



Charrette:essay

White Out: Architecture's enduring resistance to blackness

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ABSTRACT Civil rights activist Whitney Young noted in his keynote speech at the 1968 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Convention, '[...] you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights, [...] You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance'. Young's call begets the questions of the architectural design profession: How has the development of America's public spaces, streets, parks and buildings engaged in the habitual rejection of black residents? In part it is due to a naturalised ideology of whiteness at the foundation of architectural education and practice. In order to address the continued 'complete irrelevance' of architectural education and practice fifty years after Young's exhortation, this paper will: 1) conceptualise notions of whiteness and blackness and how they operate in the United States (both in practice and theory); 2) delineate the architectural implications of whiteness and blackness; and, 3) begin a discussion of how American architectural schools can address this issue explicitly by discussing a pedagogical project.

KEYWORDS pedagogy, race, design, architecture, public space

On 11 August 2017 approximately 250 mostly young white males gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia in a torchlight march meant to evoke the parades of Hitler Youth and similar ultra-right nationalist organisations from the past century.¹ In addition to torches, the marchers carried rifles, Confederate flags, swastikas, anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic banners, and yelled racist chants. The march was followed the next day by a Unite the Right rally that attracted hundreds more and made visible the hate, violence and racism often masked in the public realm of the United States. Held in Emancipation Park (formerly known as Lee Park) at the foot of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, the white nationalist gathering was convened in opposition to a city plan to remove the statue of Lee from the public city park.

Emancipation Park sits not far from the campus of University of Virginia (UVA) where the previous night's march was held. UVA was established by Founding Father and President Thomas Jefferson in 1819 as an architectural didactic demonstration of democracy and freedom. Today Charlottesville is a politically progressive city with nearly 80 percent of voters choosing Hilary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election.² But like Jefferson, the city is steeped in the legacies of Southern history and the concomitant embrace of slavery. Historically over 50 percent of Charlottesville's population were enslaved; today African-Americans make up 19 percent of the population.³ This population is being pushed out by gentrification—a phenomenon now ubiquitous in most urban regions of the United States.

The complexities of the racialisation of public space in the United States were catalysed into public discussion in Charlottesville in 2015 when a black high school student started a petition to have the Robert E. Lee statue removed from Emancipation Park. The City's vice mayor and only black member of the City Council, Wes Bellamy, championed the teenager's cause and set up a commission which recommended either relocation or reinterpretation. Instead the City Council voted in April 2017 to sell the statue. In May, a judge issued an injunction to keep the statue in place for six months. That summer two white nationalists—Richard B. Spencer and Jason Kessler—organised a July rally to protest the removal and sale of Lee's statue. Kessler

would also organise the August march and rally that would lead to the tragic death of a by-stander and two state police troopers.

Following the rally turned riot in Charlottesville, government officials across the U.S. renewed calls to remove the numerous Confederate statues, markers and monuments from America's public spaces. Those removed immediately in the weeks that followed included edifices in: Annapolis, Md., University of Texas, Austin campus, Baltimore, Md., Brooklyn, N.Y., Durham, N.C., Gainesville, Fla., New Orleans, La., Daytona Beach, Fla., Durham, N.C., Franklin, Ohio, Helena, Mont., Kansas City, Mo., Lexington, Ky., Los Angeles, Ca., Madison, Wis., Louisville, Ky., Memphis, Tenn., Nashville, Tenn., Orlando, Fla., Rockville, Md., just to name a few of a growing list across a variety of regions. Other municipalities, like Boston, Mass., covered monuments as they weighed their options with Republican Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, noting: 'we should refrain from the display of symbols, especially in our parks, that do not support liberty and equality'.⁴ More pointedly, Democratic New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu said—after removing three public monuments to the Confederacy: 'these statues were a part of ... terrorism as much as a burning cross on someone's lawn; they were erected purposefully to send a strong message to all who walked in their shadows about who was still in charge in this city'.⁵

In August 2016 the Southern Poverty Law Center had counted more than 1,500 public commemorations of the Confederacy. Excluding the battlefields and cemeteries, their count had 718 standing monuments and statues, 109 public schools, and 80 counties and cities. This does not include the 10 U.S. military bases bearing the names of Confederate icons, which while private spaces are meant as symbols to protect the public freedoms supposedly enjoyed by all American citizens. So what is the problem with this problematic history as it adorns public spaces? Charlottesville resident and former head of the local N.A.A.C.P. Eugene Williams favors keeping the Lee statue because he wants people to remember the Jim Crow era. He noted following the rally-cum-riot, 'this statue has a lesson to teach us'.⁶ If one agrees with Williams' premise (and clearly not all do), then what is that lesson?

