# CONSERVATION PERSPECTIVES

THE GCI MAGAZINE

FALL 2025

CONSERVING AFRICAN AMERICAN BUILT HERITAGE

Getty Conservation Institute

# A Note from the Director

Photo: Elon Schoenholz.

The theme of this edition of *Conservation Perspectives* is Conserving African American Built Heritage. These are places that encompass monuments, buildings, and neighborhoods—and their associations and meanings—that embody and represent the Black experience in America since its founding. Admittedly, this history is both complicated and painful. But contained in it are also the enduring, extraordinary contributions, both individual and collective, that Black people have made to American life, and that deserve not only recognition but also, most importantly, safeguarding, stewarding, and celebrating.

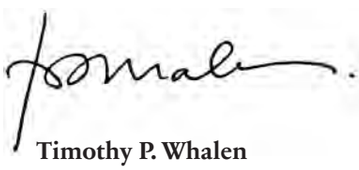
Despite the vast number of Black heritage sites throughout the United States, less than three percent of our country's designated historic sites were nominated for their importance in Black history, a situation that is common for the heritage of many marginalized communities. As an institution, Getty has undertaken initiatives to address the disparity in the representation of the built heritage of marginalized groups including African Americans. In 2020 the Getty Conservation Institute partnered with the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources to create the African American Historic Places Los Angeles (AAHPLA) project to identify and protect the city's rich Black history and heritage. In 2022 our colleagues at the Getty Foundation—in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund—initiated the Conserving Black Modernism project, a four-year, $4.6 million grant program to preserve modern sites and buildings by Black architects and designers across America. These projects are an acknowledgment that history, after all, is still being written.

All four of the articles and the roundtable discussion in this issue speak to the need to preserve Black stories and spaces. In his essay, Brent Leggs, senior vice president at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, describes the ways its African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, launched in 2017, is cementing the legacies of Black architects, communities, and buildings through its variety of grants and partnerships. The article by Rita Cofield and Sara Lardinois, project specialists at the GCI, together with Ken Bernstein, principal city planner for Los Angeles City Planning's Office of Historic Resources, discusses how our joint project, AAHPLA, is working to bring attention to important Black heritage sites in Los Angeles and address systemic challenges to secure the conservation of the rich and diverse heritage that better represents the broad history of the United States.

Preservationist Denise E. Gilmore chronicles in her article her experiences in Kansas City, Missouri, and Birmingham, Alabama, working with local stakeholders, city government, and the private sector to champion important Black historical landmarks. And in the final essay, anthropology professor Justin Dunnavant writes about his journey to becoming a maritime archaeologist and about scuba diving to examine and honor the wreck of the slave ship *Clotilda* in the waters of Mobile Bay, Alabama. In the roundtable, Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Karen Mack, and Claudia Polley engage in a spirited conversation about Black heritage from the viewpoints of an HBCU architecture professor, an LA-based educational nonprofit, and a heritage preservation activist, respectively.

I conclude with the news that in October, I announced to the GCI staff my decision to retire from the directorship of the Institute. A search for my successor will be launched in early 2026, and I will remain in my post until the new director is named. However, while I will be leaving the GCI, I will not be departing Getty. At the request of Getty President and CEO Katherine E. Fleming, I will continue in a new role as Vice President of Institutional Planning.

I am deeply proud to have led the GCI for more than twenty-five years in its mission to preserve the world's cultural heritage. I want to express my utmost gratitude to the dedicated colleagues past and present at the Institute with whom I have worked in our shared endeavor. And I am incredibly grateful to the remarkable heritage professionals and partners around the world whom I have had the privilege of working alongside. Thank you one and all for the support you have shown me and the Institute during my tenure as director.



**Timothy P. Whalen**
*John E. and Louise Bryson Director*

CONSERVATION PERSPECTIVES

# Contents

## CONSERVING AFRICAN AMERICAN BUILT HERITAGE

4
SAVING OUR SHARED PAST TO SHAPE OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE
Why Preserving Black Cultural Heritage Matters
*By Brent Leggs*

7
TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE CULTURAL HERITAGE
Preserving African American Historic Places in Los Angeles
*By Rita Cofield, Sara Lardinois, and Ken Bernstein*

13
FROM ACCIDENTAL PRESERVATIONIST TO CULTURAL HERITAGE CHAMPION
*By Denise E. Gilmore*

16
REMEMBER, REMIND, AND RESTORE
The Limits of Archaeology
*By Justin Dunnavant*

19
A CONSTELLATION OF NARRATIVES
A Conversation About Preserving Black Spaces and Stories
*With Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Karen Mack, and Claudia Polley*

25 RESOURCES
A list of resources related to conserving African American built heritage

26 GCI NEWS
Projects, events, and publications

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**ON THE COVER**
**St. Elmo Village, an artists' enclave** occupying a compound of ten small Craftsman bungalows in a colorful garden setting, is located in the Mid-City neighborhood of Los Angeles. It was founded in 1969 by artists Roderick and Rozzell Sykes as a place where children and adults could explore their creativity. Since then, St. Elmo's—incorporated as a nonprofit in 1971—has hosted art workshops, festivals, and other programs to benefit the community and engage local youth. In 2025 it was declared a Historic-Cultural Monument by the City of Los Angeles. Photo: Elizabeth Daniels © J. Paul Getty Trust.

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# SAVING OUR SHARED PAST TO SHAPE OUR COLLECTIVE FUTURE


## Why Preserving Black Cultural Heritage Matters

***BY BRENT LEGGS***

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A HISTORIAN, AN architect, or a preservationist to understand that places are powerful. Everyone has a place—a home, a restaurant, a church, a park, even a neighborhood—that inspires feelings that no other location does. Those emotions can range from empowerment to nostalgia, or even discomfort, as we grapple with the deeper personal and communal memories our built environment and landscapes hold.

The critical question is: Who is empowered with the platforms and resources to choose which historic places along our streets and across the country are preserved and championed? Preservation work is never neutral. Choices about what to save, where, and with what resources make statements about who, and whose history, is valued. For centuries, sites of enormous historical and cultural value in Black and Brown communities have been underfunded and underprotected, leading to the potential erasure of generations of stories that could go untold. We know that with the power of preservation comes the responsibility of stewarding these places and grounding us in the legacy of our past while laying the foundation for a brighter and more inclusive future.

From a young age, my parents instilled in me a respect for pioneering Black Americans throughout history: like self-made millionaire Madam C. J. Walker, education and civil rights leader Booker T. Washington, baseball legend Satchel Paige, and so many other Black entrepreneurs, civic leaders, artists, and architects who enriched our nation's history and culture. Since then, I have always wanted to ensure that these historymakers and the places they built, lived, and worked in are recognized as part of the full American story, and serve to create a more knowledgeable and empowered society.

**Participants and instructors from the March 2025 Conserving Black Modernism workshop** gather outside Carson City Hall, located in Los Angeles County. The city hall was designed by a team led by Black architect Robert Kennard, whose firm Kennard, Delahousie & Gault is the oldest Black American architectural firm in Los Angeles. Photo: Morgan Forde, courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In my twenty-year career, I have personally seen how broadening our historical lens opens the way to discovery and connection across race, class, culture, and politics, not only in the past, but also in the present. Yet when my colleagues and I look at National Register of Historic Places data, we see that less than three percent of our country's designated historic sites were nominated for their importance in Black history.[1] We know that number pales in comparison to the number of Black heritage sites that exist across the country, but when they don't have the recognition they deserve, and the legal and financial protection that comes with that, they are at high risk of being lost to time or, in the worst cases, demolition.

With this recognition I worked with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to launch the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund in 2017. Since then, we have made significant progress documenting Black heritage sites, preserving cultural assets, and inviting underrepresented voices and perspectives into the field. With philanthropic investment from the Getty Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, Lilly Endowment Inc., and others, the Action Fund has awarded over $44 million in grants to 378 preservation projects across the United States. These sites include Roberts Temple Church of God in Christ in Chicago, where Emmett Till's funeral was held in 1955; the home of music legend Louis Armstrong in Queens, New York; and the Louisville, Kentucky, park where Althea Gibson played. These places tell a vibrant story of America, shining a light on our shared arts and cultural legacies, our religious history, the expansion of our democracy, and the innovations of generations of designers who have shaped our built environment.

However, our field now has to come to terms with the fact that we can no longer assume that the historic places that reflect American identity and values will continue to be supported at the federal level. Without that baseline of protection, major donors, philanthropies, corporate partners, state and city governments, and communities will have to lean in to close the gap. Otherwise, we could lose evidence of American achievements and resilience that can never be replaced.

That is why the Action Fund is helping to build a more inclusive preservation movement, through both grant making and programs targeted toward cultivating the next generation of practitioners. This work includes our fellowships supporting architects, scholars, artists, and cultural critics that are engaging with Black heritage work in innovative ways, and our support of the National Trust's HOPE Crew initiative, which engages youth from a variety of backgrounds in the preservation trades through real-world projects. Through this multifaceted approach, we are developing a programmatic blueprint that proves the power of preservation to help us understand our past and shape a brighter future.

## CONSERVING BLACK MODERNISM

While their contributions have long been undocumented or undercelebrated, Black architects and designers have been foundational to America's built heritage for centuries. Enslaved craftspeople were engaged in building homes and churches, many of which are standing to this day. After emancipation and into the twentieth century, Black people forged paths into the architectural profession, designing for Black and white clients alike. Some names have been canonized in architectural history, including Paul R. Williams, Norma Merrick Sklarek, and Amaza Lee Meredith. Many others, unknown, have their designs standing as silent witnesses to their conceptual and material innovations.

The progression of Black architectural practices, from the so-called vernacular styles of the eighteenth century through the Modernism of the mid-twentieth century, included not only prevailing forms and techniques, but also adaptations (both overt and implicit) to reflect the realities of the Black American experience. The challenge for preservationists today is that many of these architectural gems are hiding in plain sight, unrecognized and in dire need of conservation.

To broaden the nation's architectural narrative, the Action Fund partnered with the Getty Foundation in 2022 to launch the Conserving Black Modernism (CBM) initiative to identify, preserve, and steward Modernist buildings across the country that were designed by twentieth-century Black architects. Today, this $4.85 million program has awarded grants to twenty-one sites across three grant rounds, with a fourth to come in 2026. Additionally, the Action Fund team has partnered with the Getty Conservation Institute to offer cohort training programs for grantee sites covering best-practice approaches to stewardship planning and preservation projects.

Today, less than two percent of the registered architects in the United States identify as Black, but I'm proud to count a few of them as members of the Action Fund team.[2] Through the CBM program, we've been able to bring more diverse voices to the forefront of the preservation field, including those working to broaden the canon of American architectural history. CBM jury member Dr. Charles L. Davis II, professor of architectural history at the University of Texas at Austin and a former fellow with the Action Fund, has been a crucial thought partner in defining what makes Black approaches to Modernist design unique.

"These architects are not just borrowing from white practi-

**McKenzie Hall at the University of Oregon** in Eugene was designed in 1968 by DeNorval Unthank Jr., the first Black graduate of the university's architecture school. In 2025 it was awarded a Conserving Black Modernism grant, which will support the creation and implementation of a Preservation and Interpretation Plan for the building. Photo: Brian Davies, courtesy of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

tioners, they're interpreting it in completely different ways," Dr. Davis said. "So designs that look the same have different meanings. To me, Black architectural modernity is a mode of living. It's a way of being in the world."[3]

A prime example of Black Modernist design innovation is the Founder's Church of Religious Science in Los Angeles. We were excited to award them a CBM grant in July 2025 to help shape their preservation planning. The church was established by Dr. Ernest Holmes in 1932, but by the late 1950s the congregation was outgrowing its building. Paul R. Williams, the first Black member of the American Institute of Architects and an established practitioner in the city, was commissioned to design its new building. He created a sleek, elliptical design that pushed the boundaries of then-current reinforced concrete construction, drawing on geometric forms that represented Holmes's teachings. The nearly-twenty-thousand-square-foot building was dedicated in 1960. CBM grant funding will support the church leadership's work to develop an accessibility and interpretation plan, enabling more efficient use of the site, and to create opportunities for storytelling about the church's innovative architectural legacy.

## PRESERVING BLACK CHURCHES

Alongside the contributions of Black architects, historically Black churches, from the humble to the radically designed (as Williams's was) have stood the test of time as irreplaceable centers of Black community and culture. From historic Pickett Chapel in Tennessee, built by enslaved people in 1827 and standing to this day, to New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, where Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a precursor to his "I Have a Dream" speech and world-famous singer Aretha Franklin made her first recordings for J.V.B. Records as a teenager, these sites serve as houses of worship and safe havens, and provide vital social services that uplift their communities. Yet, despite their central role, these historic sites face a broad array of challenges—from insufficient funding and deferred maintenance, to aging congregations and threats of demolition.

Because historic Black churches are usually located in Black neighborhoods, they are more likely to suffer the negative impacts of gentrification, extreme weather, and accessibility challenges brought on by historically discriminatory urban planning and zoning decisions. These communities have withstood generations of redlining, disinvestment, and harmful development, and often were relegated to areas especially susceptible to flooding, environmental pollution, and other factors that impact not only buildings, but also the physical and social well-being of the people who live there.

To preserve and uplift these historic places and the neighborhoods they serve, the Action Fund established the Preserving Black Churches program, a $60 million initiative backed by generous philanthropic support from Lilly Endowment Inc. Since its first cohort in 2023, this program has partnered with historically Black churches and congregations to reimagine, redesign, and redeploy preservation techniques to address their needs and the stories they hold.

Through this program, we have also established Rapid Response Emergency grants specifically for churches that have suffered sudden, extreme structural damage. This year, in the wake of the catastrophic fires across the Los Angeles area, we awarded Hillside Tabernacle City of Faith a grant to support efforts to restore and rebuild after the church building was heavily damaged in the Altadena fire. The site was formerly a postal office that the congregation acquired in the 1980s and transformed into a center of the local community through decades of service and spiritual connection.

One of our previous rapid-response grantees, St. James AME Church in Mayfield, Kentucky, whose building was completed in 1923, was devastated by a tornado in 2021. The seed-funding provided by the grant has grown into a multiyear fundraising effort and preservation partnership that has enabled not only the full building's reconstruction, but improvements via steel beam framing, mechanical upgrades, and ADA accessibility improvements.

"The Action Fund is enabling St. James to become more of a historical presence, not just in Mayfield, but in the world," said St. James AME Pastor Gloria Lasco. "They've helped it become more of a part of history than it already was. It's just been an amazing partnership."

