The Full Spectrum of History: Prioritizing Diversity and Inclusion in Preservation
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Cover: Attendees of the Diversity Summit at PastForward 2015 in Washington, D.C.
PHOTO BY DAVID KEITH

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Introduction: Our Future Is in Diversity

STEPHANIE MEEKS

Two and a half years ago, a remarkable essay by the late scholar and preservationist Clement Price about his grandmother’s house in Columbia, South Carolina, appeared in these pages. The house itself was a “simple bungalow, probably built in the 1920s,” and was unlikely to “make any credible list of historically significant places.” And yet, for both Price’s family and our understanding of history, “Big Mama’s House” held hidden riches. Even beyond its deep personal resonance for Price, the house conveyed a wealth of knowledge about the African American experience during the days of Jim Crow and burgeoning civil rights struggles.

“Places and spaces like Big Mama’s House” are important, Price emphasized, because they “connect very ordinary Americans with their personal histories, and in turn, these histories connect with the larger narrative of the making of a more perfect and yet complicated union.” This, he argued, represented a significant new frontier in our work, and he was heartened to see that “the old consensus view of preservation that eschewed the humble places where so many Americans learned of the power of place and memory” was falling away. Instead, “organizations, agencies, and institutions involved in historic preservation are increasingly marked by a broadening respect for all sorts of historical narratives, memories, places, and sites.”

Sadly, Price, one of the most eloquent voices for expanding the scope of traditional preservation, passed on later that year. We still miss his wisdom and guidance. But the vision he articulated continues. Today as never before, preservationists are striving to ensure that the American landscape tells the full story of our collective past; that our movement is an inclusive one; and that we are listening to, and learning from, the diverse communities connected to the places we work to save.
These are extraordinarily important efforts, both for the next 50 years of preservation and for the future of our country. For too long, historic preservation followed the same methodological approach and held the same conscious and unconscious biases as early American historians, which often led to egregious oversights. Whether in textbooks or house museums, we specialized in top-down history that focused on the great deeds of white men. Meanwhile, the contributions of millions of women, people of color, and other underrepresented communities were often overlooked.

These silences had repercussions for our historic landscape. The mansions of Founding Fathers, wealthy plantation owners, and famous industrialists were maintained, while the cabins that housed enslaved persons and the tenements of ordinary workers were left to ruin with minimal acknowledgment of their historical significance. We preserved many of our Western forts, but only recently have we included in their interpretations the stories of the societies and cultures, often Native American or Hispanic, that were displaced in their wake. Our great men have been venerated, the vast majority of them rightfully so, but too often the stories of pioneering women were at best consigned to footnotes.

Telling the American story in this top-down and one-sided fashion also distorted our understanding of our history. For example, we were taught for generations that slavery in the United States ended mainly because Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, followed by the ratification of the 13th Amendment in December 1865. These events are both critical political acts, to be sure. But we now also know—by looking at history through a wider and more authentic lens—that Lincoln’s hand had been forced in large part by enslaved persons in the South, who voted with their feet to end the “peculiar institution” by joining Union troops. Thousands of these self-emancipated slaves ended up at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia, which is now one of the Trust’s National Treasures—our signature portfolio of significant and threatened places—and does an exemplary job of highlighting this important story.
Perhaps most distressing, the limited narratives of old have, in some communities, bred an unfortunate distrust of our work and intentions. Many people of color who noticed that their stories had not been told, and that the places they cared about had not received the necessary attention, worked to restore neighborhoods and beloved places with little support from the preservation community. Only in the late 1980s and early ‘90s—thanks to the hard work of state preservation leaders such as Fred Williamson of Rhode Island and Elizabeth Lyon of Georgia and efforts like the comprehensive *Five Views* survey of ethnic historic sites in California—did the consensus shift. Saving diverse places began to take on the importance it had always warranted.

And none too soon, since reflecting on the full American story—including all its unheralded and underappreciated chapters—is critical to understanding today’s fights for justice and equality. However hard to confront at times, the complex and difficult chapters of our history resonate in and inform contemporary struggles, from immigration reform to LGBTQ rights advocacy to Black Lives Matter.

Nor, without a more thorough reckoning with and appreciation of our past, will we understand the America of the future. By 2044, less than 30 years from now, the United States will be a majority nonwhite nation—and women are already a majority of the population! All the more reason why we have to tell the stories of all our citizens and work unceasingly to build a preservation movement that looks more like America.

**2015 DIVERSITY SUMMIT**

At PastForward, our 2015 National Preservation Conference in Washington, D.C., we convened a “Diversity Summit” to take stock of where we are on these vital efforts and to help foster new partnerships and opportunities for advancing diversity and inclusion. There, preservationists, social justice advocates, and representatives from an array of ethnic and minority groups came together for an extended conversation on saving diverse places, on coming to terms with difficult histories—and on how both affect the civil rights struggles of the 21st century.
What ensued was a substantive and powerful discussion. Former National Park Service Director Bob Stanton began the day by acknowledging the tension between the vision of “We the People” embedded in the U.S. Constitution and the institutional legacies of segregation and Jim Crow, stressing that we must overcome the latter to do justice to the former. Jose Antonio Tijerino, president of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation, built on this by discussing segregation in the West and its impact on Latinos and Asian Americans in California. And Claudia Withers, chief operating officer of the NAACP, reminded us that the movement to end segregation in America didn’t just unfold in courtrooms and hallowed places like the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. It originated in modest homes—like those of Pauli Murray and Amelia Boynton Robinson—and in ordinary workplaces all over the nation.

Ellie Smeal, co-founder and president of Feminist Majority, told us about her experience at Seneca Falls, the birthplace of the women’s rights movement in America. Asian Pacific American Institute President Floyd Mori moved the crowd with his remembrances of his first trip to the “camp” he had heard his relatives talk about—Topaz, the Japanese internment facility in the Utah desert. Sarah Warbelow, legal director of the Human Rights Campaign, related the underappreciated story of Compton’s Cafeteria, where, even before Stonewall, transgender women in California publicly protested against discrimination. That site is now lost; only a plaque remains.

Over the course of the discussion, common themes emerged. All of the panelists agreed that recognizing and honoring diverse stories was key to understanding our present political debates and to building a more inclusive and allied future. All felt that, while we have made important strides as a movement, we still have a lot of work to do to get this right. All believed that forging stronger partnerships with and across diverse groups was essential for continued success. And all emphasized the wisdom of today’s broader vision of preservation, in which we seek to save the modest and even ordinary places where history happened.
After the panel discussion, the audience broke into smaller groups to continue the conversation and to further refine the tools and perspectives that will bring our preservation movement closer toward these critical goals. The articles in this issue both encapsulate and grow out of these wide-ranging and powerful discussions. We hope you will find them insightful and inspiring as you continue your own work to save the places that matter.

To keep moving forward, let’s keep broadening our perspective and thinking about the places that tell our full national story. Not every American of importance grew up or lived in a mansion. And sometimes the places that matter most to a community are not beautiful buildings, but a handball court in Maravilla, California; a playground in San Gabriel, California; or a haunting, empty stretch of green along a highway in Richmond, Virginia’s Shockoe Bottom, where the antebellum slave trade once thrived.