The Confederate statues are not just symbols of the problematic political or socio-economic control of black bodies in America. The social production of black bodies in the United States is also an architectural and public space problem; and, thus, there is a design lesson implicit in this needed discussion. Civil rights activist Whitney Young noted in his keynote speech at the 1968 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Convention:

[...] you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights, and I am sure this has not come to you as any shock. You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance. [...] As a profession, you ought to be taking stands on these kinds of things. [...] if you don't speak out [...] then you will have done a disservice [...] most of all, to yourselves. ⁷

Young's call begets the questions of the architectural design profession: How has the development of America's public spaces, streets, parks and buildings engaged in the habitual rejection of black residents? How does mere proximity to public buildings and spaces not translate into equal access for all?

The continuing story of the potential removal of Confederate monuments from public spaces is not just a socio-political story. It is an architectural one. The concept of public space in the United States is seen as neutral and, therefore, good for all users by (primarily white) designers. It is this naturalised ideology of whiteness rendering the racialised nature of American public space invisible that is also at the foundation of architectural education and practice. In order to address the continued 'complete irrelevance' of architectural education and practice fifty years after Young's exhortation, this paper will: 1) conceptualise notions of whiteness and blackness and how they operate in the United States; 2) delineate the architectural implications of whiteness and blackness; and, 3) begin a discussion of how American architectural schools can explicitly address this issue.

The social production of black bodies in America

We are a racist nation, and no way in the world could it be otherwise given the history of our country. Being a racist doesn't mean one wants to go out and join a lynch mob or send somebody off to Africa or engage in crude, vulgar expressions of prejudice. Racism is a basic assumption of superiority [...]
—Whitney Young⁸

It is not by accident that black bodies have been subjugated in the United States; and, it is not uniquely an American phenomenon. It is a belief system established by white Europeans through the invention of race. The invention of racial classification is credited to French physician François Bernier's *A New Division of Earth by the Different Species or Races which Inhabit It* (1684), wherein he classifies people based on physical features such as facial type, cranial profile, hair texture.⁹ By the 18th century Carolus Linnaeus further defined the 'races' into seven categories.¹⁰ With the 19th century an explosion of European naturalists begin publishing works on race classifying humans by their own metrics with the common foundation of demarcating Caucasians as the superior race and Negroes as the lowest.¹¹ These belief systems were then used to establish Caucasian Europeans as the dominant race and, therefore, served as a rationalisation for the subjugation and colonisation of the peoples of Africa (and elsewhere).

Simultaneous with the establishment of race as a category of scientific inquiry, philosophers would also provide their own racially-based rationalisation for White European superiority. In his aesthetic treatise Immanuel Kant—the German philosopher credited with helping to found modern philosophical thought—referred to the black man as insignificant and sub-human.¹² His successor, German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel would state that Africa had no significance to the history of man and had no value.¹³ He would describe its people as amoral and soulless. Out of these belief systems the social construct of whiteness emerges.¹⁴

In Europe and North America both the humanities and the sciences would affirm a social construction of whiteness whose outcome was to limit and control the

movement of black bodies.¹⁵ The black body was (and is) kept in place by the creation of laws, policies, and the normative reinforcement of belief systems based on this 'scholarly inquiry'. In the United States, this historical cultural construct still operates based on a whiteness belief that it has the right to police and control black bodies; and, a right to appropriate all that a black body produces.

The construct of whiteness is so embedded into American ideology it is often believed to be *the* (neutral) truth. As a condition of neutrality, whiteness is rarely critiqued or challenged by white bodies. For example, the concept of public space in the United States is seen as a neutral one by both (white) designers and (white) occupiers; and, yet, is defined by white values, beliefs, rituals and practices as the 'normative' or 'neutral' condition for public space. The aforementioned protests and discussions regarding Confederate flags and monuments in public parks is one such more visible example. As journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates states: 'the Confederate flag's defenders often claim it represents 'heritage not hate'.¹⁶ But 'heritage' in this case is a mask behind which whiteness (and racism) hides. In his 'Corner Stone' speech given at the start of the Civil War (1861), Alexander Stephens made this notion of whiteness as heritage explicit:

*Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea [of equality of the races]; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.*¹⁷

Coates notes that this 'moral truth' as embodied in the Confederate flag is what animates white supremacists. It is not a leap, therefore, to demonstrate that it is the same for the Confederate monuments which adorn 'public' parks and spaces. The 1500 public Confederate-related monuments in 31 states racialises the notion of public space; and, therefore, communicates different messages to different publics about the nature and occupation of the built environment.¹⁸ Ultimately, under the pretence of heritage, Confederate flags and monuments promote a

notion of public space that is founded in whiteness.