## PRESERVING BLACK STORIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

As we prepare to celebrate the two hundred fifty years of US democracy, we believe it is crucial that we all come together to present the nation's complex, multifaceted, and multiracial story, both for this moment and into the future.

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund focuses on a segment of this story but does not devalue the important contribution of the many other ethnic and cultural groups that have made America what it is today. We simply recognize that if we do not preserve Black history, then we, as a nation, are losing something vital.

I've seen firsthand how historic preservation is powering a renaissance in Black communities across the country, where the regeneration and reuse of historic buildings and treasured landscapes is driving resilience, economic development, the arts, and cultural flourishing. The work of historic preservation is fostering an overall sense of empowerment.

It gives me hope and continual inspiration that we are helping to create an inclusive movement where current and future generations can come together and shape our shared future. From grassroots communities to seasoned preservationists and philanthropic funders, we all have a part to play in learning the lessons our past can teach us and ensuring that those memories, both challenging and joyous, live on.

*Brent Leggs is executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund and senior vice president at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.*

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1. Trust for Public Land, "Explore Sites Honoring Black History" (January 4, 2024). https://www.tpl.org/blog/parks-honor-black-history
2. National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), *Baseline on Belonging: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Architecture Licensing* (2021). https://www.ncarb.org/sites/default/files/Main%20Website/Data%20%26%20Resources/ExaminationReport.pdf
3. Shayla Martin, "What is Black Modernism? A Conversation with Dr. Charles L. Davis II" (November 12, 2024). https://savingplaces.org/stories/black-modern-architecture-davis


# TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE CULTURAL HERITAGE

## Preserving African American Historic Places in Los Angeles

*BY RITA COFIELD, SARA LARDINOIS, AND KEN BERNSTEIN*

CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION CAN be a powerful force in addressing social justice by empowering local communities to effect positive change through the celebration and conservation of significant places, where all communities' histories are represented. There have been considerable efforts in recent years in the United States and internationally to ensure that conservation extends to heritage places that more fully represent a nation's history. However, barriers remain within the heritage system that constrain whose stories are being told, and which places are protected and conserved, including those of African Americans.

The history of Black people in America is one of hardship, pain, and struggle, but also of bravery, resilience, and achievement—narratives of national importance. However, this history is not widely known, and many of the places associated with this history remain largely unprotected and inadequately conserved.

### CONSERVATION AS A PATH FOR GREATER EQUITY

In recent years, calls to address injustices across a myriad of social, racial justice, economic, and cultural issues have prompted the cultural heritage sector to examine how their work can contribute to necessary change. This attention has spurred the conservation, city planning, and cultural sectors to reappraise the heritage

**The Lincoln Theatre, which opened in 1927 and closed operations in 1961**, was the largest of five theaters located along Los Angeles's Central Avenue corridor, then the heart of the city's Black community. In 2023 the building received a preservation grant from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. Currently it is home to the Iglesia de Jesucristo Judá church. Photo: Elizabeth Daniels, © J. Paul Getty Trust.

system—its processes, policies, and practices—to determine how current and past approaches may be contributing to the systemic problems, and to then identify changes needed to better identify and conserve the rich and diverse heritage of African American and other underrepresented communities. National, state, and local government agencies and preservation organizations have been addressing these disparities and challenges in different ways.

Nonprofit organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation have worked for decades to provide support and funding for African American conservation projects, more recently through the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund (AACHAF). Community advocacy is catalyzing projects such as the 126th Street Harlem African Burial Ground Memorial, integrating the preservation of a historical burial ground into a larger public planning project for affordable and middle income residential, commercial, and community uses. The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) is an example of a public authority integrating equity-based conservation projects into larger main street revitalization, place-making, and investment initiatives. Up-front investment and free assistance are provided for funding applications and to carry out preservation work in historically African American neighborhoods in New Orleans, including Central City, Tremé, and Gentilly.

There is considerable national and international interest in harnessing the potential of conservation as a path for greater equity, a path that encourages multiple views and stories and enriches our understanding of the past.

## 2020: A MOMENT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The racial reckoning of 2020, sparked by the killing of George Floyd at the hands of law enforcement and amplified by the Black Lives Matter movement, ignited outrage and further exposed systemic inequities across multiple sectors, including cultural heritage. The reckoning exposed deep-rooted systemic inequities and created a sense of urgency for heritage institutions to address the underrepresentation of African American and other marginalized communities in official heritage registers and the need for inclusive conservation practices that reflect diverse histories and lived experiences.

In response, the GCI and the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources began discussing ways to address the city's African American heritage and equity outcomes in heritage management, with a goal of using history and culture as tools for equity, inclusion, economic revitalization, and community building. These early conversations noted that despite the ambitious and comprehensive survey efforts undertaken by the city, there was much more that we could do to recognize the diversity and richness of the African American experience in Los Angeles.

## CONFRONTING BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE CONSERVATION

The legacy and collective memory of African Americans is embedded in the buildings, landscapes, neighborhoods, and public spaces across the United States where Black communities were enslaved, settled, and lived their daily lives. These heritage places range from sites and monuments of international and national significance to everyday spaces cherished by local communities for the roles they played in shaping lived experiences. Three African American churches in Alabama—Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, Bethel Baptist Church, and 16th Street Baptist Church—form part of the Civil Rights Movement Sites, currently on the United States' tentative list for nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List. These churches were the setting for pivotal events in the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement, a transformative movement in the United States, and profoundly influenced human rights struggles worldwide.

At the national and local levels, places such as schools and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), theaters, recording studios, beauty salons, and barber shops have also been formally recognized through inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and in state and local designations.

Despite such designations, inventories do not yet equitably reflect the diversity and richness of the African American experi-

**Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, in Montgomery, Alabama**, was an important site of the civil rights movement. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. served as pastor there from 1954 to 1960, and the church was a meeting point for the 1956 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Photo: Carol M. Highsmith. George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division.

**Councilmember Heather Hutt (middle) from Council District 10 stands on the front porch of the Tom and Ethel Bradley Residence** with the Bradleys' daughters, Lorraine (left) and Phyllis (right), at a historic plaque unveiling event on August 14, 2025. Photo: Courtesy of the City of Los Angeles.

ence in the United States. For example, in Los Angeles as of March 2025, only a little more than 4% of the city's 1,319 locally designated landmarks reflected associations with Black history.

There are significant barriers not only to recognition and designation of African American heritage places, but also to their conservation, ongoing use, and care. In late 2020 the GCI and the City convened a virtual roundtable comprising national and local thought leaders with experience in urban planning, historic preservation, African American history, and grassroots and community organizing. The participants discussed the processes and practices that perpetuate biases in how places are recognized and protected and identified barriers to the conservation of places of importance to Black communities. These include but are not limited to:

- *Lack of Investment and Access to Capital*: The general lack of investment in African American communities by governments and the community itself contributes to a lack of value being placed on historic and cultural investment.
- *Competing Values*: When Black communities are given choices about what they would like to address, cultural heritage preservation is a lower priority than transportation, affordable housing, schools, or other needs.
- *Designation and Related Criteria*: The interpretation and application of historic designation criteria frequently emphasize architectural significance and integrity over other values, often excluding modest structures of social or cultural significance.
- *Silo Mentality and Effect*: The barriers between professional spheres (government preservation agencies, preservation practitioners and academics, and community historians and members) can contribute to a breakdown in knowledge sharing.
- *Community Engagement*: Community engagement can be a challenge, particularly in large cities such as Los Angeles or in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification and changing demographics.

## THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORIC PLACES LOS ANGELES PROJECT

Seizing upon the needs identified in the 2020 roundtable discussion, Getty and the City launched the African American Historic Places Los Angeles (AAHPLA) project in 2021 with the following aims:

- Advance recognition, understanding, protection, conservation, and celebration of African American heritage in the city of Los Angeles.
- Contribute to broader understanding and to reform historic preservation, as well as planning policies, processes, and practices to enhance social justice and equity goals through expanding the heritage tool kit.
- Provide a potential model for future initiatives for other underrepresented communities in Los Angeles and beyond.

This project builds on that undertaken by the City with the GCI since 2005, to establish a comprehensive framework for the identification and management of Los Angeles's historic resources. This partnership created SurveyLA, Los Angeles's first-ever citywide survey of historic places, conducted from 2010 through 2017. SurveyLA included research on the diverse histories of Los Angeles—women, Chinese American, Latino, African American, LGBT and Jewish communities—that have shaped the city, resulting in a series of ethnic-cultural context statements that provide a framework for identifying and evaluating historic properties in Los Angeles related to each of these communities.

In February 2018 the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources released the African American History of Los Angeles Context Statement, which provided an extensive and detailed overview of the city's African American history. However, this work was just a first step in expanding understanding about this history and was intended to be revisited and expanded as additional resources became available. AAHPLA is advancing the 2018 con-


**The Mafundi Building, in Watts, was built in 1969** by architects Robert Kennard and Arthur Silvers. Founded in the wake of the 1965 Watts rebellion as an arts education center devoted to community empowerment, the Mafundi Institute (also known as the Watts Happening Cultural Center) was housed in this building from 1969 to 1975. Photo: Stephen Schafer, © 2020 schafphoto.com.

text statement, reconnecting with communities to more closely examine the African American heritage of the city, prioritizing places to bring forward for historic designation, and developing preservation strategies for neighborhood communities to understand, recognize, interpret, and protect this cultural heritage.

A robust community engagement program will be developed to facilitate meaningful input into the process, drawing on local knowledge of hidden histories, and contributing to creative approaches that best meet communities' own aims for place-making, identity, and empowerment. The project is guided by an active fifteen-member local Advisory Committee of civic, cultural, and academic leaders with deep expertise in Los Angeles's African American heritage.

In addition to a specific focus on significant African American heritage sites and neighborhoods in Los Angeles, the project seeks to identify current land use planning and historic preservation policies and practices that must be rethought to ensure support of equitable outcomes. This work will be informed by a research program and convening of international, national, and local experts to share knowledge and identify existing tools that could be adopted and adapted or new tools that could be developed to support the work.

## Understanding the Legacy of African Americans in Los Angeles

The contributions of African Americans to Los Angeles are numerous yet often overlooked, and many of the places connected to this history, both surviving and lost, are unprotected and unmarked.

The 2018 context statement identified nine themes, including deed restriction and segregation, newspapers and publishing, and visual arts, to highlight the contributions of African Americans across all sectors of Los Angeles, even amid the legacy of racial discrimination.

During the first half of the twentieth century, African Americans were generally prohibited from living in most areas of the city through racially restrictive covenants specifying that property owners could sell their property only to Caucasians. This discrimination was reenforced by Federal government policy, which led to economic disinvestment in Black communities and the limiting of Black residents' ability to achieve homeownership and build generational wealth. Many sites associated with early Black Angelenos have been demolished or lost because of these discriminatory planning laws and policies.

While these exclusionary practices constitute an essential part of the history of African Americans in Los Angeles, the 2018 context statement also underscored the pivotal role played by African American leaders in breaking down these practices and reshaping the city's civic culture. Examples include the Sugar Hill neighborhood of West Adams, where African American homeowners, including actresses Hattie McDaniel and Ethel Waters, retained attorney Loren Miller to file a legal challenge defending their right to own property in the once all-white neighborhood. These early challenges in Los Angeles contributed to the US Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), a landmark case originating in St. Louis, Missouri, that ruled that racially restrictive covenants were unenforceable.

The 2018 context statement also highlighted individuals such as Charlotta Bass, who challenged the enduring effects of nineteenth-century slavery and laid the groundwork for civil rights advancements. Bass was a trailblazing journalist, publisher, and civil rights leader; from 1912 until 1951 she was publisher of the *California Eagle* in Los Angeles and is believed to be the first Black woman to own and operate a newspaper in the United States.

AAHPLA is currently working to broaden and deepen the themes and content of the 2018 context statement, based on input from the project's local Advisory Committee and citywide outreach. The Advisory Committee helped identify and prioritize the new work, including addressing themes of business, sports, science and technology, art and culture, and the crime-police-fire-law sector. The Advisory Committee also identified as a key priority the opportunity to transcend the more typical structure of historic context statements by infusing the "soul" of the African American community into the document, through additions such as oral history vignettes and sidebars to enliven each thematic section with the voices of the community. The refined and expanded Historic Context Statement will create a framework through which we can evaluate these places associated with African Americans important to the history of Los Angeles before they are physically lost.

## Expanding Recognition and Protection of African American Historic Places

AAHPLA is expanding the list of nominations for local designation (known as Historic-Cultural Monument, or HCM, sites) reflecting African American heritage. The project team worked closely with the Advisory Committee to select priority sites identified as significant in the 2018 context statement and recognized as important touchstones to the community. The nomination selection reflects a wide range of historic themes and property types, as well as geographic representation from across the city.

**Charlotta A. Bass, publisher and editor of the *California Eagle* newspaper**, seated at her desk. Photo: Courtesy of the Shades of L.A. Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

The first six sites designated by the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission and City Council not only represent significant places of history and meaning individually, but also collectively encapsulate broader themes that give communities insight into the rich and layered story of African Americans in Los Angeles. The sites are: StylesVille Barbershop & Beauty Salon, Pacoima; St. Elmo Village, Mid-City; the Tom and Ethel Bradley Residence, Leimert Park; Jewel's Catch One disco club, Mid-City; the *California Eagle* newspaper building on Central Avenue; and New Bethel Baptist Church in Venice's Oakwood neighborhood.

Many of these sites have now been publicly recognized and celebrated with Historic-Cultural Monument plaques, unveiled during ceremonies attended by local elected officials, community members, and site stewards, alerting passersby to their historical significance.

## Securing Conservation Action: Cultural Preservation Strategies

With input from the Advisory Committee, AAHPLA is also developing cultural preservation strategies to manage, protect, conserve, enhance, interpret, and celebrate the tangible and intangible heritage of three historically African American neighborhoods in Los Angeles: the Oakwood neighborhood in Venice, Pacoima in the Northeast San Fernando Valley, and the Central Avenue Jazz Corridor. These neighborhoods are historically significant African American communities that have experienced demographic changes in recent decades. Those changes underscore the importance of conserving and celebrating the evidence of African American heritage within the current communities, including making this history relevant and accessible to all residents.

