Building a Foundation for Action: Anti-Racist Historic Preservation
Resources
Compiled between July 1, 2020 and October 15, 2021

Introduction

Intention
This document compiles resources to further anti-racism efforts in the field of historic preservation. This list is intended to support and engage the preservation field writ large, including policymakers, managers, practitioners, researchers, community organizers, advocates, and others. Educators and students, however, are envisioned as critical users and collaborators. Institutions of higher learning have an affirmative obligation to advance knowledge, challenge paradigms, and experiment with new approaches as they prepare the next generation of heritage professionals.

Position
Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements mobilized much needed focus on structural legacies of anti-Black racial injustice and, in 2020, engendered widespread statements of support within the preservation community. Efforts to bring greater recognition to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) histories, publics, and practitioners within the preservation enterprise have been growing through groundbreaking initiatives such as the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation, the Texas Freedom Colonies Project, Latinos in Heritage Conservation, BlackSpace, and other advocacy and funding entities. Debates surrounding the removal of Confederate and other controversial monuments have also fostered dialogue around racial injustice in public spaces, and compelled the preservation field to reconsider longstanding normative standards, which privilege particular values often rooted in Whiteness,¹ and to plumb questions of intent with greater scrutiny.

However, there are growing calls to more critically analyze the role of preservation in contributing to and promulgating systemic racism, through the broader realm of the built environment as well as through its own policy infrastructure, such as the Response to the National Council for Preservation Education’s Open Letter. This resource list sought to further these calls by creating a platform to share knowledge in support of action.

¹ There is ongoing debate around the capitalization of “White.” The choice to capitalize it in this document is in support of scholars, activists, media professionals, and others who have argued that not capitalizing it “frames Whiteness as both neutral and the standard” (Nguyen & Pendleton, 2020). As sociologist Eve Ewing argues, “When we ignore the specificity and significance of Whiteness — the things that it is, the things that it does — we contribute to its seeming neutrality and thereby grant it power to maintain its invisibility” (Ewing, 2020).
There are long histories of marginalizing BIPOC peoples, thereby limiting the power of BIPOC individuals and publics to claim space and property. Such legacies of racism, subjugation, and exclusion are embedded in personal and social identities and positionalities, in our physical world, and in how publics and professionals define and value heritage. They are often designed, protected, and propped up by disciplinary norms and codes. As the primary objects of historic preservation policy and practice, the built environment and landscapes fundamentally reflect:

- who had/has the right to freedom and self-determination
- who could/can make or break laws, rules, and standards
- who had/has the right to occupy land
- who could/can own property
- who could/can live in certain neighborhoods
- who had/has access to capital and financing
- who had/has political and narrative power.

Whiteness is a defining agent of socio-spatial conditions, historically and today. As such, it inextricably underpins the preservation systems and institutions through which heritage and its evidence are legitimized and valorized. There are also equally long legacies of BIPOC groups and collaborators preserving and conserving BIPOC heritage despite efforts – including by public institutions – to omit, erase, and underinvest in such assets.

Confronting these antecedents and their implications in contemporary preservation policy, practice, and education requires intentionality, collaboration, and the ceding of power. While the preservation field is becoming more diverse, fewer than one percent of professional preservationists are African-American (Cep, 2020), and 80 percent of National Park Service staff are White (Chari, 2020). White preservationists and predominantly White preservation institutions must be more than just allies to BIPOC colleagues; allyship alone places too heavy a burden on the excluded few to effect systemic change in a field so dominated by Whiteness. To reform standards, processes, and policy infrastructure, White preservationists must be, in the words of Dr. Alexandra Jones, “active accomplices.”

**Collaborative Context**

This resource list was launched and managed as part of the Urban Heritage, Sustainability, and Social Inclusion Initiative at Columbia University, a collaboration of the GSAPP Historic Preservation Program, the Earth Institute - Center for Sustainable Urban Development, and The American Assembly, with support from the New York Community Trust. The need for deep, structural shifts in preservation policy to confront exclusion and the challenges of climate change was the impetus behind the establishment of the Initiative, and this resource list was envisioned as a critical tool in that endeavor.

This list was initiated by a White professor at a predominantly White institution, with full acknowledgement that it may be imbued with implicit bias. But decentering Whiteness requires us all to step beyond our comfort zones and to take risks in challenging systemic racism, to recognize our own biases, how they have been shaped, and how they are woven through our lives, our work, and our environments. It obligates us to leverage power and privilege toward learning more deeply from the past, centering justice in our work, and being active accomplices.

This list is the result of a collaborative, crowd-sourced endeavor that sought to incorporate as many perspectives as possible by compiling books and articles, non-commercially published materials (grey
literature), preservation projects and initiatives, webinar recordings, films, reports, surveys, policy documents, statements from preservation-oriented organizations, and more. As a participatory endeavor, it relied on contributions from others to evolve. Such contributions constituted unpaid work, which may have excluded many important voices. The list is therefore non-exhaustive and incomplete. It serves as just one form of collective action to support change, limited at best since a reliance on published and publicly available sources may itself be exclusionary. But it is a small yet conscious step toward redressing racial injustice in preservation policy and practice.

This duty to recognize, reflect upon, and advocate to address racial injustices must also necessarily be a continuing commitment; anti-racism is a long-term process of learning, unlearning, and re-learning.

