

that everyone is still a part of, since every square inch of land in the US and Canada, is treaty land.

For this reason, I wrote *NO DESIGN ON STOLEN LAND* in AD Magazine (attached) this past January with a group of colleagues, a spin-off of *EXTRACTION EMPIRE*.

An excerpt:

“Every single building site – from a house to a highway – benefits from the exploitation of a capitalist property regime built on the back of broken treaties. These sites are not only taken from stolen lands and unceded territories,¹ they are the spatial products of a violent structure and system of settler-colonialism that displaced and continue to dispossess Indigenous Peoples through 500 years of territorial injustices. Mundus Novus. Terra Nullius. Doctrine of Discovery. Manifest Destiny. Since 1492, this system of state policies of segregation, assimilation or extermination continues today, literally mining squandered lands and violating Indigenous sovereignties through forced removal, gendered violence, police brutality, cultural appropriation, underservicing and overincarceration. As genocide, the oppressive system of settler colonialism is now normalised through contemporary urbanism, precisely because of the ‘denigration of Indigenous culture. Basically, it’s racism ... systemic, institutional, individual, interpersonal racism.”

That AD manifesto may seem foolishly polemical, unnecessarily provocative, or totally impractical, but at a time, when profound structural and systemic change is needed, we (as practitioners and educators) can no longer afford to ignore let alone deny the inseparable nature of climate change and colonialism to change the present. After all, how can we change the future, if we consistently misunderstand the present? It’s why racism and environment go hand-in-hand: they are fundamental to the education and re-education of landscape architects.

It’s why I asked the question earlier this week out of conversations with Marc Miller and Kofi Boone: what if environmental racism was the ground zero for the practice of landscape architecture?

Since an appeal to the pragmatism of landscape architects does not work when it comes to inherent issues of white supremacy and racism, it needs to be confronted head on, through *history* and *humanism*.

If that’s hard to swallow, substitute the word history for white supremacy in Thaïsa Way’s “Why History for Designers?” (see the attachment for what that looks like, and how remarkably true it is). Our under-education of white supremacy, the inhumanity of design, and the injustice of environment—our negligence and ignorance—are *monumental*.

For those and many other reasons, I also decided to turn away from the establishment of institutional spaces of academia and professional structures of the association, by not renewing my

membership this year and seeking alternative education outside professional programs through the formation a non-profit organization... precisely because the professional establishment nor the academic institution show little or no signs of changing, or willingness to change. I have seen first hand over and over again how this establishment has failed the current and coming generation. It is literally a sinking ship. *White Skin, Green Masks*.

Austin Allen reminded me of a week ago when we last talked about his 1994 film:

“amidst all the self-serving, self-promotional corporate symposia and institutional conferences across the field, we actually need a serious, critical, deep dialogue in this country to come to terms with histories of slavery and legacies of racism if we want to get to the bottom of these realities; especially if education and practice of landscape architecture are gonna change. We don’t have enough forums for these discussions. If we want to get to the bottom of these realities, among other things, we need to seriously revisit Olmsted and his work in the Slave States, well before Central Park, and stop conveniently writing ourselves out of history. That’s always been the dilemma of the profession.”

With this in mind, there is however a small strategy with potential implications (it’s not a blanket solution or a set of bullet points like pragmatic American practitioners prefer to take like a pill). It comes in the form of a question about the foundations of the profession because in order to make change for the future, they actually have to see the problem in the present.

So, if landscape architects genuinely profess to shape and influence patterns of land, or at least aspire to do that, they have to be accountable to the histories and legacies of those lands, especially if they want to use the word land in their title and the protection of their title act. So we’re back to our question: who are we accountable to?

Fundamental to this, is who ‘WE’ are and what ‘OUR’ field represents.

If, in fact, every building site and open space we work on is treaty land, then this is a call to get to know those treaties, and understand the responsibilities of being guests on these lands. Those treaties, broken or not, entail responsibilities because it takes two to make a treaty. Our lack of knowledge of these treaties and histories are no longer excuses. Our conditioned unawareness of the obligations of these treaties is no longer an alibi...especially as we approach the next generation where white people in America by the year 2040 will no longer be the majority.

And, the field is entirely and dangerously unprepared for that shift, which is already well underway. What else explains the growth in white nationalism in the face of its dwindling, demographic significance? *In the wake of countless killings of young Black men and women (from Trayvon Martin to Eric Garner to Ahmaud Barberly to George Floyd to Breona Taylor to David McAtee) on the very sidewalks, streets, highways, projects, that we design—the surface of the state?*

Eventually, the question of whose lands we're on, plumbs the depth of our situation. The question eventually leads to deep matters of representation that are practically absent in the profession and education of landscape architects. Underlying the question of land, is a basic protocol; a protocol of practice which the US is an international signatory related to the 2007 UN Protocol of Free Prior and Informed Consent from Indigenous communities (the United States is a signatory of that 2007 Resolution) in a nation-to-nation relationship that is part of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Territorial acknowledgments are only a beginning of these contemporary and historical relationships. And before students or practitioners begin to engage, they absolutely need to do their own homework and learn legacies of territorial dispossession, environmental racism, spatial injustice that interconnect the struggles and conflicts faced today by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, that are totally interconnected with shared struggles for representation and justice for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities against heteropatriarchy.

The underlying question of land is the question of the future, and it entails a huge responsibility that is the intergenerational project right there, in front of us. We can make that change literally right now, with the LAAB Accreditation Standards, in the course syllabi being drafted for next Fall, and in the site work we are doing right now. Because if not now, then when?

Anything less, is not only racist, it is white supremacy. **It is oppressive. It is violent. It is dehumanizing.**

So, if we want to change the climate, we gotta change the system. And to change the system, we have to be able to see the violence and oppression of settler-colonialism. And if that has to start with going back to basic vocabulary of environmental racism, to define words like settler-colonialism, heteropatriarchy, intersectionality, spatial justice, racial erasure, cultural appropriation, UNDRIP, FPIC, so be it.

It's a simple idea for practitioners and educators: who are you accountable to? My answer to them: not exclusively to themselves nor to their clients anymore, if we all want a future worth living for. We are not the technical mercenaries of capitalism nor the arms of the settler-colonial state. There is no grey zone nor middle ground in this conversation anymore. You are either fighting for a just and livable future, or you're not.

There is no **LANDSCAPE** without LAND. The politics, the sovereignties, the histories, the legacies, the treaties, the obligations, the responsibilities, of these lands are inseparable from the ideas and imaginations of the landscapes we claim to just work on.

That's my two cents, FWIW. I'll be writing to the LAAB with my simple recommendation, in plain words, and next year, I'll be dropping a reader whose voices take us through the past 25 years of this current generation to unearth what we, as a field, have marginalized, suppressed, and erased.