The neighborhood strategies will be done in partnership with community stakeholders, commencing with cultural asset mapping workshops and exercises to identify both tangible and intangible assets of each neighborhood. This will be followed by the development of a statement of significance for the neighborhood identifying heritage values and attributes; an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and development of a vision statement. Strategies will then be designed to implement the vision. These strategies will extend beyond designating historic places and may also include broader heritage and planning actions including recommendations for further documentation, such as an oral history project; leveraging legacy business programs or other financial support mechanisms to sustain community connections; promotion of adaptive reuse projects and proposals for enhanced or new public spaces to celebrate the neighborhood heritage; neighborhood tours and interpretation of significant places that have been lost; and community-based educational partnerships. The strategies will be brought forward for adoption by the City Council and will serve as an action plan guiding future implementation within each neighborhood.

## Engaging Communities

Community is at the core of AAHPLA, and an extensive commu-


**Basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar spoke with his longtime business partner Deborah Morales** at the kickoff event for African American Historic Places Los Angeles, held at St. Elmo Village on June 24, 2023. Photo: Lilibeth Garcia, GCI.

nity engagement plan has been developed to ensure that local and diaspora communities are engaged through all stages of the work. AAHPLA was publicly launched in June 2023 at St. Elmo Village with basketball legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who in conversation with his business partner Deborah Morales highlighted the importance of community involvement in identifying historic sites. Guests participated in listening sessions and enjoyed good food and company. To continue the momentum and introduce the project to a larger audience, the project team has held office information sessions, where community members met with the project team to ask questions and share their thoughts on important sites in the city associated with African Americans.

The project team attends local events such as the Central Avenue Jazz Festival, informing and inviting community members to share their stories of important people, places, and events. Future engagement efforts are in the works, focusing on the historic context statement and the neighborhood cultural preservation strategy efforts.

## Empowering the Next Generation of Conservation Practitioners

Since 2021 AAHPLA has hosted summer undergraduate internships and yearlong graduate internships, and it is committed to providing opportunities for African American students and emerging professionals in the conservation field. The project is also fostering a network of community-based preservation advocates and practitioners through training associated with various project activities. For example, in preparing the first round of HCM nominations, selected community members and students shadowed the professional historic preservation consultants, gaining hands-on experience and knowledge on the research and nomination process, with the aim of building community-based capacity for preparing future nominations.

## Expanding the Conservation Tool Kit

GCI research is examining a range of community consultation and engagement, planning, knowledge, financial, and regulatory tools in use by the cultural heritage sector and related disciplines in the United States and internationally that have the potential to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the identification and management of cultural heritage. So far, our research has focused on cultural asset mapping, a tool not yet widely in use or directly connected to place-based cultural heritage processes in the US such as protection, conservation, and policy work. The GCI is also looking to international examples of innovative policy tools to inform AAHPLA's work on neighborhood cultural preservation strategies. In the future, we plan to disseminate this research and the lessons learned to the greater conservation community.

## The Path Ahead

Transforming long-established approaches to heritage conservation demands sustained effort. On-the-ground experiences and research take time to influence and translate into policy frameworks. Community-based heritage work also takes time, ongoing dialogue, and trust. AAHPLA continues to evolve, informed by our iterative processes, each step questioning and deepening our understanding of conservation practices, amplifying voices of those long excluded, and inspiring creative strategies to protect both the tangible and intangible attributes of LA's African American heritage. Informed by parallel research and similar efforts elsewhere, we will explore new approaches and practices to expand the heritage tool kit.

Over the next few years, the success of this work will be measured not only by the number of sites designated or neighborhood strategies developed, but also by the extent to which local communities feel heard, empowered, and equipped to shape their own narratives.

More broadly, the hope is that AAHPLA and like-minded initiatives can inform efforts elsewhere and contribute to the conservation of underrepresented heritage through more inclusive, equitable, and just conservation practices. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of these efforts as they unfold.

*Rita Cofield and Sara Lardinois are project specialists at the Getty Conservation Institute. Ken Bernstein is the principal city planner for Los Angeles City Planning's Office of Historic Resources.*

# FROM ACCIDENTAL PRESERVATIONIST TO CULTURAL HERITAGE CHAMPION

*BY DENISE E. GILMORE*

AS HERITAGE PROFESSIONALS, WE KNOW THAT preservation strategies have traditionally centered on philanthropic or nonprofit institutions. Throughout my career I have been fortunate to lead efforts to combine preservation with stakeholder engagement, and I have seen how this innovative strategy yields benefits for both efforts. I will share best practices I have developed to leverage government for heritage preservation, presenting my experiences in Kansas City, Missouri, with the 18th & Vine Jazz District, and the Civil Rights District in Birmingham, Alabama, as examples.

When local leadership has a specific strategy in mind, it is often easy to push forward without considering the preferences and ideas of community members, who will live with the consequences of government policy and actions. But in both cases I found that stakeholder and community engagement to shape strategy and execution is the foundation of successful preservation efforts.

## KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, AND THE 18TH & VINE JAZZ DISTRICT

The historic 18th & Vine Jazz District is located just minutes from downtown Kansas City and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The district was known as the place to be at the height of the jazz era from the 1920s to the 1940s. Jazz greats Charlie "Bird" Parker, Jay McShann, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, and Louis Armstrong all played in the nightclubs in the Vine Street District, which back then stretched from 12th Street to 19th Street. As with many Black neighborhoods at mid-century, a new interstate highway disrupted the Vine Street District with its construction, splitting the district in two.

In 1989 city councilman Rev. Emanuel Cleaver II proposed the idea of creating a Jazz District with twin goals of preserving the city's rich jazz history and promoting economic development. Elected mayor in 1991, Cleaver advanced the district's initial construction of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, and the American Jazz Museum and Blue Room jazz club, which opened September 5, 1997. The GEM Theater underwent extensive renovations during the 1990s and opened for live performances in 1997.

**The restoration of six historic houses**, originally built between 1880 and 1920 on Highland Avenue in the 18th & Vine Jazz District, was begun in 2006 and completed in 2012. Photo: Courtesy the Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation, Kansas City.

I became President and CEO of the Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation (JDRC) in 2006, and our preservation strategy focused on designating vacant or neglected properties in the district for restoration under the direction of JDRC. After a $5 million restoration, six historic houses built between 1880 and 1920 were adaptively repurposed as affordable housing and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Jazz District gained new investments from the private sector and city government, which contributed to mixed-income housing, small businesses, infrastructure, and green spaces, generating over $25 million of economic impact. We deployed the smart-growth principles of mixed-use development, walkability, transit access, and green space expansion. All of these were made possible with support from local government. At that time, both the city manager and deputy manager of planning served on the Jazz District Board of Directors. We also enjoyed city council and mayoral support, with the recognition that embracing Kansas City's jazz and baseball heritage not only was positive for visitors but also made our residents proud.

**Kansas City jazz legend Jay McShann** playing piano at the Mutual Musicians Foundation in the heart of the 18th & Vine Jazz District in 2003. The building is located on the former site of Local 627, established in 1917 and known then as the "Colored Musicians Union." Photo: Evie Quarles, courtesy of LaBudde Special Collections at the University Libraries at the University of Missouri—Kansas City.

**Left: A. G. Gaston Motel, in a photo from 2010**. Photo: Carol M. Highsmith. George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive (Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress). **Right: A. G. Gaston Motel, in a photo from 2020**, showing the restoration of the 1954 wing. Photo courtesy the City of Birmingham.

## BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, AND THE A. G. GASTON MOTEL

The Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument (BCRNM) was created through presidential proclamation by President Barack Obama in January 2017. Its purpose was to preserve and interpret the events, stories, and places associated with the nonviolent struggle against racial segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, during the mid-twentieth century. Following changes in administration at the local level in fall 2017, little movement had occurred to actualize the national monument. In July 2018 at the direction of Mayor Randall Woodfin, I came to Birmingham as Director of Cultural Preservation to bring into existence the BCRNM, a partnership of the City of Birmingham and the National Park Service (NPS), and to lead the restoration of the A. G. Gaston Motel. Our focus was now squarely on the Gaston Motel, the centerpiece of the national monument, and to move the BCRNM to reality.

The BCRNM comprises those sites that were central to the civil rights movement in Birmingham, including the 16th Street Baptist Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Kelly Ingram Park, Colored Masonic Temple, A. G. Gaston Motel, Bethel Baptist Church, and the related sites of the historic 4th Avenue Business District and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

Dr. A. G. Gaston built the A. G. Gaston Motel to offer first-class lodging for Black Americans traveling through the segregated South, spending $300,000 to self-finance the project. The A. G. Gaston Motel held its official grand opening on July 1, 1954, boasting thirty-two air-conditioned rooms, and was described in the local Black press as "one of the finest in the Southeast." The Gaston Motel was a *Green Book* site (first listed in the Spring 1956 edition) and hosted Black celebrities, politicians, athletes, and everyday travelers. At the height of the Civil Rights Movement, the Gaston Motel was where Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. A. D. King, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, and other civil rights leaders met in the War Room to strategize and plan the 1963 campaign of protests and marches known as Project C.

## ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS IN THE RESTORATION

Championing our local goal to preserve the civil rights history through the preservation of the district and its historic sites, Mayor Woodfin supported a $10 million restoration under the Historical Preservation Authority (HPA) in 2018. We contracted a historic preservation architect to ensure that the project adhered to the Department of the Interior's historic preservation standards. We selected the A. G. Gaston Construction Company, a legacy company established by Dr. Gaston, to undertake the restoration. Working through the HPA, I coordinated the City's internal team of Capital Projects, Office of the City Attorney, Mayor's Office, Office of Public Information, and Departments of Public Works, Finance, and Planning, Engineering & Permits to facilitate a smooth start to the restoration. This close coordination was important because it kept the project on schedule and on budget, and ultimately delivered a restored motel with internal and external stakeholder and community engagement. We established weekly construction meetings with the contractor, architects, NPS, and City representatives to ensure timely information and address project issues. Embedded in all our efforts was direct communication with the BCRNM and broader civil rights district stakeholders at the outset, during construction, and to completion.

In March 2019 the restoration began with a preliminary mock-up phase, designed to explore and understand the condition of the historic site. The 1954 wing restoration was completed in December 2020. The preservation of the motel continued in 2021 with the restoration of the City of Birmingham's 1968 wing and courtyard. The Mellon Foundation generously awarded a $1.1 million grant to the City of Birmingham for the restoration of the historic motel, which now houses the A. G. Gaston exhibit, a coffee shop, and a catering kitchen. Today, the coffee shop is a vibrant space in the district for local community and visitors, recalling the history of the Gaston Motel as a gathering place during the civil rights movement.

On June 30, 2022, a ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the first major phase of restoration of the Gaston Motel and its opening to the public. Elected officials, district stakeholders, community members, the Gaston family, and more than four hundred com-

munity members attended the celebration. Today, the motel is a place of reflection, restoration, and renewal. Our work uplifted the full story of Birmingham's struggle for equality through a historical lens and now serves as a blueprint for similar preservation efforts.

## SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS, SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

When I arrived in Birmingham I found that the leaders of multiple civil rights historic sites had been working separately to try to advance the goals of their individual sites. To ensure that the City's work reflected the needs and aspirations of the local district, I convened the BCRNM stakeholders. We met monthly to advocate for the district and bring City plans before stakeholders for their input in decision-making. We adopted as a mantra the African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone; If you want to go far, go together." What made this work truly meaningful was the City's willingness to center the voices of those in the district with direct ties to Birmingham's civil rights history. Their leadership not only was valued; it was vital. The historic sites all have dedicated Black leaders, ensuring that the stories and histories of their respective sites are authentic. When we as city staff were considering what would be exhibited in the city's restored space, the stakeholders' input that an exhibit on Dr. A. G. Gaston was necessary prompted the curation of an exhibit on his life. Our discussions ensured that city policies and actions were guided by the memories, experiences, and wisdom of those in the district with a vested interest in preserving the stories and promoting the historic sites.

Similarly, in Kansas City I co-convened the Jazz District Compact, a group comprising district stakeholders, which came together to solve problems and advance the district's common interests. We met monthly with the goal of protecting cultural resources and ensuring the historical and cultural accuracy of narratives about the district. We focused on preserving our historic treasures through deliberate economic investment in both physical and cultural spaces. Finally, we worked to promote historic resources by sharing these stories with a wider audience while remaining culturally sensitive and rooted. We produced the Rhythm & Ribs Jazz Festival in 2005 to reintroduce the 18th & Vine Jazz District to the greater Kansas City region. Every district stakeholder had a role in the planning and execution of the festival. We estimated that more than twenty-five thousand people attended the three-day festival designed to celebrate the district's rich jazz history.

Both projects are examples of successful collaborations with city government and stakeholder leadership, which ultimately delivered authentic, sustainable outcomes. I sought to move beyond simply having representatives attend meetings, to encouraging broad stakeholder participation in direct decision-making. My goal was to empower Black leaders in these cultural spaces and support a mindset of stewardship as these leaders were the owners of the narratives and history that their historic sites represented. Stakeholder engagement was the first step to ensuring that our stories would pass to successive generations. It was through this process that I helped facilitate the multigenerational transition of legacy-keeping by empowering local preservation leaders and practitioners as cultural owners.

**Civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** standing on a balcony at the A. G. Gaston Motel, Birmingham, Alabama, 1963. Photo: Marion S. Trikosko, U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection (Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress).

## PRESERVING BLACK STORIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Call me an accidental preservationist. At the beginning of my career, I could not have anticipated the role I would play in saving the stories of Black culture and places. However, I always loved and was deeply interested in Black history, even before I began my preservation journey. It quickly became apparent to me that the preservation of Black spaces, places, and stories was dependent on those of us with lived Black experience.

Walking the streets of the 18th & Vine Jazz District, it was impossible not to be drawn to the stirring stories of 1920s jazz belting out from the nightclubs and how the Negro National League was founded in the Paseo YMCA building that still stands today. I saw the photos of Count Basie standing under the 18th & Vine Street sign, and I became emotional just thinking that I was at the same spot jazz greats had stood. To stand in the courtyard at the Gaston Motel and look up at the balcony where Dr. King directed the foot soldiers for the protest marches gave me chills.

So, who tells these stories? Black leaders must serve as caretakers of Black histories and legacy. These places form and shape our narratives. The buildings historically represented a safe place for Black people to gather, to enjoy life, and to bring about social change. These spaces are institutions of Black hope and achievement. They represent the narratives and stories that the Black community sees immeasurable value in preserving, for current and future generations.

