

@sunrisemvmthtx

Letters of Hope to Houston

our stories and
why we organize



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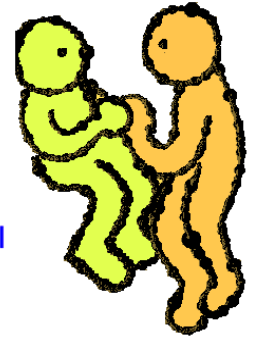




Climate Justice begins with Economic Justice

I am a Universal Basic Income advocate because I see a world that is tortured by our relationship with a money system that doesn't support our human relationships, artificially creates scarcity, and creates cyclical boom and bust. Climate change is not at the forefront of people's minds when they are busy trying to pay their rent and put food on the table. An unconditional monthly cash dividend of our sovereign wealth would ensure that everyone can meet their basic needs and be the bosses of our country.

Only if you met a group of strangers from across a river and you didn't have relative status would you resort to trading or bartering. Money is an extension of trade, but the biggest problem is we are forced to use money for our survival now. In the past, our survival used to depend on our personal relationships within our tribes, rather than our ability to trade with distant strangers.



With a Universal Basic Income, we could get our mental bandwidth back while recognizing that all humans have a right to life. When everyone is able to move forward from their daily survival needs, we will find it possible to work together on climate change solutions that will impact all of us.

On Third Ward from a UH Student - Lizzie Weaver

I remember the first thing I noticed when I visited the University of Houston in my senior year of high school was the lack of drainage grates along the side of the road. This was not an issue on campus, but rather in the neighborhood nearby where my dad and I were staying in someone's apartment. As an outsider to a place, it is easy to notice small things that others may miss. We were confused how a place that got so much rain lacked proper drainage in an area right near a major university. Four years later, I still struggle with the complexities of the Third Ward and what it means to live there.

After almost four years at UH, I now pick up on changes in the community I might not have noticed before. A new student apartment building is built. White and gray townhomes pop up off Scott Street. A large Baptist church arrives off Wheeler. Despite so much development, streets like the one I stayed on during my first visit to UH continue to accumulate large puddles after it rains. I think of an article I read about how the Third Ward is resistant to gentrification and question if that is still true. I wonder who will inhabit these new spaces when so many of my peers talk about the neighborhood with fear and vigilance. I can't help but think that people automatically associate "predominately Black and brown" with "unsafe".

I recognize the privilege that comes with being a student and living on campus. Unlike people who are priced out of their area, I have autonomy over when I leave and return to the neighborhood because of my dorm. Although I may not live here full time, I still have a stake in the neighborhood. I love my school and the community it is situated in. I acknowledge that I contribute to the gentrification of this neighborhood by attending UH and occasionally utilizing nearby Airbnb's. I struggle with the contradiction of wanting more people to visit and live in the Third Ward and not wanting it to change to accommodate the expectations of potential visitors or developers.

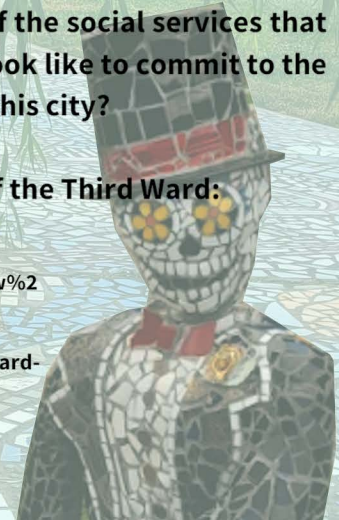
Ultimately, I want the Third Ward to be treated as the rich cultural center that it is often described as. Updated infrastructure, affordable and accessible housing, investment into local businesses, and expanded public transit are just some of the social services that can help uplift the Third Ward. What will it look like to commit to the people and places that are the backbone of this city?

Resources to learn more about the history of the Third Ward:

<https://uh.edu/third-ward/third-ward-map/#:~:text=Third%20Ward%20has%20been%20called,grew%20out%20of%20Third%20Ward.>

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/third-ward-houston-texas-1837/>

<https://houstonhistorymagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/wilson-third-ward.pdf>

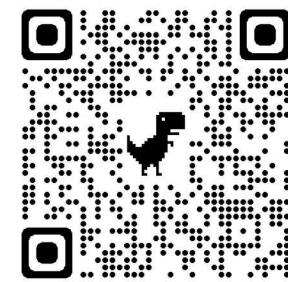


STUDENT HOUSING

SORORITY HOUSING

ELDER HOUSING

MORMON CHURCH



This is my garden.

