

FALL 2024

# SPARC ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LAB AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY ADRIENNE CACHELIN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

In this second annual issue, we highlight the critical elements of all SPARC lab projects - student pathways, action research, and critical community engagement. As a collaborative of engaged faculty, students, community members, and scholars who are committed to enacting principles of community-based participatory research to achieve justice, we hope you enjoy the these annual highlights!



## ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Through:

**S**tudent  
**P**athways,  
**A**ction  
**R**esearch, and  
**C**ritical  
**E**ngagement







# Student Pathway Spotlight

KAITLYN RICKS

During the 2024 spring semester, I had the opportunity to participate in a community-engaged research project in my Environmental Justice course. Three other women and I chose to research the perspectives of public officials and advocates involved in the process of homeless camp abatements. We carried out a qualitative analysis on interviews collected in a prior semester, participated in the annual point-in-time (PIT) count, and studied the complexities of homelessness in Salt Lake City. Having received funding from UROP, Margeaux Rice and I are working on additional analyses and a publication with former student Madeline Fuchs, Dr. Jeff Rose, and Dr. Adrienne Cachelin. We will share complex effects of abatements on public service employees, and explore their perspectives on proposed solutions.

This project has inspired me to go into family law to study and understand the legal implications of complex systems, and how they create these complex emotions. It is important to not only understand these issues but to also learn and garner your strengths to create a better future for folks in unfortunate circumstances.



## RESOURCE GUIDE HIGHLIGHT

**Cachelin, A., Tabak, S. (2024). Urban Food Forest Initiatives: A Resource Guide for Planters and Planners. SPARC Environmental Justice Lab. Salt Lake City, UT.**

[Read it here](#)





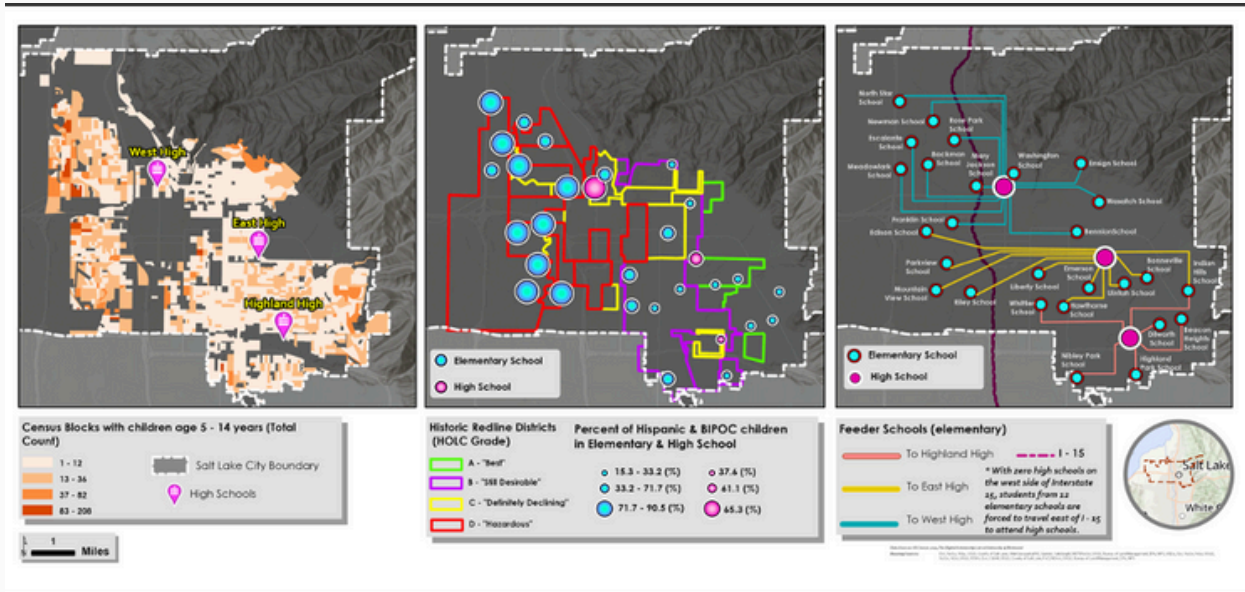
# Action Research Spotlight

## A HIGH SCHOOL IN GLENDALE?

by Jarred Martinez, Jorge Jiminez, Adrienne Cachelin

Working towards educational justice has been a long process for University Neighborhood Partners, the SPARC EJ lab and the Utah Community Advocate Network (UCAN) and it's not over yet... When South High School closed in 1987, Glendale students needed to travel across the city and highway to attend school at East High, creating a series of challenges.

In 2017, after hearing about multiple problems experienced by Glendale students who attended East High, a research partnership between UNP and the SPARC Environmental Justice lab was formed to study the student experience of graduates of East High School. We learned that beyond transportation issues, these geographical obstacles yielded greater inequities in terms of educational outcomes, extracurricular participation, parental involvement, and a sense of belonging. After documenting former student experiences, the project shifted to listening to the experiences of local Glendale parents (2021) whose perspectives reinforced the difficulties of having a high school outside of their local neighborhood.