*Denise E. Gilmore is Founder and President of the Heritage Consulting Group LLC, based in Kansas City, Missouri. She previously served as Director of Cultural Preservation for the City of Birmingham, Alabama, and as President and CEO of the Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation in Kansas City, Missouri.*

# REMEMBER, REMIND, AND RESTORE

## The Limits of Archaeology

*BY JUSTIN DUNNAVANT*

### RECOVERING THE MISSING PAGES OF WORLD HISTORY

It's been more than twenty years since I participated in my first excavations. As a young archaeology student, the idea of helping uncover Mayan history in the Belizean rainforest was both thrilling and intimidating. But what captivated me wasn't so much the adventure as the possibility. I was passionate about African and African American history and became frustrated when I encountered hundreds of years of history summarized in a few loosely worded pages. I knew the history was important and existed in great detail somewhere, so I turned to archaeology as the tool to help recover what John Henrik Clarke called the "missing pages of world history."[1] My passion for archaeology and new histories took me all over the world, from Tanzania to Ethiopia, the Gambia, Mozambique, Jamaica, and throughout the United States.

But as a student at Howard University, I never found myself fully committed to the field of archaeology. It was always a tool. My intellectual forebears weren't Howard Carter, Lewis Binford, or Thomas Jefferson—yes, President Thomas Jefferson is credited with supervising the first archaeological excavations in North America on his Monticello estate. I saw the work of archaeologists Cheikh Anta Diop, Alain Locke, Arturo Schomburg, and William Leo Hansberry as my North Star. I was more interested in what they were studying and why, as opposed to how I could further the field as a science. I knew they were committed to a community and a history that was deeply personal and politically important.

It was the quest to understand my role in the field and the motivations of those who came before me that led to deep study and the eventual founding of the Society of Black Archaeologists. As a new graduate student at the University of Florida, I met Ayana Omilade Flewellen, then an undergraduate archaeology student who shared the same commitment, and we knew there was a need for such an organization. We played around with names but eventually settled on the Society of Black Archaeologists, yielding the acronym SBA, after the Asa Hilliard III text *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*. While many still confuse it with the Small Business Administration, the name is a constant reminder of our commitment to an African-centered approach to archaeology.

**Dr. Justin Dunnavant, conducting an underwater archaeological survey** in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary with Diving With a Purpose, 2018. Photo: Chris Searles.

## AN ARCHAEOLOGIST EARNS HIS FINS

Soon after founding the organization, I received an email from a scuba diver in Mozambique. Jay Haigler and his colleagues at Diving With a Purpose and the Slave Wrecks Project had been working with the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture to locate, document, and interpret slave shipwrecks. But at the time, US universities had produced only one African American underwater archaeologist, and there was growing interest and need to rapidly build capacity. Soon Ayana and I found ourselves spending our school breaks at swimming pools, quarries, and lakes, training for our scuba certification. Prior to my encounter with this group of divers, I never considered Black history as existing underwater, much less the idea that I would become trained as an underwater archaeologist.

Working with those divers opened my eyes to a new mode of archaeological practice, one that quickly tested the limitations of the field. All archaeological work requires a degree of care and sensitivity, but there is something special about being an African American diving on slave shipwrecks. As you might expect, all the emotions of trauma, reverence, grief, and enlightenment are intertwined. I had to reconcile a personal relationship to the site with the power upwelling in these shared community memories. This reconciliation forced me to move beyond the limits of archaeology into the exploration of recovering ancestral memory.

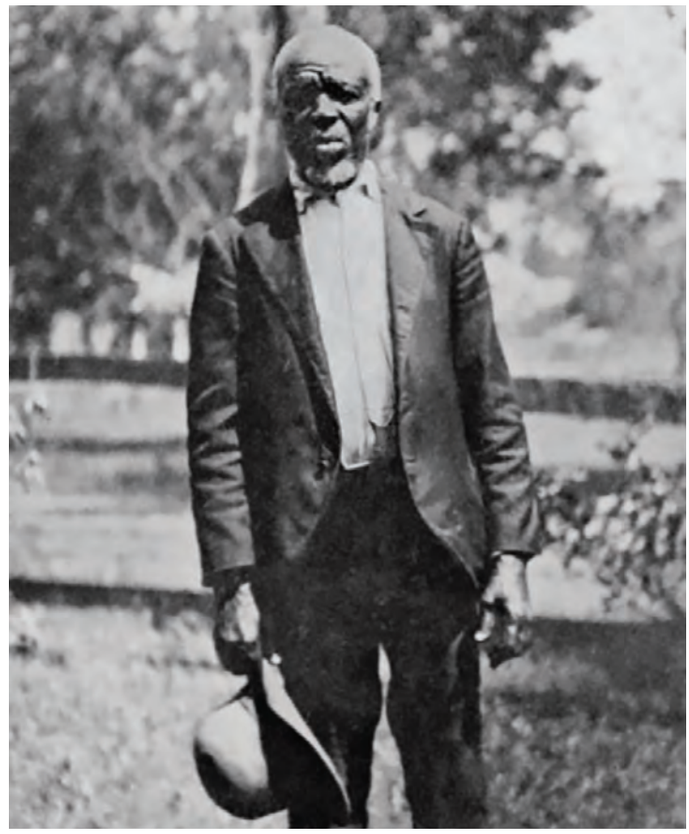
## RECOVERING ANCESTRAL MEMORY

The *Clotilda* wasn't the first slave shipwreck site I've worked on, but it was the most impactful. As the last documented slave ship to enter the United States, the shipwreck represents both the continuation of the slave trade well beyond its international abolition and the lingering reminder that our present is shaped by the past. Slave trader Timothy Meaher commissioned Captain William Foster and refitted the *Clotilda* to travel to the coast of West Africa, illegally purchase enslaved Africans, and bring them back to Alabama. In 1860 more than one hundred West Africans were disembarked on the shores of Mobile Bay, Alabama, and Meaher scuttled and burned the ship in an attempt to hide his crimes. The Africans were sold into slavery throughout the state and remained enslaved during the Civil War. Upon emancipation in 1865, several of those individuals came back to the site of disembarkation and made their case for return to Africa. When the request was denied, they pooled their resources, purchased land nearby, and established the community of Africatown, which still stands today.

For over a century, the descendants of the *Clotilda* maintained a clear record of their lineage to those Africans who were taken from West Africa. The location of the ship, however, was unknown until 2019, when its rediscovery sparked an international conversation about the enduring legacy of slavery. As one of the members of the recovery team, I learned that the project was about community history as much as it was about personal reconciliation. As archaeologists and conservationists, we were concerned with questions of documentation and preservation: Is it feasible to raise the ship, or should it remain underwater? Does it belong in an international museum or under the stewardship of a local organization?

But as Black archaeologists, there were additional questions of care that needed to be addressed. On May 9, 2022, Jay Haigler and Kamau Sadiki likely became the first two African Americans to reenter the hull of a slave ship in more than a hundred years. Sadiki, who had worked on other slave shipwrecks, composed an ancestral prayer before diving into the *Clotilda*, while Haigler recounted an unusually calm sensation when entering the wreck.[2] Both divers expressed the importance of acknowledging and honoring those Africans who traversed the Middle Passage, understanding their responsibility to conserve the memories.

Caring for and stewarding the memories in the slave ship into the present pushes the boundaries of archaeology and requires new modes of practice. For the *Clotilda* it was a prayer. For the wreck of the *Henrietta Marie*, a seventeenth-century slave ship wrecked off the coast of Key West, Florida, in 1700, it was the installation of an underwater plaque that reads, "In memory and recognition of the courage, pain, and suffering of enslaved African people. Speak her name and gently touch the souls of our ancestors."[3] For the underwater wreck of Lt. Frank H. Moody's P-39 fighter plane, it was a wreath-laying ceremony in Lake Huron and an onshore monument acknowledging the first African American military pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen, who lost their lives in training missions during World War II.[4] In all these cases, researchers working at Black underwater heritage sites had to come to terms with what is required when the past is brought into the present.



**Cudjoe Lewis (c. 1841–1935), illegally brought to the US aboard the *Clotilda*,** one of the last known survivors of the Atlantic slave trade between Africa and the United States, 1914. Photo: *Historic Sketches of the South* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1914).

## REMEMBER, REMIND, RESTORE

If we take this call to reclaim ancestral memory seriously, what is required? As stewards of memories, our responsibilities are threefold: to remember, remind, and restore.

*Remember* signifies both recovering memories from the past and putting them back together in a manner that is both legible and relevant in the present moment.

*Remind* stresses the need for us to remind ourselves of what it is that we have done and what it is that we are capable of—the good, the bad, and the beautiful.

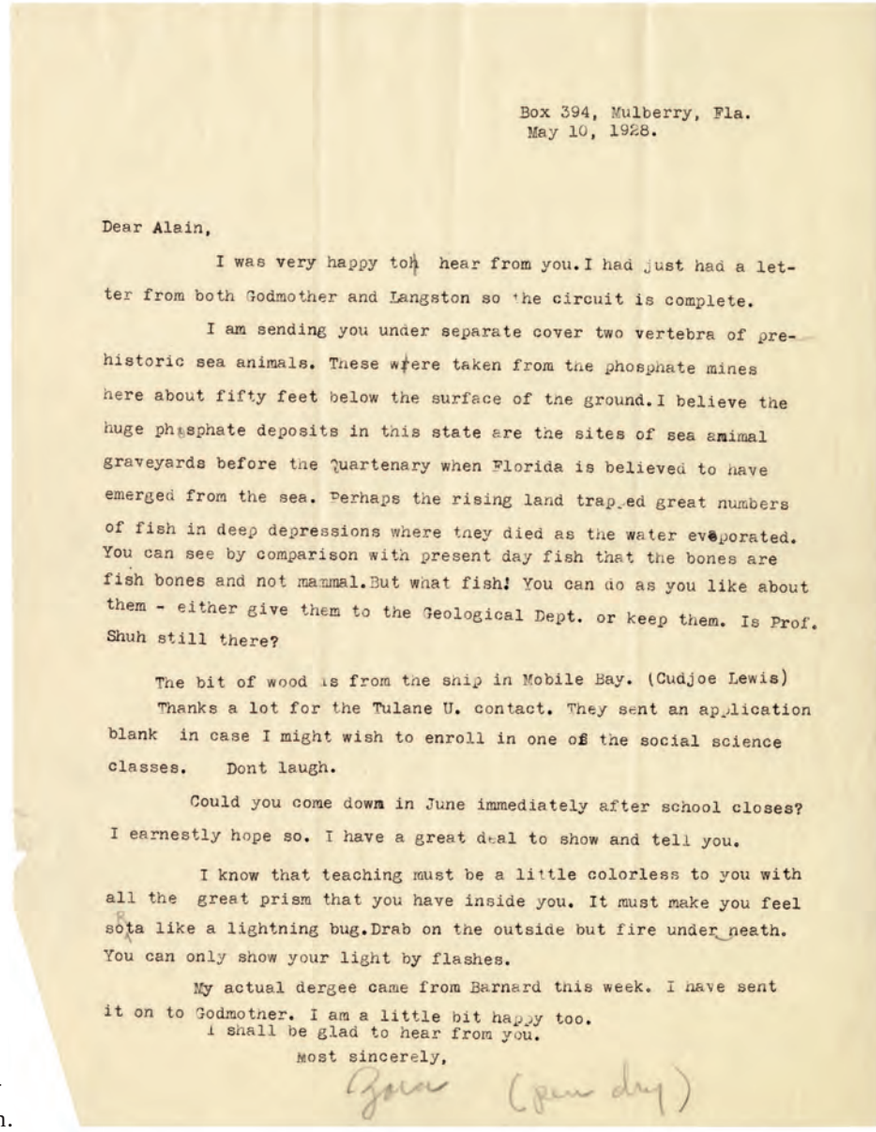
*Restore* speaks to the possibility of reviving and embedding those memories, moments, and practices so that they may endure into the future.

Whether we call ourselves archaeologists, historians, conservators, or curators, we are all stewards of memories. There is much to be gained in collectively exploring how we recover old memories, retain existing memories, and create new memories. We often refer to the Akan Adinkra symbol of Sankofa, which reminds us to go back and retrieve. The Māori proverb similarly says, "Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua," which means, "I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past."[5]

Personally, I'm most intrigued with the process of how we have historically conserved our memories. In the case of the *Clotilda*, 2019 wasn't the first moment that we encountered the wreckage of the ship. In 1927 Zora Neale Hurston, an African American anthropologist and novelist, traveled down to Africatown, Alabama, at the request of historian Carter G. Woodson and anthropologist Franz Boas to interview Cudjoe Lewis, one of the last known survivors of the Middle Passage. Hurston's interviews detailing Lewis's life in West Africa and Alabama would serve as the basis for her book *Barracoon*, published almost a century later. Hurston made two important discoveries during her time in Africatown. First, she learned of two other women who also survived the Middle Passage with Lewis: Sally "Redoshi" Smith and Matilda McCrear. They lived upriver. Second, Cudjoe Lewis gave Hurston a piece of wood from the *Clotilda* that he had kept all those years. Hurston then sent that fragment to the one person she thought could properly conserve it, Alain Locke at Howard University. The letter she wrote him stated, "The bit of wood is from the ship in Mobile Bay."[6] While the location of the *Clotilda* remained unknown to many, the memory of the ship circulated through Africatown and Black intellectual communities for decades.

The Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant once spoke of a "prophetic vision of the past," where the writer is in the process of revealing the past, which has been hidden, and projecting it into the future.[7] As we embark on this journey of recovering ancestral memories, we'll invariably become time travelers scavenging pieces of the past that need to be thrust into the future.

*Justin Dunnavant is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles.*



Box 394, Mulberry, Fla.
May 10, 1928.

Dear Alain,

I was very happy to hear from you. I had just had a letter from both Godmother and Langston so the circuit is complete.

I am sending you under separate cover two vertebra of prehistoric sea animals. These were taken from the phosphate mines here about fifty feet below the surface of the ground. I believe the huge phosphate deposits in this state are the sites of sea animal graveyards before the Quartenary when Florida is believed to have emerged from the sea. Perhaps the rising land trapped great numbers of fish in deep depressions where they died as the water evaporated. You can see by comparison with present day fish that the bones are fish bones and not mammal. But what fish! You can do as you like about them - either give them to the Geological Dept. or keep them. Is Prof. Shuh still there?

