Home, Interrupted
Red Lines and Zip Codes

Your zip code can tell a lot about your health. Studies show that historically redlined neighborhoods can overlap with areas that flood the most, have the worst air quality, and experience the warmest temperatures.

Our story takes us to California's San Fernando Valley and to Newark, NJ, where immigrant families live in or near zones that have been redlined and experience health issues due to extreme heat and pollution.

Iggy Monda: There's been one underlying catalyst in all of our stories this season. Basement apartment tenants dealing with flooding in New York, Maya immigrants planting roots in Nebraska, Black and brown residents in disparaged parts of Chicago fighting to be a part of the energy transition. In each of these episodes, you heard tales of people whose very definition of home had to change somehow. Some might even say…it was interrupted.

Iggy: From Feet in 2 Worlds, welcome to the final episode of Home, Interrupted, a series where we explore the links between immigrants and climate change. I'm Iggy Monda.

On this episode, we're going to take a look at an interruption that is a little harder to see, feel, or notice. It's not a major event like a hurricane or wildfire. It rarely makes the news. But like global warming, it's also the result of human activity—decisions we've made.

We're talking about the legacy of redlining and government disinvestment in certain neighborhoods across the country—many of them immigrant neighborhoods. Today, this legacy makes it harder for these communities to respond and adapt to environmental hazards and climate change.

Iggy: Isaias Hernandez grew up in Sylmar, California, the northernmost neighborhood of Los Angeles.

> Isaias Hernandez: My parents named me Isaias Hernandez or also known as Isaias Hernandez in Spanish.

Iggy: More than a third of Sylmar's population is foreign-born. And 78 percent of residents are Latino. Isaias' own parents were farmers from Mexico. Sylmar is an area once known for being the world's largest olive ranch. But Isaias grew up around the muted gray colors of factories and concrete, as well as the loud horns from cars and rumbling from the Metrolink railway.

> Isaias: There was not a single day in my life that I've [n]ever been interrupted. I mean, even right now as we're speaking, the Metrolink is passing by and you can sense the shaking in my home.

Iggy: Instead of being surrounded by olive trees, Isaias and his family lived in the industrial part of Sylmar. Their apartment was right across the street from the Metrolink, a busy road with heavy traffic, and multiple manufacturers like the paint and coating PPG industries facility.

Isaias: It was a very weird blend of nature meets industry.

Isaias: Very paved and concrete. Silver, black were mainly the colors around that region. Maybe a few dandelions and a few weeds pulling out from the cracks of the concrete trying to re-flourish that landscape. A landscape that was deprived of life.

Iggy: Sylmar is far from the city center, but it's vital for LA's infrastructure. It's home to the Sunshine Canyon Landfill, where one-third of LA county's garbage is deposited. That's 9,000 tons of trash per day. From 2009 to 2016, over 9,000 complaints were filed against the landfill because of its toxic odors.

Isaias: I remember having an itchy throat at times and having a cough in the mornings and just thinking, "Am I sick or is it because I woke up too early or is it because I left the window open and I let the cold air get into my lungs?"

Isaias: And then you have the chemical smells that are coming from that road, those train tracks, the waste that is thrown there.

Isaias: The smell was this like almost like a plastic slash tire that's burning.

Iggy: Occasionally, Isaias had an escape. His dad worked as a landscape gardener assistant. And on weekends, he would put Isaias and his brother in the family's silver Ford truck and bring them to his job sites in different neighborhoods.

Isaias: Bel Air, Calabasas, Pasadena, Beverly Hills, name it. You can name all the rich cities that you live in LA today.

Isaias: When you'd enter these gated communities you saw these large trees and bushes that covered everyone's property for their privacy. You entered they'd have this luscious green garden with flowers of different colors coming out. I remember seeing pink, purple, yellow, orange and just and just being fascinated by them and said I've never seen them. I've only seen dandelions growing up.

Isaias: I remember just seeing rich, fancy cars was the one thing. The second thing I saw is the public infrastructure. I said, wow, they have working lights. Wow, they have a mailbox down the street. Oh, my God. They even have like fresh grocery stores. And they don't have any potholes in their streets. Like everything is so nice here. Like that's cool

Isaias: And I said this is paradise. This is what it looks like to be rich and to be happy.

