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BLACK LANDSCAPES MATTER

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Department Store, Mobile, Alabama 1956

Gordon Parks
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"To be seen, to live with dignity, and to be connected"
- Alicia Garza

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is one of the most influential American protest movements in the 21st century. Building from contemporary mobilizing strategies developed through Occupy Wall Street and other movements, BLM leveraged the police murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 into an international movement that makes a deceptively simple proposition: you cannot have a just society if an unarmed black person's life is not protected from state-sanctioned murder. BLM's intersectional leadership (two thirds of its founding members are queer black women), its decentralized structure, its lack of reliance on established black organizations, its strong aversion to established black "leaders," and its embrace of social media as an organizational tool extend the rich traditions of non-violent direct action used by generations of black people to effect social change. In this case, it represents an information age and "Do It Yourself" approach to organizing.

However, some have questioned the long-term impact of BLM on national policy as affecting black people and all Americans. BLM created a comprehensive platform now being championed by The Movement for Black Lives that extends to areas of health, safety, and welfare where black people live. What does this broader agenda mean for designers and planners that work with black people and black communities? What are the implications of this era on the landscapes where black people live, work, worship, remember, and play?

The timing of this topic is significant. Twenty-three years ago, Landscape Architecture Magazine (LAM) featured a cover story on the reflections of landscape architects in the aftermath of the LA Insurrection . In that issue, past, present, and future leaders in democratic design gathered and shared their perceptions on the limitations of landscape architecture (in the traditional sense) to effect social change in black communities. Many of these perceptions interrogated the traditional project delivery model, the economics that drive traditional landscape architecture practice, and the challenges of serving those without land ownership, money, and political organization.

The story built on themes brought forth another 25 years prior by Whitney Young in his historic keynote address to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) . In the aftermath of nationwide insurrections ignited by the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Young admonished architects and the design community for not representing the communities they served and doing more harm than good. As an aside, this speech is credited with kick starting the

Community Design Center (CDC) movement, which provides pro bono design services to communities in need.

If there is a common thread here, it is that both the LAM article and the AIA address that preceded it by a generation were responses to crises. BLM and the Movement for Black Lives are different. Both offer systemic arguments that extend beyond black people. Although unarmed black people are murdered by police every year at a disproportionate rate, police murder Latino and Native American people at equally disproportionate rates, and murder more unarmed white people than people of color combined . In addition to the mainstream dismissal of BLM as merely "identity politics," the compartmentalization of these issues as just black issues that somehow do not affect white people is false.

Jelani Cobb recently made the point that "the myth of White supremacy is the lack of recognition of mutuality "; that somehow doing harm to black people does no harm to white people and others. I want to expand that; I think many people think that doing harm to black landscapes will not hurt other landscapes, or will not affect landscape architecture overall.

It may be time to not only think about how Landscape Architecture can better serve Black communities, but also to be honest about the need to begin a radical rethink of the profession. Especially in the nascent days of what looks to be a federal government that will threaten the protection of our rights and resources, how can we rethink our approaches so that Black Landscapes Matter?

For the purposes of this paper, I want to build on a quote from BLM co-founder Alicia Garza. At a panel called "Building Multi-Racial Coalitions" and sponsored by Race Forward, Garza described the underlying motivations for the BLM movement as fighting "to be seen, to live with dignity, and to be connected." I will use these three themes as lenses to examine landscapes in North Carolina, and to show how Black Landscapes (could) Matter.

Middleton Place, North Carolina

"To Be Seen": They Were Landscape Architects

Slavery and the Design Legacy of Mutuality: Middleton Place, SC

When North and South Carolina were a single colony, the region was struggling to identify a cash crop profitable enough to grow. Despite early failed attempts, white landowners found that the climate and tidal action of the rivers surrounding what is now Charleston, South Carolina were ideal for rice production. Yet plantations like Middleton Place initially struggled for two reasons: one was a lack of local rice production knowledge, and the other was exposure to mosquitos. White plantation owners and their workers were getting sick and dying from malaria.