Speaking about the Pullman neighborhood of Chicago last year, President Barack Obama put this so well. “Part of what we’re preserving here,” he said, is “understanding that places that look ordinary are nothing but extraordinary. The places you live are extraordinary, which means you can be extraordinary.” History happens all around us, in all our neighborhoods and communities and in everyday deeds of kindness, compassion, justice, and love. These stories should be honored and preserved too.

And we are doing it. All over America, preservationists are finding more ways to recognize and affirm the diverse stories around us. We are digging deeper, moving beyond buildings to preserve more intangible—but no less important—historic assets. And the truly exciting thing is that we still have room to grow. As our dear departed friend Clem Price put it two years ago, diversity and inclusiveness “give the historic preservation movement an opportunity to become the ‘next big thing’ that will contribute to democracy’s sense of its past and the essential dignity of the places, like Big Mama’s House, that contributed to it.”

Clem is right. At the end of the day, a more diverse and inclusive preservation movement is not just an enormous opportunity for us to flourish. It is our responsibility to the past, present, and
future of our nation. As the chair of the National Trust’s Board of Trustees Marita Rivero concluded at the close of the Washington summit: “Diversity is about humanity. We are all fighting for human rights. We are all always here, so let’s make sure everyone’s stories are told.” FJ

STEPHANIE MEEKS is president and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**TAKEAWAY**
Read Clement Alexander Price’s “When Historic Sites Reveal the New American Past: Reflections on History, Memory and the Unknown.”

**TAKEAWAY**
Read Toni Lee’s “Cultural Diversity in Historic Preservation: Where We Have Been, Where We Are Going (Update).”
One theme emerging from the PastForward 2015 Diversity Summit was the call for a national network to establish common ground and advance collective priorities around preservation issues.

Preservationists share common roots with all other individuals and organizations who care about heritage, love history, and have a passion for protecting the places that evoke our shared cultural legacies—tangible and intangible. But we need to expand the boundaries of our field to find that common ground and identify ways to work together. When we focus on people, places, stories, identity, culture, heritage, and collaboration, we will find opportunities for mutual understanding, input, and buy-in.

Hispanic Heritage Foundation President and CEO Jose Antonio Tijerino spoke frankly and with passion about the need for developing a common ground:

Anything can happen at any point if you’re thoughtful, if you’re brave, if you take chances, and if you’re willing to do all the work—give all the credit—to make something happen...

I’ve never felt that there was a call from your industry [historic preservation], from your field for the Latino community that I’ve seen so far, even though we play a very important role in that.

So the first step is reaching out. And also making it relevant. How is it relevant to a young black man? Woman? A young Latino? Young Asian? Young LGBT? To be able to feel connected to what your mission is...
And that, I think, is the challenge. You don’t have a choice. You have to reach out to minority communities—it’s not the right thing to do, it’s a value proposition.

Watch Tijerino and the other thought leaders on the 2015 Diversity Summit panel to hear their insights on building a more inclusive, effective national network for advancing historic preservation. FJ

**VIDEO**

Watch the 2015 Diversity Summit panel.

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SANDI BURTSEVA is the content manager in the preservation resources department at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

**TAKEAWAY**

Diversity and Inclusion at Heritage Organizations

AMANDA DAVIS, ADRENA IFFILL, AND LILY ANNE WELTY TAMAI

Participants in the PastForward 2015 Diversity Summit identified diversity and inclusion as top priorities for heritage and preservation organizations. Through focused diversity and inclusion efforts, preservation professionals can better engage and involve underrepresented communities to tell the full American story. Attendees examined telling missing stories and protecting undervalued and endangered historic places that resonate with underrepresented communities as strategies for achieving social and racial justice. They also discussed the importance of acknowledging the tangible and intangible heritage of often-overlooked groups. The strategic partnerships that emerge from prioritizing inclusivity help create a shared ethic of stewardship and connect local communities with vital preservation resources, and summit participants emphasized their value.

We pick up the conversation around organizational priorities where we left off in November by interviewing three heritage professionals working on the front lines of advocacy and action. These interviewees highlight the specific ways in which their respective organizations welcome and work to sustain cultural diversity in practice, programs, and projects:

Amanda Davis of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project;
Adrena Ifill of Ifill/DoubleBack Global Group; and
Lily Anne Welty Tamai, Ph.D., of the Japanese American National Museum.

What is the mission of your organization and scope of your work? How do you bring attention and protection to undervalued and/or endangered places that reflect America’s diversity?

Davis: Identifying and protecting undervalued and potentially endangered historic places is the core of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project’s mission. Our project was founded specifically to provide a more diverse and inclusive view of history by documenting
extant places in New York City that are significant to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community.

Besides developing an interactive online map, which will feature 100 historic sites when it launches this fall, we are also working on gaining official recognition for tangible heritage through listings on the state and national registers of historic places. We have received a grant from the National Park Service (NPS) to either nominate at least five sites to the National Register of Historic Places for their significance to LGBT history or amend existing nominations to include this history.

While there is still an active push for LGBT equality and acceptance, decades of hard-fought struggles have achieved significant milestones like gay marriage—and those struggles all physically took place somewhere. Recognizing these places at the local, state, and federal levels through official landmark designations and register listings sends a message that LGBT history matters. That message can be incredibly empowering to a community that has long been—and, to varying degrees, remains—ostracized legally, professionally, and personally.

Ifill: The mission of Ifill/DoubleBack Global Group is to share the stories of undervalued and endangered histories. We provide cultural heritage management services to private corporations, government agencies, and nonprofit institutions, including event management and marketing, documentary and multimedia production, and educational curriculum development. Working with clients like the National Archives and Howard University has allowed us to bring diverse histories to life for a modern audience, which is one of our specialties. Diversity and inclusion is not merely a goal for Ifill/DoubleBack Global Group—it is a way of life.

Welty Tamai: The Japanese American National Museum’s (JANM) mission is to promote the understanding and appreciation of America’s ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience.

JANM opened its doors in 1992, housed in the former site of the historic Nishi Hongwangi Buddhist Temple, built by Japanese immigrants in 1925. The building was later renovated to support
the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, a National Museum project. In 1999 the Japanese American National Museum opened a new 85,000-square-foot pavilion, which is the current site of the museum. The two buildings are connected by a granite-and-flagstone-paved courtyard and garden.

The National Center partners with educators and community-based mentors to inspire youth to become active, informed participants in shaping democracy in America. Telling the history of the Japanese American experience in a historic setting amplifies the value of the museum by contributing to the education of our visitors. Approximately 10,000–12,000 students from nearly 250 schools and about 35 school districts visit the museum annually. Among them are students from underserved communities in the Los Angeles area—JANM raises funds to transport them to the museum.

Why is it important to acknowledge and protect America’s diverse cultural places?

Davis: Buildings and sites are the physical reminders of where we have been and how we arrived at today. This is particularly true for sites that represent underrepresented groups who have had to overcome discrimination in the past. Heritage tourism is evidence of how compelling and inspiring it is to be able to see where history took place—there is nothing quite like standing in front of the place where one’s history was made to instill a sense of pride in that history.

