

ISSUES IN PRESERVATION POLICY

— Preservation
and Social Inclusion —
Preservation's Reckoning
— Examining Questions
of Exclusion — Shifting
Policy Toward Inclusion —
Challenging and Redefining
Narratives — Connecting
to Community Development
— Edited by Erica Avrami



Center for Sustainable
Urban Development
EARTH INSTITUTE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

COLUMBIA
GSAPP
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION

THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST **NY
CT**

Preservation and Social Inclusion

Edited by Erica Avrami

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

- 9 Preservation's Reckoning
Erica Avrami

Examining Questions of Exclusion

- 23 Toward an Inclusive Preservation:
Lessons from Cleveland
Stephanie Ryberg-Webster
- 35 How Can Historic Preservation Be More Inclusive?
Learning From New York City's Historic Districts
Ingrid Gould Ellen, Brian J. McCabe, and Gerard Torrats-Espinosa
- 45 Historic Preservation and
the New Geography of Exclusion
Mark J. Stern
- 55 Telling the Full American Story: Insights from
the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund
Brent Leggs, Jenna Dublin, and Michael Powe

Shifting Policy Toward Inclusion

- 65 Serving All Americans: The Case for Relevancy,
Diversity, and Inclusion in the National Park Service
An interview with Sangita Chari
- 71 Los Angeles's Historic Contexts:
Pathways to Inclusion in Preservation
Janet Hansen and Sara Delgadillo Cruz
- 85 Achieving Equity through Heritage Preservation:
Lessons from the Margin for the Center
An interview with Donna Graves
- 97 Finding the Soul of Communities
An interview with Claudia Guerra

Challenging and Redefining Narratives

- 109 The End of Bootstraps and Good Masters:
Fostering Social Inclusion by Creating Counternarratives
Andrea Roberts
- 123 Preserving LGBT Places:
The NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project
Andrew S. Dolkart
- 137 Blackspaces : Brownsville
Codesigning Black Neighborhood Heritage Conservation
Emma Osore
- 147 Equity and Social Inclusion from the Ground Up: Historic Preservation in Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities
Michelle G. Magalong
- 157 The Community Foundations of Allyship in Preservation:
Learning from West Mount Airy, Philadelphia
Fallon Samuels Aidoo

Connecting to Community Development

- 175 Historic Preservation and Community Development:
Past and Future Synergies
Vicki Weiner
- 191 Pullman Revitalization, Historic Preservation,
and Community Engagement
An interview with Ciere Boatright
- 201 Connecting Historic Preservation and Affordable Housing
Caroline S. Cheong
- 213 Toward Equitable Communities:
Historic Preservation in Community Development
An interview with Maria Rosario Jackson

Appendices

- 220 Conclusions: Action Agenda
- 224 Preservation's Engagement in Questions of Inclusion:
A Literature Review
- 240 Symposium Program
- 243 Authors and Symposium Participants
- 251 Acknowledgments

- Examining Questions of Exclusion
- Shifting Policy Toward Inclusion
- Challenging and Redefining Narratives
- Connecting to Community Development

The End of Bootstraps and Good Masters:
Fostering Social Inclusion by Creating Counternarratives

Andrea Roberts

Challenging and Redefining Narratives

Although I grew up in Missouri City, Texas, I had never been to the Freedom Tree tucked away in the subdivision of Lake Olympia. FIG. 1 But one day, accompanied by my friend Ayanna and her son, Zahir, I decided to see the tree for myself. I was taken by its giant extended branches. I read the historical marker, which tells the story of Palmer Plantation, founded in 1860 by Edward Palmer, one of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred"—that is, one of Texas's original Anglo settlers. ¹ The next event on the marker is Emancipation, on June 19, 1865, or Juneteenth. General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston on that date to announce the end of slavery in Texas. The marker refers to General Granger's proclamation as the "basis for what are the annual 'Juneteenth' festivities." One enslaved man, Ed Gibbs, called "a leader of the slaves" on the Palmer Plantation, "gathered all of the workers together under the branches of this tree to explain that they were free." He also said they could stay and sharecrop. The end of the story is telling: "It is in this light that slavery ended on the Palmer land beneath the spreading boughs of 'The Freedom Tree' and may it stand ever proudly as a symbol of our freedoms as Americans."

¹ Lester G. Bugbee, "The Old Three Hundred: A List of Settlers in Austin's First Colony," *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 1, no. 2 (1897): 108–117.