White landowners learned of the Wolof people in present day Senegal (West Africa) and their expertise in rice cultivation. For generations, Wolof people planted, harvested, and processed rice at a large scale. Although called “farmers,” the Wolof not only planted and tended crops--they perfected intricate lock and flooding systems to maximize rice growth. Additionally, many Wolof people possessed the Sickle Cell trait. This genetic condition mutates normally disc-shaped red blood cells into sickle shapes, causing chronic clotting, pain, and even death. However, even then, doctors knew that the sickle cell trait also produced an increased resistance to malaria.

With that knowledge, slave owners plundered Senegal and strategically bought slaves who were Wolof rice farmers with the Sickle Cell trait. During the construction of Middleton Place, fear of malaria kept white plantation owners and their white workers away from the plantation, meaning that Wolof farmers planned and constructed much the rice cultivation areas in isolation. They essentially built, and through cross-cultural translation, designed the rice plantation.

For many scholars, Middleton Place is among the only remaining early "designed" landscapes in colonial America. It is most famous for its beautiful butterfly lakes, and home to the first Camelia species planted in America. The success of rice cultivation led to an economic boom and the explosion of wealth for Charleston's land and slave owning class. For a time, South Carolina was the wealthiest colony in America.

Notable in this story is the high level of talent and ingenuity of the skilled African people who built estates like Middleton Place under extreme duress. But for some reason, American landscape architecture avoids discussion and recognition of the African and black contribution to the profession. By any reasonable definition of the role, the Wolof and the countless thousands who did similar work across the burgeoning nation were landscape architects. These black landscapes were the foundations of wealth and power in this country.

Black Towns

After the end of the Civil War, recently freed black people endeavored to create their own communities. During Reconstruction, with newfound access to political and economic power, black towns and institutions emerged wherever black people lived. Princeville, North Carolina became the first incorporated black town in America. Princeville was unfortunately developed in the floodplain fringe of the White town of Tarboro (built on high ground). Through their topographic siting, Princeville and many other southern black towns were doubly burdened. After "Restoration," the aggressive retrenchment of White Supremacy that swept through the South after Johnson's compromise in 1877, racial violence exploded throughout the state and the nation. Princeville was under consistent racial attack for much of its history. Since the town was built in the vulnerable land discarded by whites, Princeville also fell victim to numerous floods and hurricane damage. Just this year, Hurricane Matthew resulted in damage condemning 51% of the town. But even with that risk and outcome, Princeville retains significant meaning for black people in North Carolina. Their tenacity to build and rebuild basic human systems--landscape systems--under extreme duress, make them landscape architects as well.

Rosenwald Schools

North Carolina distinguishes itself by having the most Rosenwald Schools in the country. This regional school program was born of a southern tour involving Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, and Julius Rosenwald, co-founder of Sears and Roebuck Company. Rosenwald, appalled by the deplorable conditions of schools in poor black rural towns, created a matching-grant program. If local communities could raise half of the resources required to build a new school, he would match it. Additionally, the program used school design patterns that prefigured current sustainability practices, such as orientations that maximized sanitation, daylight, and natural ventilation. Black

people built nearly 700 of these schools across the state and over 5,000 more across the region. Sadly, many of these sites have fallen into disrepair. But they echo a time when local people, black people, raised their own funds, contributed their own know-how, and sited hundreds of state-of-the art facilities in their own communities. They were landscape architects.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

North Carolina has the most Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) of any state. Although largely founded by white philanthropists to prevent black students from attending Predominately White Institutions (PWI), HBCUs continue to play a critical role in grooming future generations of American citizens. Many campuses were laid out by their architects, many of whom were black. Following the lead of Tuskegee Institute, designed by the first black architect to graduate from a PWI school of architecture, Robert Taylor, and built by the first generations of students, many HBCUs have early vestiges of the community build model we celebrate today. The people who designed, built, and sustained these campuses during the days of Jim Crow were landscape architects.