I've been gardening for four years.
(I suck at it.)

It calms me down.

Sometimes I worry I'm not making enough money or like nothing I do matters. But then I remember I have to water or remove some weeds and it gives me that spark I need to keep going. And I wonder "what if others had gardens?"

peach tree!



melon harvest

zucchinis :o

NEXT PAGE →

THIS IS A NEIGHBORS' HOUSE.
(IT'S UGLY.)



but

WHAT IF IT COULD LOOK LIKE THIS...



NATIVE PLANTS

AND FENCES WERE TORNDOWN TO MAKE WAY FOR BACKYARD TRAILS!



could it do for others what it does for me?

-SANBLES

LET'S PLAY 'THE STREET IS LAVA'!

Houston streets are deadly. If you walk across them, you risk being mangled. If you walk alongside them, their fumes slowly poison you. We need to make streets safer for pedestrians. But as long as streets belong to cars, some people will (understandably) feel uncomfortable walking or biking.

But what about an alternative path that **doesn't** belong to cars? If there was a way to get across town without ever having to interact with traffic, the entire culture of our city could change. Parents could feel better about letting their children walk by themselves. Short trips to the grocery store or the park could be taken on foot without risking injury.

The problem is that streets are greedy. At a glance, it seems that there's practically nowhere left in the entire city that isn't either private property or designated for cars. But if you look closer, there's a network of paths for the transport of things besides people across the city – utility corridors for electric transmission lines, drainage ditches for stormwater runoff – in addition to lots of underutilized city-owned and vacant land.

These aspects of our city's infrastructure are usually ignored and generally disliked. They aren't really considered, and when they are they're seen as ugly scars of weeds and accumulated trash, at best as necessary eyesores that keep the rest of Houston functioning. But they hold the promise of unencumbered mobility – mobility which they afford to water and electricity, but with room to spare for us pedestrians.



Bintliff Ditch near Fondren Rd



THE BAYOUS WERE THE FIRST STEP

Living in Houston without a driver's license would be a whole lot harder if I didn't have the bayou greenways. And I mean "living" literally – considering the number of miles they've spared me from biking on the street, the greenways might have kept me from becoming roadkill. Right outside my apartment, Brays bayou can take me ten miles east or ten miles west without me even having to think about cars, except at the occasional intersection. Sometimes I have to bike North-South too, and that usually means white-knuckling it along the street gutter while pickup trucks blow past me.

The greenways are a solution so obvious that it's infuriating they didn't come sooner. People are getting hurt on Houston streets, and here are these urban rivers with 100-foot banks on either side, passing under all the roads they cross with room for as wide of a mixed-use path as you could need. But it wasn't until 2012 that the bayous stopped being glorified drainage ditches and started working to move people. Now the greenways are almost universally beloved, helping 2022's ballot proposition C pass with a 27-point margin to fund parks and trails into the future.

