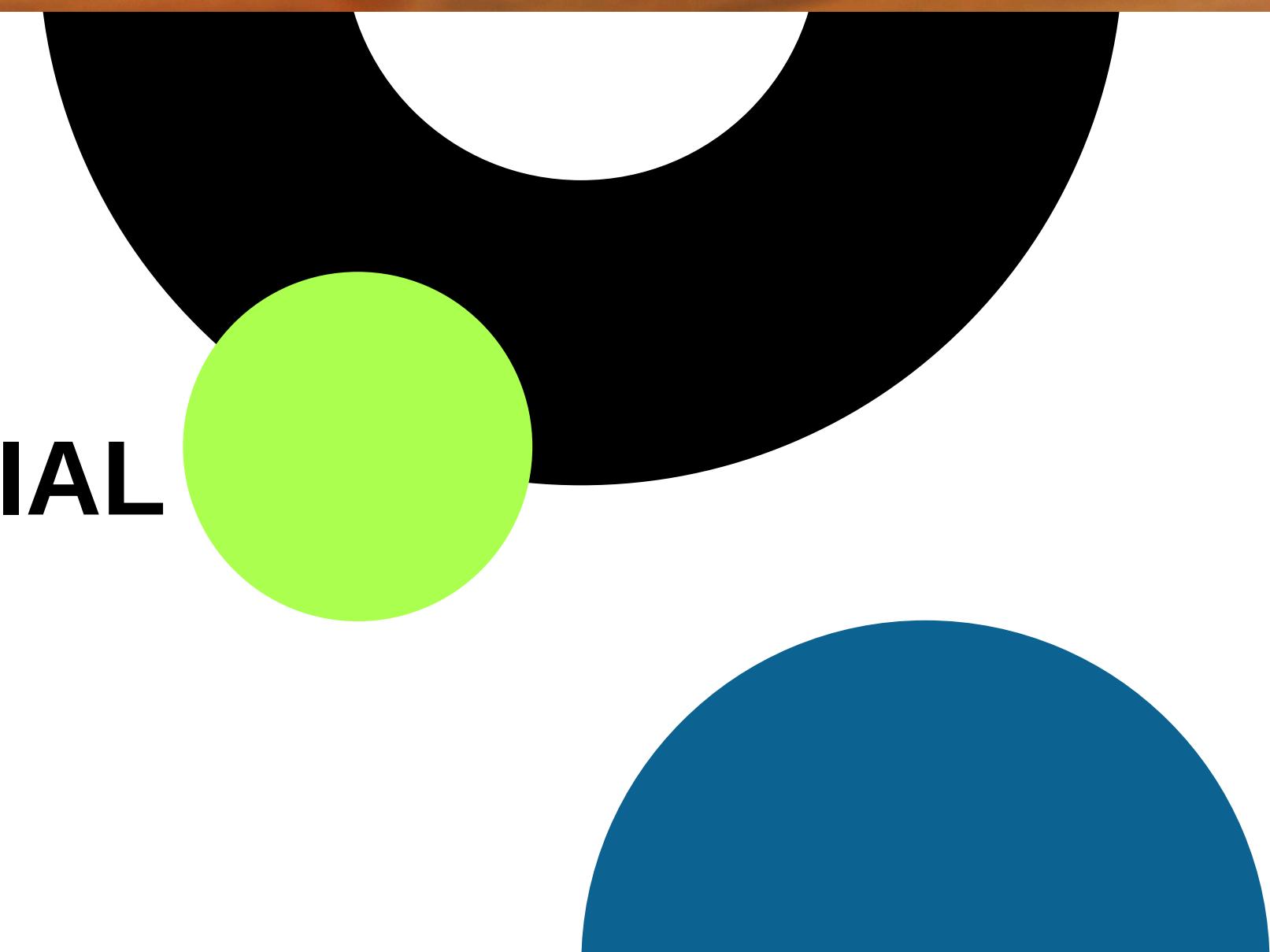




**“You are NOT in
Cameron Village”**



**EXAMINING MEMORY AND SPATIAL
IDENTITY IN HISTORIC OBERLIN
VILLAGE IN RALEIGH**

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Introduction

Purpose

- Research questions
 - How do black residents negotiate identity in the face of displacement and erasure?
 - What role does memory and storytelling play in preserving these histories?
- Highlights the ways in which language becomes a tool for resistance and remembrance.