**Structure and Content**

This resource list is framed around typical components of the preservation process – for example, documenting, designating, interpreting, and so forth – very intentionally. In order for anti-racism to radically take hold in the preservation field, there is a need to critically question and consider how change must be threaded through these very fundamental acts and methods that make up the preservation enterprise. This document thus imagines change not on a site-by-site basis, but rather on a more systemic, essential level that permeates throughout historic preservation decision-making about policy and practice.

While a critical impetus for and intention of this endeavor was addressing anti-Black racism, this list includes resources that explore the marginalization of multiple publics: BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, women, people with disabilities, those who are economically disadvantaged, and others. In doing so, it sought to recognize the many dimensions of identity, exclusion, and intersectionality, and to leverage that knowledge to constructively challenge racism and Whiteness.

By providing entry points through the existing resources, the hope is to facilitate continued engagement with and learning about these topics, and to provide starting points to address how the preservation field has (or has not) addressed race in the past, and to explore what an anti-racist preservation practice entails. As a field dedicated to enabling and constructing valorizations of the past, there is an obligation to confront and critically examine whose stories are told, how, and by whom. Published and publicly available sources are not sufficient to underpin these conversations and examinations, and this list may prove useful not simply in the sources it includes, but in the gaps it elucidates, which underscore the need for continued research and investment.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, our access to the usual academic resources is understandably limited. Luckily, there are many resources still available online. Those with unlimited online access are hyperlinked in blue; those that require institutional access or have a paywall are hyperlinked in green.

**Contacts and Acknowledgements**

This resource list was initiated by Erica Avrami, James Marston Fitch Assistant Professor of Historic Preservation, Columbia University with assistance from Anna Gasha, doctoral student, Columbia University as part of the Urban Heritage, Sustainability, and Social Inclusion Initiative. For more information or questions about the list or about the initiative, please contact Prof. Avrami at eca8@columbia.edu.
We are indebted to the many colleagues associated with the Initiative who have provided resources and feedback on this list, and we especially thank Emma Osore, Andrea Roberts, and Brent Leggs for their critical input.
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Maintaining Accountability as a Field and Form of Public Policy

Analyzing race within preservation’s historical underpinnings

In order to understand how preservation is implicated in traditionally racist structures and processes, it is first fundamental to learn how race has intersected with the history of preservation. The sources below are entry points into comprehending, and possibly beginning to confront, why the history of preservation is inseparable from questions of race, and how these problematic practices rooted in these historical origins still shape our field today.


Martinko, Whitney. Historic Real Estate: Market Morality and the Politics of Preservation in the Early United States. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. Whitney Marinko examines the history of historic preservation in the early republic (roughly 1780-1850) and, in doing so, provides a fresh intervention into the historiography of preservation by re-periodizing the movement to the origins of the United States itself. This time period, Martinko argues, laid the foundation for the contemporary historic preservation movement. Martinko demonstrates that preservationists saw historic sites as real estate and thus determined "what should not be for sale, how consumers should behave, and how certain types of labor should be valued. Preservation was, in other words, a strategy for making a moral economy." (4). Used to negotiate tensions between public good and private profit, advocates of preservation argued that it could demonstrate economic behavior as a social virtue. Thus preservation emerged as an environmental ethic, a "set of moral principles articulated to guide how people treated the world around them," that preservationists used to create a moral historical consciousness. Such a historical consciousness and material landscape was oriented towards the process of settler colonization as one of civilization that enriched the development of U.S. civil society. In this framework, architectural "permanence" assumed center stage as a way to demonstrate civilizational progress. Through an examination of the Ohio Land Company's efforts to preserve Indigenous earthworks in Marietta, Ohio, Martinko illustrates how preservation was a tool of settler colonization used to assert US settler colonial sovereignty.


“Negro buildings” of various worlds’ fairs. Such spaces allowed Black Americans to develop their own curatorial ethic that circulated ideas and narratives about the Black past while advocating for concrete civil and social rights to shape the future. In this way, the Negro buildings of the worlds’ fairs made up one part of what Wilson describes as the Black “counterpublic sphere.” Barred from the mainstream white public sphere, Black Americans cultivated their own counterpublic sphere through churches, mutual benefit associations, and exhibits and events like the Negro buildings. Wilson speaks to an anti-racist framework by illustrating how preservation has functioned as a tool to promote racial and social equity.


Stephanie Yuhl’s analysis of Charleston in the 1920s and 1930s unravels the intricate connections between preservationists, artists, authors, and tourism boosters that worked to construct a public memory of the city as genteel and "authentic" against the "ravages" of modernity. The city's cultural elites, descendants of Charleston's former planter and slave-owning classes, were galvanized against the perceived threats of modernization and African American politicization. Turning to cultural preservation, these elites reinforced a civic and public identity for Charleston as "the last enclave of genteel white aristocrats and subservient African American folk in an otherwise tumultuous nation." In examining this development, Yuhl illustrates how preservation was a critical tool in reinforcing racial and spatial inequities.

**Challenging preservation’s foundations**

Critical heritage discourse has challenged the Eurocentric origins of the international preservation enterprise (and its influence on national and local preservation frameworks) and sought to elucidate how normative standards devalue differing publics and worldviews. While many of these critiques do not explicitly address questions of race and Whiteness, they speak to the foundational preservation perspectives that have enabled exclusion based on factors including class, gender, or geography. In striving for an intersectional view toward anti-racism, these works are both foundational in identifying and valorizing non-dominant narratives and publics, while posing room for further elaboration and analysis to specifically consider how race and racism play a part in these practices and theoretical bases.


The book introduces the concept of the “authorized heritage discourse” (AHD) in which conventional (often White) experts sideline the heritage values and meanings of marginalized groups.