Geographer Carolyn Finney notes that this goes beyond the tropes of the Confederacy as she argues that the legacies of slavery and racial violence have culturally shaped who has access to public parks and natural spaces. Finney writes:

*Racialization and representation are not passive processes; they also have the power to determine who actually participates in environment-related activities and who does not; which voices are heard in environmental debates and which voices are not.*¹⁹

Parks, Recreation and Tourism Professor KangJae Lee has identified several reasons why blacks do not frequent public parks in large numbers to include racist historical prohibitions to access, a lack of black heritage interpretation, and contemporary racial conflicts between communities. Both Finney and Lee did extensive interviews for their studies with Lee noting:

*Many of the adults I spoke with were raised by parents who experienced discriminatory Jim Crow laws which prevented or discouraged African Americans from visiting public parks. [...] Many African Americans do not go to parks because their parents and grandparents could not take their children. In other words, many African Americans' lack of interest [...] is a cultural disposition shaped by centuries of racial oppression.*²⁰

While Lee and Finney are focused on the public's participation in natural spaces, their arguments can be extended to the built environment as well.

The racial production of Architecture and Urbanism

How can architectural modes of production, then, resist image and representation to translate the black American experience into spatial forms, and to create alternative spaces for creative expression and affirmation of daily life in American society?
—Mario Gooden²¹

When black bodies try to critique or challenge architectural or spatial whiteness, it is met with a resistance that, at best, is a reaction of

ignoring the challenger and at worse physical violence (the aforementioned riots in Charlottesville, Virginia are just one in many examples of this phenomenon). When black bodies exist in white space it is often seen as suspicious.²² This manifests itself in a variety of ways when black bodies occupy public/white space: being followed by security in an outdoor mall; being questioned as to one's presence on a college campus; being interrogated by police for being in a park, on the street, or on a front porch or stoop. The normative/white supposition assumes that black bodies in the built environment are criminal, intellectually inferior, and/or undeserving. Whiteness becomes a structural system that ensures the continued dominance of white bodies.²³ It is a tool to legitimise the oppression of the 'otherness' of black bodies and reinforce exclusion, marginality and create 'landscapes of exclusion'.²⁴ It is such a prevailing structural system that ties to the origins of the United States, that architectural education and praxis reinforce it as a neutral condition, because it is assumed to be the (white) American condition.

Historian Dolores Hayden has commented on this condition by noting, 'one of the consistent ways to limit the economic and political rights of groups has been to constrain social reproduction by limited access to space'.²⁵ Thus, different groups understand public space differently and people's experience of spaces are not often revealed or made visible in the complex politics of space that overlap with issues of identity, heritage, and experience; particularly when whiteness has rendered those spaces as neutral in the prevailing discourse. This paper's author, Wortham-Galvin has previously written about this phenomenon related to LGBTQ contributions to North American cities wherein whiteness correlates to straightness.²⁶ Culturally protean urban and public spaces will only result when straightness-cum-whiteness is challenged as an outmoded utopian twentieth century notion of the city as community. Queering public space, thus means constructing a place 'where people witness and appreciate diverse cultural expressions that they do not share and do not fully understand'.²⁷

In constructing a queer design praxis that promotes a city of difference, queer is used to refer to a destabilisation of the norm. Queer is also used as a signifier of the making of



Figure 1: Diagram showing whiteness' perceived position with blackness. Blackness sits outside of whiteness. All diagrams shown were created to demonstrate the spatial relationships between the construct of whiteness and blackness as explored during Jackie McFarland's M.Arch thesis research (Jackie McFarland).

identity, gender, sexuality, family, and 'community', as moving targets.²⁸ Wortham-Galvin, thus, uses the term queer (as other authors do) not as a way of stipulating specific people's identities or sexualities, but in the questioning of norms and orthodoxies so that we might achieve an urban realm of 'difference without exclusion'.²⁹ City life and urban knowing, in this schema, does not aspire to community (which oft excludes those not a part of the predominating homogeneous group) but to the construction of city life wherein the tensions between different groups and their varied understandings of sites make the complex politics of place visible. In this way a queer or black space is a means by which culture is seen as a process, not product, that derives from the enaction of space, not *a priori* to it as whiteness/straightness does.³⁰

A notion of blackness is, thus, similar to conceptualisations of the queering of space in that it aligns with Lefebvre's proposition of the right to the city as the right 'to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of [...] moments and spaces'.³¹ Sociologist Don Mitchell concurs with the promotion of a city of tensions and difference noting that, 'in the city, different people with different projects must necessarily struggle with one another over the shape of the city, the terms of access to the public realm'.³² Within the theoretical rubric outline above, the discourse of

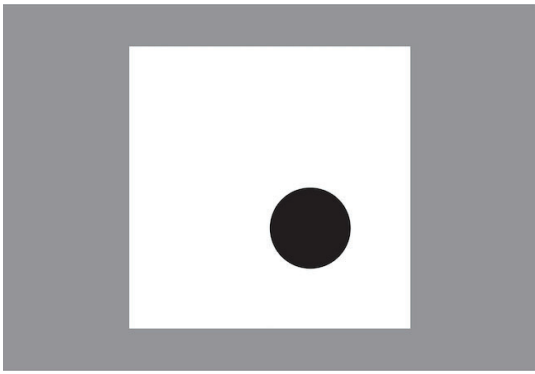


Figure 2: Diagram shows the true relationship between whiteness and blackness. Blackness is a construct created by Whiteness to prop itself up and justify its control over black bodies research (Jackie McFarland).