The bit of wood is from the ship in Mobile Bay. (Cudjoe Lewis)

Thanks a lot for the Tulane U. contact. They sent an application blank in case I might wish to enroll in one of the social science classes. Dont laugh.

Could you come down in June immediately after school closes? I earnestly hope so. I have a great deal to show and tell you.

I know that teaching must be a little colorless to you with all the great prism that you have inside you. It must make you feel sota like a lightning bug. Drab on the outside but fire underneath. You can only show your light by flashes.

My actual dergee came from Barnard this week. I have sent it on to Godmother. I am a little bit happy too.
I shall be glad to hear from you.

Most sincerely,

Zora (pen dry)

**Zora Neale Hurston, "Letter from Zora Neale Hurston to Alain Locke,"** May 10, 1928. Moorland–Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC.

1. John Henrik Clarke, "Ancient Civilizations of Africa: The Missing Pages in World History," *Présence Africaine* 130, no. 2 (1984), 148–58.
2. Kamau Sadiki, "Diving the *Clotilda*," *Divers Alert Network* (August 18, 2022). https://dan.org/alert-diver/article/diving-the-clotilda/; Jay V. Haigler et al., "Diving the *Clotilda*—Jay Haigler and Kamau Sadiki," unpublished oral history interview (May 9, 2022).
3. Michael H. Cottman, *Spirit Dive: An African American's Journey to Uncover a Sunken Slave Ship's Past* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999).
4. Wayne R. Lusardi, "Lake Huron Red Tails! Tuskegee Airmen in Michigan," in *Strides Towards Standard Methodologies in Aeronautical Archaeology*, edited by Hunter W. Whitehead and Megan Lickliter-Mundon (New York: Springer, 2023), 169–90.
5. Takarua Tawera, "Wisdom Is Universal," in *Indigenous Autoethnography: Illuminating Māori Voices*, edited by Kelli Te Maihāroa and Adrian Woodhouse (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024): 53–77.
6. Zora Neale Hurston, "Letter from Zora Neale Hurston to Alain Locke," May 10, 1928 (Howard University: Moorland–Spingarn Research Center).
7. Édouard Glissant, *Monsieur Toussaint: Version scénique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986).

# A CONSTELLATION OF NARRATIVES

## A Conversation About Preserving Black Spaces and Stories

**DR. KWESI DANIELS** is department head and associate professor of architecture at the Robert R. Taylor School of Architecture and Construction Science (TSACS) at Tuskegee University.

**KAREN MACK** is the founder and executive director of LA Commons, a South LA–based art and cultural programming nonprofit group.

**CLAUDIA POLLEY** is a heritage preservation activist and founder of the Urban Legacy Lands Initiative, Indianapolis.

They spoke with **RITA COFIELD**, GCI associate project specialist, and **PATRICK PARDO**, editor of *Conservation Perspectives, The GCI Magazine*.

**RITA COFIELD** We are thrilled to be joined by three leaders whose work spans education, cultural preservation, and community empowerment to discuss how communities can protect their cultural traditions and physical spaces, particularly Black spaces. Let's start with this: How do you educate others about preserving Black spaces and stories?

**KAREN MACK** So much of it is community engagement. At LA Commons, it's really us in partnership with the community to decide what stories are important to preserve. Using the community as the messengers of these important stories is very important, but the communication channels are also important, to make the storytelling that we're doing available to the broader community.

One of the things on the wish list is really thinking about curriculum, because we found that young people involved with our Historic South LA Black Cultural District initiative, at one of our story-gathering summits, were saying, "We don't know any of these stories. We don't learn them in school. Our parents aren't sharing them."

And in 2017, during the twenty-fifth anniversary of the rebellion in Los Angeles, we actually took a group to an installation at the California African American Museum, and the students didn't know about the rebellion. So I think curriculum is an incredible opportunity in terms of education, working with the community and partnerships with other organizations in and across our communities to recognize the value of the stories as assets both intangible and tangible to advance the fortunes of our communities.

**CLAUDIA POLLEY** I should admit that I am not a trained preservationist, but I am the daughter of a woman who was a very stalwart preservation leader in Indianapolis, and she helped preserve the Black historic district in Indianapolis now known as Ransom Place. In learning from my mother and others about where they came from, what they grew up in, and what they prized as important, we early heritage preservation activists realized that we had to define importance for ourselves as opposed to anyone else. That importance was signified by buildings, by stories, by all the things that we knew in our lives. But how to translate that understanding into a history that is appreciated and perpetuated?

In this conversation we start with buildings, but we go outward from there to the people and the experiences that took place in and around those buildings. People can touch a physical structure and learn from the buildings that are there. Understanding that something took place when those buildings were first created. Now we get to augment that built knowledge with a heritage understanding we bring to the table, and I think that's the biggest challenge for us all.

**KWESI DANIELS** When I think about this question, there's educating people about preservation and the value, and there's educating people about the work that we're doing. And for me at least, I get to have a cheat code for all these students. I'm like, "Yeah, there is this wonderful class you might want to look at called Architectural Preservation." And they get in, they see it, they like it, they run with it, right?

Then we have some other students, we ask them, "What do you want to do?" They don't really know. And so we say, "Hey, come check out this work." A lot of times it's the tech that really talks to them. And I know by the time I launch the drone in the air, all the students are going to come to us. Or the minute I put on virtual reality glasses, and they're like, "Oh, what's that? Can I look?" We get to capture spaces, digitize them, put them in augmented reality

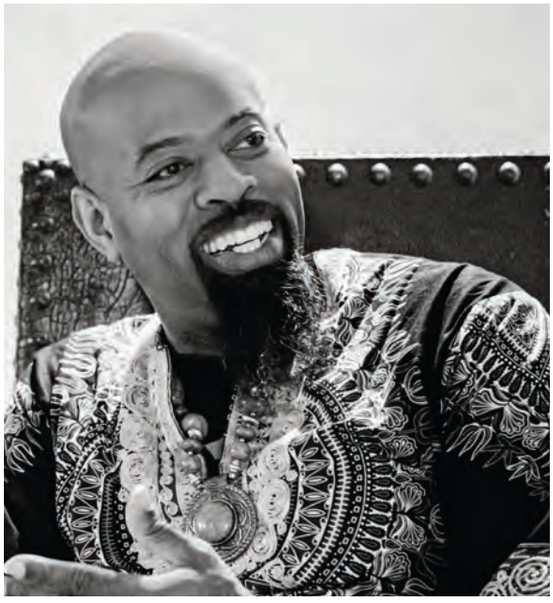


Photo: Courtesy of Kwesi Daniels.

**You actually can't understand the building without understanding the space. You have to understand what has happened with this building since it was born.**

KWESI DANIELS

or virtual reality, and then you can look at this building, and you feel like you can touch it. It's an immediate conversation starter.

But there's also the other larger conversation, and I'd say this is beyond the student who's doing the learning. It's the decision-makers, university presidents, and university development officers. We're currently the only HBCU [Historically Black Colleges and Universities] that has an established degree-granting program in preservation. To me, it's a no-brainer that architecture and preservation are together, but, unfortunately, here the industry separates them. And so there's a conversation that we have to have with our people about the value of the space, that if you tear this building down, you don't lose just the building, you lose those narratives, you lose those relationships, you lose the cultural references that people have to what happened there.

**MACK** I feel like now is an opportune moment because there's a focus on erasure. So how do we use this opening to engage people in a conversation about preservation? We need those stories, those buildings, those touchpoints there, so that people understand the significance of our community, our *communities*, and the role that we have played in creating democracy and freedom.

**POLLEY** Seize the time. It's not for us to wait for someone to give us the opportunity. We take the opportunity, and we make the opportunity, because no one has to tell us that our history is important. We know that, so we simply stand firm on protecting those monuments to and of our past. They don't have to be the best building on the block, but they are ours. As experienced in Indianapolis, we've lost so much of the old African American community, because it was close to downtown and therefore ripe for development, whether we wanted it or not. And it was all done in the name of progress, especially in the 1960s with the building of the interstates through urban America. Those interstates created walls, as we all know, that didn't need to be made. And so what do we do with the buildings we have left, many of them standing alone in urban cement prairies?

I think probably the one thing we have found to be most important in the work I've done over the last three decades or so, is that we define what is important for our community. And that definition is then utilized in and by Black, Brown, Green, Yellow, Red, Purple communities. Communities that had always felt somewhat segregated, because they were different from the historically important communities of this country.

**MACK** We've been through this struggle so many times. But that's where the heritage is, touching those past struggles, and connecting to that resilience.

**DANIELS** I totally agree because of the moment that we're in. There's a real added value to realizing this is not new. And so that becomes a great moment to ground ourselves in realizing how to move forward. Now, the other thing that I find valuable is this digital space, because the reality is that the majority of the world is engaging in a digital environment all the time. The capacity to digitize our spaces, and put them in the digital world means they don't have to disappear, right?

And now you get to have a whole different conversation about it and can maintain control of your narrative. Because I find that one of the biggest things we face is how do we control our narrative? So often we're not the ones who are writing the histories about our spaces. And so, the narrative of what it is, and the dynamics of it, are immediately lost. But when we start digitizing it, if we're the ones behind the digitization, then we're also controlling the narrative.

**MACK** Are your students supporting the process of this digitization? Because what's exciting to me is bringing it to communities. How can communities participate?

**DANIELS** At this stage, my students are the ones doing the work. We open up the work for them, because I realized I can't

be everywhere. And I learned about it so that I could understand how to continue to engage in the industry so that we could bring it to the community. That's the beauty of being at an educational institution because we can foot the bill for research to acquire the equipment that's necessary to then bring it into the community, and say, "Hey, you want to know how to work this equipment?" And they see it, and they're like, "Oh, wow, this is cool." And then we can have a conversation about, "Well, this is actually a job. This is a career path, this is an opportunity." I call it guerrilla digitization.

**MACK** In our work, having young people as ambassadors is really powerful. We have our youth gathering the stories, and then they're the ones who bring in everyone else to this experience. And the joy and opportunity presented by this sharing of narratives is the spark for people once they are together.

**POLLEY** I think we should be combining all of this media, because this is not just conserving our culture but expanding it, and it's embracing a future that we make more exciting for all our children. The next generations are coming along, and they should get involved. We elders should be figuring out how to popularize what we do. This is our world, our lived story to tell. We are creating a different kind of narrative for the twenty-first century, and I think that's what our definition of heritage preservation is doing.

**COFIELD** What I'm hearing is that preservation is part of the solution. It's not the only solution. If the building isn't there anymore, then how do we continue to tell that story? The field of preservation is very Eurocentric. It has been for a very long time, but more recently people have been working to change and diversify this. I'd like to know what called you to this work and made you feel like you belong?

**MACK** I really focused on that word, "belonging." When I was starting LA Commons, my background was in nonprofit management. But one of the things that I saw was, you can't solve problems unless people in the neighborhood are involved. As much as people try, it really requires local agency. So, how do you make people feel that sense of ownership, that sense of belonging, the connection between people? One of the most powerful tools for doing that is people sharing their stories and working together to share them more broadly so that everyone understands the power that is in a neighborhood, even one that may seem disinvested. Every neighborhood is incredible, because of the people who live in those neighborhoods. And so, we want to unleash that.

**POLLEY** I like to think that we are stronger than we think we are. We have an extraordinary history of being able to make it through. Otherwise, none of us would be sitting here doing what we're doing. I think seizing upon that strength, showing people that strength in the stories we tell, whether it's through buildings or through words, and now through the digital world of re-creating what was, we don't have to make stuff up. We just need to tell the truth.

That was my sort of "bingo" when I first got into this. It was like, "No, we don't have to make these stories up. Just tell the stories of how we got here, how we're still here, and how we're going to be here a hundred years from now."

**DANIELS** I always laugh, because I do not have a degree in preservation. My degrees are in architecture, sustainability, and urban geography. However, my very first internship in undergrad was with HABS, the Historic American Buildings Survey, and I was in North Philadelphia documenting six African American sites. It was 2001. And it's funny how you're led to be in certain spaces by forces that are beyond your control. And no matter what you do, they keep leading you there.

So, I left Philly and was like, "This preservation is cool, but I'm studying to be an architect. Because this is not for me. I don't see anybody who looks like me."

Well, then roughly twenty years later, I'm working on my PhD and I'm in Philly again. And I'm doing architecture and urban geography, and I'm doing this dissertation to figure out how to stop gentrification from changing our communities. And then, I looked up and was like, "You know what? This gentrification train is gone. We're not stopping what's happening." I'm talking to a community resident and we're discussing how do we address the fact that West Philadelphia was changing shape right before us. We're watching the erasure happening in real time. And it was like this huge light bulb went off. And I'm like, "You big dummy. You got all the tools that you need here." Preservation has laws and policies on the books that can help preserve cultural spaces. It has the resources and the techniques. There's no greater architecture than looking at the buildings that are already existing. You don't have to try to reinvent the wheel. You look at the ones that people made already. And then I became a preservationist. And so, it gives me so much passion and joy because I know that we're doing right by those who came before us, because at the very least, we're saving those stories and preserving them for future generations.

**COFIELD** We need more architects-preservationists like you. And I know that you want to give other architecture schools, especially HBCUs, access. The architecture that I went to school for was not centered on community. If I'd had that, I probably would've gotten into preservation a lot sooner. But I love that there are people doing that work—and the role that all of you have to play in connecting preservation with some real-life issues.

**DANIELS** The reality of preservation is that it's about indoctrination, right? Education is used to indoctrinate the masses to follow the majority, and the majority in power. I'd say for everyone else who studies architecture, preservation has that space. And it's because preservation and architecture are not supposed to be separated. In America, we separate it, but around the world, they don't separate it. But we're also grounded in eradication. This is not a country that was grounded in, "Let's respect the Indigenous populations and others that are here." It was about, "Let's wipe them out."

**MACK** It's all about capital. That's the challenge. And what you're making me think of is, how does culture connect to everything else? Even if we think about public health, for example, and how people feel in spaces, how do spaces promote well-being for the community? I'm thinking about the Mafundi Institute in Los Angeles and how important that was to the community, and having the Watts Happening Cultural Center as a touchstone. So how do you have these conversations about architecture and other disciplines so that people can be part of the voices of support for preservation?

This conversation to me is related to housing as well. Just land use in general. How does land use promote the well-being of the community by preserving spaces, by considering what the housing needs are, but those needs in relationship to the narratives that are important to that community's identity? When I was on the Planning Commission, it was like, "We are not building buildings. We're building neighborhoods, and a neighborhood grounding for the population that lives there." And so, thinking about resources, money is slim for art and culture, and for preservation. So how do we do the advocacy to ensure that it's considered in these conversations?