Publisher description: This book argues for an important shift in cultural heritage conservation, away from a focus on maintaining the physical fabric of material culture toward the impact that conservation work has on people’s lives. In doing so, it challenges the commodification of sacred objects and places by western conservation thought and attempts to decolonize conservation
practice. To do so, the authors examine conservation activities at Maori marae—meeting houses—located in the US, Germany, and England and contrasts them with changes in marae conservation in New Zealand. A key case study is the Hinemihi meeting house, transported to England in the 1890s where it was treated as a curiosity by visitors to Clandon Park for over a century, and more recently as a focal point of cultural activity for UK Maori communities. Recent efforts to include various Maori stakeholder communities in the care of this sacred structure is a key example of community based conservation that can be replicated in heritage practice around the world.


Abstract: This paper reviews the methodological utility of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in heritage studies. Using the Burra Charter as a case study we argue that the way we talk, write and otherwise represent heritage both constitutes and is constituted by the operation of a dominant discourse. In identifying the discursive construction of heritage, the paper argues we may reveal competing and conflicting discourses and the power relations that underpin the power/knowledge relations between expertise and community interests. This identification presents an opportunity for the resolution of conflicts and ambiguities in the pursuit of equitable dialogues and social inclusion.

Wells, J.C. “Are We ‘Ensnared in the System of Heritage’ Because We Don’t Want to Escape?” *Archaeologies* 13 (2017): 26–47.

Abstract: This paper explores why heritage practitioners continue to embrace the objective security of positivism, building on Sharon Veale’s (cited in Sullivan 2015:114) observation that we are “ensnared in the system of heritage, rather than in understanding and unravelling the social processes of its making.” Specifically, built heritage conservation/CRM practice is too standardized and motivated primarily by speed, efficiency, and compliance; the field is not innovative or flexible; and heritage/CRM practitioners and scholars do not engage with each other. The field needs to recognize that the regulatory environment is a fundamental barrier in bridging theory and practice and in integrating tangible and intangible approaches. Lastly, understanding heritage requires a transdisciplinary approach that is altogether absent in most aspects of theory and practice.

Reforming preservation policy

This subsection explores the discourse that has sought to identify, critique, and counter the bases underlying exclusionary preservation practice and policy. These entries articulate why preservation’s existing infrastructures are problematic, provide rationales for policy reform, and begin to address how we can reimagine preservation policy.


In this article, Buckley and Graves analyze whether cultural preservation and related planning approaches could aid social and cultural minorities in resisting development pressures. While
there is potential, the article identifies as major challenges existing policy frameworks for identifying significance; preservation tools that challenge the dominance of traditional land use regulation; and the stagnant nature of the preservation and planning professions. The authors argue for changes to overcome these obstacles so that increasingly diverse areas and publics in the United States can better benefit from preservation and planning.


King, Thomas F. Our unprotected heritage: Whitewashing the destruction of our cultural and natural resources, Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009. Publisher description: Most Americans agree that our heritage—both natural and cultural—should be protected. Then why does development run rampant, aided—rather than limited—by government inaction? Tom King has been a participant in and observer of this system for decades, especially as an advocate for Native American communities and their heritage. In this hard-hitting critique of the heritage-industrial complex, King points the finger at watchdogs who instead serve as advocates, unintelligible (often contradictory) regulations, disinterested government employees and power-seeking agencies, all of whom conspire to keep our heritage unprotected. His solution to this crisis will be uncomfortable to many in power, but may help save more of our cultural and natural treasures.


Examining diversity in preservation education & academic programs
Undergraduate and graduate academic programs and training programs in historic preservation play a massive role in shaping the philosophies and priorities of future preservationists. As such, this section explores the diversity (or lack thereof) within such programs, and potential ways to foster inclusive learning environments that proactively accommodate Black students.

This presentation demonstrates and explains the collaboration between academic institutions to develop preservation efforts and pedagogy centered around Tuskegee University. Daniels in particular speaks to the intellectual and professional impact these educational experiences had on Tuskegee students.


From the panel announcement: "Where does archaeology sit in relation to Black Lives Matter and how might we find ways to engage with the insights and challenges of this moment in our archaeological practice? How do we move beyond statements of solidarity against anti-Black racism and towards making sustainable systemic changes in the discipline? And what might that change look like? This panel discussion gathers notable scholars from different sectors and backgrounds who bring diverse experiences and interests to the topic of archaeology in the time of Black Lives Matter. Themes we hope to touch on include personal and scholarly activism and forms of solidarity; pedagogical and curricular strategies; capacity building and community engagement; and how we might diversify and critically rethink research themes and the presentation of archaeological heritages."


Archaeology is deeply troubled, but students are unlikely to learn about it in their ARCH 100 class. Our experience with ‘World Prehistory’ and ‘Introductory Archaeology’ courses and reviewing common textbooks charts a discipline securely anchored in the 19th century ideological harbor that is science, evolution, imperialism and progress. This includes so-called ‘middle road’ and ‘post-colonial’ approaches, which reinforce the status quo by limiting political action. In our search for an alternative, we discuss here our attempts to teach an anti-colonial archaeology rooted in critical pedagogy, political activism and anti-oppressive practice. At its core are three tenets: archaeology is personal, political and all about the present. While we are gratified by the many students who relish this opportunity for critical enquiry, we are faced with this lingering problem: most people do not want to hear the “negative reality” of archaeology.