community is one of whiteness and the discourse of difference is one of blackness. Currently, place-making via architectural design in the United States is ruled by an ideology of community (aka whiteness) rather than one of difference (aka blackness). While geographer Kath Browne has asserted that the conceptualisation of the queer 'seeks to reconsider how we think [of] our modes of being and our conceptualisations of politics',³³ this paper uses the term blackness to underline a similar conceptualisation of the production of architecture and architects.

As much as the construct of whiteness asserts that blackness sits outside of whiteness—and that the *American* experience is based on white European values—it is not.³⁴ American culture has, in large part, been produced by black experiences. Black Americans have contributed significantly to music, literature, art, sciences, and food, as well as, all other aspects of American life.³⁵ In the context of the United States blackness sits firmly in whiteness not outside of it. Much of what blackness has generated in terms of culture has been that of remixing and reinterpreting white Eurocentric values with African culture, creating a distinct voice that can only be described as American.³⁶ The problem of whiteness is also an architectural problem, because the regime of architecture refuses to be critical of its continuing role of the erasure and confinement of black bodies in the United States. Architecture is all too willing to align itself with whoever is in power or who has funding,³⁷ which has often allowed itself to be

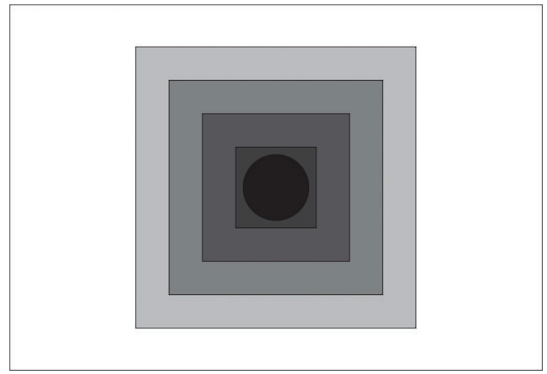


Figure 3: Diagram shows that in-order to control blackness it must build a system of barriers to limit access to spaces research (Jackie McFarland).

used as a tool for the continued oppression on the 'other'.

Design is not neutral and neither is architecture (in its pedagogies, processes and products). While the profession and discipline find it easy to rally around issues of sustainability and efficiency, conversations about race are minimal to non-existent. The ideology of neutrality allows its practitioners to be, at the least, complicit in the role of architecture in perpetuating racism in the United States. This unwillingness to engage in conversations about race has, in part, made architecture less relevant in American society by excluding those who are seen as 'other'. The fixation of architectural praxis with the celebration (or commodification) of aesthetic genius in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been supported by an emphasis on the architect as reified author of the artistic object, rather than as facilitator of cultural practices. Is it possible to counter notions of cultural commodification and aesthetic genius in search of extending architecture culture to those specific people and distinct places left out or behind of those discussions and decisions; and, as a consequence, re-conceiving of the role (and implicit power) of the architect?

Extant design and development processes are reinforced both by historical precedent and contemporary practices in the Global North that perpetuate a naturalised mainstream praxis and teaching pedagogy.³⁸ A 1976 *Newsweek* interview with architect Peter Eisenman encapsulates sentiments toward practice that abound still. Namely, that the professional architect wields the power and expertise to



Figure 4: Diagram shows where blackness and whiteness intermix, mostly for the entertainment of whiteness research (Jackie McFarland).

know what is best for the client and/or the public; and, it is the architect's job to convince them of such.³⁹ The disavowal of client participation in the design process began with the professionalisation of architecture in the United States in the late nineteenth century and, despite the incursions of public interest design, is still the prevailing attitude today.⁴⁰ This is problematic as blackness is present neither as significant creator or significant client in the built environment.

In order to start this conversation of blackness in architecture, it must begin with architectural learning institutions. This must go deeper than filling demographic quotas; and, educators must understand this is not just about who is in architecture school and who is in practice (although those are critical issues), but the conversation needs to expand beyond demographics.⁴¹

Blackness as knowledge production

Knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?

—Jean-Francois Lyotard⁴²

These attitudes of the profession begin in the classroom where architectural pedagogies reinforcing the authoritarian role of the architect as form giver remain. Theorist Peter McLaren notes the problem of these naturalised structures that wear the mask of neutrality:

Mainstream pedagogy simply produces those forms of subjectivity preferred by the dominant culture, domesticating, pacifying, and

*deracinating agency, harmonising a world of disjuncture and incongruity; and smoothing the unruly features of daily existence. At the same time, student subjectivities are rationalised and accommodated to existing regimes of truth.*⁴³

In other words, unless the ideology of the architect and their productions are challenged in school, it is difficult to dislodge the practice of architects outside of the academy.