Ifill: Inclusion—as practiced through acknowledging the full spectrum of history, providing resources to explore lesser-known elements of a place or event, and inviting input from communities that are historically connected the site or event—is integral to preservation. By learning our history in full color, we as a society can thrive at our highest level. Preservation requires acknowledging the story of a site and all of its participants and making that story accessible to a global audience.

Describe some of your projects and plans. What is their relationship to your organizational diversity/inclusion priorities?

Davis: Our first documented victory was the successful nomination of Julius’, a bar in Greenwich Village, to the state and national registers this spring. This was the site of the April 1966
“Sip-In” organized by members of the Mattachine Society, an early gay rights organization, to challenge the State Liquor Authority’s discriminatory practice of revoking the licenses of bars that served gay men and lesbians. Many people don’t know about this significant pre-Stonewall event—in fact, many are surprised to hear that this kind of discrimination happened. On April 21, we celebrated the Sip-In’s 50th anniversary, as well as the National Register listing, at Julius’. The press event and the story itself drew broad interest from both the public and elected officials, illustrating that this history very much matters to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

The April 2016 celebration of the 50th anniversary of the “Sip-In” at Julius’ honored two of the original protest participants. PHOTO BY JAY SHOCKLEY
One of our upcoming initiatives is amending the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Alice Austen House on Staten Island to include the life that Austen and Gertrude Tate, her partner of more than 50 years, shared there. Tate played a pivotal role in helping them hold on to the house after Austen lost everything in the 1929 stock market crash.

Our top priority is making sure that our survey, which is the first initiative to comprehensively document LGBT historic sites in New York City, is as inclusive as possible. We are taking steps to identify and include sites associated with less-represented LGBT groups, including people of color and transgender people, by partnering with community-based groups and local institutions, and asking the general public to provide suggestions through our Google form. We are also looking beyond Manhattan through public outreach to LGBT organizations and community groups in all five boroughs and by working with the LGBT Caucus of the New York City Council. We have an invaluable opportunity to hear from people who lived through some of the history that we are documenting, and we want their stories to be included. We hope to collect oral histories from the elderly LGBT community and feature them on our website.

Weiwei Tamai: JANM is committed to educating the public about the incarceration experience of Japanese Americans during World War II. Our commitment to this topic is rooted in the belief that history is relevant in the present and that we can safeguard other vulnerable communities by interpreting a painful past. Our ongoing core exhibition, *Common Ground: The Heart of Community*, includes a reconstructed barrack from the Heart Mountain War Relocation Center in Wyoming. The abandoned barrack, which typified the hastily built residences in which Japanese American
families were confined during the war, was brought to Los Angeles in fragments and rebuilt within the museum.

In promoting cultural diversity and inclusion, does your organization focus on tangible heritage, intangible heritage, or both?

Davis: Our focus is on promoting and raising awareness of tangible heritage so that people can understand where history happened. We feel that this is particularly important for the LGBT community, given that contemporary society may not realize how far back this history goes or how vibrant and diverse it is. Our survey findings have already identified sites dating back to the 18th century associated with activism; arts and culture; notable figures; and important social centers like bars, clubs, and restaurants. The project will enable historians to look at LGBT communities’ intangible heritage in the form of social and political organizing and cultural activities.

Ifill: Ifill/DoubleBack Global Group leads the way in building a portfolio wherein inclusion is integral to preservation. It is critical to acknowledge the full spectrum of intangible and tangible heritage, providing resources to explore lesser-known elements of a place or event, and inviting input from communities that are historically connected the site or event. Oral history, for example, blends the tangible and the intangible. Working with the National Park Service, we produced a video to help visitors of the Mary McLeod
Bethune Council House in Washington, D.C., recognize both the history of the site and its contemporary role.

Welty Tamai: JANM promotes the understanding of the Japanese American experience through both tangible and intangible heritage, including personal oral histories, artifacts, and the aforementioned historic structures. Its permanent collection includes two- and three-dimensional artifacts, oral history interviews, photographs, and film and video.

How do you form partnerships with other civil rights or heritage-based organizations, and what do they contribute?

Davis: We recently spoke with members of the Harlem branch of Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE), which directed us to numerous LGBT-related sites in Harlem and provided us with a wonderful oral history. We not only plan to keep that conversation going but would also like to reach out to other SAGE branches around the city. Such partnerships are invaluable to a small group like ours because New York is a big city with many diverse communities within the larger LGBT community, and we want to represent all of them.

As we undertake more public outreach, we hope that people will come forward with suggestions of significant places throughout the five boroughs. Reaching a national audience is important because many New Yorkers with knowledge of historic sites may have moved away from the city, and we still want to hear from them. Conversely, we also want to hear from people who have only lived here for a short period of time.

We also hope to encourage national civil rights and heritage-based organizations, as well as preservation organizations, to advocate for the recognition of LGBT historic sites. National groups can reach a broader audience and encourage positive understanding in a country that has a long way to go toward full LGBT acceptance.

Ifill: Partnerships between national civil rights organizations and preservation groups are invaluable to conversations and actions around inclusion. Every heritage site has many layers, and including its complete story in its preservation requires engaging all stakeholders and acknowledging all connected communities. The working relationships between these organizations may
require difficult conversations, trainings, and many steps—but all are essential to move forward.

We have forged several strategic relationships with national civil rights and heritage-based organizations, including government agencies, universities, and international repositories. We have been working with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation on the Avoice Project for more than 10 years. In that time, we have developed and leveraged partnerships with corporations like Dell Inc. and nonprofits like the National Girl Scouts to aid digitization efforts and marketing campaigns. This enables us to understand the communities that we work in and to develop programs that align with their goals and priorities. It also allows for technical knowledge transfer and implementation that support preservation work.

**Welty Tamai:** JANM has partnered with organizations like the Little Tokyo Community Council, the Japanese American Citizens League, the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center, the Go For Broke National Education Center, the Buddhist Churches of America, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Skirball Cultural Center on events, programs, and exhibitions. By doing so, we have attracted diverse audiences, learned from our partners, and built on our strengths.

We participate in the All-Camp Consortium, a meeting of representatives from all of the World War II Japanese American incarceration camps, sponsored in part by the NPS through its Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) program. The consortium convenes people and organizations connected to the War Relocation Authority Incarceration Centers, Assembly Centers, and other confinement sites to develop networking relationships and partner on projects related to the Japanese American incarceration experience. FJ

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**TAKEAWAY**

A More Inclusive History of El Paso

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ LEYVA

In El Paso, Texas, the landscape is powerful, shaped by ancient mountains, the Chihuahuan desert with its pungent creosote and orange-tipped ocotillo plants, and the often dry Rio Grande/Rio Bravo rivers that serves as the boundary between the United States and Mexico. Just as compelling are the urban landscapes of its earliest Mexican American neighborhoods, where red brick replaced adobe following the arrival of the railroads in the 1880s and where block-long, one-story apartment buildings are called presidios (forts) because they reminded people of military barracks. I grew up in the 1960s and ’70s hearing stories of iconic tenements like El Barco de la Ilusión (The Boat of Hope) and Los Siete Infiernos (The Seven Hells), imagining that, for Mexican immigrants at the turn of the 20th century, life here on the border could hold both hope and hell.