HOPE (Hands-On Preservation Experience) Crew is a National Trust program providing training in historic preservation trades. Its engagement with Morgan State University, an HBCU, is an example of proactive ways that preservation training programs can engage in outreach to Black communities and seek to increase diversity in education programs.


This article gives a sweeping overview of the demographics, teaching and learning goals, and common concerns and problems of undergraduate-level historic preservation programs in the United States. Notably, the majority of undergraduate majors in preservation are female, White, and middle-class, pointing to a lack of diversity in the pool of “young preservationists.”

This chapter suggests the adaptation of the *havruta* method of small-group learning in Jewish pedagogy for preservation. Pointing to the fact that the country’s demographics are changing, the authors argue that preservation education should be incorporating sociocultural issues that arise from these changes, and that collaborative group learning can help to form peer support systems and critical analysis skills while allowing for the exchange of different opinions and vantage points on course material. While the chapter does not explicitly point to racial diversity – which could yield more nuanced perspectives or not, based on implicit power dynamics – the rationale for collaborative learning is an important one.


Abstract: This paper seeks to understand the relationship, in historic preservation, between equity/social justice and the field’s intra-disciplinary scholarship by using a critical heritage studies lens. Intra-disciplinary scholarship is defined as the scholarly literature produced by the 58 tenured and tenure-track faculty associated with historic preservation degree programmes in the United States through the end of 2018. A content analysis of this literature shows a general lack of engagement by authors on issues related to the public’s needs, including topics related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. A citation analysis of this literature reveals meagre faculty productivity and low impact for intra-disciplinary preservation scholarship. In order for the field to sustain itself, it needs to reconsider its anti-intellectual tendencies, increase its socially relevant scholarly publications, and embrace more critical, people-centred approaches.


**Incorporating anti-racist pedagogy and curricula**

*Given that educators and students comprise the primary intended audience for this document, this section seeks to provide examples of syllabi, courses, or engaged scholarship projects that are rooted in anti-racism. These entries can serve as resources for those seeking to change and embed anti-racism in their own pedagogical practices.*


In this presentation oriented toward preservation educators and students, Leggs speaks to the role of higher education institutions and educators in preservation to advocate for Black heritage sites and enact change within the field.


Weiner discusses efforts to orient preservation pedagogy at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn toward community engagement. While community-engaged pedagogy does not equate to nor always enact anti-racism, it does seek to counter exclusion.


**Increasing diversity in preservation practice & employment**

As with preservation in academia, preservation professionals also tend to be predominantly White in the United States. Entries in this section discuss why diversity in the profession is an urgent need for the field.


From the event description: “In the United States, over 90 percent of archaeologists are of European descent. There are fewer than 30 African American archaeology professors and about as many Black archaeologists in cultural resource management (CRM). While recognized Native American tribes have nominal consultation in the handling of their heritage site, there is no legal nexus for archaeologists to consult or collaborate with Black communities. This means the vast majority of archaeology in this country is conducted by white people without input from Black descendant communities. The Society of Black Archaeologists (SBA) was founded with several primary goals including advocating on behalf of African Diaspora heritage sites, collaborating with African descendant communities in archaeological research, and increasing diversity in archaeology. In this presentation, we would like to highlight some of the pedagogy we use to help prepare students of African descent for careers in archaeology and building partnerships with cultural resource management industry to build a pipeline to
By recognizing the unique needs of Black students and Black communities, the SBA hopes to move towards collaboration, equity, and diversity in American archaeology.”


A letter to the National Science Foundation from four Alaska Native organizations, representing northwestern and southwestern regions in Alaska, underscoring the need for indigenous voices and scholarship to lead any research projects involving their communities.


Baker (Mandan-Hidatsa) has been one of the few Native Americans in leadership roles in the National Parks Service. In this essay, he discusses his efforts in increasing the visibility of Native narratives and perspectives during his time as Superintendent of the Little Bighorn National Monument, both through interpretation and hiring of staff.


The panel discusses how implicit biases underlie the profession of preservation through three lenses: within practice and policies; in preservation economics; and among preservation professionals.


Choosing what to document

Often, the first step in preservation processes is to decide what to research and record. This decision is already a value judgment, implicitly declaring a site worthy of attention and resources that may not be afforded to others. These entries examine how preservationists can critically examine how we have made these decisions so far, and how we can reorient the scope of what we choose to legitimize through preservation.


The statement acknowledges its own history of acquiring and perpetuating Confederate artifacts and Lost Cause ideals, while declining to collect and preserve records pertaining to African-American histories. The Department expresses its aim to be more inclusive in its practices.


This is a panel discussion on the topic of protest collections featuring speakers who are facing (or have faced) the challenges of preserving protest art and sites with ephemeral material related to social justice movements. Topics discussed include caring for ephemeral material; advancing movements for social justice through preservation; caretaking as an act of social justice; and engaging with volunteers and community members.


Documenting sites of injustices & inequities

One strategy to achieve historical justice is to recognize past inequities, or note the ways in which inequitable practices and traditions still remain in our environments today. These entries discuss how these sites can illuminate these imbalances and provide strong evidence in these processes of recognition and questioning.


This article examines the Thomas Jefferson Foundation’s Picturing Mulberry Row project, which virtually reconstructed the site’s landscape – places of residence and work for many slaves and freedmen – at three different points in time. Hallock illustrates the ability of these reconstructions to demonstrate the extent to which Jefferson exercised power over the built environment and, consequently, the lives of Black Americans.


The report provides an overview of the history of the Lost Cause mythology and a summary of the findings on extant Confederate monuments and markers in the U.S. The data is summarized in a map, and is available for download through the SPLC site.