² Erica Avrami, Cherie-Nicole Leo, and Alberto Sanchez Sanchez, "Confronting Exclusion: Redefining the Intended Outcomes of Historic Preservation," *Change Over Time* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 102–120.

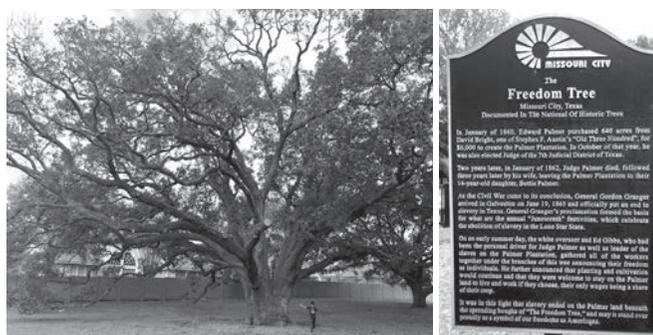


FIG. 1: Freedom Tree historical marker, December 28, 2018. The historical marker, located in front of the Freedom Tree in Missouri City, Texas, explains the significance of the tree to Fort Bend County history. While the marker celebrates the announcement of emancipation, it centers the benevolence of plantation owners. Photographs by the author.



FIG. 2: Tension rods in the Freedom Tree, December 28, 2018. While the tension rods are barely visible, their presence is evidence of the strain on the old tree and its vulnerability. A story of tension is also embedded in the narrative surrounding the tree, as its public history espouses white benevolence and Black exceptionalism while disremembering Black agency. The tension in plain sight is barely visible or perceptible. Photograph by the author.

3
Leonie Sandercock, "Out of the Closet: The Importance of Stories and Storytelling in Planning Practice," *Planning Theory and Practice* 4, no. 1 (2003): 11–28; Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Andrea R. Roberts, "Performance as Place Preservation: The Role of Storytelling in the Formation of Shankleville Community's Black Counterpublics," *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage* 5, no. 3 (2018): 146–165.

4
Laurajane Smith, "A Critical Heritage Studies," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 18, no. 6 (2012): 533–540.

5
Alexis P. Gumbs, *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Jessica M. Johnson and André Brock, keynote conversation at "Intentionally Digital, Intentionally Black" conference (University of Maryland, October 20, 2018), <https://youtu.be/6Dt5QL7ZXM4>.

6
Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 59–71; Laura Gillman, "Storytelling as Embodied Knowledge," in *Unassimilable Feminisms: Reappraising Feminist, Womanist, and Mestiza Identity Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Angel D. Nieves, *We Shall Independent Be: African American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the United States* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2008); Roberts, "Performance as Place Preservation."

Like any young boy, Zahir's instinct was to run and climb the tree. However, after his mother warned him not to climb, he looked at the tree more closely. It looked like a healthy tree—that is, until he noticed the tension rods. FIG. 2 From far away, the rods are inconspicuous, but they keep this tree together. Like the historical marker, the rods exemplify a supportive white benevolence, keeping the tree erect. The truth of the tree's condition, of enslavement, of liberation, is all obscured by the seemingly smooth transition from slavery to emancipation depicted on the historical marker.

In this sublime park space, amid a master-planned landscape of Houston bedroom communities, a child sees a large tree, forgets how old it is, assumes it can hold his weight, and contemplates climbing it. This is how "forgetting as annulment" becomes child's play. Signage and his mother tell him to be careful, but nothing in the landscape or on the marker acknowledges what is missing from the narrative. Even local news articles that engage descendants of Ed Gibbs indicate little about the positionality of this particular slave and his family with respect to others on the plantation. While visitors are welcome in a public park, can these absences in the public narrative be processed and substantively engaged? How do we foreground the critical enslaved voice, which has become a "null value" of missing information?

— THE CASE FOR COUNTERNARRATIVES

Preservation is alternately blamed for spatial inequality or gentrification and lauded for the ways it can catalyze social inclusion. ² Planning and preservation scholars point to the possibilities for increased participation through activities such as storytelling and public remembrance. ³ While support for safeguarding Black (African American) historic sites has increased in recent years, "authorized heritage discourse" inhibits identification, interpretation, and commemoration of difficult Black history. ⁴ Local governments struggle with how to interpret or manage fraught public histories or sites of conscience involving slavery and convict leasing. However, stories of Black agency in these contexts are often similarly repressed or overshadowed by places and sites with conciliatory or uncomplicated versions of Blackness. Within the context of public history and heritage conservation, representing Black agency demands a comprehensive portrayal of Black identity and heritage, including manifestations of fugitivity, subversion, and resistance in the past and the present. ⁵ Forgetting as annulment and disremembering—that is, reckless omission from public memory—of Black agency in Texas's public history and cultural landscapes must be met with counternarratives in historic Black settlements or embodied by the descendants of enslaved Black Texans. ⁶