As our concept of historic preservation expands to include not just the physical and built environment but, as importantly, the social and cultural histories associated with specific spaces, these early immigrant neighborhoods are at the heart of that evolving definition. Efforts to ensure that preservation moves toward full and authentic representation must capture stories that have previously been overlooked. In often-neglected neighborhoods, like El Segundo Barrio—one of the oldest immigrant neighborhoods in El Paso and arguably one of the most significant in the Southwest—buildings embody rich and complex histories and memories. Public and social historians are important allies in the effort to recover these histories through archival research and by listening to community members who hold this knowledge. Engaging and learning from underrepresented and marginalized communities helps develop an increasingly accurate and inclusive account of our collective history, strengthening the preservation field.
El Segundo Barrio, or the Second Ward, developed in the late 19th century. An 1886 birds-eye-view map of El Paso by Augustus Koch shows its beginning south of the railroad tracks and north of the river. Some of the buildings on that map still exist, although their facades have changed over time, and several lots depicted as vacant would later house such significant institutions as Sacred Heart (Sagrado Corazón) Catholic Church and parochial school. Referred to as the Ellis Island of the Southwest, El Segundo Barrio of El Paso welcomed more Mexican immigrants than any other port of entry for much of the 20th century. People across the United States can trace their familial roots here, to the tenements of El Segundo.

From a nascent immigrant neighborhood in the 1880s, El Segundo became the most densely populated area of the city by the early 20th century. As the Southwest economy grew with the
arrival of the railroads and the spread of commercial agriculture and mining-related industries, Mexican workers were drawn to employment in El Paso and other Southwestern cities. Within a decade of the 1881 arrival of railroads in El Paso, the population expanded from a few hundred to 10,000. Migration from Mexico surged during the Mexican Revolution of 1910 as well as in the 1920s, which were marked by ongoing violence and instability stemming from the decade-long civil war. By then the population of the city exceeded 100,000. While we often imagine only single, male workers coming from Mexico to work in the Southwest, women and children also migrated, labored, and built the new settlement. In spite of chronic governmental and landlord neglect, the barrio has been the site of important cultural and social history.

**THREATS TO THE BARRIO**

In 2006 El Segundo Barrio drew attention as the city of El Paso announced a new “downtown revitalization plan.” Created in collaboration with the Paso del Norte Group (PDNG)—headed by wealthy businessmen and developers, including the father-in-law of the first-term city council member representing El Segundo Barrio—the plan was eventually named “Downtown 2015.” It promised to bring new life, entertainment, and work to the downtown through the creation of a *mercado* (market) district capitalizing on Mexican culture as well as mixed-use buildings and new stores. El Pasoans were excited. Within two months of the announcement, however, historian David Dorado Romo published “Not for Distribution: Behind the Demolition Plan,” revealing that the plan also included the demolition of 168 acres of El Segundo Barrio.²

Century-old stereotypes re-emerged during the debates about revitalization and demolition. When the city paid branding firm GlassBeach $100,000 to research El Paso’s image, the firm presented a report that included a photograph of an older Mexican man with the caption “male, 50-60 years old, gritty, dirty, lazy, speak Spanish and uneducated” to represent El Paso.³

The demolition plan led to a contentious year as developers and the city government confronted opposition from community
residents, activists, small businesses, and scholars. The people and buildings of El Segundo were at the heart of the conflict. Local activists and residents organized to stop the demolition, and historians worked to bring the barrio’s history to public attention—particularly to the residents of the neighborhood. In 2006 the grassroots Museo Urbano began posting historic photographs of individuals whose stories were linked to specific Segundo Barrio buildings, including Teresita Urrea, a folk saint and healer known as la Santa de Cabora, who had been exiled from Mexico as a teenager in 1896 by Porfirio Diaz; Henry Ossian Flipper, the first African American graduate of West Point; and a class from Sagrado Corazón parochial school. In addition, a group of public history students in the University of Texas at El Paso’s (UTEP) Department of History produced a bilingual booklet, “El Segundo Barrio: A Living History,” which was distributed in the neighborhood and to local libraries. Nonetheless, PDNG members began purchasing properties in El Segundo. While no demolitions have occurred, the plan is still on the books, approved by the city government.

THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION’S MUSEUM OF THE STREETS

While other U.S. cities can claim ties to the Mexican Revolution of 1910—a decade-long civil war that killed a million Mexicans and pushed another million to migrate to the United States—it was uniquely transformational for El Paso. Many extant buildings in downtown and south El Paso boast connections to the Revolution. These include the homes of arms dealers, buildings that once housed the flourishing literature of the Revolution, and tenements that provided refuge to revolutionary leaders and thousands of families both fleeing violence and drawn by the economic development of the Southwest. They also include the buildings that housed the provisional Mexican government of Francisco Madero and the consulate of Pancho Villa.

In 2010 the centennial of the Mexican Revolution afforded the city of El Paso another opportunity to work with the community to highlight its history. Under the leadership of its chair, Dr. Paul Edison, UTEP’s history department agreed to research, design, and
curate an exhibit at the El Paso Museum of History in collaboration with the museum’s director Julia Bussinger and her staff, particularly curator Barbara Angus. David Dorado Romo’s 2005 microhistory, Ringside Seat to Revolution: Underground Culture in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, provided the intellectual foundation for the exhibit.

PUBLIC HISTORY MADE PERSONAL
To prepare for the exhibit, Romo and I co-taught two graduate public history classes and further researched the rich Revolution-era stories. Building on the earlier work of Museo Urbano, we decided to focus on buildings in downtown El Paso and El Segundo Barrio, re-imaging them as artifacts in a museum of the streets. While many of El Paso’s historic buildings feature beautiful architectural design and details, our focus was on documenting the stories of the people and historic events connected with those buildings, of which Romo had already identified more than 100. While some students were initially hesitant to research buildings rather than people or events, they soon learned that buildings are more than physical structures. They are vessels that can hold hidden or forgotten histories, and for contemporary residents, they serve as lodestones for memory. As the semester went on, we began to make connections between the individuals and social, economic, and political histories of El Paso and the histories of Mexico and the United States during the 1910s and ‘20s. Our research demonstrated that the historic buildings of El Segundo Barrio were the cultural and historical patrimony of both nations. Using records such as Sanborn Insurance maps, the U.S. federal census, newspapers, the Historical American Building Survey, city documents, and secondary research on the Mexican Revolution, students delved into the histories of buildings and their residents.

A particularly rich example is the Pablo Baray Apartments, a tenement that is still occupied today. Mariano Azuela, a physician with Pancho Villa, wrote the first great novel of the Mexican Revolution, Los de Abajo (The Underdogs), on a borrowed typewriter in this building. Then editor Fernando Gamiochipi published the novel in serial form in his newspaper, Paso del Norte, also run out of Pablo Baray. As we rediscovered the residents who lived and
worked in the building, we discovered further literary connections. In 1939 Elisa Gamiochipi (Fernando’s daughter) published a little-known serialized novel of the family in a San Antonio newspaper called *La Prensa*. Olga Beatriz Torres, the daughter of *Paso del Norte* co-editor, Elias L. Torres, authored *Memo- rías de Mi Viaje/Recollections of My Trip*, describing life during the Revolution. It was not published until 1994. Once, during a graduate student walking tour, a neighborhood resident stopped to hear the story of the Pablo Baray building. He asked incredulously, “Can anyone live there? It’s such a historic building!” The ordinary, two-story brick building represents the most significant literary and journalistic production related to the Mexican Revolution in the United States.

