

## Landscape Reparations

Repair the landscape.

This is a preliminary discussion to introduce the idea. To open up the topic for discussion and reflection.

This discussion will be focused on one aspect of the landscape, the racialized landscape. A racialized landscape is a landscape which promotes white supremacy. This can be the names given to places on the landscape, such as history. It about symbols of white supremacy on the landscape. It is about the presentation of history, such as street names and Confederate monuments and parks and “heritage” presentations on the landscape.

All together it is about how the landscape through all these things mentioned and more presents the land as a white man’s land and erases non-whites from the landscape.

There are other landscape reparations that need to be done. African Americans and other minorities have been subjected to being restricted where they could live, neighborhoods subjected to environmental degradation and toxic poisoning and other practices that involve geography.

Once the process of thinking about landscape reparations has started other issues will be recognized.

Currently as it is not only are African Americans largely not seen in the naming of the landscape but the landscape honors white supremacists denigrating the human worth of African Americans. But the racial encoding of the landscape operates in a more pervasive and less obvious way. African Americans being held as slaves and then subjected to Jim Crow and other oppressions were largely not able be real estate developers and name streets or amass wealth and donate land for parks, or have cities founded by them. Stripped of their African names, even when something is named after an African American, after a time it will be forgotten that they were African American. Blackness on the landscape will fade and will be invisible.

Repair of the landscape would not only be the elimination of places named after white supremacists, but implementing name changes so that Africans are seen on the landscape. America was built with slave labor and yet there is no Africaness on the landscape. Africans can look on the landscape and see a white landscape and see that they are aliens in this nation and feel alienation.

On the landscape we can see the cities of New York and Birmingham and many, many cities named after European cities. But where are the cities named after African cities. Where is New Benin or New Zimbabwe? If there can be an Ithaca or Athens in America why can’t there be an Aksum or Timbuktu?

Surely there are cities that being named after slave traders such as Charleston could be renamed. Dallas named after an obnoxious racist could be renamed.

Don't think that changing place names is some project only for the benefit of African Americans. The current set of place names communicates a message to white people that African Americans are an alien other. The messages of the racialized landscape are poisonous to e

Of course the presence of place names of white supremacists, slave holders and others who have victimized non-white groups are intolerable for the message that they send. The message is that these names are tolerable because the victimization is essentially believed to be trivial.

A street named after a Nazi would be intolerable and the name would be changed immediately. Even if it was an abandoned street, inaccessible, without street signs and only known through maps. Of course it would be changed even if there were special costs involved.

This not without precedence or merely a speculation. A neighborhood, Swastika Acres, in a town outside Denver, was built in 1908, before the Nazi party came into being. The swastika has a long history going back thousands of years as a positive symbol before the Nazis used it. However it was intolerable to the residents, regardless of the history of the origin of the name. The city council vote was unanimous to change the name. The person who collected the signatures and did the paper work to change the name got overwhelming support from the neighborhood.

Contrast that to the various excuses given to retain Confederate named streets. Nazis are intolerable, but Confederates are. This another aspect of landscape reparations, in contesting the landscape we will reveal the banal white nationalism of people. People are unconscious in their thinking about the landscape so they will say and do things that reveal their real attitudes and thinking regarding race. Their thinking about race is superficial and confined to a laundry list of racial etiquette items and that list doesn't include the landscape. However, the threat of the loss of control of a white landscape will be keenly felt if not consciously, though it is revealed by certain statements, about where will it end or what about the slaveholding leaders of the American Revolution or other slave owners held up as heroes in American history textbooks.

Without putting the issue of street names in a context of landscape reparations, the struggles to rename streets after civil rights leaders gets entangled and blocked when it is enmeshed in arguments looking at the question in isolation of the particular street. Opponents will discuss that a street needs to be named, but just not this one. Or that there is a better way to honor someone besides street renaming. Their arguments in opposition are endless. One favorite argument of opponents to renaming streets is the cost of business stationary being reprinted which put a really low value on the human worth of none white people.

When the question of street renaming is framed in the larger question of landscape reparations these arguments against renaming demolished but they are also revealed for what they are, efforts to retain the white landscape. When the goal is 10 or 20 or 50 or

100 streets, or a certain percentage of streets, it isn't whether a particular street should be renamed, it is which ones will be renamed.

Landscape reparations involves more than place names.

Plantation houses are sites in which the spoils of the exploitation were used to create beautiful houses. The horror of slavery is invisible, though now some plantation homes give some token effort to acknowledge slavery. Regardless of what might be expressed, the plantation house says, "What wonderful beauty slavery has produced!" Plantation weddings are the execution of a desire to have this beauty derived from the exploitation of slaves in your wedding because you don't care.

In Dallas the plantation house is a two-thirds replica of Robert E. Lee's plantation home Arlington but weddings are conducted there.