Complex stories of resistance and self-making are essential to creating truly inclusive preservation practice and public history. Fissures can be identified in authorized heritage discourse where these counternarratives can interrupt or complicate foundational stories of settlement and origination. Foundational stories, Leonie Sandercock explains, involve

“telling and re-telling the story” in a way that causes people to reproduce behaviors and their identities. These stories give “communities and nations” “meaning to their collective life” and are the hinge of any society’s culture. Stories define culture, Sandercock maintains, because they “bond us with a common language, imagery, metaphors, all of which create shared meaning.” ⁷

Structured as critical reflections on field notes, this essay describes and analyzes encounters with forgetting and remembering while recording Black community origin stories told by deep East Texas freedom colony descendants. These field notes explicate the ways groups in these contexts obscure community origin stories rooted in Black agency while centering narratives rooted in settlerism, white benevolence (the “good master” myth), and “bootstraps” ideologies. I pay specific attention to the ways that freedom colony descendants in one community leverage a fugitive slave narrative to center Black agency in local public history. Later, in another context, my own positionality changes as I go from being an inductive observer to a partial and then a full participant—encountering, documenting, and embodying counternarratives.

— A FRAMEWORK FOR CURATING PLACE-MAKING AS FREEDOM-SEEKING

Curation of a space, place, or landscape should be a process of investigating the absences—what Jacob Gaboury refers to as the “null value.” Gaboury employs Edgar Codd’s definition of the null value as a way to represent “missing information and inapplicable information in a systematic way, independent of data type.” ⁸ Digital humanities scholar and historian Jessica Marie Johnson posits that this null value is actually the fugitivity of enslaved women in the archive. ⁹ How then does the curator become the willing accomplice of fugitivity? That is, how does the public historian or the preservationist explicitly seek out and foreground attempts to seek freedom from sociospatial constraints in racialized landscapes? ¹⁰

The null value of the critical enslaved voice is central to recognizing place-making as African American freedom-seeking. How do we hear the omitted, the annulled, and the deliberately forgotten? Rendering these places—and other spaces of Black agency and place-making in states of bondage, fugitivity, or recent freedom—visible and geographic requires creating spaces for cocreation with those holding evidence of resistance and freedom-seeking. In my work researching freedom colonies from 2014 through 2016, I had to explore new ways to listen for and document the null value. Further, I endeavored to share power with the grassroots place-keepers and preservationists engaged in stewardship, interpretation, and advocacy in places rendered ungeographic by prevailing definitions of place in historic preservation and urban planning. The dominant white sociolegal constructions of place (and the public history that reinforces their power) negate Black epistemologies of planning and preservation, and they obscure hidden Black agency in past and current descendant communities. ¹¹

⁷ Sandercock, “Out of the Closet,” 16.

⁸ Jacob Gaboury, “Becoming NULL: Queer Relations in the Excluded Middle,” *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 28, no. 2 (2018): 152; Edgar F. Codd, “Is Your DBMS Really Relational?” *ComputerWorld*, October 14, 1985, 596.

⁹ Johnson and Brock, keynote conversation at “Intentionally Digital, Intentionally Black.”

¹⁰ Richard H. Schein, “Normative Dimensions of Landscape,” in *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson*, ed. Chris Wilson and Paul Groth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 199–218; George Lipsitz, “The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape,” *Landscape Journal* 26, no. 1 (2007): 10–23.

¹¹ Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2007); Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

12
Loren Schweninger,
*Black Property Owners
in the South, 1790–
1915* (Urbana and
Chicago: University of
Illinois Press, 1997).

13
Thad Sitton and James
H. Conrad, *Freedom
Colonies: Independent
Black Texans in the
Time of Jim Crow*
(Austin: University of
Texas Press, 2005).

14
Sitton and Conrad,
Freedom Colonies, 2.

15
Patricia Davis,
"Memoriscapes
in Transition: Black
History Museums,
New South
Narratives, and
Urban Regeneration,"
*Southern
Communication
Journal* 78, no. 2 (2013):
120–127.

16
Arjun Sabharwal,
*Digital Curation in the
Digital Humanities:
Preserving
and Promoting
Archival and
Special Collections*
(Amsterdam: Chandos
Publishing, 2015).