The first black landscape architect to graduate from an accredited program was David Williston at Cornell University, a North Carolina native from Fayetteville. Among his many accomplishments was the campus plan for Howard University and its famous central space better known as “The Yard.” The significance of this space in celebrating the gathering and public dialogue of black people cannot be undersold. For a contemporary understanding of the significance of The Yard, see Ta-Nehisi Coates’s seminal work, Between the World and Me.

Digging into the origins of the state of North Carolina, we see that mainstream landscape architecture history, theory, and practice relegates these critical black landscapes to historic preservation, cultural anthropology, and archeology. Why not landscape architecture?

How can one credibly discuss the American landscape without including plantations and the legacy of slavery? This can be a toxic arena for sure, but with more nuanced understanding, there are opportunities to reclaim the mutuality that produced the country’s earliest landscapes. Enslaved Africans were not big dumb brutes, and white slave owners did not possess all of the knowledge and understanding. In the case of a place like Middleton Place, quite the opposite was true. Acknowledging this mutuality between black and white, in the midst of extreme oppression, may even shed light on contemporary design strategies in light of Michelle Alexander’s groundbreaking work and addressing the legacy of mass incarceration in contemporary black communities .

Water Plant Rendering from the WPA plans for, Soul City

"To Live with Dignity": Public Space for Black Leadership Development

The Negro Park and SNCC

In an effort to uphold the Jim Crow legacy of separate but equal facilities for black and white Americans, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) purchased open land on the edges of the South Park East Raleigh Neighborhood. "The Negro Park" was created in 1938. Nearby Pullen Park, an amusement park privately donated and funded by white Raleigh newspaper owner Stanford Pullen, featured a wide array of amusements but excluded black people. "The Negro Park" was a part of a larger effort to master plan a significant section of Raleigh's Black Community. The overall plan not only included an amusement park but also a school and public housing. Some local historians consider the overall "Negro Park" plan as one of the first mixed use master plans in the state. Local black leaders later successfully petitioned for a name change. The Negro Park became John Chavis Memorial Park, in honor of John Chavis, the first black teacher allowed to teach both black and white students in the state and who lived nearby.

Within walking distance of Shaw University and St. Augustine's College, the park served as the green heart of Raleigh's black community. It was also a regional attraction seen as one of the few "safe places" for black people

traveling between Atlanta and Washington, DC. A who's who of black political, economic, athletic, and entertainment leaders all frequented the park. Until Brown v Board of Education II, it had equal amenities to Pullen Park.

he park, and later the university, birthed one of the most important Civil Rights era movements (SNCC) and distinguished itself by breaking the patriarchal structure embedded in other organizations like Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). SNCC more accurately reflected the roles black women have played historically in organizing and protest. Acknowledgement of the role of public space in protest action as well as in leadership training and development black community development is critical to understanding the effectiveness of Civil Rights era struggles.

Black Wall Street

Although the Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma is best known, in no small part due to its murderous end at the hands of white supremacists in 1921, it was not the only Black Wall Street. In the early twentieth century, Parrish Street in Durham, North Carolina, was the home of what were two of the largest employers of black Americans in history: North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and Mechanics & Farmers Bank. At their heights, NC Mutual Life and M&F Bank funded and underwrote more black land ownership and building construction than any other entities in the country. Their close proximity led to the moniker "Black Wall Street." The success of this area persisted for generations. Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X all extolled the virtues of this example of black economic self-sufficiency in urban America.

The "space" this economic boom provided was equally important for the cultivation of black political leadership. In addition to the leaders of NC Central University, the Black Wall Street phenomenon led to the emergence of people like Pauli Murray. Murray, the first black female episcopal priest and a queer woman, claimed Durham as her home and base for continued activism and agitation.

The tragedy of Black Wall Street was its proximity. Located one block away from Main Street, or rather, "White Main Street," the accumulation of this economic influence and political cultivation was regulated by what in Durham was known as "The Gentleman's Agreement." The wealthiest and most powerful white businessmen gave the business leaders of Black Wall Street incredible (for that time) influence and decision-making in the city with one caveat: they did not want to be publicly embarrassed through public protest.

