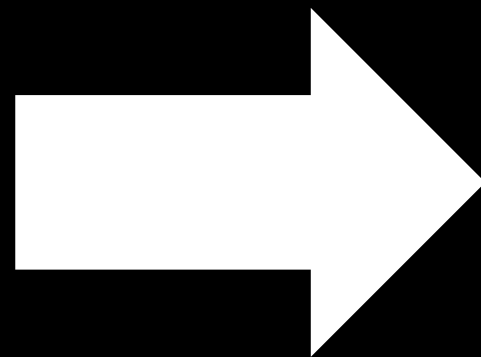


From MedTech to Environmental Justice: Using Science for Advocacy & Community Empowerment



Cynthia Prieto-Diaz, MPH, CPH

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Hola, soy Cynthia Prieto-Diaz

“Yo sí soy de aquí y soy de allá.”

Stubborn optimist and wonderfully impatient. Applied scientist by training, former full-cycle biomedical engineer, and cheerleader for ‘changing the face of science’, and proud civic scientist with Engineers & Sciences Acting Locally.

Education

Master of Public Health
West Coast University

Bachelor of Science in
Biotechnology, Chemistry minor
California State Polytechnic
University - Pomona

Experience

5 + Y E A R S

Civic Scientist & EJ Advocate
Community Impact Projects

1 0 + Y E A R S

Biomedical Engineer
Life Sciences
(Pharma/MedTech)

Certifications

2024
Regulation VIII - Dust Control

2023
Certified in Public Health
No. 20172
National Board of PH Examiners

Key Skills

- Project Management
- Public Health Advocacy
- Data Analysis & Reporting
- Problem-Solving & Decision-Making
- Risk Management & Mitigation



Prieto-Diaz, C. (n.d.). I-880, photograph, located in San Leandro, United States.

Intersection of Public Health
& Environmental Justice

This Life Chose Me

A W A K E N I N G T O E N V I R O N M E N T A L I N J U S T I C E S

- WFH (working from home) during the pandemic, **highlighted severe air and noise pollution** in my neighborhood.
 - Delayed and limited responses to concerns, **motivated me to TAKE ACTION.**
- Discovered a **lack of real-time air quality data** in my community, particularly near industrial zones and mixed-use zoning areas.
- Research revealed a **history of environmental injustice** in the area, with residents facing **disproportionate burdens of pollution.**
- Driven by the belief that everyone deserves clean air, regardless of their zip code, I decided to elevate these concerns and **vocally advocate potential solutions** for change.



We Are All Public Health

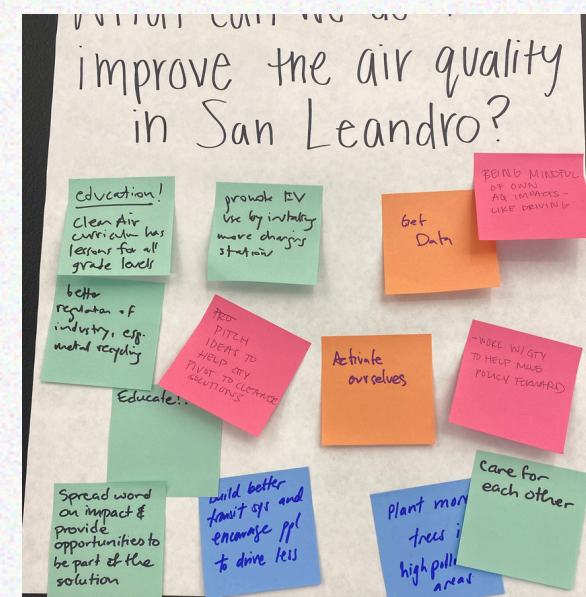
AIR QUALITY + SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Air quality is important to and for everyone, because **ALL LIFE DEPENDS ON BREATHING** (Pinder et al., 2019).
- Scientific evidence and firsthand experience shows us that “**pollution sources tend to be located near disadvantaged communities**” additionally, underserved areas may not have access to monitors or information about the air quality in their area (American Lung Association, 2023).
- Gathering data is a great FIRST step help in the quest to “**rectify past policies that have contributed [to] higher levels of pollution**” in Oakland and the surrounding areas that adversely impact Black and low-income communities the most (Brewster, 2023).



