



# Climate Change: Racialization & Environmental Justice in Toronto

Cheryl Teelucksingh, PhD

Ryerson University

Ontario Climate Change Symposium

May 12, 2017

# Environmental Justice and Climate Change

Environmental Justice is a banner globally and locally that unites activism, including:

- a) the contentious 2016 American election;
- b) the need for greater action on environmental issues as signaled by Flint's water crisis and the Indigenous appeals at Standing Rock;
- c) the recognition that there is plenty of work to do after Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and,
- a) the reality posed by the Black Lives Matter movement that a post-racial panacea has never existed in Toronto.



# Environmental Justice and Climate Change

Environmental justice argues for the need to address:

- the environmental burden (spatial injustices)
- lack of participation in environmental decision-making
- environmental misrepresentations of marginalized communities
- disinvestment in communities (eg lack of transit, and healthy food options)
- labour market inequalities (need for green jobs)

# White Privilege and the Commons

(Pulido, 2008; Gosine and Teelucksingh, 2009)

- White privilege is associated with economic, social, and environmental advantage.
  - White privilege is structural and spatial form of racism.
  - Whites can escape the effects of climate change and secure cleaner environments due to their greater mobility and economic power.
  - However, white privilege does not operate in all places in the same way.

# White Privilege and the Commons

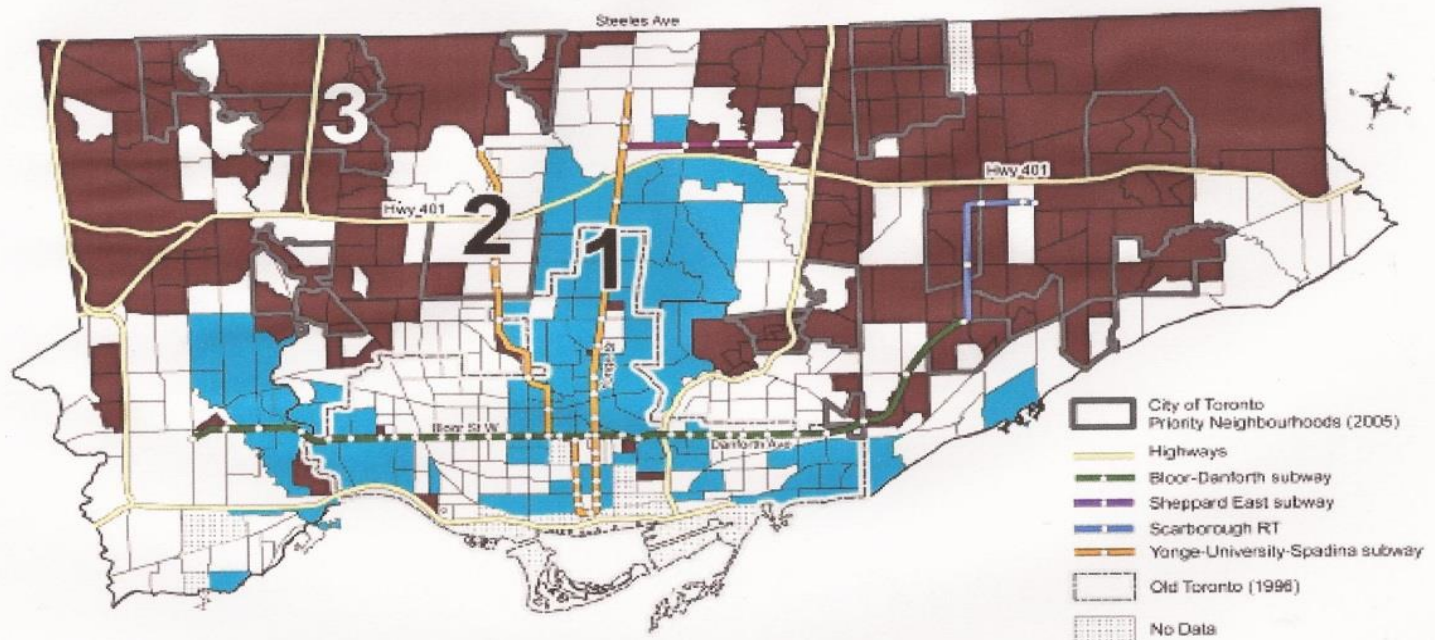
- Canada, itself, was imagined to be a white nation, which helped to maintain racial hierarchies.
- Processes of racialization are hidden in historical patterns of land use, development, and the enforcement of environmental regulations.
- Racialized neighbourhoods with poor, infrastructures and disinvestment are vulnerable to problems associated with climate change (flooding, energy inefficiencies, fewer public transit options).



# Hulchanski's Three Cities

## MAP 1: CHANGE IN AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL INCOME, CITY OF TORONTO, RELATIVE TO THE TORONTO CMA, 1970-2005

Average individual income from all sources, 15 years and over, census tracts



Change in the Census Tract Average Individual Income as a Percentage of the Toronto CMA Average, 1970-2005

**City #1**  
Increase of 20% or More  
100 Census Tracts, 20% of City

**City #2**  
Increase or Decrease  
is Less than 20%  
208 Census Tracts, 40% of City

**City #3**  
Decrease of 20% or More  
206 Census Tracts, 40% of City

Note: Census Tract 2001 boundaries shown. Census Tracts with no income data for 1970 or 2005 are excluded from the analysis. There were 527 total census tracts in 2001





# Climate Change & Racialized Communities – Lessons Learned

- The transition to renewable energy in poor and racialized communities can allow for the creation of new green jobs and opportunities to improve rundown urban infrastructure.
  - Community power initiatives are a strategy for community development

# Climate Change & Racialized Communities – Lessons Learned

- Example 1: Eglinton Crosstown LRT – involves green bond investment and community benefits agreement
- Example 2: City of Toronto's Tower Renewal Project.







Thank you.

Cheryl Teelucksingh, PhD  
teeluck@ryerson.ca  
twitter: cateeluck