Iggy: But at the end of the day, Isaias, his brother, and his dad would return home after work. Back to Sylmar.

Isaias: Poverty really redesigns your brain to think that there's a lot of things that you should feel guilty for and that you do not deserve in this society.

Isaias: And I saw that reflected in the ways that our communities were designed and treated is that, yes, we did have nature but we didn't have what everyone else had, which is the access to clean air and clean water.

Isaias: And I remember as immigrants, my parents were like, we have to work hard in life to get out of here. And that's the mentality, but they've been here and still living in this apartment for nearly three decades, almost.

Iggy: Isaias and his family didn't have the financial capital to move. The only reason they could afford Sylmar was because of section eight vouchers. Section eight is the federal government's program that provides rent assistance for low-income people, the elderly, and those with disabilities.

So, the family remained in Sylmar with all of its noise, lack of trees, increasingly hotter days, potentially contaminated water, and dirty air.

KTVU: Air quality in California is actually the worst in the country. Our state has 11 of the top 25 most polluted cities in the country. People of color are three times more likely to live in an area with failing grades for air quality categories.

Iggy: Sylmar's environmental issues are not just being noticed by the local news and people who grew up there. Vivek Shandas is a professor of climate adaptation at Portland State University. His research is at the intersection of climate change, the environment, and social justice.

In January 2024, Vivek took part in a neighborhood-wide initiative to help make Los Angeles greener and cleaner. One of the neighborhoods his team highlighted for change was Sylmar.

Professor Vivek Shandas: Los Angeles is one of those places that people colloquially know as a concrete jungle, as an incredibly diverse demographic, and as a place that has had such acute racist practices in the policies that have played out in L.A. So, in many ways, Sylmar represents kind of one of the hardest challenges we have across the country.

Iggy: Vivek worked with the Urban Forest Equity Collective, a partnership between the City of LA and various local organizations to bring more trees to low-income, heat-impacted neighborhoods. In Sylmar, he conducted a community discussion with local residents about heat and air pollution risks…and where in the neighborhood they wanted to see more trees.

He says city planning and climate change are not usually tackled together.

Vivek: These fields tend to be in their own entire universes. Like the housing people rarely talk to the climate people, and the climate people rarely talk to the housing people, and they're just different sectors that haven't really spent much time trying to unpack and learn about each other's work.

Iggy: His work naturally leads him to look at how people of color—including immigrants—are impacted.

Vivek: Immigrant communities largely live in urban areas in the United States. And urban areas have a long history of policies that have impacted the quality of life for every zip code differently

Iggy: Which brings us back to zip code 91342. Sylmar.

Vivek: Sylmar essentially is this concretized space that is very difficult now to even get a tree into the ground because you'll have to cut up a bunch of concrete to just get a small tree in that space.

Iggy: For Vivek, Sylmar today is a classic example of what happens when no one invests resources in a neighborhood. The value of the land goes down.

Vivek: What that depressed land value does is it essentially attracts these hungry land uses. So, this is like the big box stores. The manufacturing facilities. The things that require lots of land relatively cheap. And if you're investing in a neighborhood,

Vivek: Those land-hungry uses are not going to go to those more expensive neighborhoods. They're going to go to those less expensive neighborhoods because they just cover a lot of acreage.

Iggy: So, places like Sylmar end up attracting not only factories and warehouses, but also massive roadway infrastructures—like freight rail lines, interchange passes, and freeways.

All of this ends up crowding out green space. And it brings down the value of this land even more.

But in the U.S. this often didn't happen by accident.

Vivek: When we disinvest in a neighborhood over time, like what redlining essentially had the effect of decision makers deciding that this particular area is not in their mind worthy of investment in large part due to the communities that live there and plans that decision makers have for the place, you know, we are going to draw out these red lines, and we're not going to bring homes, and we're not going to put parks in or trees in, schools, medical services, et cetera, into a neighborhood

Iggy: Vivek mentioned redlining. Before we continue, let's unpack that word with all of its history. What exactly is redlining and where does it come from?

