



# Oral History: Doria Robinson

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*Measuring What Matters: Neighborhood Research for Economic and Environmental Health and Justice in Richmond, North Richmond, and San Pablo*



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The full report is available at [http://www.pacinst.org/reports/measuring\\_what\\_matters/](http://www.pacinst.org/reports/measuring_what_matters/)



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# DORIA ROBINSON

// I was born and raised in Richmond. For the first 13 years of my life, I lived a block away from the Nevin Community Center, so Nevin Park was my park. But we hardly ever went to that park even though it was so close because there was not much to do there. It was just a bunch of grassy hills and no trees. It was nothing exciting. And there was always a bunch of adults hanging out at the picnic tables. While a big grassy field is better than nothing, it's important to actually think that you're creating space for people to inhabit, to think about safety, so kids feel comfortable in the park space. If you look at the numbers comparatively, the percentage of West County schools using the regional parks is so small. It is basically because the parks we have here—Alvarado, Eastshore, Point Pinole and Miller Knox—have no facilities. There are no facilities.

When I was a kid, I didn't even know about the North Richmond shoreline. I had never been to Point Pinole; I had never known about Breuner Marsh or any of that area. Ninety-nine percent of kids from Richmond and the flatlands have never been out there even though it is blocks away from their houses. When I bring kids out to the shoreline, they feel uncomfortable. They feel like it's not theirs.

The gated communities in the area do not help. Every time I drive around down there, you need a code to get in. It just feels so screwed up. I mean, I'm the kind of person they are trying to keep out, right? People who live on South 12th Street—that is what they are afraid of and that is why they have their gates up. At least that is how I feel.



Every single person who goes into that community who is not from that community and not from Marina Bay knows that the gates are there to keep you out.

In terms of future projects and development on that shoreline, discouraging physically gated communities and discouraging residential development is a good thing. It just makes it so the shoreline isn't for everyone; it becomes a private property thing. We need to minimize residential development along the shoreline because we need more open space and greater access. We need to engender a sense of entitlement: this is your space; feel comfortable. This is your space."