In 2010 Museo Urbano received a grant from the Texas Historical Commission that allowed us to rent two small turn-of-the-20th-century apartments to create a museum at 500 S. Oregon Street, in one of the most historically rich tenements in El Segundo Barrio. The building is at the intersection of the Mexican immigrant barrio, the old Chinatown, and the historic African American neighborhood, and it reflects this juncture of cultures. It had served as, among other things, the Mexican Preparatory School, an African American women’s boarding house, and a Chinese laundry. In 2010–11, students and community volunteers worked to paint the apartments. David Flores, a muralist with *Colectivo Rezizte*, painted a mural in the courtyard of the tenement building honoring Pachuco culture. Flores was inspired in part by Edmundo Tostado, known professionally as Don Tosti—a renowned musician who composed “Pachuco Boogie,”
the first million-selling single by a Latino composer—who had grown up nearby. And seeing Flores’ mural, young men from the neighborhood volunteered to contribute their own.

It was perhaps at 500 S. Oregon that I came to understand most poignantly how buildings can elicit memories and histories—even ones not linked directly to the specific structure. One morning I went out to say hello to a group of men who sat on our stoop each day—some day laborers, some older men talking with their friends—when an older gentlemen pointed out the woodwork on the ceiling of the porch. He described how he could tell that it is handmade, explaining that he had been trained to do that woodwork as a young man in his hometown of Flores Magón, Chihuahua. After he told me his story, I walked him to the back of the tenement where David Flores had stenciled an image of one of the Flores Magón brothers, a leading intellectual at the turn of the 20th century. “That’s who your town is named after,” I told him.

Similarly, when I was sweeping the courtyard one Sunday morning, an older woman asked if she could come in. One of the murals there showed the black United Farm Workers eagle on a simple red background, which reminded her of her youth. From her wallet, she pulled a 1950s farmworker union card and told me about a strike she had participated in while living in California.
The building was designed to represent a collapsed bridge no longer dividing the two nations. The doorway faces south, representing the migration of workers from south to north. Former *braceros* (“strong arm” laborers) and their families have entrusted thousands of documents to Marentes, who is organizing to demand repayment of funds deducted from the braceros’ wages by the Mexican government.

The Bracero Program began recruiting temporary Mexican laborers during World War II and 6.4 million contracts were issued in its 22-year history for men to work primarily in agriculture, but also in railroads and industry. The first braceros entered the United States through El Paso, and the history of the program—and of the men and their families—is an integral part of the city’s story.

Twenty miles east of the Farmworkers Center is Rio Vista Farm. Established as the County Poor Farm in 1915, it not only continued to serve orphaned and poor children until its closure in 1964 but also functioned as a bracero reception center from 1951 to 1964. Surrounded by cotton fields for much of its existence, its buildings remain remarkably well preserved.

What is perhaps even better preserved are the memories of those who worked and passed through the processing center. The [Bracero History Archive](#)—a joint project of UTEP’s Institute of Oral History, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, and Brown University—contains the often surprising oral histories of both men recruited to work in U.S. agriculture and the men and women who worked at the processing center. For example, Manuel Márquez Flores, who was contracted...
as a bracero in 1959, remembered that, since there were no beds, the men slept on the floor covered by whatever they had brought with them. He also recalled that the men who were not allowed to work because of health issues were simply told to return to their homes. Since these men had no money, other braceros would pool their funds to give each man $10 or $20 toward travel back to his hometown. Their desperation did not prevent these men from being compassionate and generous with their compatriots.⁷

In another oral history, Socorro O. Perez recalled starting work as a clerk at Rio Vista when she was a teenager. Several generations of her family, including her mother and grandmother, lived in El Segundo Barrio in a presidio on Park Street. In 1955 she began typing passports at Rio Vista Farm, starting at harvest time in July and staying until school started again. “Some of these men would come in for the adventure,” she remembered. The clerks were instructed to check the men’s hands—if their hands were smooth, the men were deemed not to be workers. Others had worked so hard that their fingerprints were no longer visible.⁸ In 2001 the El
Paso Community Foundation sponsored a historical marker at Rio Vista Farm called “Granja Rio Vista,” which outlines its history as a poor farm and a bracero processing center. Significantly, the sign was the first bilingual historical marker in Texas.

As historic preservation evolves toward greater complexity and inclusion, the significance of everyday, “ordinary” tenements and long-abandoned poor houses comes to light. Social and public historians can play a valuable role in recovering such histories and creating spaces in which to revive memories. Telling the story of this nation and the people who lived and worked in its diverse urban and rural areas requires looking with new eyes—one that can see the long-hidden and sometimes forgotten stories contained within the walls of buildings.

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4 Like the people historically crossing from Ciudad Juárez to El Paso, the concept of a “museo urbano” also migrated. It was first developed by Willivaldo Delgadillo and Fausto Gómez Tuena from la Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. See Fausto Gómez Tuena, “Los límites de un museo urbano para Ciudad Juárez” in Relatos de la Memoria. La erosión del centro histórico en la ciudad fronteriza, Colección Bicentenario, Museo Logos, Editorial Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, 2010, pp. 45–54.
5 Olga Beatriz Torres, Recuerdos de Mi Viaje/Recollections of My Trip, Juanita Luna-Lawhn, translator, University of New Mexico Press, 1994.
6 The word “pachuco” is believed to have come from young men in Los Angeles, California, who described traveling back to their hometown as going “pa’ El Chuco” (slang for El Paso). Pachuco culture emerged in the 1930s and ’40s, as increasing numbers of Mexican Americans moved to urban areas; Mexican American youth no longer identified with Mexican culture and felt dismissed by U.S. culture. Pachuco culture was expressed through caló, a language that combines indigenous words, archaic Spanish, and the language of the Spanish Roma people; dress, especially the zoot suit; and music that brought the big band sound together with the sensibilities of Mexican American youth.

TAKEAWAY
Delve into the Bracero History Archive.
Cultural Mapping: Engaging Community in Historic Preservation

CLAUDIA GUERRA

I had barely sat down at the kitchen table, a plate full of pan dulce and a hot cup of coffee in front of me, when one of my hosts leaned over, trying to control her giggling, and said, “Make sure Danny tells you the cemetery story.” I set up my recording equipment as quickly as I could. The lively family I was visiting in San Antonio had gathered, as they frequently do on Sunday afternoons, and were already reminiscing and telling stories in both English and Spanish without waiting for me to hit the record button.

We passed the next two hours sharing stories and drawing maps of childhood events; favorite fishing holes; the importance of fire traditions; and the family’s matriarch who, like many other descendants of the first mission residents, had lived within the deteriorating walls of Mission San Jose at the turn of the 20th century. Recently inscribed as a World Heritage Site, San Antonio Missions were designated for both for their authentic tangible heritage and their intangible heritage, which was created by the collision of Spanish colonial and indigenous populations.

Part of our job in San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation is to discover and celebrate these stories in order to preserve them. Breaking bread and sharing stories with the people whose heritage is connected to the San Antonio Missions allows us to do just that. The next step is cultural mapping, in which we pair recorded narratives with hand-drawn maps from the storytellers. We are working toward multimedia interpretations that capture and preserve a full range of stories from the community.