Cate Mingoya-LaFortune: This story actually goes all the way back to the 1930s.

Iggy: This is Cate Mingoya-LaFortune. She's the Chief Officer of Climate Resilience and Land Use with the Groundwork USA network. They help make neighborhoods greener and more environmentally resilient.

Cate: Sometimes folks go, gosh, how is something that happened in the 1930s relevant to today? But back in the '30s, it's the Great Depression.

Sherman Grinberg Library: 1929 found the bottom falling out of the New York Stock Exchange and the panic was on. Overnight, men of wealth were reduced to selling apples on street corners. The prosperity boom of the '20s had exploded

like a giant soap bubble, and the United States tumbled down into a bottomless abyss of depression.

Cate: People are out of work. They're struggling, and by 1933, about 50 percent of mortgages were in default, which meant there was a huge eviction crisis that was looming.

Iggy: Fewer people buying homes, meant less construction of residential buildings, and fewer jobs…in a country that already was in crisis.

Cate: And the federal government says, we've got to do something about this. We've got to solve this problem.

Cate: So, they created what is called the federally-backed mortgage, which basically says that the federal government will vouch for you, the lender, to the bank, and says to the bank, hey, if this person defaults on their loan, we, the federal government, will pick up the tab.

Iggy: This was all part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous New Deal. The Deal that created over 20 million jobs during The Great Depression.

It was the rebound Americans needed. But those federally-backed mortgages, they came with one caveat.

Cate: The federal government had to figure out which mortgages were going to be risky and which ones were going to be safe. So, they created something called the Homeowners' Loan Commission, which went to cities that had populations of about 10,000 and above to figure out which neighborhoods were a safe investment for the federal government and which ones were risky.

Iggy: The group Cate is talking about is The Home Owners' Loan Corporation. It decided which neighborhoods were safe investments by drawing up maps.

Cate: Oh, these maps are wild.

Cate: Those neighborhoods that have the right kind of white people have nice housing quality stock. Those were outlined in green and given the grade of A.

Cate: The areas with black and brown people and poor housing quality and low-income populations, they would outline it in red and label it a D neighborhood. That's the lowest grade you can get. Those areas are not eligible for mortgages.

Iggy: That's where the term redlining came from. The Corporation would literally draw red lines around immigrant and Black neighborhoods that were considered risky. There were also areas that were colored in blue and yellow, depending on the risk level. The Corporation never hid their efforts to racially discriminate.

Cate remembers reading one specific note about a town in Virginia.

Cate: The rationale for labeling it a yellow-lined neighborhood is respectable people, but homes too near the Negro neighborhood in Section D-2. That means that the very proximity to Blackness was enough to rob an entire neighborhood of

people to access to the predominant wealth-generating mechanism in our culture, which is property ownership.

Cate: So, those are nuts. They talk about immigrant populations destroying local culture. They're really explicit. There's no quiet part to these maps. It's all loud, bold text.

Iggy: So, immigrants and people of color in redlined neighborhoods were ineligible for these financial resources….and didn't get invested in.

Cate: So, the government doesn't plant trees there. They don't site parks there. They don't upgrade the sewage infrastructure in the same ways that they would in these white neighborhoods that had been green-lined.

Iggy: Residents in many of these areas are still living under similar conditions, even though redlining has been outlawed since the late '60s.

And as our climate crisis gets worse, immigrants and people of color in these neighborhoods are often disproportionately affected by environmental and climate issues.

Cate: It's too hot, it's too wet and the air quality is too bad.

Cate: As you walk from a redlined neighborhood over into a yellowlined neighborhood over into a greenlined neighborhood, your sweat is gonna cool. The sun's gonna be a little bit less glaring on your eyes. It's gonna be a little bit drier when it rains.

Iggy: And we know this because of the work of researchers like Vivek. In 2020, Vivek co-published a never-before seen heat and redlining study.

Vivek: We found unequivocally across 108 cities 94 percent, I should say, that the redlined areas were consistently hotter than the green-lined areas.

