The last couple of months have seen non-stop protests around the globe against police brutality and systemic racism.

Urban green spaces highlight some of these systemic inequalities powerfully. Decades of discriminatory urban planning practices in many countries and cities have often limited green spaces to wealthier, predominantly white, neighborhoods while communities of colour are often pushed into concrete deserts.

In cities that experience heat, lack of green spaces and shade can result in real health issues. Policing can also exacerbate this disparity when police insist that trees be removed or cut back so they can better surveil “high-crime areas.” (Yep... code for targeting non-white communities.) Ironically, research shows that presence of green spaces can actually help reduce crime rates.

So what do we need to be doing? It's clear there's a close relationship between racial inequality, policing, and access to nature. As ecologists, it's our responsibility to make sure green spaces and nature are open to everyone!

In addition to protesting or supporting protestors right now, this means...

1. Watching out for one another in green spaces
2. Advocating for the creation of more community-led green spaces in urban areas. Look to models that increase green space while protecting residents from gentrification.
3. And supporting Black ecologists like those at Black AF in STEM.

FURTHER READING:

by Holly McKelvey Chollmack