For that reason, you will not find many records of traditional protest in Durham during the heydays of tobacco and textiles. Conflicts were handled behind closed doors and in secret until Brown v. Board of Education II. This Supreme Court decision led to federal mandates for states to eliminate discriminatory practices. Residential desegregation and school integration clashes were among the first breaches of "The Gentleman's Agreement." This coincided with the decline of textiles and eventually tobacco, leading to increased rates of poverty in black Durham residents that persist today. It also led to the creation of the Durham Freeway and urban renewal of the Hayti community, doing grievous generational harm to Durham's black community.

Creative Protest

On February 1, 1960, four black students from NC A&T State University decided to occupy the lunch counter at Woolworth's in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina. Their sit-in prefigured a wave of non-violent direction action from college educated black students across the South and is rightfully credited as in part sustaining the Modern Civil Rights Movement. Days after their protest, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to speak at White Rock Church in Durham, North Carolina heralding the student efforts as "creative protest."

The lunch counter eventually integrated and that action provided a pathway for other college students to find a role in effecting social change. In Durham, students occupied an ice cream parlor and achieved the same results. All of these protests depended on the perception of these private spaces as public spaces. Although these public spaces were not "safe," there was much less overt violence than elsewhere at the time. The tenacity of black students, coupled with hostile but largely non-violent responses from whites, in part fed North Carolina's past reputation as a moderate part of the South.

Soul City and the Environmental Justice Movement

In an unlikely political alliance in 1969, Floyd McKissick, the first black graduate from UNC Chapel Hill's law school and long-time NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) leader, worked together with President Richard Nixon on a plan to develop a "Black New Town" in Warren County, North Carolina. Warren County then and now ranks among North Carolina's poorest communities. McKissick, anticipating future regional economic development projects such as Research Triangle Park, saw this new town as a potential industrial and logistics hub in a traditional pattern where black residents could live and work in in the same

community. Dubbed “Soul City,” this effort garnered national attention and design assistance from faculty at NC State University’s School of Design.

State and regional lack of cooperation, poor internal organization, and perceptions of impropriety undermined Soul City. Homes were built prior to utilities being installed. Commercial spaces were built without pro forma or business plans. Roads were disconnected or not built in the initial phase, making the project inaccessible. In the end, Soul City was shut down partially finished, and subsequently used as a tool to discredit all those involved. The failure of Soul City is a microcosm of a prevailing attitude towards black leadership in the twilight of “great society” programs. Not long after the demise of Soul City, Nixon led efforts to divest from community and social programs. This effort was accelerated by Ronald Reagan and continues to permeate contemporary perceptions of black political leadership as incompetent in cities across the country.

If there is a silver lining to the Soul City story, it is the emergence of the Modern Environmental Justice Movement from the same place. In the 1980s, North Carolina was accused of illegally disposing of toxic PCBs

in roadside drainage ditches. A court order required the state to remove all PCBs from the ditches and dispose of them in a landfill. The companies involved conducted a site selection study and identified Warren County. What was not revealed at the time was that race played an explicit role in site selection. Wealthier white residents in Warrenton (the county seat) helped companies to identify places that they thought lacked the capacity for political resistance to landfill location and targeted the black communities.

As word spread of the proposed landfill siting, former Civil Rights era activists, who had not organized since the 50s and 60s, as well as people who were involved in Soul City, mobilized. They deployed Civil Rights Movement non-violent direct action tactics for environmental purposes. The protests garnered national attention, including the notice of academics that were beginning to correlate race and the siting of toxic waste facilities. Ben Chavis, then Director of the United Church of Christ’s Commission on Racial Justice, was active in these protests, as was Dr. Robert Bullard. The protests failed and the landfill was built. However, Chavis’s report, “Toxic Waste and Race” (1987), was groundbreaking. After analyzing Warren County, among other case studies, the report concluded that race was the primary determinant in the location of toxic waste facilities, outstripping income and other factors. In their opinion, the researchers found that this constituted a pattern of “Environmental Racism.” In addition to the term and methodology, the Warren County protest is recognized as launching one of the first mainstream American environmental movements led by people of color.

