EDITED BY CRAIG E. BARTON

sites of memory

PERSPECTIVES ON ARCHITECTURE AND RACE
presented in text, images, and music, offer invaluable insights into the mem-
ories of black Americans have supplemented narratives of history with memo-
nurtured, and shaped into expressive artifacts as chronicles of their powerful
the American landscape. Contemporary scholarship has begun to make
use of these artifacts, including literature, music, dance, art, film, vernacular archi-
tural geography, to explore the construction of a modern cultural landscape
by memory as by physical artifact.

I will explore the issues of spatial identity and representation of
the contemporary urban landscape. Thirty years ago the Civil Rights move-
ment necessitated a new way of thinking about the dynamics of urban and rural
communities which defined both the black and white cul-
s. Today, we as planners, designers, writers, artists, and historians continue to
believe in Sitges of Memory present the recent fruits of such research and collectively
address these crucial questions: How are the ideology and political history of
the city and nation visualized and spatially in the built environment? What are the visual and spa-
these elements, and how do they contribute to the character of the urban and rural
landscape? Cultural manifestations be documented, preserved and interpreted? Sites of
memory and provocative responses by those who view the built environment as
able of rendering a more complex interpretation of the influence of black cul-
tural history and memory of place.

one
duality and invisibility

RACE AND MEMORY IN THE URBANISM OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH

In his 1947 novel *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison chronicled the tension and ambiguity that per-
vades black life and culture in America. Two pas-
sages from that text articulate his interpretations of
the physical and ephemeral landscapes occupi-
ed by blacks in the twentieth century. In the
prologue Ellison characterizes the cultural land-
scape of black America.

"I am an invisible. No, I am not a spook like those who
haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-
movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and
bone, fiber and liquid—and I might even be said to possess
a mind. I am invisible..."

Describing a nation bound by both institu-
tional and traditional racism, Ellison defined the
black landscape in terms of the visibility (or lack thereof) of black culture. This interpretation still
resonates with the contemporary architect or urban-
ist seeking to explore the historic and contemporary
effects of race upon the development of the built
environment and to examine the realities and myths
of America's dual racial landscapes. Ellison later
articulates the importance of spatialized memory to
the comprehension and interpretation of twentieth-
century black culture. In this later passage the narra-
tor suggests that black history is invisible because of
where it resides and may be interpreted through
selected vernacular landscapes.

In order to explore some of the effects of race
upon the development of the black cultural land-
sapes in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century
South, it is critical to examine how Ellison's concept of invisibility was built and spatialized. For
Ellison, the ability to render the world visible and
invisible is a concrete form of power, and is a part of
the social construction of race.

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to and assistance with this essay.

1 Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
RACE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION  We understand race to be a means of establishing cultural hierarchies, determined by social rather than biological criteria. In America, race defines us in terms of skin color (and all its associations) and we have historically conceived of “blackness” in terms of negation and opposition. Black culture has been defined not so much by what it is but by what it is not. To be black is to be not white, and as such to be inferior, politically powerless and culturally impoverished. Defining blackness exclusively in terms of opposition is a useful strategy, for it reduces black life and culture to a series of generalities far more susceptible to subjugation by established authority. The irony, of course, is that black culture serves as an avant-garde testing ground for popular culture in America. Fashion, music, art, and even language draw heavily and directly from historic and contemporary aspects of black cultural practices.

Though largely considered a regional phenomenon, race as a social construction has had a broad and pervasive influence upon the spatial development of the American landscape. The connotations conveyed through the perception of race in America have created separate, though imposed cultural landscapes for black Americans. These landscapes were initially “constructed” and subsequently “designed” by the custom of the Supreme Court’s “separate but equal” 1954 “Jim Crow” statutes. The Court has taken the liberty of designating the boundaries of the cultural landscapes, frequently marginalized cultural landscapes.

In the introduction to his 1977 book Process, A. Leon Higginbotham argues that the text he describes the various judicial and special limitations imposed upon the aspirations of blacks that might otherwise have been realized. 

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America have created separate, though sometimes parallel, overlapping, or even superimposed cultural landscapes for black and white Americans. The spaces forming these landscapes were initially "constructed" by the politics of American slavery, and subsequently "designed" by the customs, traditions and ideology emanating from the Supreme Court’s "separate but equal" finding in Plessy v. Ferguson,¹ as well as twentieth-century "Jim Crow" statutes. The result was a complex social and cultural geography in which black Americans occupied, and often continue to occupy, distinct and frequently marginalized cultural landscapes.

In the introduction to his 1978 text, In the Matter of Color, Race and the Legal Process, A. Leon Higginbotham aptly summarizes the legal and political structures which have defined the state of black men and women in America. Throughout the text he describes the various judicial and statutory "mechanisms of control... the special limitations imposed upon free blacks... generally restricting any activities or aspirations of blacks that might threaten groups in control."²

The legal mechanisms of control to which Higginbotham refers are implicitly spatial, reinforcing the visible and invisible boundaries distinguishing white and black space. These boundaries have effectively established the political, social and productive space available for occupation and control by the black population.