MITIGATION EFFORTS

- **Petitioning for low-cost air quality monitoring sensors** for residents through the Library of Things.
- **Organizing air quality workshops** to promote availability of air monitoring sensors and providing space for developing short and long-term solutions.
- **Elevating concerns** to elected officials **with solutions**.
- **Networking** with organizations working on EJ efforts and **participating in distribution days** in Martinez, CA.



Successful DIY Air Filter Build

30 people attended the DIY air filter build on Sun Sept 24 at San Leandro Main Library hosted by the Educators for Environmental Justice and supported by the San Leandro Resilience Hubs Initiative. Community members learned the importance of protecting health and improving indoor air quality during wildfire smoke days to build 10 air filters to take home. This is the second workshop in the series. Next month's workshop will focus on indoor and outdoor air quality monitoring.



Prieto-Diaz, C. (n.d.). East 14th Street
near Old Downtown, photograph,
located in San Leandro, United States.

Community-Driven & Evidence-Based Solutions

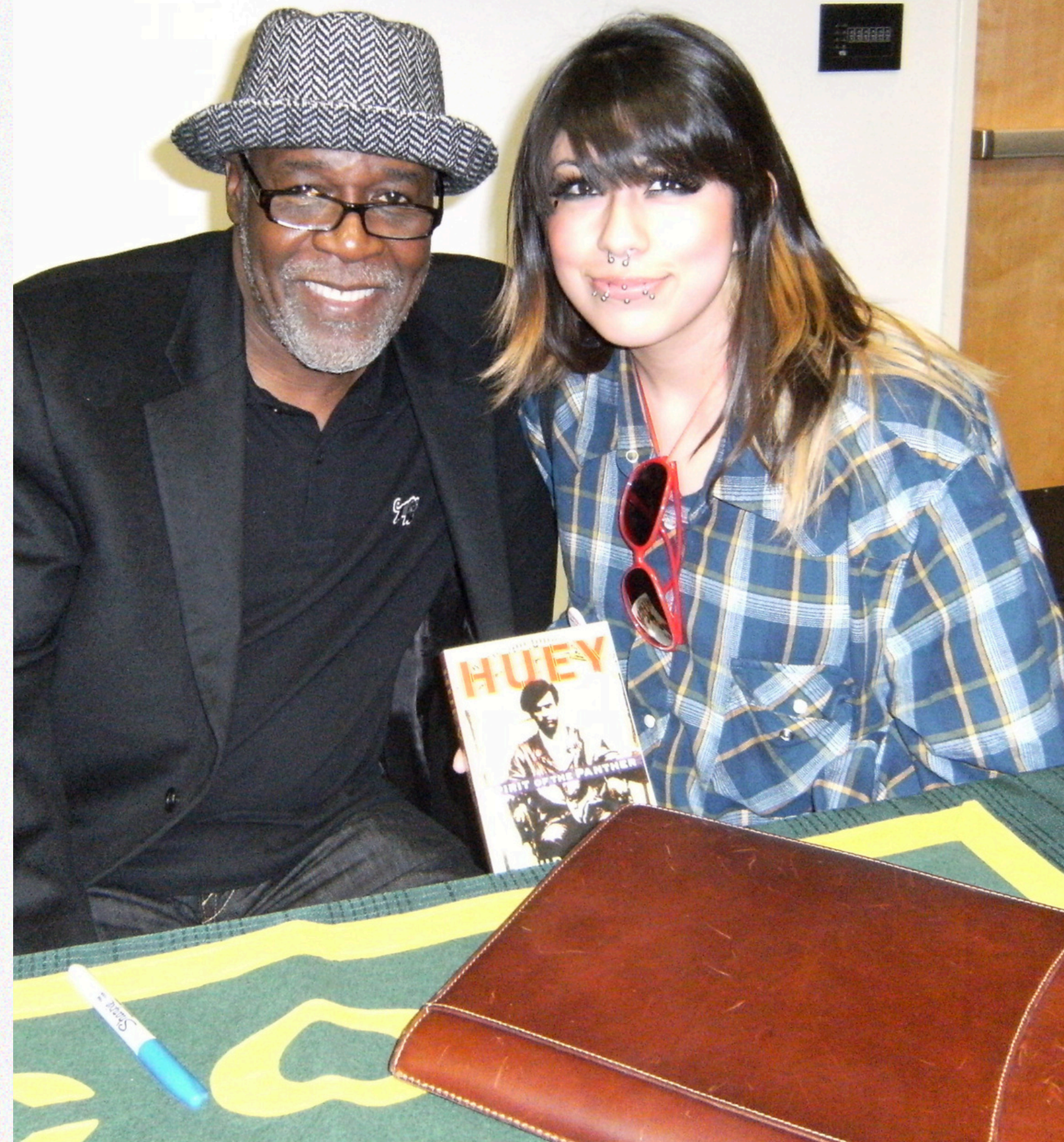


Using the Scientific Method to Advance Solutions

LESSONS FROM MY YOUTH

- **Science is Punk Rock** - I learned that I can use the **scientific method for social good**, to fight for a healthier environment for ALL!
- **Not accepting things as they are**, but questioning them and working towards building a more JUST and sustainable future - even if that means going at it from a **DIY (Do-It-Yourself) approach**.
- **Living Out LOUD!** Living our values and inspiring others to also do something, if they see something!
- **Positive impact** can happen from **where we are with what we already know and have**.

Prieto-Diaz, C. (n.d.). David Hilliard meet and greet, photograph, located in Pomona, United States.



Community Impact Projects

2023

AQ Sensors

- Petitioned for and implemented an Air Sensor Loan Program at the San Leandro Public Library, empowering residents to collect data on local air.
- Organized an AQ workshop series.
- Identified key locations for fixed AQ monitoring units and advocated for their installation.

2024

Public Service

- Appointed to the Alameda County Public Health Commission, actively attending community events while chairing the Communications & Community Outreach Committee.
- Organized local cleanups, inspiring community members to take action.
- Actively participated in public forums, sharing concerns with solutions to protect public health.

2025

Regional Impact

- Expanding knowledge related to air quality challenges beyond the Bay Area - like the Central Valley, including the impact of dust particles and the need for Regulation VIII.
- Recognizing the interconnectedness between realities of many “super commuters” traveling to/from the Valley to the Bay Area.
- Networking at learning sessions and connecting with community members.



Reflections with a Call to Action

Prieto-Diaz, C. (n.d.). Lake Elizabeth loop landscape, photograph, located in Fremont, United States.