Co-creating data / community-engaged documentation & cultural mapping
Preservationists work to protect the histories that are important to various publics. If it is their stories that we seek to honor and value, it is vital for preservationists to not only listen to but share their power and decision-making with the relevant communities of stakeholders. These entries illustrate various examples of how such involvement can be implemented at the documentation stage.


Read or listen to the author discuss her work in the Preserve Cast podcast, Doing Social Good through Preservation Activism with Catherine Fleming Bruce (Episode no. 134, July 13, 2020).


In the context of the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, CyArk has noted the importance of capturing evidence of these movements in the city. In this webinar, the speakers explain their rationale and process for using photogrammetry as a tool to document the rapidly shifting urban landscapes of protest and resistance, comprising murals, graffiti, interventions on public monuments.

Kelman traces the drawn-out process of establishing the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site in Eads, Colorado. The Sand Creek Massacre (1864) was a White American attack on a local, unsuspecting local Cheyenne and Arapaho camp, within an expansionist policy structured around extermination of Indigenous groups. In establishing the Site, the National Park Service attempted to consult descendants of the massacre victims. Kelman’s book documents and elaborates upon the few successes, many shortcomings, and numerous blind spots of the NPS’s approach in engaging with the descendant communities.


Abstract: Angel David Nieves and Leslie M. Alexander’s We Shall Independent Be (2008), which contemplated the relationship between American ideals such as freedom and black space creation, advanced the validity of vernacular African American placemaking and architecture as a by-product of protest, cultural expression, and intentional design. Despite this, few scholars have focused on related rural African American building and preservation practices as expressions of a continuous freedom struggle and diasporic search for home. Through observation of African American grassroots preservationists, this essay argues for increased attention to rural grassroots homestead preservation. From 1865 to 1920, former slaves founded more than 557 "freedom colonies" across Texas. Ethnographic and archival research conducted within Newton County freedom colonies demonstrates that descendants, regardless of residency status, have sustained place attachments and nurtured stewardship of homesteads through heritage conservation, rehabilitation, and family property retention. Rehabilitation activities in two settlements, Shankleville and Pleasant Hill, show the relationship between intangible heritage and descendants’ landscape stewardship practices. The concept, called here the homeplace aesthetic, illuminates descendants' preservation methods, resilience strategies, and stylistic preferences as unrecognized dimensions of significance and integrity. The concept of a homeplace aesthetic also explains descendants' concurrent negotiation—through subversion and assimilation—of the racialized landscape and regulatory environment, with important implications for preservation documentation and legal regulations.


The professional practice of built heritage and cultural landscape conservation is based on a top-down approach, expert rule, and an unintentional disregard for the values and meanings of most stakeholders (i.e., civil experts). This study, based on a case study of the Horto d’El Rey, one of the first botanical gardens in Brazil, explores a possible way to dissolve the barrier between civil
experts and conventional experts by inverting the conventional top-down system for heritage conservation so that it becomes bottom-up. The overall methodology used for this research is a qualitative case study that incorporates community-based participatory research. In this study, the participants (co-researchers) identified values and issues associated with the garden and, at least in one case, developed a plan to self-address some of these issues. The results of the study raised some difficult issues about the role of conventional experts in heritage and natural conservation efforts. While, ideally, civil experts need to play a central role in solving problems, conventional experts often stepped into familiar roles in the work planning process. A challenge, therefore, is how to enable civil experts to take leadership roles in an environment where the conventional experts facilitate rather than assume the efforts of these civil experts.

**Recognizing & addressing exclusionary documentation standards & methods**

Conventional documentation standards are often formed around particular, White, hegemonic conceptions of heritage and evidence that do not apply to non-White sites, and more insidiously, delegitimize those sites altogether. These entries discuss how these standards can act in such exclusionary ways, and how they may be corrected.


This brief field note calls to question the neutrality of both historians and their subjects, particularly in relation to what constitutes evidence. The availability of architectural evidence – which also plays a large role in preservation efforts – is intimately linked to conceptions of race and subjective judgments of “value” and aesthetics. The authors thus argue for increased sensitivity to how race has affected the existing canon and standards of significant architecture, and identify how racial thought has permeated ubiquitous objects and narratives.


**Recognizing & supporting constructive cultures & techniques**

This subsection highlights and explores a particular dimension of the perpetuation of White standards and assumptions in choosing what forms of heritage merit documentation and recognition, as examined in the previous section. The canons of architectural history and design tend to devalue building materials and constructive cultures traditionally associated with communities of color. They are often deemed to be “primitive” forms of architecture, and/or the contributions of their builders to architectural and landscape histories are underrepresented. In turn, preservationists often
misunderstand these building systems by the imposition of conventional, White frameworks and
expectations in the choices and methods of how these constructive cultures are researched and studied.
The following sources shed light on these issues through discussions of specific cases of constructive
cultures that have been underserved by the preservation enterprise, as well as the mutations to and
abandonment of constructive cultures that this devaluation has spurred.

Dahmen, J. "Perceptions of earth in the age of global architecture." In Vernacular and Earthen
This chapter contrasts the devaluation of earthen architecture, which has spurred widespread
abandonment of older earthen structures around the world, with the fetishization of the same
materials in contemporary architectural design along a Western value system, which connects to
and reveals tensions and imbalances between the Global North and South.