As we value the roles of social media and other virtual spaces for organizing, it's important to recognize the roles physical places have in the development of the many components which effect change writ large. From the role of John Chavis Memorial Park in nurturing a regional vision of equitable spaces for black people, to the roles black businesses played in building economic self-sufficiency in black communities, to the expanded frame of public space that includes lunch counters and college campuses, black landscapes are defined by all the places black people live their lives. Although noble, it is perhaps naïve for landscape architects to assume that the design of public space in black communities is merely a physical and spatial problem. Public spaces fill more than leisure needs, and designers and planners must defend the role public spaces play in protest action by joining with others to catalyze political and economic change.

Charlotte as the Sorted Out City

Charlotte, North Carolina in many ways represented the most progressive city in North Carolina until recently. The speed of regional economic development made it a magnet for attracting black professionals second only to Atlanta. Concentrated efforts to create a vibrant downtown have resulted in a dramatic turnaround in mixed use and mixed density living with statewide implications. It remains the only city in the state with light rail transit. On paper, these are all strategic moves that could advantage black communities.

Charlotte's First Ward neighborhood was the home of the city's first black community. By providing supporting services to the city's banking center, the Second Ward grew as a home to many residents and black-owned businesses. Not unlike many communities nationally, many black communities were identified as slums after World War II. This designation followed decades of suffering under redlining, the early 20th century banking practice which labeled black communities as areas that did not qualify for mortgage lending. Coupled with racial exclusion from the G.I. Bill, the Second Ward struggled with community improvements in housing, businesses, and infrastructure.

Slated for urban renewal, much of the Second Ward was demolished in the 1960's and 1970's. Today it is known as the Government Center and is home to the NASCAR Hall of Fame and The Epicenter. On a brighter note, the Harvey B. Gannt Center is located in this area, recalling the history of Black Charlotte and bearing the name of Charlotte's first black mayor and an architect. The building was designed by Phil Freelon, celebrated architect of the Smithsonian African American History Museum in Washington DC.
Romare Bearden Park, another and equally significant downtown place, was designed and built as a nod to Charlotte's most famous artist. Bearden grew up

in Mecklenburg County but became world famous after settling in Harlem and interacting with black artists during the Harlem Renaissance. Bearden Park's design aspires to some of the post-cubist and impressionist collage work for which Bearden is renowned. It is important to note that Bearden's work focuses on his rural North Carolina memories in contrast to his lived urban experiences in Harlem; there are no Bearden works featuring Charlotte during his time there.

It is difficult to reconcile the lack of acknowledgement other than signs, in either park, of the black communities that once occupied their sites. Both parks have been leveraged effectively to attract urban redevelopment. However, that development placed no priorities on the local people that once lived there. North Carolina's legislature bans inclusionary zoning and requiring affordable units in new development projects. This is a right of individual cities but has not been enacted by city officials. Both park locations lack affordances to enable local business development or any non-recreational activity in the parks and adjacent areas.

Is this "blackwashing?" Is this a sincere, misguided attempt to offer equity to black communities by naming parks, which replaced their homes, after their more nationally marketable identity? One wonders if in Charlotte, and across the country, gaining an identity in a marketable public realm is a fair trade for displacement. As we are learning from the Atlanta Beltline, and monitoring with the 11th Street Bridge Park project in Washington, DC, there are perils to investing in public infrastructure in advance of the economic and legislative tools needed to mitigate their potentially displacing effects on center city black communities.