History of Oberlin

- Oberlin pioneers such as Republican alliance between Black and White legislators
- First plot sold to Jesse Pettiford, tenant farmer and free Black
- Lewis Peck, earliest landowner to sell to Blacks
- James Harris black legislator

Oral History Project

- “Voices of Oberlin” Art exhibition and oral histories
- Conducted 27 interviews through 2020-2021
- Culture town- previous collection done on black neighborhoods in Raleigh (1993)

Historical Background



Early Black History

- History of slavery and African American history in the South, the narrative is often presented as a monolith
- Slave narratives as written tool to reclaim identities that had been stripped away

Reconstruction Era

- Plantation owners sell land to construct Raleigh's first neighborhoods
- Black population migrate to Raleigh for economic and political pursuits

Literature review

**Oral History
Methodology**
Ortiz 2021, Fitzgerald

Spatial Identities
Blommaert and De Fina 2017,
Bakhtin (1981), Bates and Towne
(2019)

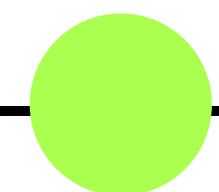
Production of Space
Lefebvre (1991)

Stance
Bucholtz and Hall (2010), Strauss
and Feiz (2014)

Double Voicing
Bakhtin (1984)

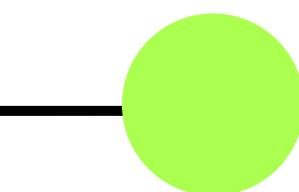
Unmapping/Mapping
Schwarz (2023)

Theoretical Definitions



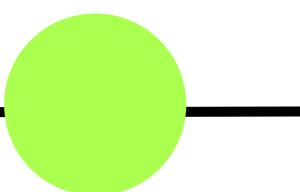
Double Consciousness

divided sense of identity or self due to a racial or colonial context



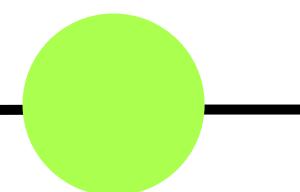
Stance

“the speaker’s or writer’s feeling, attitude, perspective, or position as enacted in discourse”



In the “Wake”

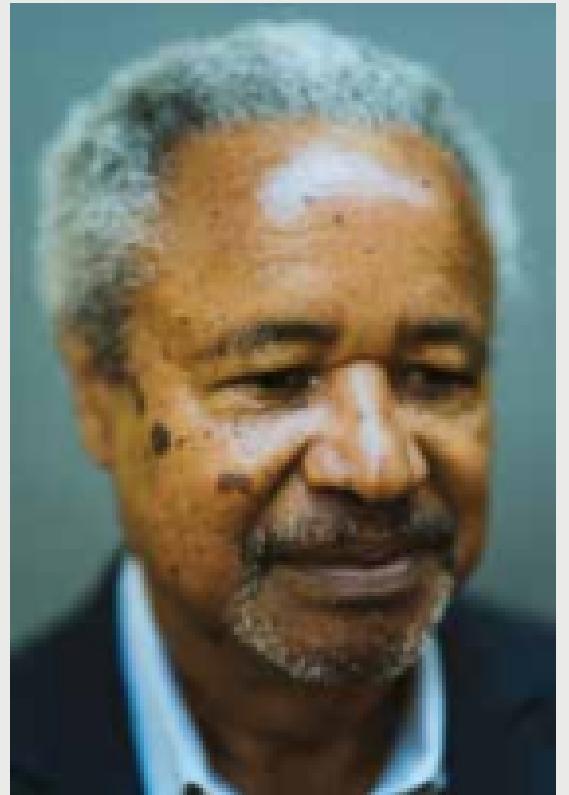
blackness as a historical and embodied site, one that is inscribed with the wounds and memories of slavery



Black Spatial Imaginary

Black communities construct spaces of belonging and community free from dominant and exclusionary forces

Methodology



“Folk in Oberlin believed in integrity and hard work. You might — this is what we were taught: throughout your life, you might run into folk that are smarter than you are, but don’t let them outwork you. That’s been my mantra. Nobody’s going to outwork me.”