Vivek: So, we drew a direct connection between what was historically a federal and locally codified policy and what we're seeing on the landscape today.

Vivek: We need to be really bringing this topic of heat, bringing this topic of climate change across all the different sectors, really thinking about how does transportation deal with this? How does housing deal with this? How does public health deal with this? How do immigrant communities deal with this?

Iggy: But heat is not the only place where Vivek noticed a pattern.

Vivek: We did a study looking at flooding in historically redlined communities, and we found that urban flooding occurs more in redlined communities than in greenlined communities. And that was a very clear pattern. We've done this with heat. There's other people who've done it with air quality and found that air quality is far worse in areas that were historically disinvested.

Iggy: And these connections have major health consequences, as Cate points out.

Cate: A lot more instances of things like asthma and high rates of cancer, maternal mortality, a lot of things related to air quality and a poor environment.

Cate: Pretty much anything you would be disappointed by happens more frequently in those formerly redlined neighborhoods.

Iggy: To be clear, we're talking about all sorts of neighborhoods impacted by disinvestment and municipal neglect—including but not limited to areas officially redlined by the Homeowners Loan Corporation back in the '30s.

Redlining was outlawed in April 1968 when the Fair Housing Act was passed. And yet the legacy of this discriminatory practice endures.

Cate: If our neighborhoods don't look the way they do by accident, that means they're not going to change by accident, and we're going to actually have to push to further change.

Cate: So if we choose to be hopeful for ourselves if we choose to be hopeful for our community members, I think those maps are going to look a lot better. If we choose to give up, I think they're going to look a lot worse.

Iggy: After the break, we'll hear from people who not only have hope but who have found ways to help their disinvested communities in the present day.

Maria Lopez-Nunez: Really, it's about collective action. And participation, right? Like, we need to actually push the system to be different.

Iggy: Stay tuned for more Home, Interrupted from Feet in 2 Worlds.

Ad Break

Rose Liston: Don't get run over. Thank you.

Iggy: Welcome back to Home, Interrupted.

Rose: Good Morning.

Volunteer: Morning!

Rose: Morning! My name is Rose. I am the community forestry coordinator for the San Fernando Valley. How's everyone doing?

Volunteer: Excellent.

Alyssa Carillo: So, everyone, this is our planting demonstration, we want to make sure you all feel well equipped to plant our trees today.

Rose: We've already put in 1,000 trees in San Fernando alone, which is just amazing. Yes, thank you!

Iggy: A day after Arbor Day—in other words Tree Day—several volunteers gather to plant new trees on a busy residential street in San Fernando. San Fernando borders Sylmar, and, in 1939, it was split between blue-lined, yellow-lined and redlined neighborhoods.

Rose: Trees support everything that we do. They support our air, they support our heat islands—which San Fernando is a heat island – they support our

stormwater capture. So, trees are a very tangible thing that we can do to support the Earth.

Iggy: Back in the day, the redlined area in San Fernando was made up of mostly Mexican-born residents, many of whom still live there. Today, about 38 percent of San Fernando is foreign born.

Alyssa: Thank you for joining us. you wonderful groups.

Rose: Yeah, so sweet!

Rose: Alright. Let's head to the truck.

Iggy: Alyssa Carrillo leads a planting demonstration for the volunteers. She's a community organizer for a Southern California non-profit appropriately named TreePeople. The group teaches locals how to plant trees and support urban ecosystems. TreePeople also collaborates with researchers like Vivek.

Alyssa: Today, we're planting trees in San Fernando in order to help mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme climate changes that happened with urban heat, with stormwater that we experienced in San Fernando particularly. There's a ton of flooding that we experience in this region. You know, adding shade to our streets.

Iggy: It might seem simple, but trees are being used all across the country to combat inequity. If you remember from before the break, immigrants and people of color who lived in communities that were redlined didn't get trees or many parks. And that has consequences, especially when it comes to the worsening climate.