Where are the narratives depicting these processes of becoming free, in which the recently freed sought out earth welcoming enough to start new, safe communities after Juneteenth?

— FREEDOM COLONIES: TRACES OF BLACK
AGENCY IN THE LANDSCAPE

To understand the settlement of Texas and not just the popular Anglo settler narrative, it is essential to understand the interconnectedness of enslavement, property, and westward expansion. Tales of white settlers attaining, taming, and defending the land are the cornerstone of Texan identity. Texas grew quickly due to the availability of Spanish land grants. Further, for every enslaved person Anglo settlers brought with them, they were afforded another eighty acres. This incentivized settlers' sense of entitlement to land, expansion, and slavery. By the time African Americans were emancipated, Black Codes inhibited their access to publicly available land, which limited their ability to accumulate land. Nevertheless, African Americans acquired land through adverse possession, also known as squatting, and sometimes through outright purchase. In other cases, Anglo men who fathered interracial children willed property to their progeny. Through a combination of these methods, African Americans went from owning 2 percent of all farmland in Texas in 1870 to owning 31 percent by 1910.¹² These clusters of landowners engaged in intentional building of communities anchored by the cemeteries, churches, and schools they built near the railroads and mills in The Bottoms.

In this essay, I use "curation" to describe a process in which narratives renounce their complicity with disremembering and instead work to make visible the null value, the obscured contestations of places and landscape meanings embedded in these places called freedom colonies.¹³ An umbrella term for places, settlements, and cultural landscapes in which landowning African Americans created communities based upon economic self-determination, self-definition (identity), and security, freedom colonies are both historical landscapes and the site of memory for dispersed, diasporic social geographies. Similar historic Black settlements were founded between 1865 and 1920 throughout the United States; they include Rosewood, Florida (1870); Nicodemus, Kansas (1877); Eatonville, Florida (1887); and Allensworth, California (1908). In Texas such settlements were known as "freedom colonies."

Thad Sitton and James H. Conrad, in their book *Freedom Colonies: Independent Black Texans in the Time of Jim Crow*, describe the communities as dispersed settlements "unplatted and unincorporated, individually unified only by church and school and residents' collective belief that a community existed."¹⁴ Freedom colonies, as historical and contemporary cultural landscapes, challenge conventional wisdom around national histories of Black migration and settlement. Instead of sharecropping, much of freedom colony history is filled with tales of cunning and tactical place-making on abandoned land.¹⁵ In freedom colonies, annual commemorative events have become opportunities for the cultural and knowledge reproduction necessary to preserve these now sparsely populated places and their endangered buildings.¹⁶

But what happened to the populations of these communities? Several factors contributed to their decline, including the Great Migration, population shifts toward more urban areas within Texas, and a constant threat of violence. Migration, desegregation, growth, and natural disasters all made Black settlements vulnerable. African Americans who accumulated land were frequent targets of white vigilantes. Even as the idea of self-sufficiency was defended and promoted among African Americans, this same ethic attracted the wrath of resentful, racist Anglos. With the expansion of cities, farm-to-market roads, and interstates came infrastructure projects that ran straight through freedom colonies: Interstate 45 eviscerated the Fourth Ward of Houston, Texas, also known as Freedman’s Town. Jobs in industrial factories in the large cities of Texas and California drew people away from family properties that became secondary to more pressing concerns in their new homes.

In the absence of population, the character of structures and settlement patterns, demolition by neglect, and deferred maintenance made many freedom colonies ineligible for the preservation protections afforded to other local historic districts. Local districting, one of the most effective mechanisms for slowing down or halting demolition, was largely out of reach for residents of historic Black settlements, especially in formerly red-lined urban areas ineligible for the home improvement loans that would enable these families to address deferred maintenance needs. The increasing invisibility of these communities means that these settlement patterns have become the stuff of intangible heritage, such as oral traditions and memory.

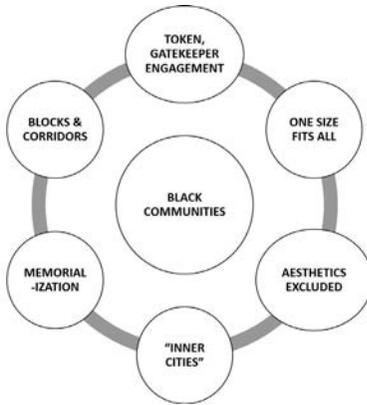


FIG. 3: Diagram of normative planning in Black communities (2018). Each circle contains one dimension of normative planning’s assumptions about Black communities, which, I assert, minimize practitioners’ inclusion of multivocality and spatial diversity when engaging Black places and spaces. Figure content and design by the author.