**COFIELD** I think you're absolutely right, Karen. And the work that you're doing with the cultural districts, that is a part of it. We're talking about neighborhoods. We're talking about preserving these spaces, these stories and traditions. I'm glad that you are at the center of that work, because the art and the culture are so much a part of where people connect to. They don't immediately connect to a building or to preservation.

**POLLEY** I want to jump in and talk about a project that was very near and dear to my heart in the defining project of the organization, Urban Legacy Lands Initiative, ULLI, which I founded a couple of years ago. We did a project with the Harvard Graduate School of Design [GSD]. We did a design studio with twelve GSD students who came to Indianapolis and studied the Black neighborhood, the Near Westside of Indianapolis, to learn about the history of what had happened there. They walked all around, gathered stories, and then created what could be the future for this neighborhood. And it was done by people who are not going to be architects, but they might be city directors or planners, and now they will think differently when they see an area that has been essentially wiped from the face of the Earth. And if you look in the right way, you'll learn what happened before so that you can make sure that what comes after is informed and better.

The project was called *Legacy Lands/Protopian Futures: Reclamation, Reconciliation, and Reconstruction in Indianapolis*. And it gives you an idea of what can be done in the name of design and history, and desire for a better world.

**PATRICK PARDO** All of you have touched on this idea throughout our discussion, but I would like to know how each of you defines community preservation in your work? How do you balance caring for tangible assets, such as buildings and landmarks, and intangible ones?

**POLLEY** They're the same.

**MACK** We really think about the stories first, because that is what draws people in. We are a storytelling species. From time immemorial, people have told each other stories. And the story of Black people in Los Angeles—Black people everywhere really—is nothing short of heroic. And so, to be able to create ways for people to experience it, that's when the physical comes into play, whether it's a building or piece of art. But you have to engage the community. For example, in the first phase of our Historic South LA Black Cultural District project that we're working on, we had five story-gathering sessions. That gets people excited to be involved in the process going forward. I have people who are coming out of the woodwork who want to be involved in the creation of the Black Cultural District. One of our partners is Mark Wilson, who runs a community development organization based on historic Central Avenue. So he actually has control of, for example, the Lincoln Theatre, which is one of the incredible historic sites related to the jazz era on Central Avenue, one of our most important thoroughfares in Los Angeles. The former home of the Black Panthers is in that area. The former office of the *California Eagle*, a newspaper for African Americans, is there. Charlotta Bass ran the *California Eagle*; she was a Black woman who ran for Vice President in the 1950s—an amazing person. And so, that's what you have to do: get people excited about the stories.

**DANIELS** I find there is no separation between the two, as Miss Polley said. You actually can't understand the building without understanding the space. You have to understand what has happened with this building since it was born. As it matured, it began to take on a life, and that life was not isolated from other buildings around it.

You have to understand all of that because as you preserve one, you're preserving them all. You're preserving this larger network or constellation of narratives. For example, I've been doing a lot of work in the South; we're spending time at Civil Rights sites. Because of that, I've learned about all these places and how they're linked to one another.

This is the story of not just Dr. Martin Luther King who lived here, but Dr. Richard H. Harris, whose home served as the place for the Freedom Riders when they came to Montgomery. Foot soldiers like John Lewis, the late civil rights leader and United States congressman, escaped to the Harris House, and Mr. Lewis sat in a specific spot on the floor in their family room. They all connect because that goes back to the campsites from Selma to Montgomery. And then they all connect because it goes back to Selma and Brown Chapel and the Edmund Pettus Bridge. That's all part of community. It's all talking about this larger space that is linked by these cultural events.

**POLLEY** It's about people. Community preservation is based on the people of that community. And everybody has a story. Some are bigger, some are not so big. And for that story to help make the community understand its importance, that story needs to get out, or needs to find a way of being told, of being shown, of being

Photo: Courtesy of Karen Mack.

**From time immemorial, people have told each other stories. And the story of Black people in Los Angeles—Black people everywhere really—is nothing short of heroic.**

KAREN MACK

illustrated. And I loved your phrase, "the constellation of narratives," because that is exactly what it is. This is our story in the sky.

**COFIELD** Do you all know Jason Foster? He leads Destination Crenshaw, which is literally creating Crenshaw Boulevard in Los Angeles as a destination for people through economics, through culture and art, through storytelling. He often mentions the book *Root Shock*, by Mindy Thompson Fullilove, which talks about a building or a place having roots in the community. So when you remove that one place, you displace not only that building, but also the community and the connections that once grounded them. So that image came to mind as you folks were talking.

Most times, the communities that are at the margins of society are focused on their immediate needs like housing and jobs and staying safe. How should we best navigate the tensions between those needs and the preservation needs in those historically underrecognized and underserved communities?

**POLLEY** I would simply say by recounting how those communities have gotten to where they are, how they have survived the worst of times that came before. What we have now is based on people coming together to protect one another. We shared our stories, our wealth, our pride in place—which is the thing we have sadly lost in many ways. It is the stories that each of us created and lived together. That is what moves us forward.

**MACK** And to build on that, we've got to turn the community into advocates. The community really should drive the planning commission and the community plans. Thinking about land use should be a role for the community so they can decide where the housing goes, what should be preserved. That is our challenge because government is not equipped ultimately to do this decision-making in a way that supports the well-being of people.

Some people like being involved in civic activity. It's why I think our work is valuable. Because it's a first step. If you can come to a story summit and share your own story, then you are connected, and you start to care about your place.

**DANIELS** For me, being at Tuskegee, I get to see where this idea of community generated from, or a genesis of it. Here's an environment where they had to make their own bricks by digging. They literally had to get it out the mud, right? Make their own bricks to then build their own buildings and teach themselves in the process and use that as the educational system to get them out of sharecropping. And as a result, we're able to build communities surrounding the campus and then subsequently build communities around the country.

If we're talking about preservation, then I can't tear down that building if it has that type of narrative. And you will want to know that narrative because you might be looking and saying, "How do I survive in a world where I'm dealt this hand that says, 'you can't do this, you can't do that?' Based on the color of your skin, it's impossible to meet and connect with other people and other races and other ethnicities." Well, then I can point to an example where that happened and I can say, "I promise you whatever we're dealing with, they dealt with a whole lot more and they did a whole lot more with a whole lot less."

I was in Birmingham during the summer at a building that was designed by Robert R. Taylor, who's the namesake of our program, and the first professionally trained African American architect in the United States. It was a Masonic temple that served different Masonic lodges around the area, served community residents, and had professional services: doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants. And then the last level was reserved for the actual Masonic temple. They pooled their money and created something for the community, and the community had a benefit by this building being there. And that's how it was able to survive. That means whatever challenges we're facing right now, we've already solved those problems.

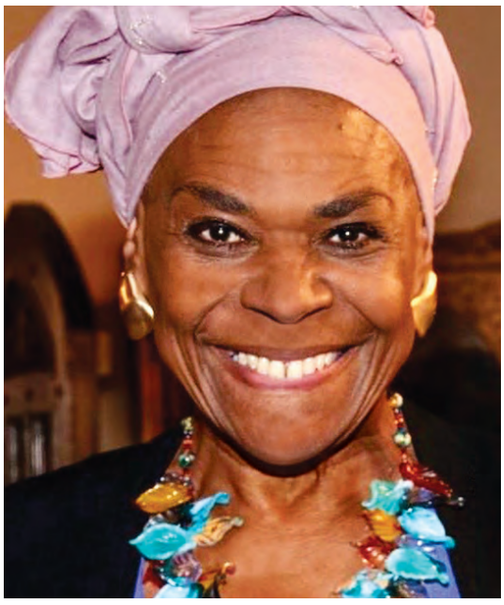


Photo: Courtesy of Claudia Polley.

**The one thing we have found to be most important in the work I've done over the last three decades or so, is that we define what is important for our community.**

CLAUDIA POLLEY

But if we don't jump into those spaces and learn the history, we've stopped doing our job. We were supposed to be the caretakers of it, and that means that whatever problems we're looking at are not as big as we think they are because we don't realize where we've come from.

**POLLEY** I love the phrase that you used. You said we grew as citizens in this country, and the things we were prevented from doing were because of the color of our skin. Well, now we should be at a new point because of the color of our skin; we can do exactly what we need to do because we are telling our truest stories of strength and resilience and moving forward. Those stories come forward because of the color of our skin. And that's not just unique to Black people. We all need to step up and use our truth that perhaps has not been used as a strength before this.

**COFIELD** Before we wrap up, I'd love for each of you to share what you envision for the future of heritage conservation for Black spaces, and what do you want your legacy to be?

**MACK** I love how this conversation naturally landed on young people, because I think that really engaging them in this process is the only way to do it—so that they really understand the significance of their history through connecting with those stories, connecting with both the tangible and the intangible assets in their neighborhoods, and being inspired to be the stewards.

**POLLEY** It is their future, and we are here to help them see that our past should be the strength that leads them to an even greater future. So that's what we work towards, and all the work that we're doing, each of us in finding and telling the stories, illustrated by the buildings of our heritage. Then getting young people to tell the stories in their own way because they have now done the work to find what's going on and what has gone on. That's why we're doing this. I only have one grandchild, but believe me, he knows that it's on him to keep this going. Hopefully not alone in this pursuit of truth. This is why we do what we do.

**DANIELS** For me, the vision is honoring the elders and ancestors who came before us and preserving this legacy they left us and building upon it. So not just resting on "okay, it's here." It's like, no, that's not why we did it. We do it to make sure that we have that legacy to be preserved. I said years ago that preservation is revolutionary, and I stand true to that because of the sheer fact that we have committed to keep something that our entire society is doing everything it can to get rid of—and we know that to be true because of all the Black spaces that have been burned, bombed, buried, and drowned. Clearly, there are forces that don't want this to exist.

And so, the fact that we have committed to preserving them, that's the greatest honor that we can take on for those who came before us. And then the other piece, I want to see all our spaces digitized, every space around the world and around our country. I want to see them digitized because it allows us to connect that story with the world very quickly. And it's a very simple way for us to connect our populations with that history but also contemporary work. So I throw it out there. Hey, let me know, Miss Karen, Miss Claudia. I'm happy to come on out there and do some scanning at your spaces because we have a lot of work to do and, as John Lewis said, "If we ain't here to get in good trouble, I don't know what we here for."

**POLLEY** That's right!

**COFIELD** Well, you all are getting into some amazing, good trouble. Thank you for sharing your insights and your passions and having a conversation with one another about your work. Let's continue to uplift and preserve the stories, the spaces, and the spirits of our communities, especially those voices that have been pushed to the margins.

# RESOURCES
# CONSERVING AFRICAN AMERICAN BUILT HERITAGE

## BOOKS & JOURNALS

*All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855–1975* by Charles M. Wollenberg (1976). Berkeley: University of California Press.

*Black Landscapes Matter*, edited by Walter Hood and Grace Mitchell Tada (2020). Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

*Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* by Douglas Flamming (2005). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

*Change Over Time* 12, no. 2 (fall 2023), special issue, "Civil Rights."

*In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West 1528–1990* by Quintard Taylor (1998). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

*Living the California Dream: African American Leisure Sites During the Jim Crow Era* by Alison Rose Jefferson (2020). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

*The Negro Trail Blazers of California: A Compilation of Records from the California Archives in the Bancroft Library at the University of California* by Delilah Leontium Beasley (1919). Los Angeles: Times Mirror Printing and Binding House. PDF retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/19008159/.

*Preserving African American Historic Places* by Brent Leggs, Kerri Rubman, and Byrd Wood (2012). Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation. https://cdn.savingplaces.org/2023/06/01/09/17/37/884/PB_AfricanAmericanSites.pdf

*Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, edited by Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (2001). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* by Isabel Wilkerson (2010). New York: Random House.

**Established in 1958, StylesVille Barbershop & Beauty Salon**, in Pacoima, is the oldest Black barbershop and beauty salon in the San Fernando Valley. Opened by Fred and Ollie Carter, the barbershop is currently operated by a third-generation family member, Greg Carter Faucett, pictured here inside the shop. StylesVille received Historic-Cultural Monument status from the City of LA in 2024. Photo: Cassia Davis. 

## ONLINE RESOURCES, ORGANIZATIONS & NETWORKS

African American Civil Rights Grant Program. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/african-american-civil-rights.htm

African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. https://savingplaces.org/african-american-cultural-heritage

The African American History & Engagement Project. https://www.blackhistoryparks.org/

African American Studies in Library Special Collections, UCLA. https://guides.library.ucla.edu/c.php?g=180904&p=1189232

Africatown Heritage Preservation Foundation. https://africatownhpf.org/

Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium. https://aaacrhsc.org/

AMMD Pine Grove Project. https://www.ammdpinegroveproject.com/

California African American Museum. https://caamuseum.org/

California Cultural Districts Program. https://www.caculturaldistricts.org/

Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites, Weitzman School of Design, University of Pennsylvania. https://cpcrs.upenn.edu/

Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. https://www.thewright.org

Daufuskie Island, South Carolina. https://www.sallieannrobinson.com/

Friends of the Tanner House. https://savethetannerhouse.org/

Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California. https://www.aclunc.org/sites/goldchains/index.html

National Civil Rights Museum. https://civilrightsmuseum.org

National Museum of African American History and Culture. https://nmaahc.si.edu

National Trust for Historic Preservation. https://savingplaces.org

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. https://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg

United States Civil Rights Trail. https://civilrightstrail.com/

Watts Happening Cultural Center. https://www.wattshappeningculturalcenter.org/

**For more information on issues related to conserving African American built heritage, search AATA Online at aata.getty.edu**

# GCI News

## New Project

### THE ATHENS AGORA PROJECT

The Getty Conservation Institute, through its Managing Collection Environments (MCE) initiative, is collaborating with the American School of Classical Studies at Athens to evaluate and recommend sustainable improvements to the storage facilities of an important archaeological collection. The collection is housed at the Stoa of Attalos in the Agora of Athens and is closely tied to an active excavation project that contributes a significant number of new artifacts to the collection each year.