Now, in 2024, with pending bond proposals to improve the current high schools, the west side community is calling for something different – a high school in their own community.

Most East High School students are from the west side, as shown in the map below, depicting the highest population of school-aged children in Salt Lake City (figure 1, left). We can also see the percentage of Hispanic and BIPOC children in schools depicting the racial implications of the current system with historic redline designations (figure 1, center), and feeder elementary school patterns depicting high school and highway locations (figure 1, right).

Through partnership with the Utah Community Advocate Network (UCAN), a westside community-based organization that specializes in multi-generational participatory action and organizing around community-identified issues, the Glendale High School proposition has been gaining traction. Along with SPARC lab data, additional data collected by the community went to the school board, the superintendent, and the Salt Lake City Mayor who continue to engage with the issue and UCAN continues to attend city council meetings, school board meetings and community events to draw attention to the issue. In May, more than 50 students, parents and community members participated in a walkout spending nearly two hours walking from East High School to Glendale Middle School on the west side.

The district has done a feasibility study citing land in Glendale as a primary obstacle and has asked UCAN to stop organizing around the topic. Yet UCAN continues to meet and develop alternative strategies including a community-based charter school.







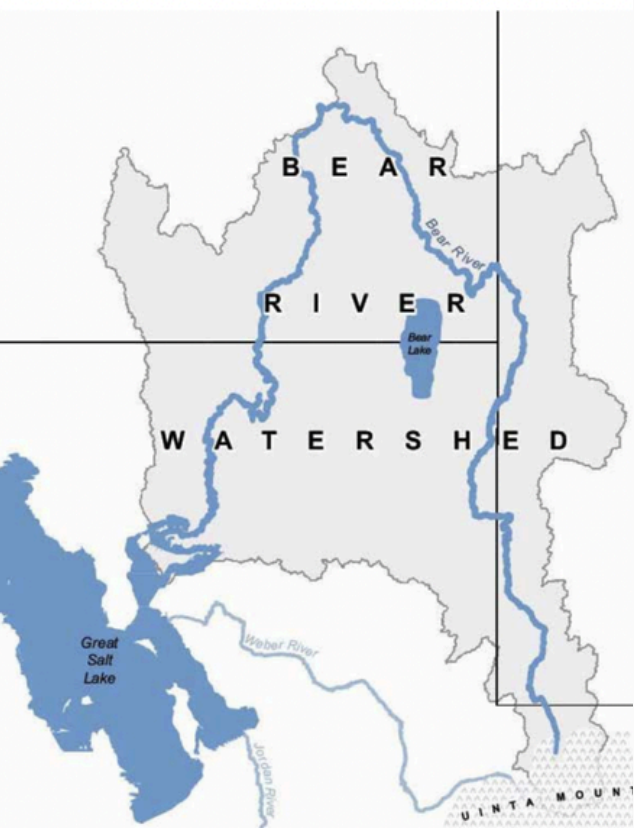
## STUDENT REFLECTION

“Just last year, the NWBSN filed a lawsuit against the state of Idaho to allow for the tribe to have access to hunting rights on their traditional lands in southeastern Idaho. Although the NWBSN won, it is still a reminder that Indigenous communities have to jump through political and economic hoops in order to occupy and use their traditional land.”

## Critical Engagement Spotlight

### ETHNOBOTANY FOR THE NORTHWEST BAND OF THE SHOSHONE NATION

Over the past year, a multidisciplinary team of faculty led by Dr. Brian Coddling and the Northwest Band of Shoshone have been working to restore Indigenous socio-environmental systems (SES). The team will quantify long-term Indigenous SES dynamics and model the drivers of change in order to understand how to best restore socio-environmental system function and services identified as critical for Indigenous practices and conservation goals.



To achieve these goals, environmental justice students led by Dr. Danielle Endres and doctoral student Jessie Chaplain, conducted archival research in Marriott Library’s Special Collections. Here, they were able to find historic documents detailing ecosystem interactions. So far, students have found over 200 different materials from a variety of newspaper and archival collections as the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone implement an ecological restoration project and cultural interpretive center at the site of the Bear River Massacre. Students learn about this history through working with tribal leaders and, through their archive research, while also supporting the Tribal nation in their restoration projects.



**Dr. Debolina Banerjee**



## Celebrating Changemakers

CONGRATS TO DEBOLINA, NICO, AND PIPER

SPARC Lab post-doc, Dr. Debolina Banerjee has accepted a position at the Kinder Institute of Urban Research housed at Rice University as a Research Analyst! Congratulations Debolina!

Congratulations to Dr. Nico Hernandez on a successful PhD Defense and new position! Nico has accepted a position at the College of Wooster as a visiting assistant professor position in Communication Studies!



**Dr. Nico Hernandez**

**WANT TO GET INVOLVED?**

**Email us if you have questions or want to get involved.**

**[EJLab@utah.edu](mailto:EJLab@utah.edu)**



**Piper Christian**

Alumni student and SPARC project coordinator Piper Christian is now a Policy Associate with Stewardship Utah!

And finally, congrats to all SPARC students who graduated in 2024 !