Jackson, Ellen, and Rosangela Tenorio. “Accessibility of earth building in New Zealand.” New Zealand
This article speaks directly to how the issues around perceptions of earth building pose a need to
decenter Western values surrounding commodification and value. The authors also include
statistics that demonstrate the energy justice implications of the disturbance of constructive
cultures, through analyzing the relationship between the prevalence of these constructive cultures
and the environmental footprint of those same regions.

Lorenzo, June L. “Paguate Village Attitudes and Beliefs on Preservation and Renovation of Traditional
Structures: Remembering Our Connection to Our Mother.” Journal of American Indian Education 55,
no. 3 (Fall 2016): 91-110.
This article provides background on the intervention by the U.S. Department of Housing and
Urban Development (HUD) on Laguna Pueblo housing. Lorenzo explains how HUD’s decisions
devalued traditional constructive cultures, domestic arrangements and lifestyles, and details how,
despite the Pueblo communities’ interest in preserving their built structures, mainstream "White"
preservation does not serve these publics’ aims.

affects attitudes and adoption.” Building, Research & Information (forthcoming).
This article quantitatively demonstrates the reduction in the prevalence of earthen domestic
architecture, which has dire implications in terms of the ability for the continuous transfer of
construction techniques, as well as potential priorities and directions for conservation efforts.

Seltenrich, Nate. “Healthier Tribal Housing: Combining the Best of Old and New.” Environmental Health
Perspectives 120, no. 12 (December 2012): a460-a469.
This article illustrates the grave public health consequences of the replacement of traditional
Indigenous housing with federally organized HUD residences (see citation for Lorenzo, above, for
background), and provides examples of projects and teams that have re-centered the constructive
cultures that HUD had previously devalued, along with Indigenous values, needs, and practices.
Designating non-material or physically “compromised” heritage

The historically persistent socioeconomic disenfranchisement of Black and minority populations often led to those communities’ tangible heritage being systematically destroyed or neglected. Yet, one of the mainstays of criteria for designating historic sites is material integrity and authenticity. These entries call into question this persistent fixation on the physicality of heritage, particularly in designation criteria.


This article highlights the bureaucratic hurdles in the attempt to designate 857 Riverside Drive in New York City for its connections to the Underground Railroad. The comments from Landmarks Preservation Commission representatives and the proponents of designation demonstrate the tensions arising from conventional designation processes and criteria.


In addition to highlighting the need to shift attention away from materially intact heritage, Graves discusses the Legacy Business Program and cultural districts in San Francisco, which are examples of designation tools that shift the focus from material to communities’ cultural assets.


Michael identifies and challenges the existing standards and definitions of integrity, period of significance, and the application of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards as obstacles to the designation and recognition of more diverse heritage.


Finding representational justice in designation

Designation systems, like the National Register in the U.S., have tended to be dominated by White narratives and sites, partly due to the focus on materiality mentioned above. The result is a blatant imbalance between what publics are represented on heritage rosters and the actual demographic breakdowns of the population. The entries below focus on efforts to correct these imbalances, as well as critical analyses of whether those efforts were successful.


de Cesari offers a critique of the UNESCO World Heritage program and its structural prevention of equitable participation among non-Western parties in heritage processes, despite its attempts at reform through the 1990s.


While the rationale for diversifying the historic preservation practice is given in terms of imbalances in the National Register, Kaufman also recognizes the limits of the Register’s standards in its ability to account for sites, and concludes by noting that until social inclusion is fully learned (including through the employment of preservationists from underrepresented groups), the profession is unlikely to fully embrace diversity.


Based on his work with the National Park Service on the César Chávez Special Resource Study and American Latino Heritage Initiative, Rast analyzes the contradictions between the purported aims of historic preservation to embrace diversity and the existing methods within the field that provide obstacles to achieving these goals. In particular, Rast discusses why current designation standards are inadequate or inappropriate if preservation is to steer away from the “designation and protection of properties... associated with prominent, White, male architects and their wealthy clients.”


Programs & groups valorizing heritage with specific publics

Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation.


Latinos in Heritage Conservation.

**Interpreting Historical Content & Narratives**
Involving stakeholders and publics in examining significance & appropriate representation

As with designation, preservationists can integrate stakeholders perspectives in interpretation and curation. This affords publics more agency in shaping how their narratives are told and presented to others. These entries examine how publics self-determine and interpret their histories, and ways to implement this collaboration.


Whiters, Kennedy. @unRedacTheFacts on Instagram and Twitter.

Managing multiple or conflicting values and significance

A common challenge when interpreting historic sites is the coexistence of numerous narratives or values, making them important to different publics in different ways. The entries in this section provide examples of solutions to navigate such scenarios.
Atlanta History Center. “Confederate Monument Interpretation Guide.”
This online toolkit provides resources to help communities address, interpret, and make decisions about Confederate monuments in their public spaces.

In recent years, preservation agencies at the federal, state, and local levels have advanced more inclusive approaches to historic preservation by commissioning theme studies, surveys, and nominations to registers of historic places that address previously neglected aspects of US heritage. Much of the work done under the broad umbrella of inclusive histories has been focused on communities defined by a single aspect of identity. This essay raises questions about the effectiveness of single-community studies in addressing previously overlooked aspects of history at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and more. We encourage preservation professionals to take seriously the concept of intersectionality, which acknowledges the multivalent quality of lived experience, addresses the complexity of identity, and recognizes the multiplicity of communities with a stake in the preservation and interpretation of any given historic property. This essay argues for the strategic importance of learning from recent studies of LGBTQ resources to refine intersectional approaches to preservation planning, while identifying hidden barriers to inclusion and cultural equity in programs and projects that use a single lens to identify cultural resources associated with underrepresented groups.