Racial Sorting and the Digital Age

Many urban redevelopment efforts parallel the re-segregation of the American city. Charlotte and other cities in North Carolina are more segregated now than in 1960. Today, Charlotte is one of the top 10 most segregated cities by race and lack of social mobility in the country. The beginnings of this recent racial sorting can be traced to the statewide enforcement of Brown v Board of Education II, and more specifically, school busing. Today, white residents overwhelmingly attend charter schools, leaving most public schools starkly segregated with predominantly black and brown people and the poor. In general, black people have been pushed from city centers to first ring suburbs. Although this mirrors national trends, Charlotte's speed of development and lack of supporting social and economic infrastructure for people displaced to outdated suburban sprawl settings is alarming.

A recurring theme is that black people, and others perceived as low wealth and low skill, do not attract investment that transforms sprawl landscapes into livable places. Proposing change to these new landscapes in anticipation of their future roles as homes for black people is a pragmatic but incomplete strategy given what we know about economic development.

The Great Migration of the early 20th century, where black people from the rural south relocated in droves to the urban north, is the beginning of the minority-majority American city phenomenon. Through the in-migration of black people, and the outmigration of white people, urban places were made black spaces. The Great Migration coincides with the post-industrial and manufacturing era where fixed capital relied on attracting mobile labor, giving power to labor via union organizing and other mechanisms. In some ways the timing of this migration compared to changes present in society at that time led to economic opportunity for black people that far outstripped those of staying in place.
However, in the global information age, and in especially in North Carolina with its decidedly anti-union “Right to Work” policies, the pathways for black people to build wealth are constrained. Additionally, the generational debt of living with redlining, block-busting, exclusion from the G.I. Bill, and other exclusionary racial policies mean that not only are current labor policies working against black communities in terms of wealth creation, the sustained economic devaluing of their places make envisioning local place-based wealth building difficult.

Racial equity analysis and an emerging set of equitable development case studies offer some guidance on how to identify, address, and monitor the wide array of systems required to provide just results through design and planning. Although this area is an emerging focus of federal agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and The Department of Transportation (DOT), there are a number of cities and foundations that have claimed this arena as a focus. The City of Seattle includes equity as a metric in public space design, and the East Harlem Plan offers potentially scalable approaches to attracting and retaining the range of people required to address racial equity.

Reconnection to the Black Creative Ethos: Learning with Artists

At the NC State College of Design, I led a Ghana Study Abroad program for many years focusing on cross-cultural competence building tools between American students and Ghanaian artists and makers. A major goal of the course was to impact the student’s perceptions of Ghanaian artists. Despite their economic challenges, the Ghanaian artists used the design process to create

beautiful things. It was the intention of the course to highlight this ingenuity as a source of inspiration for the students, and through their exchange and collaboration, to co-create innovative experiences, places, and things.

Although many efforts have been made to connect landscape architecture with broader arts and culture, there remain divides in the perception of the discipline's connection to other arts. The information age and D.I.Y. culture have made tools and maker-spaces more accessible than ever. Black people in particular are the heaviest users of social media, and are the most engaged in the production and distribution of videos, music, and even fashion online. However, this energy has not impacted the built environment professions, especially not landscape architects. The recent increase in black graphic and industrial designers illustrates the ability for some black people to discern the role and value of design when it is connected to the products and experiences we use.
Reflecting on the topics discussed in this paper, there is an implicit assumption that since black representation is so low in the landscape architecture profession, the black community does not have the design training or background to participate. I've wondered if this attitude and its resultant approaches have limited the potential for co-creation between designers and black people. I'm struck, internationally and locally, by the abundance of designing and making going on in black communities, and wonder if a more concerted effort to connect black landscapes with existing black artists and makers would create new possibilities.

Renowned scholar Mark Anthony Neal recently moderated a conversation at Duke University between cinematographer Arthur Jafa and celebrated cultural critic Greg Tate that recovers the need to reconnect to the makers of black cultural artifacts. Jafa, the acclaimed cinematographer of Julie Dash's "Daughters of the Dust," described the black creative ethos as "somewhere between holding your tongue and speaking in tongues." He spoke of the breadth of black expression as being grounded in the spectrum between the sacred and the profane in the manner of Amiri Baraka's "Blues People" -- making no distinction between what others may refer to as high and low cultural practices. Jafa observed that the innovative and avant garde creative expressions present across black popular media culture, music, and fashion indicate that the spirit driving the making of powerful artifacts is as strong as ever.