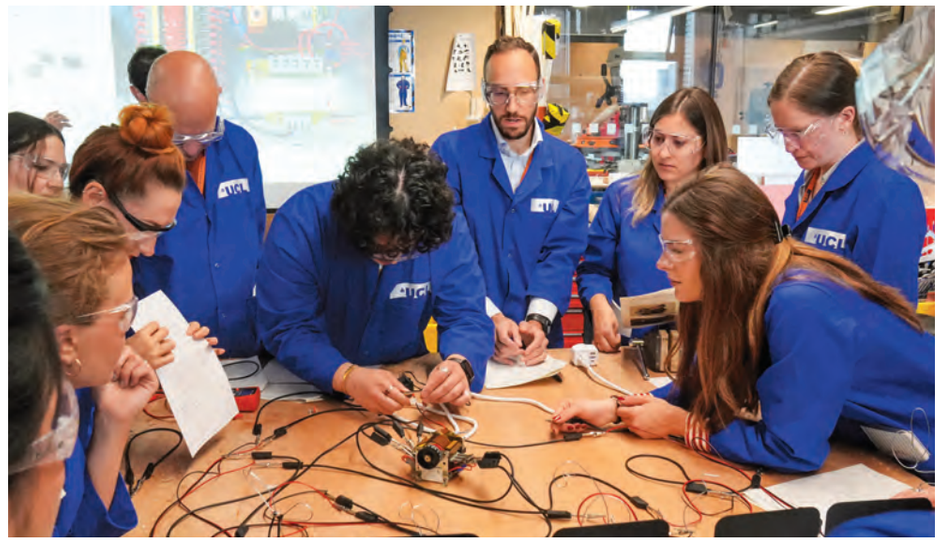
The overarching goal of this project is to identify sustainable environmental solutions that balance multiple priorities: ensuring the long-term preservation of the archaeological materials, providing comfortable working conditions for staff and researchers, and accommodating the growing need for access to the expanding collection for study and scholarly research.

As part of the project's first phase, a comprehensive environmental monitoring program has been established. This program will run for twelve months to capture detailed information about the building's storage and collection-related spaces across seasonal cycles. The monitoring system, which was installed in early June 2025, consists of twenty-nine sensors distributed across six key spaces within the building. These sensors are designed to measure a range of environmental factors critical to preservation and use, including temperature, relative humidity, daylight infiltration through a glazed facade in one of the storage areas, as well as airborne pollutants and dust levels.

## Recent Events

### MICROFADING TESTER ANIMATED VIDEO

Two pillars of the GCI's mission are education and dissemination, and the Institute's Advancing Microfading Tester Practice project and MCE initiative are exploring new ways to share our work with colleagues and those interested in the field. GCI scientist Vincent Laudato Beltran, animator Alexander Robert Johnson, and Getty producer Jessie Hendricks have collaborated to create an engaging animation to demonstrate the application of scientific techniques to monitor object change.



**Kinetic Art Workshop participants link their handmade kinetic sculptures to an analog controller**, exploring the electronic intricacies behind time-sequenced art installations. Photo: Ellen Moody, GCI. © J. Paul Getty Trust.

In May 2025 the GCI released an animation to illustrate use of the microfading tester, or MFT. Developed in the mid-1990s by conservation scientist Paul Whitmore to assess the light sensitivity of an object, the MFT exposes the surface of an artwork to an extremely small and intense spot of light while recording the resulting color change with a spectrometer. This information then guides the development of an object-specific lighting policy.

The MFT animation followed the May 2024 release of the first animation on acoustic emission monitoring. To increase accessibility, subtitles for both animations were translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, and Spanish.

To view the video, use the QR code at left.

### LITA ALBUQUERQUE ARTIST DIALOGUES FILM AND CONVERSATION

On May 13, 2025, the GCI hosted a public screening and conversation with Los Angeles–based artist Lita Albuquerque. The event took place at the Getty Center and featured a screening of the new short documentary *Lita Albuquerque: Dust to Dust* (2025), followed by a conversation between the artist and Ellen Moody, conservator of contemporary art at the GCI.

Presented as the latest installment in the Artist Dialogues film series, *Dust to Dust* explored Albuquerque's evolving artistic practice, from early paintings to monumental land art and recent studio-based works incorporating earthen materials and natural pigments. The film focused on the artist's creative practice and influences, from her upbringing in Tunisia to her role in Venice's Light and Space art movement.

During the conversation, Albuquerque shared her perspectives on impermanence, transformation, and how her interest in cosmic and geologic time influences both her artistic methods and her views on conservation. Moody offered insight into the challenges conservators face when engaging with experimental or ephemeral materials, especially in outdoor or site-specific contexts.

To view the film, use the QR code at left.

### KINETIC ART WORKSHOP

From May 20 to 23, 2025, the GCI, in collaboration with University College London (UCL) and Tate, hosted a four-day workshop in London focused on the conservation of indoor kinetic art. The Movers and Shakers: Strategies for the Conservation of Kinetic Art workshop brought together eighteen international conservation professionals and twelve UCL graduate students to explore the practical, ethical, and theoretical dimensions of preserving motion-based artworks.

Since the 1960s, kinetic art—defined by its incorporation of motion and its use of diverse, often experimental materials—has evolved rapidly alongside advances in technology. Today, the preservation of such works requires an interdisciplinary skill set that spans mechanics,

electronics, and digital systems. In response, this workshop emphasized collaborative approaches that integrate conservation with engineering, curatorial, and artist perspectives to ensure the long-term functionality and aesthetic integrity of kinetic artworks.

Developed by a team of international experts, the curriculum was led by Reinhard Bek (Bek & Frohnert LLC), Pip Laurenson (UCL), and Deborah Cane (Tate), with facilitation by GCI senior project specialist Flavia Perugini. The course combined lectures, hands-on activities, artist conversations, and a site visit to Tate to examine and discuss real-world case studies.

A highlight of the program was a panel featuring contemporary artists Hannah Perry, Rie Nakajima, and Bao Rong, who discussed the central role of motion in their practice and shared their perspectives on breakdown, repair, and the evolving role of the conservator as collaborator.

## ROCK ART CONSERVATION WORKSHOP

From June 22 to 28, 2025, the 10th World Archaeological Congress (WAC-10) was held in Darwin, Australia. GCI Rock Art conservation project specialist Tom McClintock chaired a session to present case studies of conservation and management needs from sites in Spain, South Africa, and New Zealand, including landscape-level inventory and management, threats from industrial activity, and climate change. The session was followed by an open discussion on global needs, local solutions, and foregrounding site stewardship by First Nations.

During the Congress, McClintock and Susan Macdonald, head of GCI's Buildings and Sites department, took the opportunity to host a workshop for colleagues engaged in the stewardship of rock art to discuss the current conservation needs for the field. The participants in the workshop came from a diverse range of professional and cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous rangers, site managers, scientists, conservators, researchers, and students of archaeology and rock art studies. These varied perspectives led to consideration and robust discussion of the many needs relating to the workshop topics of research, training, management, and technical conservation.

## FIRE RECOVERY CONSERVATION CLINIC

On June 14, 2025, the Getty, in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture and Art Recovery LA (ARLA), hosted a Fire Recovery Conservation Clinic at the Getty Center. This free public clinic was developed to support the residents affected by the wildfires that swept across Los Angeles in January, notably those in Altadena and Pacific Palisades. Designed as a hands-on triage and support service for individuals recovering personal and cultural belongings damaged by fire, smoke, and soot, the clinic brought together more than seventy volunteer conservators and heritage workers to provide direct assistance and conservation guidance.

Approximately ninety community members attended the event, bringing with them fire-damaged artworks, heirlooms, collectibles, and household items. These included objects of significant emotional and cultural value, such as ceramic toys, menorahs, coins, photo albums, and mixed-media artworks. Participants received practical advice on stabilization and cleaning methods, as well as referrals for further treatment.

## GCI GETTY MARROW INTERNS

For many years during the summer months, GCI staff have supervised college undergraduate interns as part of the Getty Marrow Undergraduate Internship program. The aim of the program is to encourage greater diversity in professions related to museums and the visual arts. It supports substantive, full-time summer work opportunities for undergraduates from backgrounds traditionally underrepresented in the arts.

The summer 2025 GCI undergraduate interns are listed below along with the colleges they attended, their majors/minors, and a description, in their own words, of what they did during their internships at the GCI.

**Cassandra Chan**
*Chapman University, Orange*
*Art History and Communication Studies/ Computer Science*
"Working with the AATA bibliographic database, I've utilized the automated indexing tool Annif to generate subject terms and increase discoverability for nearly a thousand records.

**Arvin Ferdows**
*California State University, Northridge*
*History*
"For both African American Historic Places, Los Angeles (AAHPLA) and the Conserving Modern Architecture Initiative (CMAI), I worked on a project that would help engage youth audiences and K–12 students in conserving modern architecture in Los Angeles, specifically regarding African American heritage."

**Skylar Whitley**
*University of California, Los Angeles*
*Materials Science Chemistry/Art History*
"Split between the Conservation Institute and the Research Institute, I did preventive conservation work using a scientific instrument called a microfading tester."

**Maria Carolina Zensen Simoes**
*University of Southern California*
*History and Archaeology/Digital Studies (3D modeling)*
"With the Decorated Surfaces team, I supported Needs Assessment efforts focused on the conservation of wall paintings and rock art."

## CHANGING CLIMATE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WORKSHOP

The GCI hosted the third and final iteration of Changing Climate Management Strategies: Sustainable Collection Environments and Monitoring Object Response, in Los Angeles July 7–11, and London (2024). Organized by GCI's MCE initiative, the workshop underscores the Institute's commitment to advancing sustainable conservation practices.

The workshop aimed to support museums and cultural organizations in transitioning to evidence-based environmental parameters that balance collection care with the urgent demands of climate change and rising energy costs. Forty-five participants—leaders in conservation, collections management, facilities, and administration—represented a wide range of institutions across North, Central, and South America and Hawai'i, with a strong presence from small and mid-sized museums.

The program opened with discussions of the changing environmental and political contexts shaping museum practice. Sessions then examined perceptions of object damage, change, and value during walk-throughs of the J. Paul Getty Museum galleries. Other modules explored life cycle and risk assessments, environmental monitoring and data analysis, and both mechanical and nonmechanical strategies for climate management.

With the three-workshop cycle complete, MCE will focus on sustaining the network of past cohorts—helping participants stay connected, share experiences, and foster peer learning among institutions facing similar climates and challenges. MCE also plans to pilot new educational formats, including online workshops and other digital tools, to broaden access and support ongoing exchange of ideas and practice.

## INTERNATIONAL COURSE ON THE CONSERVATION OF MODERN HERITAGE

The Conserving Modern Architecture Initiative (CMAI) recently concluded the second iteration of its hybrid International Course on the Conservation of Modern Heritage (MAC), which ran online from March to June and in person in Los Angeles from July 20 to August 1, 2025.

Twenty-six professionals from twenty-one different countries—Albania, Australia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Ireland, Kosovo, Kuwait, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay—were selected for this course.

The course bridges theory and practice, and because of its hybrid format presents a unique opportunity for sustained and robust knowledge exchange between participants and instructors. During the eleven modules online, participants learned about a wide range of topics concerning the conservation of modern heritage, including the values-based conservation methodology; the deterioration and conservation of materials and systems such as concrete, plastics, metal, and wood; approaches for upgrades and reuse; sustainability and climate change; conservation of modern landscapes; and advocacy for modern heritage. When participants arrived for the in-person session, they applied the knowledge gained from the online component while also delving into conservation practice in Los Angeles; attending lectures, class discussions, social events, and site visits to historic modern sites; and participating in a daylong hands-on concrete conservation workshop.

The course was initially offered in 2023, training twenty-six professionals, and is intended to be offered again in the coming years.

## ARCHES AT THE CIPA 2025 INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Members of the Arches Project team at the GCI presented the workshop Arches Heritage Data Management Platform (Version 8) on August 23, 2025, at the CIPA 2025 30th International Symposium at the National Museum of Korea in Seoul, Republic of Korea. CIPA is the International Scientific Committee on Heritage Documentation of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

The workshop, attended by nearly sixty participants from around the world, shared information about the latest version of the Arches Platform, as well as about Arches applications, such as Arches for Science, Arches for Reference and Sample Collections (RaSColls), and Arches Lingo for managing controlled vocabularies. It also featured presentations by representatives from the Dunhuang Academy about its deployment of Arches to support conservation and management of more than 230 Buddhist grotto sites along the Silk Road in Gansu Province, China.

To find out more about Arches, visit the Arches Project website at https://www.archesproject.org/.

**Workshop participant reporting on her group's observations from a surface assessment session** in the church of Catas Altas, Brazil. Photo: Stéphanie Auffret, GCI. © J. Paul Getty Trust.

## CLEANING OF GILDED WOOD WORKSHOP

As part of the Cleaning of Wooden Gilded Surfaces project, the GCI hosted its first five-day workshop, Cleaning of Gilded Wood, in Brazil, August 25–29, 2025, in collaboration with the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). The workshop welcomed twenty-four professionals from Latin America, Macau, and Portugal to explore cleaning systems developed for water-sensitive gilded and polychrome surfaces.

Starting in the conservation labs of the university, participants spent the first two and a half days at the Centro de Conservação e Restauração de Bens Culturais Móveis (CECOR) at UFMG in Belo Horizonte. There, they engaged in hands-on preparation and testing of various cleaning systems, including flexible polysaccharide gels and PVOH-borax gels.

Then the group traveled to Catas Altas, a community close to well-known Ouro Preto, where they spent the remaining two and a half days on-site, in the Igreja Matriz de Nossa Senhora da Conceição. Inside the eighteenth-century church, participants were guided through the interpretation and assessment of its various surfaces. These observations, combined with the practical learning from the previous days in the lab, informed discussions around treatment approaches.

The final day focused on advocacy for the preservation of decorative surfaces in the church. Participants engaged in meaningful conversations with key stakeholders—including the church's priest, community members of all ages, and conservation organizations—to explore strategies for sustainable and thoughtful preservation of such invaluable cultural heritage.

## GETTY POST-BACCALAUREATE CONSERVATION INTERNSHIPS

The Getty Post-Baccalaureate Conservation Internships aim to increase the number of students from underrepresented backgrounds preparing to enroll in graduate degree programs related to museum conservation. For further information, visit https://gty.art/postbacc.

The 2025–26 Getty Post-Baccalaureate Conservation Interns began their terms September 2, 2025. They are listed below with their university affiliation and respective Getty conservation department and partner institution to which they have been matched.

