized in a community. Being actively engaged in the advancement of marginalized communities can help prevent acts of environmental injustice and the further creation of racialized spaces. Being engaged and aware of these communities can reduce the invisibility that these communities often experience and can allow these people to be heard.

Recently I spoke to a group of about ten Flagstaff high school students in a casual conversation. When I mentioned to them that Flagstaff had been segregated historically a look of shock fell upon their faces. They had no idea. Knowing and understanding our history is the first step in improving the present and the future. There is power found in knowing what happened in a city's past. Residents of Flagstaff need to know its history from different perspectives. Creating better informed citizens can help residents to make informed decisions about policy in the future and avoid repeated mistakes.

There is nothing wrong with wanting more from your community. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging the mistakes that have been made in a community's history. A city should continuously look at bettering itself for the benefit of all residents no matter their race, class, religion, or sexual orientation. Acknowledging negative history has positive consequences. History happened whether it was good or bad. When it happens and nobody acknowledges it, this leads to historical trauma that can persist in a society for generations. However, when history is told from a variety of perspectives and acknowledges the injustices that have taken place in the past, it heals the present and leads to a more positive future.

Flagstaff, Arizona is a town that has multiple stories that need to be told. History has been written but must be written from all points of view and perspectives, otherwise it is not

truly an accurate history. Flagstaff has a deep history of diversity, and its history should reflect that diversity.

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