Reflections

A D D R E S S I N G R O O T C A U S E S

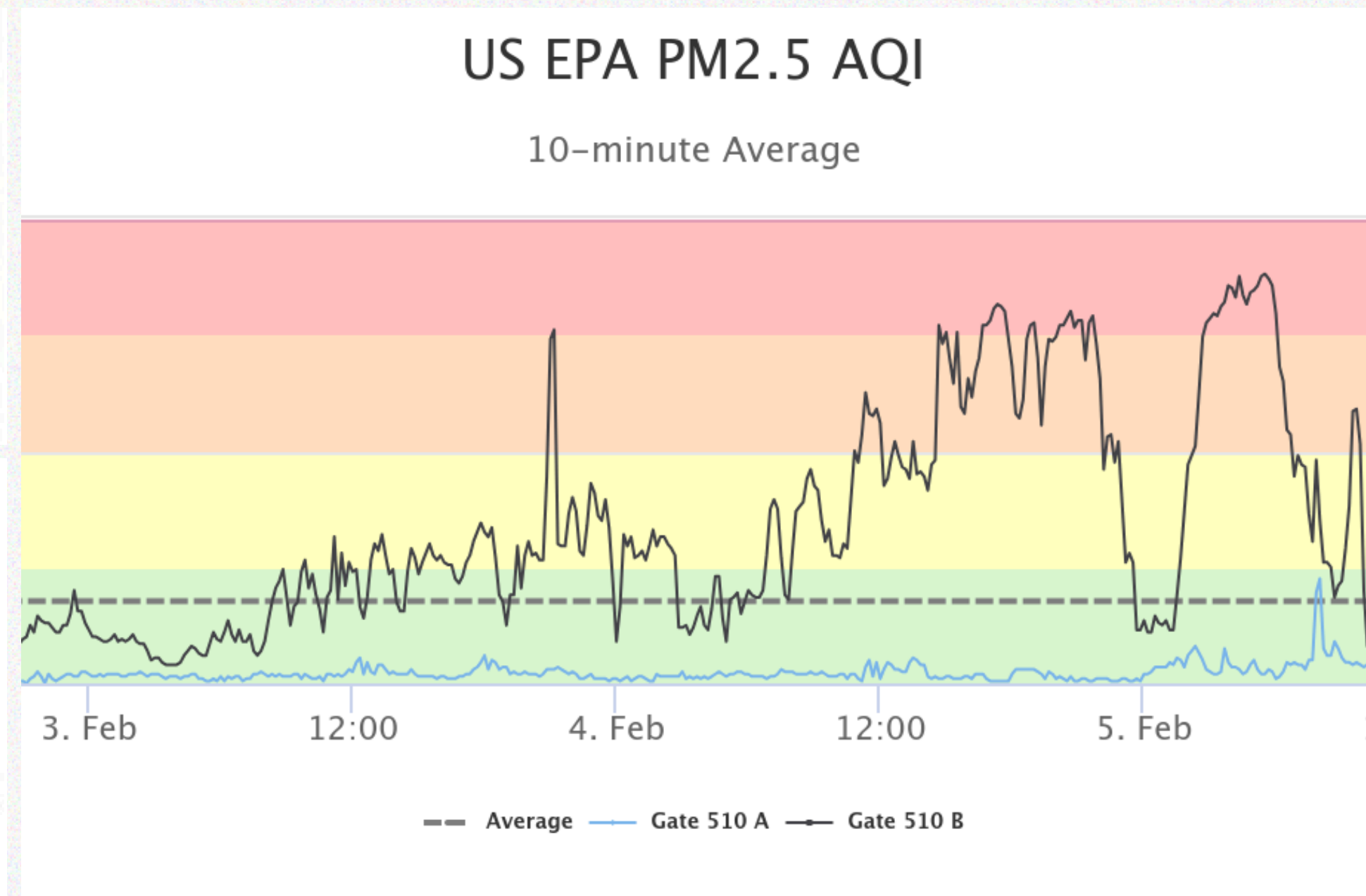
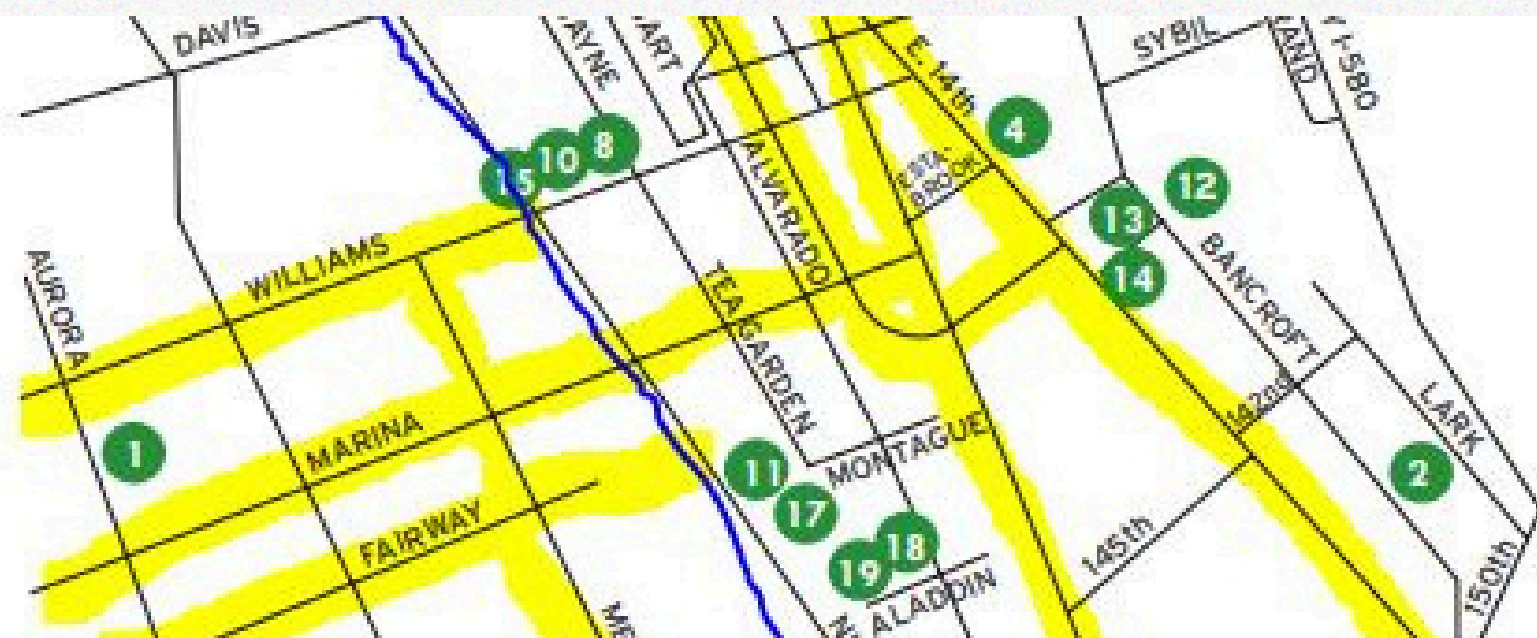
- **Prioritizing Community Health:**
 - Re-evaluating historical land-use decisions and proactively planning for the health and well-being of ALL residents, especially those considered sensitive receptors (i.e., children, elderly, etc.)
- **Focusing on Prevention:**
 - Investing in increased inspections of facilities emitting toxic contaminants, including auto body shops, used car dealerships, manufacturers, and transportation hubs, to safeguard community health.
- **Building a Healthier Future:**
 - Promoting green/clean infrastructure in overburdened communities, while engaging residents in development of solutions and access to economic opportunities.