Alyssa: Trees are able to complete what we call evapotranspiration as well, where it's kind of like, we like to use the analogy of the misters that you see at theme parks, where you feel that mist and it cools you off. Trees through their leaves are able to release water into the atmosphere, and it provides that same cooling effect. So, the shade of a tree will make an area anywhere from 20 to 40 degrees cooler than the shade of a building or than just being out in the sun.

Alyssa: And so, we're here to fill that gap. We're here to create that, you know, equitable access to green spaces that everyone deserves.

Iggy: Alyssa and TreePeople call these low-income, climate-susceptible areas bright spots. According to one environmental project manager we spoke to, about a fifth of Los Angeles is covered by tree canopy. But almost all of that is concentrated in LA's wealthiest zip codes.

So, the trees are not really where the people are.

And that's why TreePeople and the Urban Forest Equity Collective stepped in.

Alyssa: All right, what do you think of our tree? Beautiful. We do need a name for our tree. Every tree we plant gets a name so who wants to shout out a name? [Abigail] Abigail! We're a little bit of a hippie organization. So, we like to include this beautiful ritual every time we plant a tree. So, you're gonna repeat after me, okay?

Alyssa: Trees need people. [Trees need people.] People need trees. [People need trees.] Welcome Abigail! [Welcome Abigail!]

Iggy: TreePeople planted 20 new trees that day in San Fernando.

In 2017, the Census Bureau found that nearly 11 million people nationwide currently live in neighborhoods that were redlined. Seven point five million are people of color. And of those, Hispanic people make up the biggest representative group. That's a lot more trees you gotta plant.

Trees can improve immigrant neighborhoods, but they aren't going to solve the full problem. So, what else are people trying?

In California, some neighborhoods—like Sylmar—are repainting their streets hoping the new coating will reflect the sun's beams and keep the pavement cool.

In Rhode Island, people are setting up rain barrels to prevent flooding.

In Detroit and Portland, folks are throwing depaving parties. People from the block get together with sledge hammers or picks and break apart the pavement because asphalt and concrete trap heat and don't absorb stormwater.

These are all positive steps at an individual grassroots level. But they're stop gap solutions. Band-aids to cover up large wounds.

When thinking about how we're navigating the climate crisis, we are not just figuring out how to cope with environmental disasters. We have to deal with the infrastructure we have put in place around us.

This means that to help make neighborhoods more climate-resilient, the legacy of redlining and disinvestment needs to be top of mind. This goes for grassroots efforts—like people planting trees—and major policy changes.

We're going to leave LA and California altogether for the East coast to visit a community in New Jersey that is taking steps in the right direction.

On a sunny Friday afternoon in late April, Maria Lopez-Nunez is in a small conference room in Newark, New Jersey. She's on a Zoom call, trying to get the Port Authority to adopt more environmentally-friendly practices.

Zoom Call: ...the Port Authority has already been talking about. But I don't know if you have any thoughts on any of that.

Maria Lopez-Nunez: We need to get the tenants at the port thinking with an environmental justice lens cause I don't think your tenants think about the community implications of their operations necessarily.

Iggy: Maria is an environmental advisor to the White House and is the Deputy Director of Organizing and Advocacy at the Ironbound Community Corporation in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark, or as some people call it...

Maria: The armpit of New Jersey because it smells so bad. But again, it smells so bad because of the toxic pollution.

Iggy: The Ironbound is a four-square-mile formerly redlined neighborhood. It's near the notoriously polluted Passaic River. And it's sometimes known as Little Portugal because of the many Portuguese immigrants who arrived there in the '60s and the '70s. Today, the community looks a bit different.

Maria: Our demographic is mostly immigrants, mostly undocumented folks, actually, in our neighborhood. Mostly from Central and South America. And in public housing, you have mostly Black folks.

Maria: And I would say mostly everyone in the neighborhood is low income. Our neighborhood is 78 percent renters. So, it's not like people own their homes, but there's still a lot of pride to be part of the Ironbound and to be part of Newark.

Iggy: Maria has been proud to be a member of the Ironbound since she moved there from Brooklyn by way of Honduras when she was three. But even from an early age, Maria could tell that her neighborhood was different from many others in New Jersey.

