Environmental Justice Nurses

THE
PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE

EPA EJSCREEN [EPA's Environmental Justice Screening And Mapping Tool (Version 2015)]

EJ communities in US and Distribution of Coal Power Plants

She Answers Humanity's Call

Your Red Cross Membership
makes her work possible
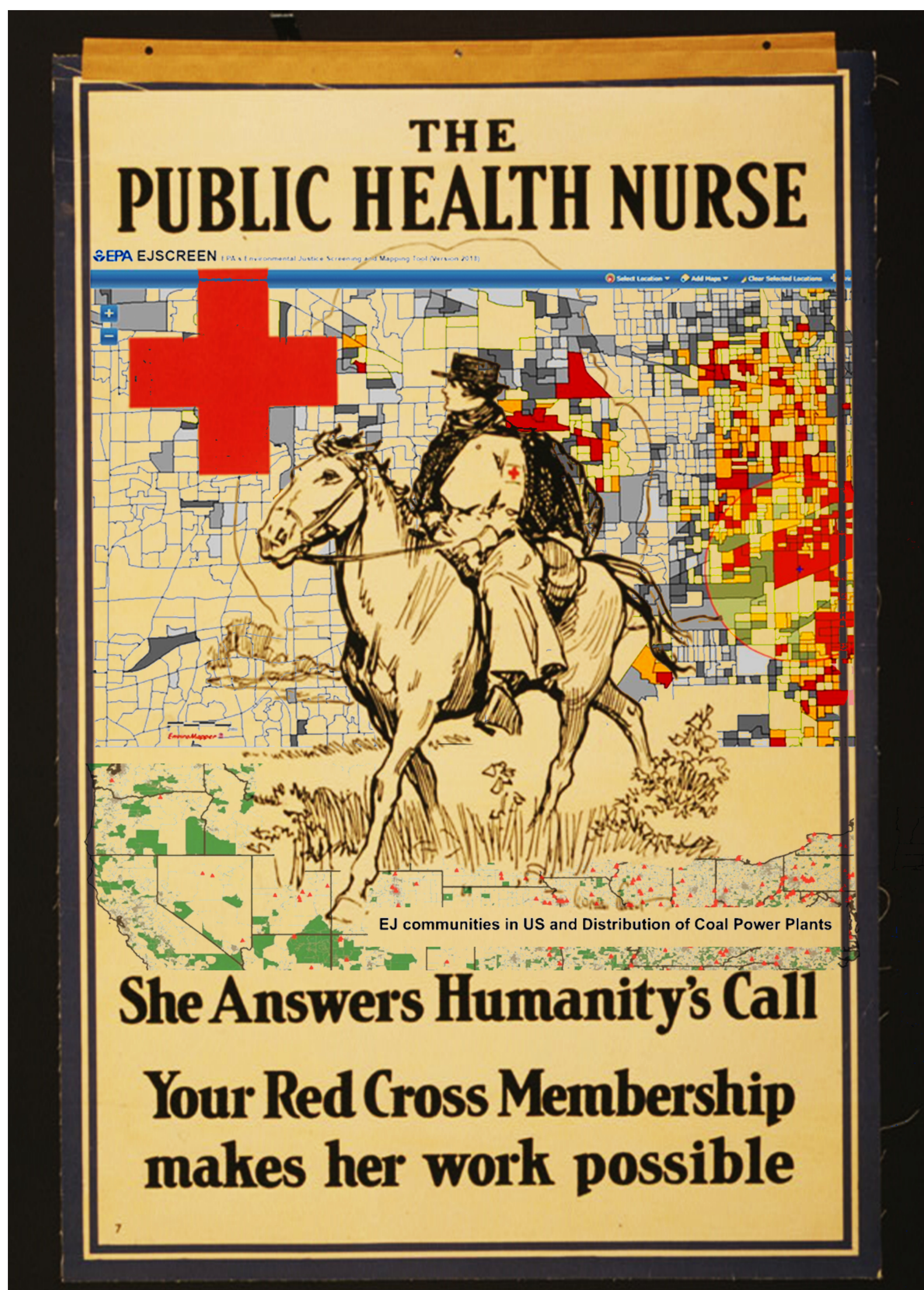
Caption

This is a reworked image of a World War I poster depicting a public health nurse on horseback, presumably traveling to meet her patients and nursing colleagues in person. I have layered a digital map showing unequal distributions of pollution into the background. The map was produced using a tool for exposing environmental justice developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These tools are the focus of a recent research article that encourages contemporary public health nurses to make use of these tools so that they "can educate community members about reducing their personal exposures to the pollutants" (Amiri & Zhao 2019: 419). With this mashed up image, I draw attention both to how public health nursing has changed (in part because of new communications technologies) and to ways it remains focused on individual health and care. Though digital mapping makes it clear that environmental ill health is a social problem (unevenly distributed), nursing discourse still casts the remedy in individual terms. In an interesting, less straightforward turn, the article also encourages nurses to become proficient at making environmental justice maps themselves -- since recent EPA cutbacks and questionable data quality heighten the possiblity of misrepresentations in preconfigured maps. Nurses as individual experts thus bear the burden of correcting a corrupt political apparatus. The individualization of responsibility is thus happening in many

Design Statement

This collage is used to convey how a particular community of practice (public health nursing) has changed over time, partly through changes in supporting technologies. It also conveys how progressive discourses can remain tethered to entrenched assumptions even when enabled by new technologies and visualization capabilities.

Project Statement

In this photo essay, I explore how different kinds of civic data infrastructure support efforts to improve environmental public health and governance. As an anthropologist, I'm interested in how people design, access, use and think about the value of such infrastructure, especially in effort to address problems that resist representation and public recognition. Civic data infrastructure, in my reading, is infrastructure that enables collaborative effort to advance the public good.

Schütz, Tim. 2019. "Nurses and Environmental Justice Tools"

In "Toxic Data Infrastructures." In Visualizing Toxic Subjects, curated by James Adams and Kim Fortun. The Center for Ethnography. May.

https://tinyurl.com/y2rpeeqt

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