Prieto-Diaz, C. (n.d.). Close-up of *Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion) with Golden Gate Bridge in background, photograph, located in San Francisco, United States.



PITCHING PROPOSALS

- **Prioritizing Community Health:** Urgently re-evaluating truck routes and upgrading fleet technologies to mitigate air pollution impacts in vulnerable communities.
- **Promoting Sustainable Solutions:** Exploring effective mitigation strategies, such as improved ventilation systems (passive and mechanical) and advances filtration technologies to protect residents from harmful air pollutants.
- **Investing in Our Youth:** Connecting youth with opportunities in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and environmental restoration, creating pathways to good-paying jobs for a more equitable society and resilient future.





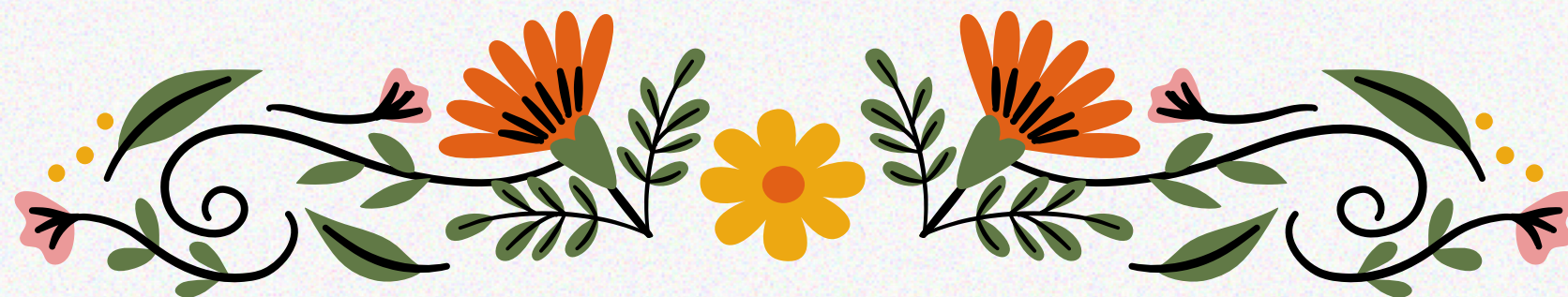
'Cause my ability to breathe
is directly connected to my ability to see,
It's not about me, never was, never will be,

It's about **"We"**

It's time to move, y'all

(my people) - **It's Movement Time**

"It's Movement Time" by Las Cafeteras



cynthia@esal.us



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BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

