

PREFACE

Narratives of Segregation and Resistance in American Landscapes

On behalf of Dumbarton Oaks, we acknowledge that the scholarship and learning in this volume was created within the lands of Indigenous communities who have stewarded this land for thousands upon thousands of years. In Washington, D.C., where Dumbarton Oaks sits, this is on the land that is a part of the legacy of the Piscataway, Pamunkey, Nentego (Nanichoke), Mattaponi, Chickahominy, Monacan, and Powhatan communities, among others. By expanding our discourse on the relationships between people and places, culture and landscape, we seek to contribute to more fully understanding and supporting Indigenous struggles for sovereignty and place, and to finding ways to reimagine how we contribute to healing the violence of dispossession of landscape, past and present.

In summer 2019, the Garden and Landscape Studies program at Dumbarton Oaks launched the initiative Democracy and the Urban Landscape: Race, Identity, and Difference, funded and supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The intention was to catalyze, steward, and disseminate scholarship that reframes the narratives of landscape history by engaging in a deeper inquiry into the legacies of race, identity, and difference as they shape the practice of democracy in place. Landscape within this initiative is defined as the ground upon which we collectively live and make community and, in our case, is focused on the public realm. At its most physical, landscape describes the land that we shape, cultivate, and engage; at its most abstract, it describes the natural and built systems that comprise the environment more broadly. This volume of collected essays is thereby rooted in efforts to view history and historical change through a broader understanding of landscapes and their creation, shaping, and representation. The capacity of a landscape framework to identify the place of history, the sites on which history happens, serves as a critical premise of this volume of collected essays and the larger urban humanities initiative.

A landscape framework offers the opportunity to more fully interrogate the relationship of people and communities to place and land. We launched our discussions with a colloquium in fall 2019 on landscapes of enslavement. Speakers featured historians as well as interpreters and practitioners at museums, including Monticello and Whitney Plantation, and university campuses, such as Georgetown University and the University of Alabama. The discussions were probing, and it was clear that there was much to learn from the scholars and practitioners engaged in this significant work. It was also notable

how little scholarship had truly explored the agency and contributions of land and place to historical narratives of people and communities. In response, this volume is seeking to contribute to an interrogation of land-based policies and place-based practices that segregated and discriminated communities alongside alternative understandings of resistance and resilience in land and place.

For the 2020 Garden and Landscape Studies symposium, a call for papers was issued, inviting scholars to address questions of segregation, discrimination, and oppression alongside forms of resistance and the re-imagining of place and community grounded in explorations of land. The abstracts submitted reflected broad interests by scholars to push the narratives of segregation and resistance to more thoughtfully consider the ways in which cultural and spatial practices of separation, identity, response, and revolt are shaped by place—and, in turn, how place informs practice. While the proposed papers covered places around the world, we concentrated on the Americas to focus the discourse through a regional geography. And then COVID-19 hit.

In May 2020, in response to the pandemic, we moved what had been planned as an in-person symposium over the course of three days to a series of four virtual discussions over three summer months. After our initial disappointment in losing our in-person opportunities, we realized there were benefits of the virtual format. First and foremost, far more individuals and communities were able to access the papers (each prerecorded and shared with closed captions for the public) and to listen to the discussions. Second, we could expand our discussion by inviting scholars as active respondents, including Craig Barton, Kofi Boone, and Brandi Summers, as well as members of the Garden and Landscape Studies senior fellows and Mellon Advisory Board. The discussions were far richer than those hosted in the fifteen minutes allowed after an in-person talk. Furthermore, by spreading the talks and discussions over three months, the authors as well as the broader audience could reflect on each discussion over time, often, as we heard from many, re-listening to a talk or reading a reference mentioned. By the end of the series, we had not only built an audience for the topics discussed, but, to return to the Mellon initiative, we had developed a deeper recognition of the scholarship that we were seeking to steward at Dumbarton Oaks.

Dumbarton Oaks has long held a reputation for scholarly excellence, and the Garden and Landscape Studies program has been a leader in supporting research in landscape history. The Mellon initiative has brought new scholars and audiences to our collective efforts, and it has broadened attention to the urban humanities as a means of understanding the cultural constructs and built environments of cities and their urban systems. This work has expanded “the field of humanistic inquiry by adding new dimensions—of time, space, mapping, method” to the traditional focus on textual materials.¹ This volume builds on efforts to understand how spatial analysis and the study of landscapes are essential to reading spaces of democracy. Further, the work is essential to the teaching of landscape history, much of which remains constrained to outdated narratives of white male dominance as taught within design programs and encapsulated by current textbooks. The papers, first shared via the symposium and now making up this collection of essays, seek to challenge traditional historiographies and methodologies to encompass

emerging scholarship on race, gender, identity, and difference alongside urban and environmental histories.

The symposium and volume come at a time when the democratic values of equity, justice, and inclusion are especially threatened in the public realm. This is evident in the increasing challenges to stewarding national parks, the right of immigrants and marginalized communities to the urban public realm, the rising rates of mass incarceration and police violence, and the enduring legacy of redlining and exclusionary zoning as inscribed upon residential landscapes. An inclusive dialogue is required to nurture a dynamic democracy that can actively respond to the legacies of neglect, marginalization, and privilege. This volume demonstrates the critical contributions of landscape histories to the dialogue while proposing directions for further research and discussion.

None of this can be accomplished without a community of leaders, participants, and advocates. We want to thank Dumbarton Oaks and the Mellon Foundation for making this symposium and volume possible. Leadership matters when one is trying to make real and enduring change, and the support of director Tom Cummins at Dumbarton Oaks and program director Dianne Harris at the Mellon Foundation was essential. We also acknowledge the critical work of the Mellon Advisory Board, led by N. D. B. Connolly (Johns Hopkins University), Justin Garrett Moore (Columbia University), Alice Nash (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Willow Lung-Amam (University of Maryland), Dell Upton (University of California, Los Angeles), Michelle Wilkinson (National Museum of African American History and Culture), and the volume co-editor Eric Avila (University of California, Los Angeles). The Garden and Landscape Studies senior fellows were also integral in the shaping of the symposium and, in some cases, serving as discussants. These scholars include Elizabeth Meyer (University of Virginia), Kathy Gleason (Cornell University), Ron Henderson (Illinois Institute of Technology), John Pinto (Princeton University), Beth Hyde (Keane University), and Stephen Daniels (University of Nottingham). And the publications staff, including Kathy Sparkes and Sara Taylor, and program staff, including Jane Padelford and Caroline Miller, were essential. Thank you to the anonymous reviewers. Finally, thank you to our contributors, who fearlessly navigated new obstacles to produce important scholarship that we hope will generate further questions, responses, and approaches.

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NOTE

- 1 Anthony Cascardi and Michael Dear, "What Are the Urban Humanities?," *BOOM California* 6, no. 3 (November 2016), <https://boomcalifornia.org/2016/11/27/what-are-the-urban-humanities/>.