Maria: I used to go to school in the suburbs around here in Summit, New Jersey. If you take the train from Newark, you can see how it gets greener and greener as the income bracket goes up. And the people who live there get whiter and whiter.

Iggy: I printed out a memo about Ironbound written on an old redlining map back in 1939. Back then, the neighborhood was 20 percent Black and 80 percent immigrant.

Specifically, it says Italians followed by an etc. Everyone lived in poverty. The memo called Ironbound "primarily industrial" and a "slum area." And noted it's where poor employees from their local plants lived in tenements and shacks.

Maria: They made it a slum through redlining and disinvestment. You know, they've made all of Newark that.

Maria: All of this, I mean, redlining makes it so that industry finds our neighborhood cheap to develop in. Also, redlining made it so that only certain neighborhoods are even designated as neighborhoods where you're allowed to build power plants and warehouses and toxic facilities.

Maria: We're on a river. It should be riverfront property, but it wasn't. It instead went to the lowest … all this toxic industry.

Iggy: The Ironbound is still primarily an industrial neighborhood, just as it was when it was originally redlined. There's an incinerator, three power plants, Newark airport, semi-trucks that pass through the neighborhood, and a polluted river.

Maria: We have a fat rendering plant. That's where they boil animal carcasses.

Maria: You can smell obviously the human waste because our sewage treatment facility, they claim to be too broke to cover up their pits of sewage, but they're like many, many Olympic-sized swimming pools full of human waste. And you can imagine what that smells like, especially in the summer.

Iggy: As we learned from Vivek and Cate, neighborhoods that are disinvested in or were redlined are now more exposed to pollution and impacts of climate change. And that includes Ironbound's immigrant community. They deal with heat.

Maria: On hot days, our neighborhood's incredibly hot.

Maria: It'll be 15 degrees hotter than it is in the suburbs in the summer. And I know that that translates to people dying in their homes because they don't have AC. I think about the deep impact that's going to have on seniors, on vulnerable people, on pregnant women walking around, like on kids who just don't want to go to the park because it's just concrete heating up, you know, making it feel like you're sitting in a cast iron pot.

Iggy: Ironbound also deals with increased rainfall and therefore floods.

Maria: When it rains there's nowhere for the water to go. And our neighborhood floods after 10 minutes of rain.

Maria: Sometimes it's hard for emergency services to get to us.

Maria: When we flood, it's not just flooding. It's like toxic flooding. Kids can't play in a puddle in this neighborhood. If they do, they're exposing themselves to who knows. Like, it could just be human waste at the most benign, or it could be very toxic chemicals on the other end

Iggy: For Maria, all of this is extremely frustrating.

Maria: I think about it all the time, and I get stressed out because I get worried that Ironbound and communities like ours, we might not exist. Honestly, Ironbound might not exist. It might just go underwater.

Maria: That's why when folks say climate change affects us all, it does, but not the same way. It's going to kill some of us first if we don't fight back. You know? And that's why we fight back, because we know that we might be the first to go.

Iggy: To counter the impact of redlining, Maria and the Ironbound Community Corporation have found ways to invest in the neighborhood.

They helped establish 100 affordable housing units, cultivated a 15-acre park on the river, and they built a community garden. They've even take on big polluters.

New Jersey has four incinerators in the entire state. Three of them were built in neighborhoods that were redlined. Newark's incinerator is run by a company called Reworld, but it used to be known as Covanta. From 2004 to 2021, Covanta racked up over 800 air permit violations. The incinerator was burning and spewing purple and pink pesticide and iodine fumes into the air.

Maria: When you burn trash, you're releasing arsenic, mercury, dioxin. Dioxin is one of the worst cancer-causing chemicals known to humans.

Maria: And the people that work at these companies, they don't live in this neighborhood. If they love incineration so bad, they should set one up in their neighborhood

Iggy: In 2009, the Ironbound Community Corporation filed a lawsuit against Covanta. As a result, the company agreed to upgrade its facility with pollution control equipment. But that didn't stop Covanta from violating permit limits. And the pollution continued.