There are some examples of blurring creative lines in the process of making culturally significant places. Rick Lowe's work in Project Rowhouses combined the celebration of the artistic legacy of John T. Biggers with the improvisational nature of cultural practitioners working to improve but not gentrify the Third Ward of Houston. Currently, Theaster Gates' work on the Southside of Chicago

blends urban planning, architecture, art, and activism in ways that gather and celebrate black cultural capital. When looking at contemporary landscape architecture, one wonders how learning from the dynamic works of contemporary black artists could inform our creative processes. What could the critical study of and engagement with artists, like Lowe and Gates, Kara Walker, Barry Jenkins, or Kanye West, offer in the way of framing the spatial, aesthetic, and experiential qualities of designed places?

Learning Landscape Architecture

Barriers to Educational Access

I'd like to conclude this section with more explicit issues that prevent black people from connecting to landscape architects and the profession of landscape architecture. We are in a decade long transition with a reduced number of undergraduate programs in landscape architecture and an increase in the globalization of graduate programs. The decline of undergraduate programs has affected North Carolina specifically. Recently, NC State University was forced to close its undergraduate program due to low enrollment. NC A&T State University, the first HBCU with an accredited program, struggles with enrollment.
In the case of undergraduate education in general, HBCUs produce more black graduates of professional programs than PWIs. In addition to providing the academic training required, they are attractive to black students and families because they overtly promote their awareness and connection to black culture. NCATSU currently produces the highest number of black engineering graduates in the country. The institution specifically credits their black "family" atmosphere as a reason for their high recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. Their work is the model for the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) 10,000 Black Engineer Initiative that is currently on track to meet its ambitious goal by 2020. By comparison, there are around 250 black landscape architects in the country. Of those with undergraduate degrees, most of these designers attended HBCU programs. 10 years ago there were three accredited programs at HBCUs. Today, two remain with one in dire need of rejuvenation.

There have been no explicit strategies offered by The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA), or other entities at this time. One program in particular, Florida A&M University, was closed by the University of Florida system despite

producing the most black landscape architecture graduates in the country. There was no strategy proffered to defend the need for that program to remain in the interest of the broader profession.