AGENDA: 5

Community Advisory Council Recruitment and Selection Process

Community Equity, Health, and Justice
Committee Special Meeting

February 19, 2025

Miriam Torres, Senior Advanced Projects Advisor

miriamtorres@baaqmd.gov

Lisa Flores, Staff Specialist II

lflores@baaqmd.gov

Presentation Outcome

- At today's meeting, the Committee will:
 - discuss the recruitment and selection process for the Community Advisory Council (CAC)
 - begin discussing guidance to expand on the current criteria for selection of CAC members
- In March, the Committee will review, deliberate, and vote on updated guidance for selection of CAC members

Background

- The inaugural CAC was established by the Board of Directors on November 17, 2021
- The CAC held their first meeting in January 2022
- At the end of this year, 13 CAC seats will be open for two or four-year terms
- The majority of current CAC members will complete their initial 4-year terms and are eligible to reapply

Community Advisory Council Terms

“CAC Members apply or reapply for either a two-year term or a four-year term. CAC Members are limited to serving a total of eight (8) years. This will ensure that others have the opportunity to participate in the CAC and that there is continuity of County or institutional knowledge. The inaugural CAC will serve for four (4) years with the ability to reapply.”

Source: [Community Advisory Council Charter](#)

Community Advisory Council Seats

CAC seats per Board resolution:

- (4) Alameda County
- (4) Contra Costa County
- (1) San Francisco County
- (1) San Mateo County
- (2) Santa Clara County
- (1) Solano County
- (2) At-large
- (2) Youth



Available seats for selection:

- (1) Alameda County
- (4) Contra Costa County
- (1) San Francisco County
- (1) San Mateo County
- (2) Santa Clara County
- (1) Solano County
- (2) At-large
- (1) Youth

Recruitment and Outreach

The recruitment and outreach will consist of:

- Information on Community Advisory Council page of Air District website
- Social Media outreach (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, X [formerly Twitter], Threads, and Nextdoor)
- Air District's Currents Newsletter
- Air District's Latest News post
- Emails to James Cary Smith Grantees and Assembly Bill (AB) 617 partners
- CAC members sharing information with their networks

Process & Timeline

2025

- March: CAC approves creation of new Member Selection Ad Hoc Committee
- April: First Member Selection Ad Hoc Committee meeting
- May: Application period opens
- June: Application period closes
- June: Second ad hoc committee meeting
- June/July: Community Advisory Council application review begins
- July: Application review period ends
- July: Third ad hoc committee meeting
- September: Recommended candidates are presented to the CAC
- October: Recommended candidates are presented to CEHJ
- November: Recommended candidates presented for Board consideration

January 2026: New slate attends CAC meeting

CAC's Role in Selection Process

- The CAC:
 - Supports with outreach and recruitment
 - Creates a CAC Selection Ad Hoc Committee (March)
- The CAC Selection Ad Hoc Committee will be tasked with:
 - Developing criteria for the selection of candidates, according to the guidance developed by the Community Equity, Health, and Justice Committee
 - Reviewing applications
 - Selecting candidates for recommendation to the CAC
- The CAC considers selected candidates and recommends slate to the Community Equity, Health, and Justice Committee (CEHJ) and the Board of Directors

Source: [Community Advisory Council Charter](#)

Board of Directors' Role in Selection Process

- The CEHJ provides guidance on selection criteria
- The Board Chair selects at least one CEHJ member (or other Board member) to participate in the CAC's Selection Ad Hoc Committee
- Board member(s) attend three (3) Selection Ad Hoc Committee meetings to finalize criteria, review applications, deliberate and select slate of 13 candidates.
- The CEHJ Committee will consider the selected slate of candidates to recommend to the Board of Directors for final approval
- CAC members are appointed by the Board of Directors.

Source: [Community Advisory Council Charter](#)

Board of Directors Selection Criteria

Selection criteria included in Board Resolution No. 2023 – 14:

1. Reflect the diverse demographics of the Bay Area;
2. Include generational history and experience living in communities heavily impacted by air pollution;
3. Demonstrate diversity of relevant experience—including environmental justice, technical expertise, health, and Air District functions or knowledge of the Air District; and
4. Have access to other people who have a range of relevant knowledge and technical experience that could help inform the Community Advisory Council

Priority should be given to individuals from Bay Area communities overburdened by air pollution, environmental justice communities, and/or those with a history of partnering with environmental justice communities.

Questions?