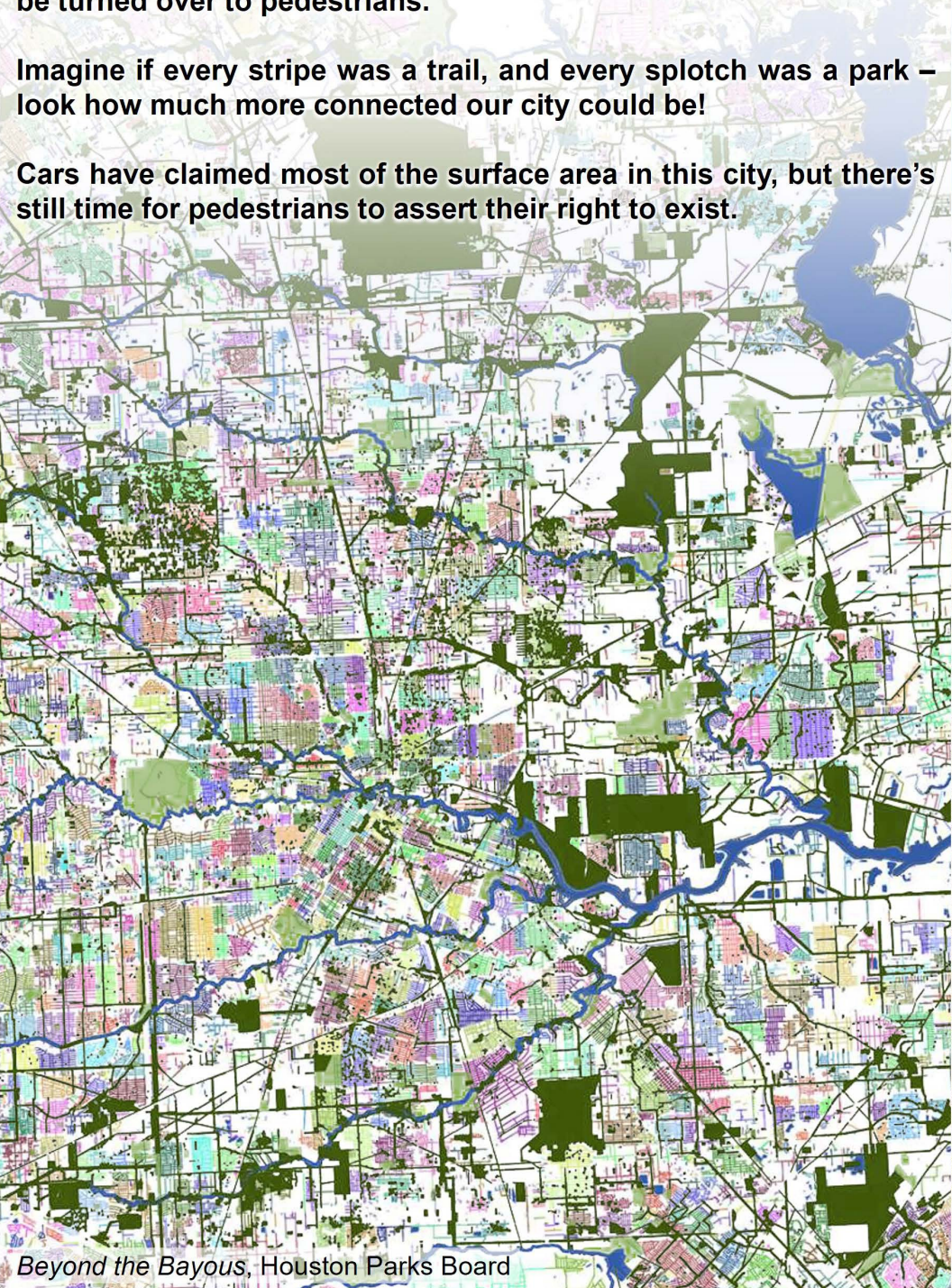
The project's not finished. The trails still spit pedestrians out over the top of big intersections. They could extend further, with fewer conflict points. But, most importantly, we can't stop with greenways – we need to use them as the sturdy posts between which to weave a dense spiderweb of urban trails. As a next step we might look to smaller drainage ditches, which could accommodate sidewalk-wide trails that run in all directions and pass under big roads. The city can't afford to call it quits on its urban trails until we can walk all the way from Alief to North Shore without ever having to worry about getting pancaked by a three-ton pickup truck doing 50 in a 35.

A SPIDERWEB OF POSSIBILITIES

Every patch of color on this map is a neighborhood separated by major roads. Every stripe and splotch of green is land that could be turned over to pedestrians.

Imagine if every stripe was a trail, and every splotch was a park – look how much more connected our city could be!

Cars have claimed most of the surface area in this city, but there's still time for pedestrians to assert their right to exist.



Beyond the Bayous, Houston Parks Board

Willow Waterhole Bayou near Fondren Rd



We deserve valuable, exciting destinations,
but also safe and compelling journeys.

How to be Human

they said, "behave, be quiet, be a
good kid,"

our worth measured by
compliance, don't you dare be
defiant

"just do what everybody else is
doing. it seems to be working."

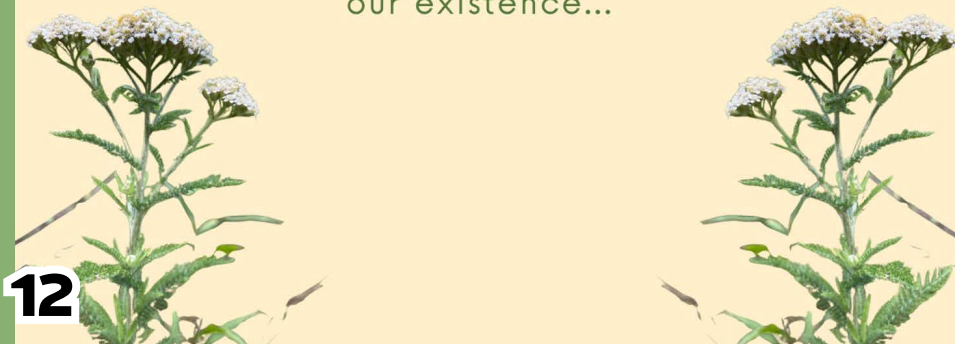
because God forbid that you
become anyone

other than their imposed will.