PRESERVATION IS SHARING

We know historic preservation to be a process for protecting something that has importance to a community. Typically it’s a building or a place, but as our understanding of heritage continues
to grow, we know that it can also be a story, a tradition, perhaps even a recipe. Safeguarding and preserving our heritage is what preservationists do, but preservation is about more than protection—it is inherently about sharing.

We preserve our past to share it with future generations—every time someone walks past a building, tells a story, or teaches a tradition, we have shared that resource. And if sharing is a core value of preservation, it stands to reason that we are obligated to also develop a shared process for identifying which resources must be tended to.

Engaging the public in the process of identifying cherished resources, rather than leaving that to a so-called expert, not only advances a democratic process but also is likely to reveal resources that would otherwise go unnoticed. Members of the public are the experts and must be invited to share their expertise.

**SHARING THE WORK OF PRESERVATION WITH THE COMMUNITY**

The process of recognizing community resources is itself a shared experience. In San Antonio, as in many other cities, the public engages with the preservation process through public hearings regarding landmark designations and treatment of historic properties. As in other cities, we also have education and outreach programs through Preservation Month celebrations; lectures throughout the year; opportunities for volunteers to work on historic properties; and fun events like Preservation Races, which send participants on timed, historically themed scavenger hunts through historic districts. These are all excellent ways to engage those who are already interested in the work of preservation, but they are not sufficient to attract those who aren’t as plugged in. Even when they are aware of an activity, people need to feel connected enough to want to participate, which is why preservationists dedicated to truly engaging the community must take it a step further. Engaging groups that are, at best, unaware or, at worst, disenfranchised is an important step toward inclusivity, and that engagement is best accomplished by activities that a community can relate to culturally.
As part of our cultural initiatives through community engagement, San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation has been working with residents to create a cultural map through testimonials. The work is intended to tell our cultural story, particularly regarding the intangible heritage that has led to our World Heritage designation. Using this kind of information gathering to achieve community engagement strays somewhat from heritage management as it is conventionally practiced, but it is growing in interest and potential. It also collects not quite an oral history, but a testimonio—a testimonial form of narrative and storytelling. Most popular in Latin America and other colonized regions, testimonio straddles literary theory and anthropology and allows the person telling the story to tell it as they wish, rather than forcing them to answer a prescribed set of questions.

CULTURAL MAPPING AS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Throughout history, people have created and used maps to find places, to keep from getting lost, and to shape the boundaries of geographic space. Maps, however, are more than pieces of paper with geographic points. Maps say, “We are here,” but they also say, “This is who we are.” Maps tell us how countries were formed, how history shaped territories, and who shaped history. Essentially, maps are stories about the lives of people in places.

Josie Mendoza, descendant of the 1816 alcalde (mayor) of San Antonio, Domingo Bustillos, creates a cultural map. Bustillos’ family had lived in La Villa de Bexar (now San Antonio) since the early 1700s, and he was granted a Spanish Land grant in 1824. Mendoza lives on a portion of that land in an adobe home built circa 1857 by her great-great-grandparents.

PHOTO BY CLAUDIA R. GUERRA
Many of the cultures that compose San Antonio’s population have strong oral traditions. While this is true in many places, a city with Latino, Hispanic, African American, and indigenous cultural foundations is particularly given to strong spoken-word traditions. Songs, story-telling, and testimonials are all thriving. In the United States, cultural mapping is an emerging tool for documenting customs and activities while relating them to geography. In San Antonio, we’ve found this to be a creative solution to gathering community knowledge that reflects the cultural foundations of many of our citizens.

Cultural mapping may be done in different ways. Our approach is rooted in listening to stories and memories. The conversations, recorded on video, are guided by the question “Which memories and traditions would you like to hand down to future generations?” After the conversations—which range from a few minutes to two hours—are completed, storytellers are asked to draw maps that reflect their narratives. The maps are drawn by hand and each represents a unique story. Using the collected maps and the video-taped stories, we create one unified map. Eventually we plan to create a map using GIS technology that urban planners can use to obtain quantitative data, as well as an art exhibit that captures the spirit of the place and people.
One day when we were holding a community open house for story gathering, a woman named Josie Mendoza walked in and joined an ongoing conversation about culinary traditions. After 20 minutes or so of discussion, Mendoza said, “Well, I’m here because I wanted to talk about my ancestor, Domingo Bustillos. He received a land grant in 1824 and I still live on a part of that original grant.” At that point everyone stopped to listen to the story she was about to tell. It isn’t every day that one meets a descendant of someone who owned most of the county we live in and, as we would learn, who served as an alcalde (mayor) of La Villa de San Fernando de Bexar.

Domingo was eight years old when his mother died. The family lived in a home off of what we now call Alamo Plaza. He joined the Spanish Royal Army and became a well-respected merchant and politician. In 1824 he received a grant for land known as Rincón del Alamo (corner of the Alamo), which included land around missions Espada and San Juan. But the important part, she wanted us to know, is that although much of the land has been sold by now, she and her family still own and live on part of the Rincón. She and her siblings and cousins grew up swimming in the Arroyo de la Piedra (rock creek), “but all the maps are in English, and they call this Six Mile Creek.” A week later another resident and descendant of settlers in the Mission San Juan area would tell a similar story and create a map with all the Spanish names that the locals use, none of which are documented on current English maps.
While we could populate these maps with the information found in history books, the point is to gain the knowledge—like the Spanish place names—of the people who have visited the missions or live in the surrounding neighborhoods. This mapping is only beginning, but so far we have discovered—or, more appropriately, rediscovered—the many people, both great and ordinary, who created this vibrant city. And we have gained new insight into how they understood place.

By listening to our community experts, we’ve learned about two childhood games called *pajaritos* (little birds) and *cebollas* (onions), which we rarely see children play anymore in this part of the world, but which apparently come from Spanish traditions and are still played in Spain. Along with culinary traditions that are well known, like tamales, we discovered that *fideo*, a noodle dish that was an everyday staple for most families and continues to be a favorite, is equally important.

With its World Heritage designation, the city of San Antonio is charged with protecting the intangible aspects of the missions. Our map-making is a critical first step of defining and documenting this heritage. The next step is figuring out how to protect it. While mapping it will help us better understand what creates a unique sense of place here, making sure that future generations continue to play traditional games, cook traditional foods, know the names of their ancestors, and know the shared community history of the place they call home is the best way to preserve intangible heritage.
VITAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Cultural mapping was first explored in San Antonio during the National Park Service’s Latino Legacy Summit held here in 2014. The event was co-hosted by the Westside Preservation Alliance (WPA) and the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, a local Latino arts and culture community-based organization. Donna Guerra, WPA member and professional local archivist, and I led a workshop in which participants were asked to share stories and were guided through visual imagery of memories, emotions, scents, and events. More than 40 individuals from the city’s Westside shared and then mapped their stories. We were joined by several students from the University of Texas at San Antonio who were working towards a Certificate in Historic Preservation under the guidance of Professor William A. Dupont, San Antonio Conservation Society Endowed Professor and director of the Center for Cultural Sustainability. The students helped participants draw maps of the neighborhoods in which their stories occurred. Through the community members’ work that day, we not only discovered potential landmarks but also documented the history that would help us form statements of significance.