Recognition for the 557 freedom colonies we know existed (357 of which have been mapped) is obstructed by normative planning and preservation practices’ operating assumptions about African American communities. These assumptions inhibit the visibility, voices, and vulnerabilities of freedom colonies from being brought to the center of planning education and practice. [FIG. 3](#) Currently, most memorialization

17
Tim Hashaw,
*Children of Perdition:
Melungeons and the
Struggle of Mixed
America* (Macon, GA:
Mercer University
Press, 2018).

18
Frederick L. Olmsted,
*A Journey through
Texas, or, A Saddle-Trip
on the Southwestern
Frontier: With a
Statistical Appendix*
(New York and London:
Dix, Edwards & Co., S.
Low & Co.: 1857).

of the past and engagement in the present is limited to those representatives of African American life who reflect traditional notions of success and legitimacy based on leadership in mainstream organizations; those who achieved famous firsts; or those of middle to upper income who espoused respectability politics. The aesthetics of preservation elude African Americans because their presence is interpreted as new and non-historic and integrity of their spaces and structures has often been compromised by additions and modifications. The result of imposing a one-size-fits-all authorized heritage discourse is that African Americans' spatial values and aesthetics fail to measure up to standards. National Register of Historic Places criteria center on property ownership and documentation from traditionally recognized archives in universities and libraries, creating a *preservation apartheid* in which African American spaces are disproportionately excluded from legal protections and, as a consequence, are disproportionately subject to demolition. Too often, little physical evidence or archival materials is preserved among African American families, let alone made part of these official archives.

— DEEP EAST TEXAS FREEDOM COLONIES: CONTEXT

Several waves of mixed-race or triracial peoples came to Texas in the early 1820s. One group, called the Melungeons, or “Red Bones,” was originally descended from enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia, who intermarried with English settlers and Native Americans. The Melungeons, more commonly associated with Appalachian mountain people, were often landholding, were free, and sometimes passed for white. They congregated in the Cumberland Gap and in the mountains, especially hidden places that were hard to access and that afforded them some isolation. They migrated from Virginia and South Carolina to Louisiana.¹⁷ By the 1830s, Melungeons had left Louisiana and settled in the swamplands of Newton County, Texas, in an area known as No Man’s Land or the Neutral Strip.

This unique mixed heritage and borderland culture along the Sabine River (between Texas and Louisiana), coupled with murky documentation of land-granting practices, destabilized land possession at the same time that it sparked the formation of freedom colonies. African Americans, mulattos, and mixed-race couples all came from the Tidewater states to Texas, believing they would be afforded equal rights and safety under Mexican governance. These settlers sought freedom as well as land. In the 1850s, Frederick Law Olmsted witnessed a Texas that belies the common story of Anglo settlement: “This county has been lately the scene of events, which prove that it must have contained a much larger number of free negroes and persons of mixed blood than we were informed on the spot, despite the very severe statute forbidding their introduction... Banded together, they have been able to resist the power, not only of the legal authorities but of a local Vigilance Committee... on the banks of the Sabine...”¹⁸ Coexisting with mixed-race people and African Americans passing as white slaveholders were also fugitive enslaved peoples. In 1860, 25 percent of “white” residents in Newton County owned ten or more enslaved people, and there were 1,013 enslaved people in total.

Shankleville, located in Newton County, about fifteen miles from the Louisiana border and the Sabine River, is one of many historic Black settlements founded after emancipation. What is notable about this particular community is the role of storytelling, not just as a pastime or entertainment but as a way to sustain descendants' attachment to this sparsely populated and remote community in the woods. The story begins with two enslaved Africans in Mississippi: Winnie, who was sold away to Texas, and Jim Shankle, who ran after her. The fugitive man crossed three great rivers for his love, whom he finally found at a spring less than a quarter mile from the Odom Homestead, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This story in many ways sustains the sense of place that (in part) justifies recognition and preservation of the historic homestead and cemeteries. I heard the story again at an event I hosted. Harold Odom begins his story by describing the sale of his ancestors:

You have a decision made by one slave owner in Mississippi that a slave is going to be sold, either because she was profitable or valuable with the children. Moreover, someone made the decision to buy her, and they broke the family apart and sold Winnie and the children. Heartbroken, Jim ran away and swam 400 miles, across three rivers, "all because of the love of Winnie and the children." He went from plantation to plantation, asking the enslaved people he encountered if they had seen Winnie and the children. Jim would then describe Winnie by height and appearance. He continued his quest until he found the plantation where Winnie and the children were enslaved, adjacent to present-day Shankleville.