**Anamaria Cuevas**
*University of California, Irvine*
GRI Conservation and Preservation and the Fowler Museum at UCLA

**Jennifer Lee**
*California State University, Fullerton*
Getty Museum Paper Conservation and Los Angeles County Museum of Art

**Camille Lopez-Ambrosio**
*Santa Monica College, California; University of California, Los Angeles*
Getty Museum Decorative Arts and Sculpture Conservation and Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

## 2025–26 GCI GRADUATE INTERNS

The Getty Graduate Internship program provides paid, full-time one-year positions for students or recent graduates who intend to pursue careers in fields related to the visual arts. Twelve-month internships are available in our Collections, Buildings and Sites, and Science departments. For further information, visit https://gty.art/gettygrad.

The GCI's 2025–26 Graduate Interns began their posts September 8, 2025. They are listed below with their university affiliation and the GCI project or initiative with which each has been paired.

**Angela Anchante Bautista**
*Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain*
Earthen Architecture Initiative

**Thomas Boers**
*The University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom*
Technical Studies Research

**Antonia Diewald**
*The Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria*
Modern and Contemporary Art Research

**James McGhee**
*The Courtauld Institute of Art, United Kingdom*
Preservation of Plastics Project/Modern and Contemporary Art Research

**Eavan McNeil**
*University of British Columbia, Canada*
AATA

**Sarah Randle**
*The Courtauld Institute of Art, United Kingdom*
Managing Collection Environments Initiative

**Seka Seneviratne**
*The University of Melbourne, Australia*
Managing Collection Environments Initiative

**Shannon Trono**
*Columbia University, New York City*
Wall Paintings Conservation and Rock Art Conservation

**Vadim Van Meenen**
*Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium*
Recent Advances in Characterizing Asian Lacquer

## 2025–26 CONSERVATION GUEST SCHOLARS

The Conservation Guest Scholars Program at Getty provides opportunities for professionals to pursue research on topics that contribute to the advancement of practice in the conservation field. For further information, visit https://gty.art/GCIScholars.

The 2025–26 Conservation Guest Scholars are listed below along with their professional affiliation, research topic titles, and residency dates.

**September–December 2025**

**Maddalena Achenza**
*Università degli Studi di Cagliari, Italy*
"The Ninmakh Temple in Babylon: A Methodological Approach for the Conservation and the Repair of the Reconstructed Monuments in Babylon"

**Davison Chiwara**
*Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe*
"Institutionalization of Safety Protocols in the Handling and Use of Contaminated Collections in Zimbabwe's Museums: Lessons from Approaches Adopted by Museums in Los Angeles, USA"

**Shatha Safi**
*RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation, Palestine*
"MANATEER: Preserving the Resilient Spirit of Palestinian Agriculture"

**January–March 2026**

**Ravina Aggarwal**
*Independent Scholar, New York City*
"Living Museums, Ghost Cultures: Heritage Conservation and Changing Land Use in the Ladakh Himalayas"

**Cecilia Benedetti**
*Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina*
"Exploring Indigenous Conservation: Chané Masks and Materiality"

**Delia Hagen**
*Independent Scholar, Missoula, Montana*
"Mapping Indigenous Montana: Reclaiming Urban Space"

**April–June 2026**

**Eleni Aggelakopoulou**
*Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Athens, Greece*
"Parthenon's West Entablature in Color: New Scientific Data Versus Nineteenth-Century Literature"

**Antonio Iaccarino Idelson**
*Independent Scholar, Rome, Italy*
"Aiming at Reproducibility in Canvas Painting Lining Techniques"

**Ajay Khare**
*School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal, India*
"Developing an Inventory and Cultural Heritage Mapping of Temple Towns in Tamil Nadu, India: Case Study—Kanchipuram"

# Tribute

Photo: Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania.

## FRANK MATERO (1953–2025)

The world of heritage conservation mourns the loss of Frank Matero, who passed away on December 19, 2025. Frank was a generous collaborator, teacher, mentor, and friend to many in our field. He was also a scholar whose influence shaped generations of preservation professionals around the world. As the Gonick Family Professor and leader of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania, which he joined in 1990, Frank built an academic legacy grounded in excellence, innovation, and the inseparable union of theory and practice.

Frank worked closely with the Conservation Institute over the years, lending his intellect, wisdom, and guidance. He coedited *Managing Change: Sustainable Approaches to the Conservation of the Built Environment* in 2003. He was a 2014–15 Conservation Guest Scholar and served as a member of both the GCI advisory and educational committee and the 2015 and 2019 visiting committees. He contributed to multiple issues of *Conservation Perspectives* and, most recently, was a key intellectual catalyst for the Terra 2022 Congress in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and coeditor of *Terra 2022: Proceedings of the 13th World Congress on Earthen Architectural Heritage*.

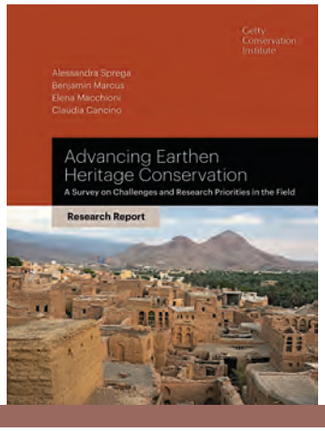
Frank believed deeply in conservation as a discipline based on scientific evidence and methodology and, increasingly, as one of the most responsible and sustainable cultural practices. As Director of the Architectural Conservation Laboratory at Penn, Frank led original research and conservation projects at significant cultural heritage sites worldwide. He worked in close collaboration with local communities and international partners, creating opportunities for students to gain hands-on field experience.

His work set enduring standards for documentation, analysis, diagnosis, and intervention.

According to several GCI staff members who studied with him, Frank was far more than a professor. He was a serious and patient mentor who taught them how to hold themselves to the highest professional standards. He listened carefully, offered guidance without ego, and trusted them to find their own voices, even long after they had left his classroom.

Frank's intellectual clarity and dedication to education leave a lasting imprint on historic preservation. His legacy lives on in the places he conserved, the ideas he articulated, and, most importantly, the students and colleagues who carry his principles forward.






# New Publications

***Cai Guo-Qiang: The Artist's Materials***
Rachel Rivenc

Cai Guo-Qiang (China, b. 1957) is among the most prominent contemporary artists active today. His prolific, diverse creative practice—which includes gunpowder drawings and paintings, explosion events, videos, multimedia installations, and site-specific works—draws on a personal belief system that freely blends Eastern and Western traditions. Based on in-depth interviews between the author and artist and with studio assistants, as well as extensive examination and scientific analysis of a wide range of artworks, this publication addresses the implications of Cai's distinctive materials and processes and their associated conservation issues.

Rachel Rivenc is head of conservation and preservation at the Getty Research Institute.

*Available for purchase at shop.getty.edu.*

***International Course on the Conservation of Earthen Architecture: Accompanying Essays***
Edited by Benjamin Marcus, Alessandra Sprega, Claudia Cancino, and Gayathri Hegde

This publication is a companion to the International Course on the Conservation of Earthen Architecture, a four-week training initiative organized by the GCI and the Department of Culture and Tourism—Abu Dhabi with the support of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman. Held in Al Ain, UAE, and Nizwa, Oman, the course aims to improve the practice of earthen heritage conservation by providing training for mid-career professionals working in the region.

The essays in this volume, written by course instructors and organizers, cover the key themes of the course and support the activities and lessons taught over its two iterations in 2018 and 2022. The publication includes chapters on regional earthen architecture and archaeology, analysis of earthen materials, building with earth, documentation, conservation theory, building assessment, and structural diagnosis.

*Available as a free PDF or EPUB or for purchase (print on demand) at getty.edu/search/publications.*

***Advancing Earthen Heritage Conservation: A Survey on Challenges and Research Priorities in the Field***
Alessandra Sprega, Benjamin Marcus, Elena Macchioni, and Claudia Cancino

The GCI has demonstrated a commitment to the conservation of earthen heritage for more than four decades, from early scientific research and seismic retrofitting efforts to global training programs and collaborative initiatives like Project Terra, the Conservation and Rehabilitation Plan for the Kasbah of Taourirt, the Seismic Retrofitting Project in Peru, and the International Course on the Conservation of Earthen Architecture in the UAE and Oman.

Building on this legacy, in 2023 the GCI's Earthen Architecture Initiative conducted a global online survey to better understand the current state of earthen heritage conservation, prioritize potential research directions, and garner critical insights to inform the GCI's strategic direction in the face of increasing environmental threats and the loss of traditional building knowledge. The survey aimed to identify key threats, challenges, and research priorities in the field.

Drawing on responses from more than 250 international practitioners, this report is structured in four main sections. It begins with an overview of the survey's design and methodology, which is followed by a presentation of the findings related to current issues and research priorities. It then analyzes key trends across the field and concludes with lessons learned and strategic recommendations to guide future conservation efforts.

The aim of this publication is to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among international institutions and different stakeholders dedicated to conserving earthen heritage.

*Available as a free PDF or EPUB or for purchase (print on demand) at getty.edu/search/publications.*

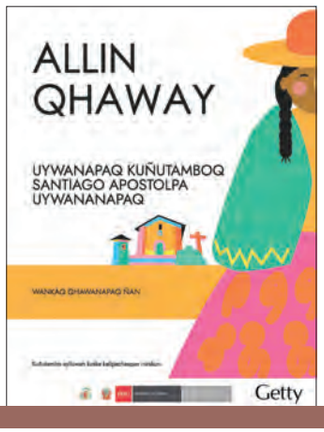
***Conservation of Granite in Cultural Heritage***
José Delgado Rodrigues

The field of stone conservation has long needed a holistic perspective that embraces the needs of conservation professionals and provides scientific support to enable them to better analyze preservation issues and implement efficient, long-lasting treatments. *Conservation of Granite in Cultural Heritage* offers such a perspective by bridging scholarly research on the available literature related to granite decay and best practices from conservators working in the field and laboratory.

First offering an overview of granitic rocks and their natural weathering, this volume then outlines the issues that arise when removing granite from quarries and incorporating it into what eventually becomes built heritage. Case studies are presented alongside guidelines for assessing conservation problems. This book will serve as a fundamental manual for students, conservation scientists, conservators, and restorers alike.

José Delgado Rodrigues is a geologist and conservation scientist based in Lisbon.

*Available for purchase at shop.getty.edu.*



### *Illustrated Manual for the Use of the Santiago Apóstol Church of Kuñotambo*

The *Illustrated Manual for the Use of the Santiago Apóstol Church of Kuñotambo* is a step-by-step guide created in collaboration with local community members to support them in the monitoring and maintenance of the seventeenth-century religious site, located near Cusco, Peru. The GCI's Seismic Retrofitting Project and the Cusco branch of the Ministry of Culture of Peru developed and implemented a project for the conservation and strengthening of the adobe structure. This manual was created as part of the monitoring and maintenance protocol for the community.

Published in Spanish (*Manual Ilustrado: De Uso del Templo de Santiago Apóstol de Kuñotambo*) and Quechua (*Allin Qhaway: Uywanapaq Kuñutamboq Santiago Apostolpa Uywananapaq*), the manual reflects the understanding that community members are best positioned to ensure the long-term care and conservation of the site. Although designed specifically for the Kuñotambo community, the manual may be used as a model for similar community-based conservation plans as it includes responsibilities, appropriate use practices, maintenance instructions, and monitoring guidelines that may apply to other adobe religious structures throughout Latin America—especially those vulnerable to earthquakes.

*Available as a free PDF download at getty.edu/search/publications.*

### *Terra 2022: Proceedings of the 13th World Congress on Earthen Architectural Heritage, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, June 7–10, 2022*

Edited by Leslie Rainer, Luis Fernando Guerrero Baca, Frank Matero, and Lauren Meyer

Earthen architecture is one of the oldest forms of construction and is evidenced around the globe. This volume gathers the research and presentations from Terra 2022: 13th World Congress on Earthen Architectural Heritage, which brought together in Santa Fe, New Mexico, 350 conservation professionals and practitioners from fifty-two countries.

Seventy richly illustrated papers, fifty-seven in English and thirteen in Spanish, address a range of conservation issues. Abstracts are provided in both English and Spanish for each paper.

Themes covered include advances in research; strategies for archaeological sites; community-based care and decision-making; cultural landscapes; decorated surfaces; education; historic and modern buildings; conservation history; risks and vulnerabilities; and traditional materials and practices. Sections that draw on symposia held at the congress spotlight two recent architectural heritage initiatives: the rehabilitation of an urban settlement by the AlUla Old Town and Oasis Conservation Project in Saudi Arabia, and the conservation and management of eight monumental enclosure complexes at the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ohio.

*Available for purchase at shop.getty.edu or as a free PDF download from getty.edu/search/publications.*

For more information about the work of the GCI, see getty.edu/conservation and


# CONSERVATION PERSPECTIVES

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**The J. Paul Getty Trust**
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***Conservation Perspectives, The GCI Magazine***
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Rita Cofield, Sara Lardinois, *Guest Coeditors, Fall 2025*

*Conservation Perspectives* is distributed free of charge twice a year to professionals in conservation and related fields and to members of the public concerned about conservation. Back issues of the magazine, as well as additional information regarding the activities of the GCI, can be found in the Conservation section of the Getty's website, getty.edu/conservation.

The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. The Institute serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, field projects, and the dissemination of information. In all its endeavors, the GCI creates and delivers knowledge that contributes to the conservation of the world's cultural heritage.

The GCI is a program of the J. Paul Getty Trust, a cultural and philanthropic institution dedicated to the presentation, conservation, and interpretation of the world's artistic legacy.

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We would like to acknowledge that the land Getty inhabits today was once known as Tovaangar, the home of the Gabrieleño/Tongva people. We show our respects to the Gabrieleño/Tongva people, as well as all First People, past, present, and future, and honor their labor as original caretakers of this land. Getty commits to building relationships with the Gabrieleño/Tongva community. We invite you to acknowledge the history of this land and join us in caring for it.



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# CONSERVATION PERSPECTIVES
## THE GCI MAGAZINE


**Brown Chapel AME Church, Selma, Alabama**, was built in 1908 by a Black builder, A. J. Farley, about whom little is known. Both the building and the members of the church played pivotal roles in the Selma marches that helped lead to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. It was the site of preparations for the march to the state capital, Montgomery, on March 7, 1965, a day that became known as Bloody Sunday. Declared a National Historic Landmark in 1997, the church is still in use today. Photo: Carol M. Highsmith. George F. Landegger Collection of Alabama Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division.

Conservation
Research
Foundation
Museum