pay your taxes, mind your own
business, stop asking so many
questions

make good money, purchase a
house, then start a family

...apparently this is the pinnacle of
our existence...



How to be Human

... but I refuse to buy into this
model of existing.

because if you look past

these avoidant eyes and subdued
expressions,

maybe you'll see the life

that wishes to be fully lived.

beyond these shallow breaths,

a yearning to remember

what it means to be alive again.



How to be Human

so, I refuse to subscribe to the
fractured system.



because it has robbed me of my
own of trust in self,
so that they may capitalize off
fears and doubts.



because it turned our precious
world into a mere commodity
and relations into transactions.



because it continues to disrespect,
devalue, and desecrate the
sanctity of Life,
while they keep you numb with
their poison of distractions



How to be Human

this is my declaration

to remain tethered to my
humanness

i will make a home

in the good, the bad, the ugly

for my loyalty resides holy

within the totality of this
experience.

written by Mimi Do





This is one bottle of water. There is an 86% chance that it will not be recycled.

8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans every year, most of which are these plastic water bottles.

The microplastics from water bottles are in our food supply, as they are ingested by birds, fish, and humans themselves.

Microplastics contribute to infertility and obesity, disrupt digestion, and that's just the health effects we know about so far!

Jan H. Christensen and Selina Tisler from The University of Copenhagen held a study on reusable plastic water bottles.

They found that after 24 hours in the bottle, the water had over 400 different substances from the plastic bottle.

After a dishwasher cycle, they found over 3500 different substances in the water from dish soap.

Water in plastic containers absorb chemicals in a process called "leaching". This leads to people like you and me drinking BPA, styrene, vinyl chloride, microplastics, and many more unknown substances.

The long term effects of these chemicals are still being researched, but what we do know is that this increases cancer risk, infertility, and damages mental capacity over time.

This is one pallet of 1920 bottles of water. Every day at my job, we can easily sell 7 of these pallets, or 13,440 bottles.

Of those 7 pallets, 11,559 bottles will not be recycled.

These will pollute our oceans, our nature, and disrupt the health of our loved ones everywhere.

We need to move on from plastic bottles. We can invest in infrastructure, test for chemicals in our community tap water, research the effects of plastic, and regulate plastic containers so they stop contaminating our people and our food supply.



FEAR OVER FRIEND- KATIE WALL

There must be something in the water, lead
poisoning, or tainted air
That makes people in this town believe their
neighbors are something to fear

Now I ain't gotta a lot of wisdom
There are brighter men than me
But attacking your fellow man is like poking
your eyes out so you can see

They treated me like an animal, drove me out
of town
They threw me in the forest demanding to
hunt me down

Now I can hear them behind me, their foot
steps are closing in
They're shotguns ring in the distance, I better
start running again

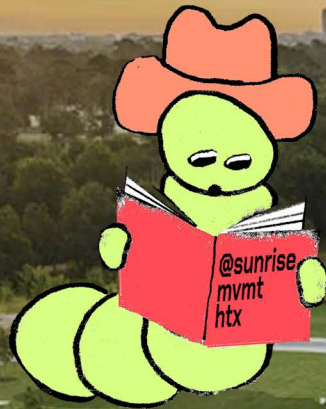
I'm an endangered animal
They killed off all the others like me
Behind their glassy eyes I don't see nothing
and that's what scares me
I'm an endangered animal

They'll hunt me and have no regrets
They burned the forest just to make sure
there was nothing left

There must be something in the water, lead
poison, or tainted air
That makes people in this town believe their
neighbors are something to fear



Join our Discord
and get to
meet us!



discord.gg/Rk5bBak47v

Sunrise Movement is a youth-led national organization dedicated to stopping climate change and creating millions of jobs in the process. We are not looking to the right or left. We look forward. Together, we will change this country and this world, sure as the sun rises each morning.

**Visit our website for more information:
sunrisemcmthtx.com**