Acknowledging this stasis, a pedagogy that embraces blackness seeks to allow (student) architects to question the way things are critically and to replace them with the way things might be. It seeks to subvert who makes the built environment and who occupies it as a static giver and receiver relationship with a conflation of multiple peoples supporting a co-production of place. A blackness pedagogy allows for (student) architects to transform from sole author of a unique form to mediator of an adaptive built environment wherein reality and forms are understood as *in process*. It also sanctions access for those people left out and behind of traditional design practices to participate in the making of the places they occupy. Thus the right to place is not just about its occupation, but about its inception.⁴⁴

The question is how to initiate a direct conversation about race and a pedagogy that embraces blackness in institutions of learning—beyond a vagueness about low income housing or public interest design—when only three percent of faculty and five percent of students in the United States are Black. This conscious reflection on the naturalisation of whiteness in architecture needs to begin with a primarily white constituency; particularly amongst a professorate where an overwhelming majority of *white* full and associate professors provide primary leadership roles in the shaping of curricula. Thus, all faculty and students need to know how we got here and have the opportunity to self-reflect to gain an insight into their own biases. It must be acknowledged that what is required is not easy. Educators in schools of architecture are constantly struggling to meet the requirements of NAAB, but even more difficult for instructors is talking about race. It requires the academy to be brave, because as a nation the explicit conversation of whiteness and blackness has been removed from all levels of education. It requires white educators to become self-aware

of their own privilege and biases and the neutrality with which they communicate the design of public spaces and buildings in particular. These conversations can begin in multiple areas in architecture schools by including Black American architects in history and theory class and by having a dialogue as to how and why—in spite of the global architecture movement and NAAB requirements around social responsibility and community engagement—they are consistently left out of history, theory, and studio discourse. Instructors can start by introducing the research of those already introducing blackness into architecture: Mario Gooden, Darell Wayne Fields, Craig L. Wilkins, and Mabel O. Wilson.⁴⁵

Blackness in the curriculum

Architectural History is White, Architectural Theory is White, and Architectural practice, no matter what color the 'owner' and 'workers' is White. Although I have insisted that I have no faith in history, theory, or practice, I can now be more specific. I have no faith in these notions because of their pronounced and pervasive 'Whiteness', which denies outright any substantive black voice.
—Darell Wayne Fields⁴⁶

In order to pursue an agenda of prompting blackness in architecture, the author used a federal National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) Artworks funded design-build project, *A Place To Be*, to catalyse curriculum change in a broader series of required courses for an academic year.⁴⁷ The curriculum project began by asking: Who makes place and who occupies it?⁴⁸ Who is left out and behind in traditional design and development issues? What happens when a primarily white city (Portland, Oregon) and a primarily white discipline (architecture in the U.S.) tackle design-based inequities? How do spaces construct a particular world-view for their occupants; how has the discipline of architecture passed on that world-view; and, how the profession has embedded that world-view within the built environment? What does it mean when the perceptions and values of the praxis of architecture differ greatly from those with whom we are supposed to be designing?

For the 2015-2016 academic year, the author brought blackness into as many courses as possible to broaden the narrow aim of the NEA

Artworks grant. These 5 courses, taught in 9 months, included: two required graduate history theory courses; a required graduate comprehensive integrated design studio; a required graduate professional practice elective requirement; and an elective seminar for upper level undergraduates and graduate students. The intent was to start a conversation within the School of Architecture—amongst students, faculty and visiting professionals—about blackness in architecture by making it central within the required curriculum instead of siloing it to a single elective or special topics studio.

The attempts were not meant to displace or discount the very needed and necessary expertise by black studies and black architecture scholars on architectural and spatial productions (e.g. Gooden, Fields, Wilkins, Wilson, etc.) by a white faculty member whose deep expertise lies adjacent in cultural studies. Instead, it was meant to confront the reality that with a predominantly white professorate bringing information into the classroom that those same faculty need to find ways to engage that material and not wait for the needed demographic changes in intellectual and professional praxis. What follows are brief descriptions about how the goal of bringing blackness into required professional architectural curricula was achieved.

The two required graduate-level history/theory seminars tackled the objective in different ways. The first was a course called 'Topics in Modernism' which typically featured the European masters of modernism from the turn of the 20th century through 1968. Meeting twice a week, the first class meeting of each week, students would read a manifesto and bring examples of built work by that (European or North American) architect to share and parse the relationships between modernism written tenets and physical manifestations. At the second meeting, students would also bring two things to discuss: 1) a black contribution to modernism from any of the arts (jazz, visual arts, textile arts, literary arts, etc.); and 2) built works of a Black Architect during the same decade as their manifesto/architecture from the previous meeting. The purpose of these exercises were: 1) to provide a broader context for the emergence of modernism and its productions outside of a Euro/North American white

centric discourse; and, 2) to build awareness of black architect's contributions to the early to mid-20th century built environment of North America which is under published and under studied.