**Considering additive interpretive approaches**
This section examines addition of new interpretive content as a particular solution to revisit and remediate existing interpretations that may be incomplete or unacceptable. This may include physical additions or digital interventions with curatorial and interpretive intent.

Wright discusses the strategies that curators took in relocating a Confederate statue on the UT Austin campus to a museum setting. The chapter highlights how the textual contextualization and interior layout design of the exhibition served to convey the statue not as an object of veneration, but of critical interpretation and historical analysis.

NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project.

The Texas Freedom Colonies Project.

**Physically Intervening on Historic Fabric**
Involving stakeholders in conservation decisions

Stakeholder participation and knowledge also have the potential to influence the appropriate conservation priorities, technologies, and philosophies. Stakeholders may value certain physical features of the site more than what an outsider may identify as notable architectural features; other publics may prefer to let sites and objects age naturally instead of artificially halting decay. This speaks to a broader discourse emerging in the preservation field on expert vs. non-expert knowledge (see the “Reforming preservation policy” subsection for sources on this issue at large). The examples in this section span such cases where “non-expert” input swayed conservation treatment plans, as well as critiques of the failure to engage stakeholders.


Based on surveys of locals in historic districts in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the authors demonstrate that community perceptions of what architectural features are worth preserving differ to a statistically significant degree. While the study acknowledges the lack of Black residents who participated in the study, the findings underline the need for community input in interpreting generic preservation guidelines and translating them into conservation treatments.


This account explores the agency of individual and institutional contributors and grassroots preservation activism in preserving heritage within communities and exercising decision-making power about what is preserved and how.


From event description: “Calls to decolonize collections and partner with communities have gained momentum in recent years. Decolonizing would mean transforming the way we view and interact with collections and people, de-centering white colonizer perspectives, and addressing the traumatic histories that have led to our existing systems. The current racial justice movement has made the need to be inclusive and to partner with communities even more clear. What would it look like if we rejected conservation’s traditional top-down approach and instead shared authority with Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color? This session will examine the need to dismantle our problematic foundations and discuss how we can enrich our work through partnerships with others.”


Baird distinguishes between the universalizing discourse of human rights and the locally oriented strategies of social justice. She argues that human rights have often been applied in the realm of cultural heritage without considering contextual particularities or involving local stakeholders in the decision-making process. While this concern for bringing community perspectives to the table applies across the whole of the preservation process, the examples that Baird highlights largely concern material decisions that guided how heritage sites would be managed and treated.


This article examines how the values, doctrines, and methodologies of orthodox heritage practice are incorporated into legal regulatory systems and thereby concentrate power in the hands of heritage professionals. The values, doctrines, and methodologies of orthodox heritage practice do not consider marginalization, segregation, and exploitation of traditionally disenfranchised groups. Socially vulnerable groups are at a particular disadvantage in post-disaster scenarios and are excluded from the planning and decision-making process for the recovery and preservation of their heritage. Using Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in the United States of America as an example, this article argues that orthodox heritage practice’s neglect of crucial social trends limit citizen empowerment and decision-making abilities for traditionally disenfranchised groups in heritage recovery, management, and planning after disaster. It goes on to propose a sequential mixed-method approach wherein heritage professionals can expand their roles from regulators to facilitators by adopting participatory methods. Though this article examines the issues of vulnerability and exclusion through a U.S. example, the authors hope that this article can open a deeper discussion of these themes in an international context.


Wells, J. C. “In Stakeholders We Trust: Changing the ontological and epistemological orientation of built heritage assessment through participatory action research.” In How to assess built heritage? Assumptions, methodologies, examples of heritage assessment systems, edited by B. Szmygin, pp. 215–265. Romualdo Del Bianco Foundatione & Lublin University of Technology and ICOMOS Committee for Theory and Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration, 2015. In the twenty-first century, the relevance of the positivistic, orthodox heritage paradigm is increasingly being called into question in terms of its ability to provide an appropriate ontological and epistemological foundation for the assessment of built heritage. Heterodox heritage theory, largely represented by heritage studies, now presents the alternative paradigms of constructivism, critical theory, and postcolonial theory that are more suited to understanding the multiple truths and the pluralistic soci-ocultural values of a wider range of stakeholders’ values. Heritage is also seen as a tool for social justice and to empower communities. In this environment, existing, orthodox tools to assess the value of built heritage are inadequate. Heterodox theory is largely based on a foundation of the social sciences and Participatory Action Research (PAR) may offer a
way to provide a useful tool for practitioners that encompasses both heterodox theory and the goals of social justice and community empowerment.

**Conserving sites where materiality is secondary**

As previously noted, it is common for material traces of historical narratives pertaining to or dear to historically oppressed publics, including Black Americans, to not be in its original state. There are instances among such sites, however, where the material integrity is not as important as associative or other intangible values that publics ascribe to that site. This section explores different approaches to conservation, broadly defined.


The article’s characterization of “ethnic” culture is not without its problems, but the article rightfully points out the importance of qualities and attributes that are not compatible with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, particularly more “ephemeral” elements that should also be considered through a preservation lens. Lee also pushes for the preservation field’s demographics to better match the actual demographic of the U.S.

