



PHOENIX'S ENCANTO AREA



SOUTH PHOENIX



Photo: www.azcentral.com

In honor of Black History Month, we want to highlight the importance of Black History in South Phoenix. We highly recommend the [African American Historic Property Survey](#) where you can learn a great deal about our local Black History. South Phoenix has a tie to its agrarian roots and many elders recall their connection to trees and the land that has been passed down for generations. South Phoenix thrived with Black leaders in the community including the homebuilder [Travis L Williams](#), activists [Louis and Dr. Robert Phillips](#), and the city's first black movie theater owners [Pearl T. Cook and Roger Laws](#). Black History in South Phoenix is rich and full of amazing people that created a strong and vibrant community in the odds against many barriers.

Looking at our own local history as a city includes a critical acknowledgement about the district of South Phoenix, home to some of the oldest Latino and Black communities in Phoenix. We must also look at our history of environmental racism. Historically, South Phoenix was deployed as a district to segregate people of color, both residentially and economically. It was constructed as a stigmatized zone of racial exclusion and economic marginality, directed at the Latino and Black communities in the Valley. "The environmental fate of this district, South Phoenix, was cemented nearly a century ago, linked to a complex of factors including pervasive racial exclusion, class domination, political disenfranchisement, and a racially segmented economy." (Bolin, Collins, Grineski) "At the center of this urban complex is a contaminated zone of mixed land uses which currently hosts an assemblage of industrial and waste sites, crisscrossed by freeways and railroads, and under the primary flight path of Sky Harbor..." (Bolin, Collins, Grineski)

In conjunction with this, communities had little to no access to trees and shade, or vegetation in general. This is still the case today, as shown in this current aerial view map of the Valley (pictured above) where we can see that clear difference in certain areas. The scope of equity becomes more apparent from the lens of greenery that is either present, or not so present. With this district remaining largely in need of trees and shade, we are focusing on finding ways to offer equal access to tree infrastructure. Our current effort in this is through our Resiliency Project: Trees Honoring Those Impacted by Covid-19. This project honors and remembers those who risked their lives, fell ill, or died during the Covid-19 Pandemic. We acknowledge that communities of color have suffered disproportionately from this pandemic, in terms of the disease itself, access to health care, and economic insecurity. Through the Resiliency Project, we will be planting 100 trees at [Spaces of Opportunity](#) in South Phoenix, in partnership with [Tiger Mountain Foundation](#)!

To view more details about this project, how to apply for a tree tag, or how to donate, go to www.treesmatter.org/100trees .

Sources: Bolin, Collins, Grineski. *The Geography of Despair: Environmental Racism and the Making of South Phoenix, Arizona, USA*.

<https://www.humanecologyreview.org/pastissues/her122/bolingrineskicollins.pdf?links=false> .