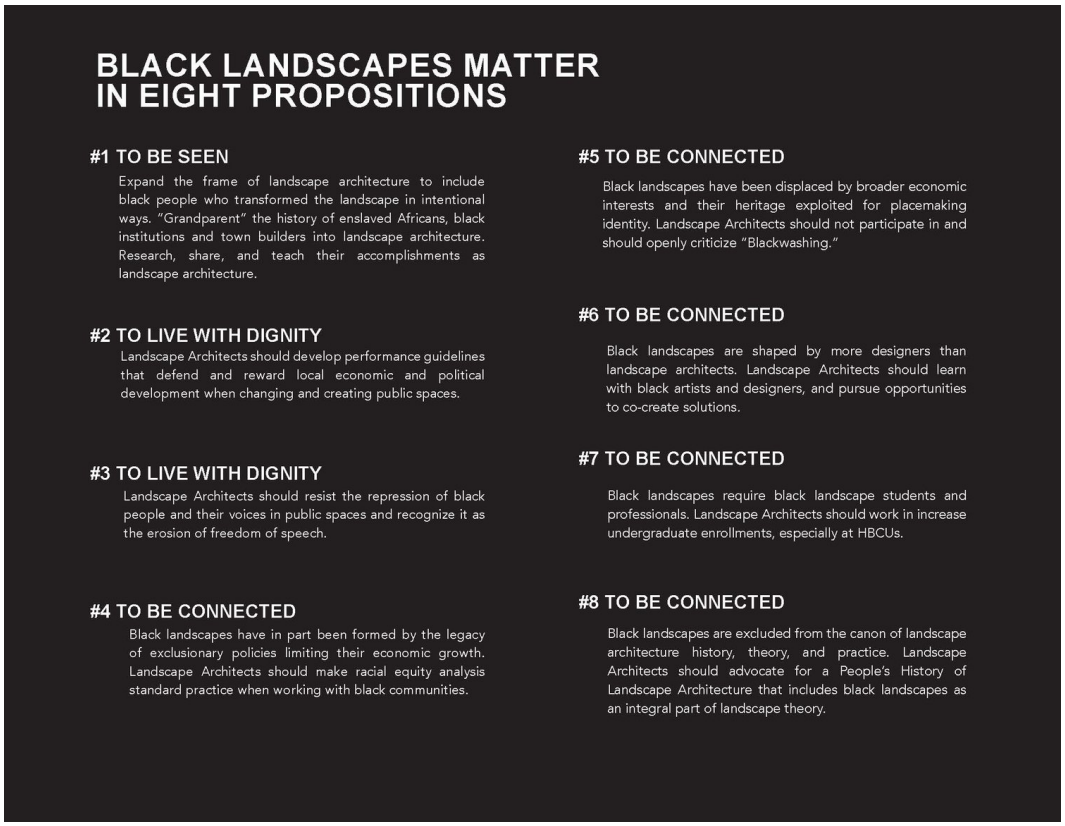
Generally, the educational experience of landscape architecture is devoid of the black experience. Black educators represent less than 0.5% of all landscape architecture educators. Student enrollment has hovered at 1.5-2% for 20 years. Landscape Architecture texts do not reference any contributions by black landscape architects: no history, theories, case studies, or any other acknowledgements. LAM has recently increased profiles of black landscape architects and their works. Can we imagine a future of landscape architecture where the only pathway to the profession is graduate study? Given the scope of the challenges that we face, this seems ridiculously narrow.
It is difficult to attract black students to the profession when pursuing a degree demands a level of rigor equivalent to other professions with a higher return on investment.

It is especially difficult to do so when our profession offers little representation of black professionals, projects, history, and theories. It seems disingenuous to want to work in black communities but to neglect to reflect deeply on the disconnect between our professional desires and our professional composition. In the face of declining enrollments overall, we need to reconsider how and what we teach the next generations about our profession.

What if we told a different story about landscape architecture? Most of our theory, history, and case studies apply European precedents to American design challenges. Especially in history and theory courses, we have a professional implicit bias towards privileged European landscapes. One can track European innovations in landscape architecture to their alternating dominance as colonial powers. In some ways, their landscape architecture contributions were funded and created through the domination of other peoples and landscapes. We marvel at the craft but edit the meanings and contexts.

Even within European culture, very few people enjoyed the privileged landscapes we acclaim from history and theory. Celebrating the everyday landscapes for the non-powerful and non-wealthy sends a different message about what landscape architecture can mean to diverse people. Palatial estates were the concretization of monarchies and external symbols of control. Monarchical lands opened to the masses, especially during the industrial revolution, were social experiments to “civilize” the working class, and maintain control in a capitalist framework. This, combined with an increased ecological awareness could also describe contemporary design efforts in American cities.

What if there was a People's History of Landscape Architecture? Borrowing from Howard Zinn's groundbreaking work, what if landscape architecture were described with some acknowledgment of the dynamics of race, class, gender, and power? What if it were possible to see yourself in the mainstream of the profession even if you did not aspire to advance white culture studies? And it is here where the lessons learned from the Black Lives Matter movement can offer hope for a more representative profession. Recovering the poorly documented landscape legacies of black people in the profession of Landscape Architecture is important to this process. But more broadly, what if landscapes were approached as a way to help invisible people and places "to be seen?" What if landscape processes were deployed to help us all "live with dignity?" And what if through our continued and shared commitment to building together a more just society we resisted those forces that would pull us apart and instead engaged in the work with the intent of being "connected?"



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