Dwight A. Peebles

Top image: Marjorie Keith, Photography, 2021, Photo by Derrick Beasley

Left image: Dwight A. Peebles, Photography, 2021, Photo by Derrick Beasley

Participants

4 men and 4 women

Interviewer

Michael Williams- writer, community builder, designer

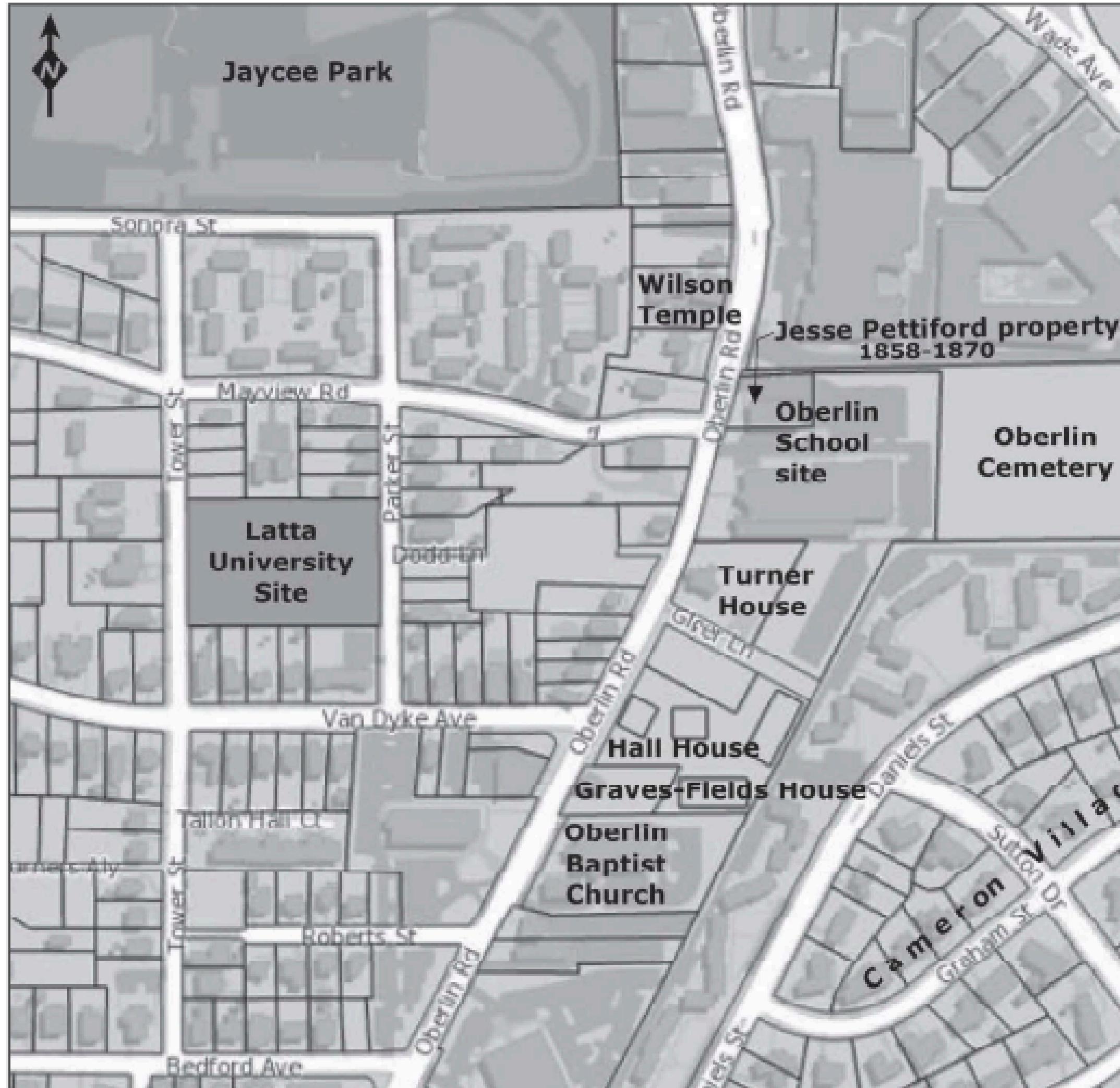
Themes

Childhood, Education, Intra-Community, Extra-Community, Religion, Redevelopment, Community values and morals