The latter exercise was complemented by guest lectures from a Black Architect who also lived in Pruitt-Igoe as a child (the notorious Corbusian inspired housing project that was summarily torn down by 1971) and readings borrowed from an introduction to Black Studies course to provide context and language for an introduction to positioning and discussion of black cultural production. In addition, having the students find the works of Black Modernism and Architecture was purposeful to de-position the professor as expert, but as co-producer of this new awareness and understanding of a broader architectural context.

The next term's graduate history/theory course took a different tactic for achieving the goal of introducing blackness into architecture curricula. This course was required to deliver content regarding 20th century urban design and develop students' research methods and dissemination skills. For every first meeting, the course alternated between the professor delivering lectures and case studies surveying the 100 years of urban design and discussion of readings on the topic (from both design and sociology sources). For the second meeting, students took on a term-long research project investigating why historical and contemporary black experiences in Portland, Oregon had been rendered invisible. Students researched an urban topic (e.g. the displacement of the black community by the building of the highway in the 1960s) and then combined traditional archival research with interviews. The final product was not a paper that would be private (between professor and student), but a series of short films that would be permanently and publically accessible on the internet. Both the research and the films were discussed and critiqued in those second meetings by the seminar as a whole so that students might not only benefit from peer to peer engagement, but their awareness of the subject matter and plural experiences included the research of the group, not just the individual.

The remaining courses were focused on design methods and praxis and, as such, the theories

of Black Architect Craig Wilkins became one of the conceptual influences in the framing of the pedagogy. Wilkins has crafted a conceptualisation of architecture as a noun and a verb in addressing the omission of blacks from both the practice and disciplinary thinking of architecture.⁴⁹ For Wilkins 'the static, concretised understanding of architecture' as a noun keeps 'it from changing with the demands of a multicultural society'.⁵⁰ When architecture is examined as an action, state or motion (i.e. a verb), Wilkins asserts it opens up 'other possibilities for our shared environment' that present a 'more fluid, inclusive, and mobile manner of engaging the built environment'.⁵¹ Thus, the verb allows architects to embrace their role purposefully as facilitator of whose image of place gets crafted.⁵²

The distinction between architecture as a noun and as a verb is paramount, as the former derives its definition from a conception that is bound in formalism, reification, and fixed in the inert qualities of the material object.⁵³ The later (anthropological) conception of architecture is produced by many peoples, representative of everyday activities, and a 'way of life'.⁵⁴ A populist notion of design allows for the processes of dynamic social interactions to take precedence in the making of the architectural product. While all academicians and most architects would lay claim to a design process (and rightfully so), the distinction made herein is that architectural pedagogy and practice has been a form-based and/or product-based process. When a design process informed by cultural practices becomes the product, the results are potentially non-fixed, adaptive and transformative sets of forms (either in configuration and/or use). Thus the defining of architecture as a verb is deployed as a means to rethink design processes (and products) as actions of agency by the users-cum-makers *in concert with* architects, rather than as an inert gift from a Maker/Architect (or financier/client) to users. This transition from Architecture to architecturing involves the co-production of making place wherein both professionals and residents are valued for their relative expertise related to culture, inhabitation, and creating. Architectural practice in this schema is one which involves the facilitation of cultural practices as an equal (and/or foundational) design activity to the manipulation of form and space. It also implies that architectural practice

is plural in authorship. The making of architecture, then, is not just a neutral, aesthetic manipulation of technique under the rubric of art praxis, but more broadly encompasses the politics and ethics of making.

The urban design methods, professional practice elective, and integrated design studio courses all embraced a Wilkins-influenced pedagogy of the architecture of the verb as one method for including blackness as a core framework. These three courses also examined past and present experiences of Black Portlanders. Drawing upon oral history, participatory and social practice methods (as well as conventional research), these innovated the notion of place-based research by documenting (just a fraction of) the varied historic and contemporary black cultural experiences, productions and impacts on the city.⁵⁵ While grounded in primary data collection (archival, demographic, statistical, interviews, and community outreach) and supported by secondary source reading, the outputs were not in the form of traditional papers and reports, but rather in 2D-visualisations, social media, and social art practice as a way to make place-based research visible and relevant to the place issues faced by black residents.⁵⁶