What followed was the Ironbound Community Corporation meeting with state representatives. Members urged the State Attorney general to investigate Covanta. They even met with Covanta representatives. And, they took to the streets, organizing many public protests, including one in less than ideal conditions.

Maria: It was supposed to be an inch of snow that day. You know, very light sprinkle, but we didn't realize it was a blizzard till we were, you know, more than halfway through the march.

Maria: We were all in a blizzard together, telling Covanta, you know, don't you dare increase the emissions. Because they need to just do better, and not think about how to increase their profit margin.

Iggy: In 2020, following their effort, the state of New Jersey enacted environmental justice legislation. It mandates stricter permit evaluation for companies that could pose potential public health problems through pollution. But it wasn't until 2023—after more nudging from community advocates—that legislation was officially enforced.

It was a giant local victory.

Maria: The big moment's awesome, but it's really the little moments of just watching people hang out at like a cookout at our farm and make connections that way.

Maria: Whether it be like a kid presenting to their class because they want to about the incinerator. Yeah, it's the little moments that make me the most proud of the work. And it's watching our community members feel like, yeah, we can do this.

Iggy: Maria and other community activists are currently fighting a fourth power plant being added to the neighborhood. Remember, they already have three.

Maria: We just had a march last Saturday, a march for clean air, if you will, and over 300 people came out to that. So, that was amazing.

Iggy: She understands the realities of capitalism and how neighborhoods like hers, like Isaias' in Sylmar, are usually picked first for industrialization. So, they march.

Maria: Really, it's about collective action. And participation, right? Like, we need to actually push the system to be different.

Maria: We have to struggle a lot more to get political power. It takes a lot of organizing and a lot of our neighborhoods sticking together and sticking around for a long fight because, you know, we win for the time being, but people always come back and try to, you know, put their toxic facility in our neighborhood just because it's cheap to build.

Maria: It's important that those most affected are the ones speaking about it. Because everybody else, they don't have the same skin in the game.

Iggy: Maria emphasizes the importance of getting those most affected by climate change and the legacy of redlining, to advocate for themselves—the question is, then, how will they be supported in doing so? Here's Vivek again.

Vivek: We're gonna really need to figure out, like, how do you build capacity with immigrant communities in such a way that they can be directly involved in the systems that are continuing to perpetuate the inequities and at the same time taking care of themselves and their own.

Iggy: This June will mark the 90-year anniversary of the National Housing Act and the genesis of redlining. When we hit the 100-year anniversary in June 2034, climate scientists estimate the world could also be reaching a point of no return in terms of global warming. This could mean a world with bigger storms, larger wildfires, and longer heatwaves. When we reach 2034, what will our neighborhoods—and our immigrant communities—look like then?

Iggy: This episode was written and produced for Feet in 2 Worlds by me, Iggy Monda. Managing Director, Mia Warren and Managing Editor, Quincy Surasmith were the editors and also contributed to our field reporting. Virginia Lora was also an editor on this episode. There was additional reporting by our intern, Shreya Agrawal.

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Home, Interrupted comes to you from Feet in 2 Worlds. Since 2004, Feet in 2 Worlds has been telling the stories of today's immigrants and training immigrant journalists. The Feet in 2 Worlds network includes hundreds of reporters and editors. Some, like Virginia, Quincy, Mia, and me, have been Feet in 2 Worlds fellows. Others have attended our workshops and contributed to our podcast and website. Together, we're making American journalism more reflective of the diverse communities that we serve.

You can find links to additional stories in the series in our episode notes. To listen to earlier episodes of Home, Interrupted, visit F i 2 W.org. That’s F, i, the number 2, W.org.

I’m Iggy Monda, Editorial Fellow with Feet in 2 Worlds. This is the last episode of the season.. so if you made it this far, just gotta let you know how much we appreciate it. This show was a team effort that took a lot of hours, a lotta cups of coffee and a lot of dedicated care from the team. Thank you for listening and supporting Feet in 2 Worlds and the show. Stay tuned for more from Feet in 2 Worlds in the future.

Quincy Surasmith:

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