The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center celebrates the oral and visual traditions of culture and, for more than 10 years, has collected stories and photographs through its program “En Aquellos Tiempos” (“In Those Times”). Its work created a document of San Antonio’s Mexican American history of the 20th century and played a vital part in identifying places of significance to the Latino community on San Antonio’s Westside, ultimately leading the city to designate 64 local landmarks.

LESSONS LEARNED

For anyone seeking effective and authentic community engagement, I would recommend the following simple steps.

- Stop using words like “process” and other jargon of the trade, and use the words that the community tells you are appropriate.
- Use tools that have meaning and cultural relevance to the community.
- Listen more than you speak.
Allow the community to participate in the planning of the work.

Build trust by allowing community partners to take the lead. Think of it like a dance: it could be a tango with syncopated leading, following, and stepping in just the right place and at the right time. Or it could be a cumbia—or a conjunto-style polka, redova, or schottische—with their coordinated twirls and carefully moderated timings.

Any two organizations coming together should be prepared to navigate differences, but that shouldn’t stop anyone from progressing and collaborating.

Be aware of and sensitive to the fact that similar cultural communities that share some traits may nevertheless differ widely in thinking. For instance, San Antonio’s Westside communities prefer to use the words *platica* (kitchen table conversations) and *cuentos* (stories) when engaging in discussions and storytelling. However, Southside communities—which share many cultural foundations, including the Spanish language—often told us that they prefer to use *conversar* (to converse), *charlar* (to chat), and *recuerdos* (reminiscences), which are subtly different types of conversations and storytelling.

And be prepared for unusual places to be documented.

Take Danny and his cemetery story. Danny had a cousin named Charlie, who loved to dance. He was very dapper and attractive but perhaps a bit vain and *un poco medioso* (easily frightened). At that time, many dances were held at the mission parishes, including Mission Espada, and Charlie loved to attend those to meet girls. But to get there and back home to Mission San Jose, he had to walk through one of the mission cemeteries. One night, Danny and his other cousins waited for Charlie in the cemetery. When they heard the tapping of his dance shoes, they spoke to him in ghostly voices, pretending to be ancestors from the grave: “Charlie! Chaaaaarrrrlieeeeee! Where are you going? Come visit us!” They spooked him so much that he was afraid to go back to future dances.
That story provides an opportunity to recall a beloved place and person that, to this day decades later, they can reminisce and laugh about. Giving space and time for a community to share these stories—that’s community engagement. That’s preservation beyond architecture. FJ

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TAKEAWAY
See more examples of cultural mapping in San Antonio.
Discussions on Broadening Outreach and Programming

KEILAH SPANN

For the past two years, I have been working to develop heritage programs and facilitate discussion with colleagues across the field about historic preservation issues related to African American communities and resources. The discussions, which began in spring 2014, have been informal and short (one hour or less) monthly or bimonthly calls that have allowed colleagues to exchange information and views regarding topics that typically come up in our work or observations of current professional and social issues.

The discourse has ranged from general conversations to sharing technical expertise and best practices, and some discussions have been instrumental in launching new programming to address the issues that were raised. While the conversations have focused on African American resources, many of the discussions may be useful in expanding educational outreach and approaches to program planning for any number of cultural groups.

INFORMATION GAPS ON BOTH SIDES

Every individual whom I have engaged in these discussions has identified the lack of information and awareness about historic preservation as an impediment to their work with minority communities. Historic preservation is a fairly new academic discipline in North America, and most Americans are only vaguely familiar with the term, let alone the field. This is magnified among African Americans and other minority groups and further complicated by the perception that preservation has played a significant role in the disenfranchisement of communities through gentrification.

Even among members of the general public who are actively involved in preservation efforts, few have formal training or education in the field or related disciplines. Most are community organizers, activists, clergy, civic leaders, educators, servicemembers,
or retired professionals dedicated to their communities. They tend to be well educated in their respective fields and have the organizational leadership necessary to gather resources and build support for a project, but they lack fundamental knowledge of preservation methodology and philosophy. Unfortunately, community projects can stall or even fail when leaders lack the information they need to make sound planning decisions. Typical components of a project—identifying the preservation method, selecting contractors, developing cyclic maintenance plans—can become daunting tasks that take longer to accomplish. Not only might the projects fall prey to financial mismanagement and ultimately fail but the community organizations that attempted them may also face difficulty in securing support for their future efforts.

More often than not, minority communities will be forced to seek technical assistance for their preservation efforts outside of their demographic groups because historic preservation, a relatively small field of study to begin with, attracts very few minority practitioners. According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, in 2014 people of color earned only 10 percent of the total degrees awarded in historic preservation and closely related disciplines. According to U.S. Department of Education statistics, in 2014 people of color earned only 10 percent of the total degrees awarded in historic preservation and closely related disciplines. African Americans accounted for roughly 4 percent with Hispanics following closely at a little more than 3 percent, whereas white Americans earned 90 percent of those degrees. With so few people of color going into the profession, disparity in knowledge about preservation—including what resources are available for funding, technical assistance, and specialized services—is unsurprising.

When there is an information gap, preservation organizations that have forged relationships to assist community projects may fail to provide adequate mentoring or real knowledge exchange. This can lead to a paternalistic relationship that fosters distrust and compounds the negative view many communities have of the preservation movement.

The information disparity also comes at a cost to preservation professionals. While communities may lack fundamental preservation awareness, preservation organizations often lack cultural awareness. The homogeny within the profession adversely affects the
field, as interactions with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds would broaden historical knowledge, accurate cultural perception, and critical thinking skills. A lack of diverse viewpoints and accountability also precipitates practices and rationale that exclude diversity in programming areas.

VARYING PHILOSOPHIES ON PRESERVATION

Program planning for resources in African American and other under-represented communities is another topic that merits close investigation. The field generally adheres to the Western definition of historic preservation, which focuses on maintaining the aesthetic properties of the material object. Many cultures, however, have different priorities, which can vary based on values. For many African, Eastern, and Native American cultures, the primary historic or cultural resources are intangible, and preservation is defined by the maintenance of beliefs, traditions, history, and craftsmanship. Maintaining material items is secondary because the tangible object—whether it be a structure, site, or ornament—only has relevance or value when it is functioning within the community to convey cultural ideology or related history.

For example, the Ashanti people of Ghana, West Africa, have a long-held practice of crafting *akua ba*, commonly referred to as “African fertility dolls,” and presenting them to women of child-bearing age to help ensure conception. The dolls range in size; some are elaborately carved or decorated, while others have very little detail. While there may be a particular ceremonial *akua ba* used for many generations, preservation is focused on continuing the ceremony and conveying the value that the Ashanti people place on children, rather than on maintaining the doll itself.

In many African American and other minority American communities, there is a similar focus on historical information and cultural memory as the primary resources worth maintaining. Examining the aesthetic qualities of an object is a secondary exercise—one that is often considered superficial. Instead, people prioritize the ways in which objects relate to them or their understanding of history. Preservationists often fail to recognize this
view. Furthermore, they may assume that, in the absence of tangible evidence, there is no reason to include a particular history in their programming.