These investigations (supported by peer to peer learning between the different classes with different cohorts) developed into a research-based design project documenting potential sites, programs, and visions for a Black Arts and Cultural Center (identified as a community desire through this process) with the intention of prompting conversations with and within the black community of needs, wants, and desires to ameliorate their loss of place.⁵⁷ This research-based design was done through interviews and workshops with a variety of black community organisations, leaders, and artists.⁵⁸ In addition to design envisioning, short films, social media, and 2D visualisation projects, performative research was initiated with the *Pop Up Porch*, a temporary structure meant to catalyse this research-based discussion and make it public. The methodological philosophy promoted—'we will provide the porch. You will talk. We will listen. A Conversation Experiment to discuss creating a space in Portland where Black Art and Culture is created, taught, discussed, celebrated and witnessed'⁵⁹—was critical to innovating research within a culture of oral

traditions.⁶⁰ The discussions, designs, artifacts, and community-engagements that resulted from the diversity of insertions of blackness into the required curricula demonstrated to the authors the necessity, vitality and possibility of having plurality enter the whiteness of architectural education.⁶¹

Conclusion

The role of architects and academics cannot be neutral: if played out uncritically it reverts to the interests of those in power. [...] In the context of agency, intervening takes on a political and ethical meaning.
—Florian Kossak, et al.⁶²

The changes to multiple courses across an academic year (in its pedagogy, processes, and outcomes) affirms that the responsibility of ensuring challenges to prevailing architectural pedagogies cannot and should not rest solely on black bodies. That is a trap of whiteness; expecting the 'other' to educate and prove itself. Ownership of the dismantling of racism must come from white bodies. At the moment, one quickly realises just how white a space most architecture schools are. Blackness is absent in its history, theory, studios, faculty, and student body. This ensures whiteness' ownership of architectural design, allowing white bodies to decide what has value and who gets credit ensuring whiteness' continued oppression of the 'other'. This will continue to be the case until white bodies are willing to have those conversations and challenge whiteness themselves. By engaging in talking about race's spatial, aesthetic, and social implication we directly dismantle the power of those who advocate the oppression of the 'other'. This will not happen overnight, but it will never happen if architectural educators and practitioners don't start leaning into it. Leaning into it means that it is a conversation that doesn't happen in one class room, but rather it happens in multiple classes and at multiple levels. And it is a dialogue—not a monologue—wherein the white professorate seeks assistance and knowing from colleagues in Black Studies, Cultural Studies and other venues in order to have these productive architectural conversations that dismantle the authority of the whiteness in architecture.

In order to address the ethical challenges that architectural education and production continues to generate, race needs to be

explicitly addressed not only as it concerns the demographics of architecture schools and firms, but also in acknowledging that architecture in the United States is taught and practiced with racial bias. The demographics of the problem are clear with NCARB reporting 105,847 registered architects (2015) with the Directory of African American Architects containing only 2,136 self-reporting licensed members (2017).⁶³ Nevertheless, the problem—identified and made explicit by Young—cannot be solved through a head count alone because it is also a problem of the presumed neutrality of whiteness and the invisibility of blackness in both the episteme of the American identity and as it blankets the teaching and praxis of architecture in the United States. Architecture, thus, is political; in spite of the fact that architectural education and practice has been naturalised throughout the 20th and into the 21st century to focus on just the objects—as if the contexts were only physical and not political. Young pointed this out fifty years ago and yet our response has been anemic.

References

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35 Black culture begins as a subculture. This concept has been articulated fully by Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979).

36 An example of this appropriation is the use of the colour haint blue in the painting of porches in the United States. Today many people paint the ceilings and/or trim of their porches various shades of blue-green that paint manufacturers have renamed from the original: haint blue (Miller Paints based on the West Coast calls this shade of blue 'verandah blue'). The first painted strokes of haint blue in the United States adorned not the homes of the rich, but the simple shacks of African slaves. The original haint blue creators worked on plantations. Many of their ancestors came from Angola and are well known for preserving their African heritage. They kept alive the traditions, stories, and beliefs of their ancestors, including a fear of haints. Haints, or haunts, are spirits trapped between the world of the living and the world of the dead, who are unable to cross over water. The slaves had an elegant solution. They created the haint blue paint to look like water so the spirits would become confused and tricked into thinking they could not enter. The slaves used this colour to paint their porches and other openings in

their homes. The tradition of painting porch ceilings haint blue continues today and demonstrates how African heritage is a part of American culture even though it has been rendered invisible by the culture of whiteness.

37 AIA President Robert Ivy's open public letter following the election of President Donald Trump is a prime example of the triumph of economics over politics and ethics in the architectural profession. While Ivy's statement was quickly denounced based on the politics of Trump, few made clear that architecture is a political proposition and, therefore, needs to articulate a clear position through both architectural processes as well as products.

38 Thomas Fisher discusses the foundations of the architectural profession in the Global North and its biases in Thomas Fisher, 'Revisiting the Discipline of Architecture', in *Discipline of Architecture*, ed. by Julia Williams Robinson and Andrzej Piotrowski (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 1-9.

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44 Here I am making a play on Henri Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city previously referenced above.

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47 Author Jackie McFarland participated in multiple classes and activities of A Place To Be as a graduate student.