- Focus on Education, Racism, Redevelopment

Softwares

Otter and Soundcloud



**Map of Oberlin Village by
Ruth Little and Andrew
Edmonds, 2020 overlaid on
City of Raleigh and Wake
County iMAPS**

01. Findings/Results

Education | Racism | Redevelopment

Education

Excerpt from Andrew Hinton Transcript

- (1) And one of the things **they all emphasize**, at least my parents did, was always, hey, you got to
- (2) get education, because **we don't want you to struggle like we are**. And they all saw that as the
- (3) out. They all saw that as the ticket out of the situation that we were in.

- **Epistemic stance:** “They all saw that as the way out”
- **Shift to affective stance** “struggle”
- “Hey”- to mark a double-voicing, voices of the community
- Education as a means of survival
- Education symbolizes path to independence
- Education provided via institution vs education via elders and community

Racism

Excerpt from Andria Fields Transcript

(1)He said that they they were watching. And he said that supervisors came up and said "N" word you all know you can't be up here, take take yourselves back down in the laundry room and finish doing the work. And when he told he told me that he was crying because, I mean, you think about it, you know he was a man, like you're a man. A man is a man, and to be mistreated and miscalculated just not a good thing. And so today I am. I don't care if NC State was playing and clanging. I don't know who I would root for, because I'm just not NC State fan.

- Affective stance through the voice of her grandfather; solidarity
- Positions herself against the university as an institution
- Lines 5-6: signals how the injustice and prejudice experiences permanently defines her stance against the school across time.
- Identity markers such as “N word” (line 1-2) and “a man is a man”
- The laundry room indexes lower income status

Redevelopment

Excerpt from Joseph Holt Transcript

(1) So I wrote up something to try to show that they listen and for the for the developers, you are
(2)not in Cameron Village, and we resent the fact that you are calling this location Cameron
(3)Village. Now, we might not have been able to do a lot about it, but we could go on record as
(4)challenging it and take an exception to it. You know, Cameron Village starts down there about
(5)the 500 block, far as I'm concerned, it does not go far as I'm concerned, that's where it started

- **Epistemic stance**
- **Line 1, “production of space” intervening with dominant narratives**
- **double voicing: to insert himself into this personal narrative but also provide a voice from the community**
- **“Mapping” as a oppressive spatial tool**
- **2021 renaming Cameron Village → Village District**

Discussion

Black body as a Historic Site

Black life has been viewed as bound by temporal constraints to white spaces, Black life has historically had to change and fluidly move through time as Black spaces do

- Afterlife of slavery (Sharpe 2016)

Summary of Findings

- Usage of stance to disalign with certain institutions (Andria choosing to disalign from NC State)
- disaligning with labels to distance themselves from certain spatial identities
- Double-voicing used to critique social structures but also used to be a voice of the community

Narratives and Stories

Giving “oral histories” back to the communities. Elders use their own form of oral history to transmit knowledge and “map” their communities. Pictures, bibles, heirlooms.

Conclusion

- “Defending the dead” (Sharpe 2016)
- Combating “conceieved spaced” through “unmapping” colonial narratives
- “Black Spatial Imaginary”- a vessel that builds on concepts of solidarity, continuity and resistance

“What does it mean to defend the dead? To tend to the Black dead and dying: to tend to the Black person, to Black people, always living in the push toward our death? It means work. It is work: hard emotional, physical, and intellectual work that demands vigilant attendance to the needs of the dying” (10).

Ending Remarks

Remembering Black history is not simply renaming buildings, landmarks, and streets, it is listening, documenting, upholding the narrative that gets left behind.