Incorporating varying preservation philosophies can be useful for expanding program development and outreach. Oral history and recitation of cultural memory—which is the main method of preservation for many African societies—can be used to link separate sites through interpretation as part of a shared cultural landscape or to bridge different time periods. People will attend historical programming events if they have confidence in the organizing group’s commitment to accuracy in interpretation. This applies to mainstream audiences as well, who appreciate learning about different perspectives on history. Broader and more varied interpretation can also increase repeated visitations to a site.

ADDRESSING ISSUES THROUGH PROGRAMMING
“Resistance, Escape, Community”

During my work with the Cane River National Heritage Area, I developed two programs based on the issues and methods identified during discussions with colleagues. One was a two-day conference called “Resistance, Escape, Community,” which focused on the history of resistance to enslavement in 19th-century North Louisiana and the Deep South, maroon communities, and varying views on racial identity between the colonizing nations present in the Cane River area prior to the Louisiana Purchase.

Attendees at the “Resistance, Escape, Community” conference on resistance to slavery.
PHOTO BY JALIE BILLIS FOR CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
The impetus for the program was local ethnographer Rolanda Teal’s recent discovery of the history of a well-organized slave insurrection that took place along Cane River in 1804. Teal’s research, coupled with the United Nations’ International Decade for People of African Descent, provided the perfect opportunity to develop a program directed at both history or cultural resource management professionals and a more general audience. The conference was marketed both to the public and professionals, especially staff of historic sites and local heritage organizations seeking to expand their historical interpretations. The aim was to promote a firm understanding of how African Americans resisted slavery while also providing enough historical details to compel professional researchers to engage in further historical research.

On the second day of the conference, oral history was used to link two sites within the heritage area, both of which are related to the history of slavery. The actual site of the insurrection was inaccessible and held no remaining tangible evidence relating to the event, so attendees first visited the adjacent Magnolia Plantation. There they heard an account of the insurrection and learned about slavery in the Cane River area. Magnolia Plantation contains intact slave cabins, a wooden gin press, and other historic outbuildings that illustrate what life there was like for enslaved people. This helped put the history of the uprising in context for the audience and gave a much-needed boost to visits to the plantation.
The second site, Los Adaes State Historic Site, is near the western edge of Natchitoches Parish, 24 miles from Magnolia Plantation. Los Adaes was the former capitol of Texas and a Spanish presidio. It was also a marker and safe haven for runaway slaves en route to Spanish territory, and those involved in the Cane River insurrection would have passed through on their way to freedom. The normal historical interpretation at Los Adaes was revised to include the history of enslaved Africans and describe the Sistema de Castas, a Spanish racial hierarchy system. This interpretation helped illuminate the differences in racial identity among colonizing nations and provided insight into why those escaping slavery in the region opted to flee into colonial Spain.

Nearly 300 people attended the first day of the conference, and 100 participated in the site visits. More than half of the attendees were from other cities or states, which proved that people will give extra consideration and effort to attend programming that is committed to conveying different aspects of history.

Attendee demographics, collected through an online survey, were found to be split 60/40 between African American and white participants, respectively. This is particularly significant in a local context of lingering racial tensions and proves the feasibility of building broadly appealing programming around intangible resources. My partners—the National Park Service and Los Adaes—and I worked to optimize audience diversity by carefully planning topics, themes, and learning expectations, as well as considering...
the cultural backgrounds of our audience. Marketing efforts aimed at reaching diverse audiences included local talk radio and television segments, local newspaper articles, announcements on the website and during the programming of a local NPR affiliate, and promotional packets sent to universities.

Per the survey, African American people who had never visited local historic sites before, or who had found past visits uncomfortable, attended because they felt confident that the interpretation would be factual and free from offensive statements and would reflect the experiences of African Americans. White Americans attended because they were unfamiliar with African American history, particularly resistance to slavery, and wanted to learn something new. Even those who had visited the sites before wanted to hear a new and more encompassing interpretation.

The majority of attendees identified themselves as “interested members of the public” (38 percent) or “researchers/historians” (32 percent), and the third-largest group (19 percent) were cultural heritage resources management professionals.

Nearly all the participants (92 percent) said that they would visit the heritage area again. White attendees emphasized their astonishment regarding aspects of slavery about which they had no previous knowledge. The responses to one particular survey question—“What was the most beneficial aspect of the conference?”—were especially revealing: The majority (74 percent) identified historical information as the most beneficial aspect. Networking and site visits came in second and third, respectively. Given that the site visits focused on intangible heritage, their popularity proves that programs built around intangible evidence can be a compelling draw. Most attendees were local—many lived within a few miles of the sites—but most were also first-time visitors. The opportunity to learn from an authentic interpretation of the sites was uniquely appealing for people who had not previously felt compelled to visit.

Cultural Heritage Tourism Workshops
This spring, I partnered with the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF) Program to develop an online
cultural heritage tourism workshop series—once again with the goal of filling information voids and raising awareness. The two-part series presents information on the NTF program, case studies on heritage tourism development, and technical assistance for researching and submitting nominations to the NTF’s database of sites. The workshops have been promoted to a national audience, this time specifically geared to cultural resources management entities, preservationists, and professionals in related disciplines. Ideally planners and preservationists will learn to develop heritage tourism initiatives around mostly intangible resources and add sites to the NTF database.

Part one of the series took place in April and was simulcast from the Maryland Office of Tourism Development (MOTD) in Baltimore. During the introduction I highlighted the benefit of understanding varying cultural views on heritage and preservation for programs focused on African American resources and history. Four organizations presented cases studies of cultural heritage tourism efforts successfully developed around tangible and intangible resources related to the Underground Railroad: Niagara Falls National Heritage Area; the MOTD; Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence in Albany, New York; and Friends of the Free State Capitol, Constitution Hall in Topeka, Kansas. The presenters shared details of their approaches to tourism development and the methods used, which include audio tours; restoration of historic structures; and, in the case of Niagara Falls, a binational event planned to celebrate the opening of an Underground Railroad History Center in 2017. Participants included staff from state historic preservation offices, museums, national heritage areas, architects, and community planners.

While the workshop series will be formally evaluated after its completion this fall, thus far it seems to be successfully broadening the approach of preservation organizations working with African American resources.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

The telephone discussion sessions, which are ongoing but not permanent, have remained informal but have initiated innovative programming around African American history and other kinds of
intangible heritage. The conversations have raised other issues as well, including the links between land ownership and cultural heritage preservation, the effects of patterns of migration on community development, and cemetery preservation. Conversations are being broadened to include social issues, and future discussions will be more formal, publicized through short conversation synopses, and shared on social media. FJ

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2 Cane River National Heritage Area, located in Natchitoches, Louisiana, is one of 49 national heritage areas designated by Congress as areas with natural, cultural, and historic resources that combine to tell a unique aspect of America’s history.

3 The term “maroon communities” refers to communities in the Americas formed by escaped slaves.

4 Archivists from several universities were asked to compile a list of archives throughout the state that house significant collections related to African American history, and attendees received these lists to assist them with future research.

5 Magnolia Plantation is a part of Cane River Creole Historical National Park, which is a separate entity from the National Heritage Area.

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