Jim found her under a magnolia tree, at the spring. It was not called Shankleville back then, but there ended up being a spring down the lane, where Winnie would go to get water and to deposit milk, butter, and perishables in the cold spring box down there for him. Jim remained hidden at the spring, and Winnie brought him food from the plantation kitchen. He even devised a system for secret communication: a special whistle that only Winnie recognized. Unfortunately, Jim was discovered.

Harold concluded that Winnie had to tell her master, as the "deliveries got heavier, got a little more frequent, and a little longer." ¹⁹ She convinced the slave master to buy Jim, and the two were publicly reunited.

This seemingly fantastical story has catalyzed youth engagement in preservation and descendants' return to the settlement. A descendant of Jim Shankle, Harold Odom leads the rehabilitation of the homestead and is the keeper of the spring where Jim and Winnie reunited; he teaches younger children to retell the story, and they drink from the spring in something much like an African libation ceremony. They reenact and retell fugitive-centered narratives at events such as their annual homecoming celebration, when people return from all over to a community that—by way of a church or a blood or social kinship—they call home.

Homecoming events emerged during the 1930s and 1940s as a result of the Great Migration. These annual events were a means by which members of the diaspora could reenact their commitment to place preservation. During the two-day event in Shankleville, a church service is held along with an evening music program. Representatives from nearby settlements announce their homecoming events and contribute to the offerings, which support the event as well as maintenance of Shankleville's historic cemeteries. The same practice is reciprocated at other freedom colony homecomings in the area over the next several months.

In 2015 I was asked to be one of the co-planners of Shankleville's freedom colony symposium. The symposium was led by descendants of the settlement's founders and included exchanges with experts, government agencies, and white county historical commission leaders. Still, the event centered on freedom colony information-sharing. Self-reliance, land-based heritage, and the bodily and physical sovereignty experienced in freedom colonies came up repeatedly over the day. As participants told stories passed down through generations, they co-counseled each other on approaches to conservation, managing tax liabilities, and the ways sovereignty operates on both an individual and a mass scale.

Soon after the event, I accompanied descendants (who may or may not live full-time in the freedom colonies) on walking tours through unmapped, no longer populated freedom colonies that contained cemeteries with fresh burials and recently replaced flowers. I recorded stories and distributed a paper survey. At other times, I was simply a guest in people's homes. The stories I encountered perfectly



FIG. 4: Huff Creek Community, July 14, 2015. This photo was taken on a walking tour of Jasper County freedom colonies. The former Rosenwald School (now a chapel) is across from a community cemetery on Huff Creek Road, where James Byrd Jr. was murdered in 1998. Huff Creek Community once had an ample Black population, according to freedom colony descendants. Anglos and Latinos now sparsely populate it. Photograph by the author.

exemplified the coexistence of fugitivity and repression of the local heritage of freedom-seeking through place-making.

Most of my research took place in the neighboring counties of Newton and Jasper. Huff Creek Community, in Jasper County, is one of many freedom colonies whose foundational stories were buried under racial violence or overshadowed by the commemoration of Confederate veterans' history. 20 In particular, Huff Creek Memorial Chapel is an example of the coexistence of Black agency and anti-Blackness in Texas's cultural landscape. Formerly the Rosenwald School for African Americans, the chapel is in an area that served as an informal border crossing between Newton and Jasper Counties. FIG. 4 Jasper County is best known today, however, for the dragging death of James Byrd Jr. in 1998. Many believe the incident happened in the city of Jasper. However, Byrd was actually dragged behind a pickup truck down Huff Creek Road—which is not just a road but also the site of a freedom colony—to the foot of the Huff Creek Memorial Chapel sign; that's where pieces of his body were found. Yet that is not the story of the place that people share. Instead, the people I spoke to told the story of how students came to the school from each county, how they later married and even founded more freedom colonies. But still, in the public imagination, the story of white violence suppresses this story of ongoing place-making through social interaction.

20
Jeffrey A. Owens,
"Placelessness and
the Rationale for
Historic Preservation:
National Contexts and
East Texas Examples,"
*East Texas Historical
Journal* 43, no. 2 (2005):
3-31.

21
Gregg Cantrell and
Elizabeth H. Turner,
eds., *Lone Star Past:*
*Memory and History in
Texas* (College Station:
Texas A&M Press,
2006); Theodore R.
Fehrenbach, *Lone Star:
A History of Texas and
the Texans* (New York:
Da Capo Press, 2000).