48 Further discussion of the issue of agency and how it enters into the pedagogy of academy can be found in: Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum Books, 2000); and, B.D. Wortham-Galvin, 'Agency and Actions in the Making of Contemporary Place', *Dialectic IV* (September 2016), 28-42. The A Place to Be project was presented by authors Wortham-Galvin and McFarland under the title 'A Place To Be: Rendering Black Bodies Visible', at the AAE Conference Architecture Connects, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK, September 2017.

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50 Ibid, p. xv.

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52 For further discussion see previously referenced Wortham-Galvin, 'Agency and Actions'.

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Cultural Practice', in *The Urban Wisdom of Jane Jacobs*, by ed. Sonia Hirt (New York: Routledge) pp. 229-244.

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55 It should be stressed that these experiences and productions are plural and that no one historical or contemporary black person represents the urbanism of the whole. That being said, students were strongly encouraged to be specific in focus for each film in order to avoid generalisations. Urban issues that formed the basis of the place research included: poverty, affordable housing, access to food, economic opportunities, environmental justice, access to transportation, neighborhood formation, access to institutions, education, complete streets, displacement, right to return, urban agriculture, etc.

56 An example of an engaged visualised research component included using the social media platform Instagram—and corollary hashtags #blacksoulpdx and #blackpdx—to create an interactive mapping resource. Students started the research by using Instagram as a tool to geo-tag and hash-tag locations in real time. But the tool is democratic and participatory in that anyone and everyone can participate. Thus both residents and visitors to Portland became a part of the map production.

57 Wortham-Galvin has been influenced by Peter McLaren in establishing a critical pedagogy and therefore process. Peter McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Age* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 231. The design process articulated by xxxx and pursued through the grant included the following goals, strategies and objectives: Finding plural ways to engage people in the discussion of their needs and desires in order to achieve co-production. Using design-thinking to find opportunities within a disinvested community and recognising and supporting what is already successful. Rethinking static notions of cultural and community centres by supporting new hybrids that respond specifically to the constituents. Using architectural design as a way to construct a conversation between

multiple partners—not as an offering of a finite solution. Visualising research and conditions so they become more apparent to stakeholders at all levels. Having both students and community members embrace culture as a process that is lived; not a product to be displayed. Using a mix of strategies (instead of one) to stimulate community dialogue in order to broaden the base of whom might be involved and continue to cycle through response to see which ones continue to resonate over time and with many people (versus those that are singular and/or temporary concerns). Having students frame their work through a series of questions rather than declarations in order to destabilise the authority of the architect and promote the agency of the 'user'. To challenge the notion of who is an expert and/or what qualifies as expertise. To challenge the notion of culture as static, inert, and/or singular. To include the agency of everyday people in the design of the built environment.

58 The *A Place to Be* website is documenting (just a fraction of) the varied historic and contemporary Black cultural experiences, productions and impacts on the city of Portland. On this website you will find a few examples in the form of films and visualisations that are meant to prompt a larger discussion of the even more diverse cultural productions and experiences by Black Portlanders occurring in the past, present, and future. Making visible both the historical and contemporary experiences and productions of black residents in Portland, research outputs include infographic visualisation posters and short films revealing institutionalised displacement, gentrification, marginalisation and dispersal of black residents.

59 These words were written by black journalist and artist Renee Mitchell early in the process.

60 The Porch is meant to catalyse this discussion and to witness how Black Arts and Culture matters to Portland. In doing so, the Porch as a temporary installation aimed to call attention to the need for a permanent, public centre to celebrate African American and Black arts in Portland. The intent was to start a discussion on the Porch that will continue and hopefully result in a permanent facility. Why

provide a porch? Historically the porch has figured prominently in African American heritage for centuries in the United States as a place for family, friends, gathering, storytelling, cooking, sewing, singing, music, and conversations both important and mundane. Expressing plans and dreams would all happen on the porch as the only historically accessible public space for African-Americans. For a month, the Porch occupied a park on the corner of SW 12th Avenue and Market Street, providing a public place for all manner of creative works and discussions celebrating and originating in Portland's Black community. The goal was to create a focused space for Portland's Black Arts to be viewed, experienced, cherished, and discussed in the public sphere, in order to highlight the need for a permanent Black Arts and Cultural Center.

61 Many of these are published on the A Place To Be website. The richness of the in-class discussions and post-class evaluations, however, are not embedded therein.

62 Florian Kossak, et al., 'Agency', in *Agency: Working with Uncertain Architectures*, ed. by Florian Kossak, et al (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 3 & 6.

63 NCARB numbers are quoted from *The Architects Newspaper*, op cit. The Directory of African American Architects accessed on 8 September 2017 listed 1733 male licensed architects and 403 female licensed architects, for a total of 2136 registered African American architects listed in their data base. < <http://blackarch.uc.edu/>> [accessed 2 January 2018].