**Adding or reconstructing**

*This section considers modes of adding primarily aesthetic (non-interpretive) material to existing sites, or reconstructing sites that were previously destroyed. This section tests the necessity of material continuity as a measure of authenticity and a criterion for judging heritage.*


Brown compares two examples of reconstruction projects – New Echota and Africville Baptist Church – that sought to rectify past destructions of collective memory and buildings belonging to Cherokee and African-Canadian publics, respectively. While reconstruction presents potential for correcting past injustices, Brown uses the contrast between these two cases to underscore how there is also the danger of changing the historical narrative in favor of the aggressors, in turn highlighting the need for the physical process of reconstruction to be enhanced by careful and just interpretation, curation, and presentation.


The Whitney Plantation is both an example of interpretive and architectural/spatial addition, but Wilson in particular argues for the importance of the latter in historical reckoning. Indeed, parts of the Plantation were moved onto the site or reconstructed – against conventional notions of “authenticity” in preservation – for the purpose of telling the full story of its past, including the enslaved Blacks that lived and worked there.
**Subtracting or removing**

As an alternative to the additive approaches outlined above, this section seeks to engage with the possibility of physically removing heritage. This approach can be applicable as a means to address past injustices, to confront the intentions and impacts of place-based symbols, as well as to expand our conception of what constitutes a viable intervention on historic material in light of climate change and other crises that endanger heritage.


This statement explains the rationale for the National Trust’s support of the removal of Confederate monuments in public spaces that were erected to promote the Lost Cause mythology. Importantly, such monuments have been one of the few instances in which a leading national preservation organization like the National Trust has openly advocated for and deemed removal as a legitimate preservation strategy.

**Propagating and promulgating**

This subsection speaks to the role and limitations of building codes and other policy-based or institutional tools that circumscribe the perpetuation and conservation of undervalued structures and constructive cultures (see “Recognizing & supporting constructive cultures & techniques” subsection under Documenting & Collecting Data above). For example, preservation efforts to increase acceptance of materials that fall outside of the conventional choices for White architecture often include attempts at standardization of the material, as well as its inclusion in building codes. While these efforts may facilitate the continued practice of these constructive cultures by removing bureaucratic hurdles, this solution can also constrict traditions by imposing homogeneity and predictability for the sake of acceptance within a predominantly White framework.


While this chapter does not directly tackle social justice questions, it is helpful in its explanation of the obstacles to standardization and approval of non-engineered materials, and the politicization of establishing building codes. It is also worth considering further whether the desired outcome is in fact for the acceptance and inclusion of these constructive materials and techniques in building codes: such a solution raises questions in terms of whether building codes will simply impose further constrictions based on the goals of standardization and compliance. For a similar discussion about bamboo, see also Buckingham, Kathleen, Paul Jepson, Liangru Wu, I.V. Ramanuja Rao, et al. “The Potential of Bamboo is Constrained by Outmoded Policy Frames.” AMBIO 40 (2011): 544-548.

**Financing and Managing Historic Places and Projects**

Preservation involves human and financial resources. Recognizing this fact, this section compiles sources for grants and financial support that specifically target projects that involve institutionally underrepresented histories. The first subsection focuses on initial funds and capital for preservation efforts, while the second subsection points toward resources to continue organizing anti-racist programming at historic sites beyond its initial preservation.
Supporting BIPOC preservation and sites


From the website: “The program encourages applications from small and mid-sized institutions that have never received an NEH grant; community colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges and Universities; and Native American tribes and Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian organizations with significant humanities collections. Furthermore, organizations or collections that represent the contributions of under-represented communities are highly encouraged.”


National Trust for Historic Preservation, “African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.”

Incentivizing anti-racist projects and activities


Examining Preservation Intentions and Outcomes

Understanding impacts of preservation on communities
While much literature focuses on the process of identifying, designating, interpreting, and treating historic material, relatively little work has critically examined the implications of these actions for multiple publics after the fact. This section encompasses efforts to identify ways to measure success of preservation efforts, and reckon with the socioeconomic impacts (both positive and negative) that preservation interventions have had on the local context.

This article examines the evolution of the discourse justifying preservation as a form of public policy, and explores the differences between legal rationales for municipal-level preservation and the ways in which preservation-minded publics and professionals perceive preservation intentions and outcomes, using New York City as a case study. A key finding is the lack of diversity in preservation-minded publics, suggesting that preservation processes, even if participatory, cannot ensure just outcomes for all.


This documentary film captures the tensions arising in a historically Black neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio, due to the influx of gay White residents. The film highlights how historic preservation tools and ordinances can be used against Black communities, by enforcing aesthetic regulations that are not only costly but align more closely with the ideals and preferences of White residents and officials.


**Instrumentalizing preservation for change**

This section raises possibilities of socially inclusive rationales for preservation, and imagines preservation as a tool not in its own right but in the service of broader social, environmental, and economic aims.


From event description: “Many regard the preservation field as being in the midst of a relevancy crisis — its systems outdated, its practices exclusionary, and its practitioners out of touch. In order for preservation to become more accessible and relevant to more communities and to survive into the future, deep change is necessary. But can we reform preservation or do we attempt to dismantle it and build anew? Can preservation ever be an instrument for addressing or advancing equity? What is the social responsibility of preservation, and what does accountability look like?”


This article provides and discusses data to examine changes that have endangered the traditionally middle class minority neighborhoods of Chicago in the past few decades, such as poverty exposure, school quality, and labor market engagement, which in turn have furthered population loss. To address these issues, the Federal Reserve of Chicago hosted a forum in November 2019 to discuss how to invest in these neighborhoods, and ultimately retain and attract residents to them. One of the recommendations from this event was to “generate positive narratives about place,” which has important implications for historic preservation in instrumentalizing the existing built environment to foster a sense of community and sense of place.