22
Terry Fitzwater,
"Gonzales Moving
Forward on Freedom
Colonies Project,"
Gonzales Inquirer,
August 9, 2018, [http://
gonzalesinquirer.com/
stories/gonzales-mov-
ing-forward-on-fre-
edom-colonies-proj-
ect,25507](http://gonzalesinquirer.com/stories/gonzales-moving-forward-on-freedom-colonies-project,25507).

— CO-CURATING BLACK AGENCY IN THE BODY

Gonzales County, Texas, home of the "come and take it" cannon, is a great place to contemplate the connection between Texas public history and implicit bias. 21 In Texas, the story of this cannon is an example of the romanticization of white settlerism as it represents Anglos' tenacity in their formation of a republic. Considered the "Lexington and Concord" of Texas independence, Anglo settlers fighting for independence defended the cannon given to them by the Mexican government—thus the saying "come and take it." Absent from the story is the centrality of the right to enslave, which is what precipitated tensions between the Mexican government and what would become the Republic of Texas. Daring the Mexican government to retrieve its cannon was a proxy for Texans' conflict over their right to own slaves. The cannon is now housed in a large art deco building that serves as a mini-museum. Less than a mile away in Gonzales's town square stands a Confederate monument.

I was invited to Gonzales to participate in a workshop organized by the Gonzales County Historical Commission in partnership with the Texas Historical Commission's certified local government (CLG) program. As part of the workshop, held August 1, 2018, I provided training on addressing implicit bias and including more freedom colonies in survey processes. 22 The workshop took place in the historic Providence Missionary Baptist Church in a freedom colony in Gonzales. The training included a storytelling activity, but rather than having only freedom colony descendants share, I invited all attendees to share their stories and to make relevant connections between their core stories and the foundational stories of the State of Texas.

Centering freedom colonies was a foundational shift for the county commissioner, county historical commissioners, and other leaders present. Predominantly women, these lay preservationists are the quasi-governmental bodies through which consultation, CLG funding for surveys, and other public monies pass. They are mostly white, and many of them can trace their origins back to the Republic of Texas, including the "Old Three Hundred," those first recipients of land grants in Texas.²³ Foundational to the workshop was not only self-assessment but also an introduction to freedom colony preservation and to the Texas Freedom Colonies Project Atlas, an online mapping tool create by my research team, which participants were invited to use to collect and store data about newly identified Black settlements. During the storytelling exercise, this exchange with an older white woman attending the training took place:

Andrea Roberts: As you were going through this, how did you see your home-place story as the story of Texas, what was the relationship? Did you make any connection?

Participant: I grew up on a thousand-acre original land grant from the Republic of Texas. [The land grant was] through a great-great-grandfather for his service during the Indian wars. They couldn't pay him, so they gave him a thousand-acre land grant.

AR: Who are "they"?

Participant: The Republic of Texas. It was a republic before it was a state. So the government gave that land to my third or fourth grandfather. He went to Austin and helped form the first legislature and everything... It is woven throughout my family on both sides. It doesn't get any farther back, going back to the Republic of Texas before it was even a state. That's a long history.

AR: I identify with that a lot. So, anyone here familiar with the Old Three Hundred? I have an ancestor named Julia. My ancestor Julia was born in Sumter, Tennessee, in 1821, and she was eventually sold to the Kuykendalls (one of the Old Three Hundred) and specifically to Joseph Kuykendall in Fort Bend County. So I have been here since then too. And so when I think about the story of Texas, I very much think about the Republic of Texas, and I very much think about those land grants, and I very much think about how much land they were afforded by virtue of bringing Julia here. These are multidimensional stories, are they not? It is not one story at all—that's what I want us to think about today, and that I see you thinking about here in Gonzales.

The woman's story—which centers war, land as reward, and inter-generational claims to the state's true origin story—is an explicit example of the disremembering that is pervasive among leaders of Texas's 180-plus county historical commissions. This workshop attendee understood her core story, which she surmised was also the story of Texas, to begin with her fourth great-grandfather's heroic struggle against Native Americans in the Indian wars, and with his acquisition of a land grant as one of the Old Three Hundred because Texas welcomed slave owners and those who wanted to get a fresh start or escape debt.