These plantation weddings are very expensive and elaborate theater productions showcased and showcasing the spoils of slave labor and a public affirmation that the humanity of African Americans is of no consequence.

The reparations is that people don't have plantation weddings and if they are invited to one they do not go and very importantly they say why.

A landscape can be racialized by historical erasure. The absence of monuments and historical markers about people and events that are contrary to a white historical narrative. A counter activity would be to do something such as mark on the landscape a slave revolt. Or as that a plantation house the local historical society use the term slaves rather than servants. This is probably where the work against the racialized landscape is the strongest but I think that perhaps it is because much of this work doesn't involve direct challenges to the white landscape.

Another major issue of the racialized landscape are these "heritage villages" or other named collections of old buildings in which the past is presented. They are almost invariably present a nostalgic vision in which the issues of race in the past are omitted or obscured or given a token treatment

For example the Dallas Heritage Village has an old school house in its premises. They have a couple of group pictures of the students. They are all white. There is no explanation as to why these classes are all white or where none white students went to school. Of course that would break the spell of sentimental nostalgia. This presentation also has a white supremacist message that the non-white students' story is of no consequence which is because they are none white. Many other examples could be given. When I visited I purchased their plantation toys.

When I surveyed the Dallas Heritage Village there were visiting classes from local schools and the great majority of the students were not white. The Dallas Heritage Village teaches them that they don't matter in the life of the land.

When these assemblages of buildings are subjected to review it is of superficial in some obvious failing is recognized, but the rest of the problems with the interpretations ignored. When I visited the Dallas Heritage Village the Miller Moore plantation house was being reinterpreted but there was no recognition that there was a problem with the interpretation of the school house and they were still selling the plantation toys.

The enclaves of nostalgia for a white past need to be dealt with and certainly not supported with tax money.

The historical interpretation at local parks is often very poor or just bad. State and national parks can also be bad. Civil War battlefield parks can be awful. They also teach a lesson that none white people's humanity is of no worth.

Civic art work such as murals, mosaics, decorative art, need to be examined. Does it tell a racist story? At the time it was created was it exclusionary? That is it excluded certain groups that were present in the city? In the artscape of the city how are non-white people presented? Does the artscape of the city look like the people in the city or is skewed towards one group? Should art be representational or should it be abstract to avoid issues of exclusion?

Of course monuments to white supremacists such as Confederate monuments need to go. These monuments hold up white supremacists as heroes to shape an understanding of the past to shape thinking to direct the future. This hardly needs to be explained, and so this will not be dwelt upon further.

We need to assess the art work of the city and ask what it is saying directly and indirectly, the art works as a whole and individually.

There will be unique items on the landscape which are items contributing to a white landscape or are white landscapes themselves. For example a big part of Fair Park is made of the buildings and artwork of the 1936 Texas Centennial. This event defined itself as an empire exhibition and the entry promenade and buildings as an empire on parade. It is a triumphalist white supremacist landscape. It has art work which asserts that the sciences, technology, arts are for white people and African Americans are for manual labor.

There is the Historic Natchez Tableaux which is a whole antebellum fantasy world in itself with token gestures regarding slavery.

No doubt other elements of a white landscape will be found.

Besides recognizing the racialized landscape and understanding the harm it does and the need to correct it, we need to have effective strategies to change it.

The first thing is to recognize that it can be changed. There are the usual things that can be done, such as petitions and speaking to elected officials and speaking to groups, however the racialized landscape will be vigorously defended. Critical understanding of the issues will be necessary to deracialize the landscape. We will need to be able to take

apart the opposition's arguments to not just refute them but show how ridiculous and self-serving they are.

The second thing that needs to be done is to organize and have a sustained effort. A few rallies and speaking at city hall won't do it.

The third thing and very important is to find ways to make the racialized landscape intolerable. To make the consequences of retaining a racialized landscape intolerable. This can be done once it is realized that this needs to be done and you are determined. We will need to be creative and find pressure points and especially not be afraid to make people upset and screaming. The usual methods will not be enough and just wear us out and result in demoralizing defeat and giving up.

This channel has already started to discuss possible tactics and will have more podcasts on ways to deracialize the landscape. The podcast on stigmatized real estate and Confederate named streets offers a very effective way to make Confederate streets intolerable with little activist energy.

Additionally there is a Facebook page Deracialize the Landscape in which information on how to deracialize the landscape will be shared.

The YouTube channel antineoconfederate also will be having videos on deracializing the landscape.

If you think there is an area or issue with the racialized landscape not covered in this podcast join the Facebook group Deracialize the landscape and bring it up as a topic or any other thoughts about deracializing the landscape.

As we struggle we will learn and progress.

A racialized landscape says that some people are aliens and that some people have no human worth. Such a landscape is a landscape of alienation and demoralization.