The next stage of the workshop was a deeper examination of bias and how it manifests itself in local preservation planning and surveying. To mark the transition to this stage, I quoted a poem by Lucille Clifton called “why some people be mad at me sometimes”: “They ask me to remember / but they want me to remember / their memories / and I keep on remembering / mine.”²⁴ This poem bridged our conversation from the past to the present and to the recognition of the human impulse to be heard and understood while confronting the biases that inhibit inclusive public histories. I then asked attendees to suggest ways they could engage in inclusive storytelling on a local level. Glenda Gordon, chair of the Gonzales County Historical Commission and our host,

24
Lucille Clifton, *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton, 1965-2010* (New York: BOA Editions, 2015), 262.



FIG. 5: A descendant of freedom colony residents shares memories of life in Gonzales County at CLG public training, August 1, 2018. Image by Texas Historical Commission Staff, Public Information and Education Division.

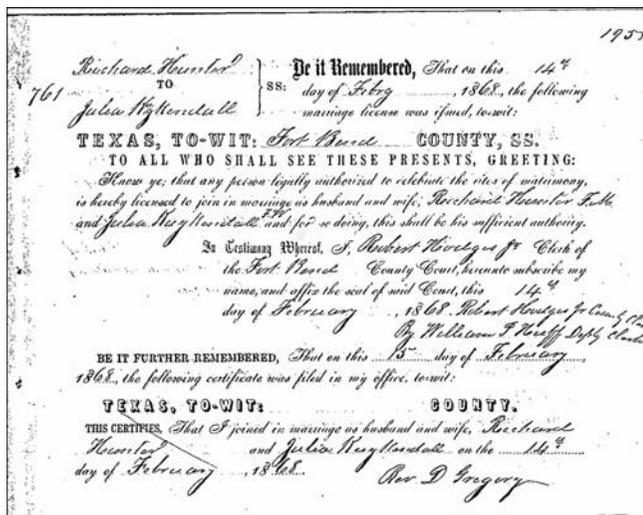


FIG. 6: Julia Kuykendall and Richard Hunter's marriage certificate in Fort Bend County, Texas, February 14, 1868. My ancestor Julia was born in Sumter, Tennessee, in 1821. She was eventually sold to Joseph Kuykendall (one of the Old Three Hundred) in Fort Bend County. I referenced Julia's story when I asked workshop participants to make a connection between individual stories and popular public narratives. The exercise revealed the dominance of Anglo settler narratives in Texas public history and showed how collaborative counternarrative work is essential to diversifying both public history and local preservation leadership.

25
Richard Roberts,
"History and Memory:
The Power of
Statist Narratives,"
*International Journal
of African Historical
Studies* 33, no. 3
(2000): 513–522;
Andrea R. Roberts,
"Interpretations &
Imagaries: Toward
an Instrumental Black
Planning History,"
*Planning Theory and
Practice* 19, no. 2
(2018): 254–288.

responded, cautiously illuminating the bias toward a particular narrative about Gonzales: "There were so many important things happening during the Texas Revolution and that is our claim to fame. And it's very difficult to include other ethnicities... It's been our goal for the last five or six years to expand past that time period and to tell all stories that want to be told, and to expand into other times. Texas public history clashes with county historical commission outreach and anti-bias training."

Regardless of how they are obscured or disremembered, Texas's origins are inextricably linked to human bondage. *FIG. 5* How then do we move past insular story-sharing or shocking confrontations with the ghosts of ancestors past? How do we decenter settler narratives and trouble the systems that keep those who tell these stories in charge of public history in Texas? By creating spaces in which the null, the fugitive, can be given a chance to articulate itself through memory, story, and confrontation with forgetting as annulment. *FIG. 6*

— INTERRUPTING ANNULMENT, ATTENDING TO THE NULL

CLG workshops like the one in Gonzales that I participated in can serve as a model for how county historical commissions can diversify their leadership and surveying processes. When tensions among attendees arise, there must be room to analyze the latent collusion with dominant narratives that overshadows more diverse narratives. The implications of these exercises occurring in state-led processes are consequential. For example, states can require participation in similar trainings or exercises to access funding for surveying and listing new sites on the National Register of Historic Places. In Texas, as well as in many other states, county historical commissions are particularly good spaces for fostering these values because they are also the interested parties that are consulted during Section 106 review processes. If unaware of the diverse people and places impacted by a federally funded project yet undocumented in the historical record, county historical commissions become complicit in the erasure of endangered places. Leveraging culturally situated and state-led social curation work spaces enables us to examine the ways that biases perpetuate certain constructions of state identity and statist narratives, constructions that undermine stories of Black self-making and the creative, insurgent survivalism manifested in stories of African American place-making. 25