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³ Plessy v. Ferguson was argued before the United States Supreme Court in April of 1896 and decided in favor of the plaintiff later that year. In this case the court affirmed a lower court ruling supporting the constitutionality of a statute enacted by the State of Louisiana which provided for separate railway cars for white and black travelers. The ruling by U.S. Supreme Court provided for a revised reading of the obligations of the Thirteenth Amendment (which made illegal the practice of slavery) and modified the scope of the language of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (which provided for equal protection under the law for all citizens).

Ironically, one of the subtle implications of these boundaries in the South was that, while the social distinctions and hierarchies of race remained intact, whites and blacks often required to inhabit the same physical space. The necessity to co-exist in the same room, building, or city required strategies for the construction of space, which by delineating social and spatial hierarchies could differentiate visibility. These spaces reiterated the relationships of power to space and obscured the presence of the black population.

Descriptions of Thomas Jefferson’s plantation home, Monticello, often refer to eclectic and idiosyncratic qualities contained within the building and of the Jefferson’s skillful manipulation of building and landscape. Much has been said about the views and vistas Jefferson created through the thoughtful placement of windows and doors. Typically, Jefferson is credited for a design sensibility often elevating the mere pragmatic to the level of the sublime. A close examination of the view created from Monticello’s east portico provides insight into the pragmatic issues of power and control negotiated through the design of the landscape. The view from the portico looks out over the various sections of Monticello’s diverse landscape. Like other working plantations, Monticello was dependent upon an enormous labor force of black slaves. Yet the views created from the east portico actively deny the presence of the black body. Through the manipulation of the landscape section and placement of the volume of the winged dependencies, Jefferson skillfully rendered invisible the slaves and their places of work from the important symbolic view of the property. Ironically, there are few locations within the campus or its immediate environs where it was possible to discern land uses or constructions of race. In the American South, race is not limited to the plantation or the cotton fields; it permeates the everyday life of black communities, where it is possible to discern land uses or constructions of race. In the American South, race is not limited to the plantation or the cotton fields; it permeates the everyday life of black communities, where it is possible to discern land uses or constructions of race.

William Rufus King (a former U.S. Senator from Alabama) described Selma as the “Center of the Black Belt,” a designation that reflected Selma’s role as a center of commercial activity and as a destination for African American pilgrims. Selma was an important center of African American economic life, and its black residents were active in local politics and community affairs. Despite its achievements, Selma suffered from neglect and discrimination, which led to the establishment of the Selma Voter Registration Drive in the 1960s.

In Selma, the spatial legacy of the slave era and the civil rights struggle is still evident in the city’s architecture and public spaces, which as they evolved became the site of struggle and resistance.
there are few locations within the composition where black and white bodies were in
closer proximity.

Whether it was Jefferson's manipulation of the landscape and his program to con-
ceal from view the black slaves working at Monticello, the separate "colored" entrance
to the cinema, or simply the denial of access to certain facilities, the effect was to re-
der the black person invisible. Negotiating both the concept and the realms of invis-
ibility became central to a construction of black cultural identity.

**Spatializing Race in the Urban Landscape** There are many sites in America
where it is possible to discern landscapes charged with the social and political con-
structions of race. In the American South's Black Belt region, questions of identifica-
tion, analysis, and the interpretation of racial landscapes preternaturally exist
because of the historic presence of a large black population. Identified primarily by
its agricultural productivity, the region was also closely identified with the Civil Rights
Movement, because of its large politically under-enfranchised black population. Cities
like Selma, Alabama, which were critical to the staging and the development of the
movement, provide an opportunity to examine the evolution and transformation of
racial landscapes.

Set on the banks of the Alabama River, the city of Selma was founded in 1820 by
William Rufus King (a former U.S. Senator and Vice-President under Franklin
Pierce). Its riverfront location and development of railway links to the ports of New
Orleans and Mobile established Selma as a major transfer point for agricultural exports
and manufactured imports. This riverfront town, sometimes known as the "Queen
City of the Black Belt," was destined to become the site of one of the Civil Rights
Movement's most significant struggles.

In Selma, the spatial legacy of *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the various ensuing Jim Crow
statutes led to an urbanism of duality, and a city composed of two distinct urban land-
scapes, which as they evolved became codified by race.
Early maps of the city illustrate a number of key elements that fostered the city’s growth and the evolution of its dual landscapes. In its original 1820 plan for the city, the Selma Town and Land Company laid out a grid of streets forming a square that became the civic core of the city. Surrounding this area are two street grids. West of the core there is direct access to the river, while the street pattern to the east of the core runs perpendicular to the river. An 1866 map of the city clearly shows this 12-block plan, the two grid patterns, and the nascent beginnings of the city’s racial division.

The original town plan established the city’s primary residential enclave of west Selma, positioning it between the civic core to the east and Live Oak Cemetery to the west. Race played a significant role in the Nineteenth-century census record of the town’s resident black population. Because of property lots with limited street access, the black community often remained largely invisible.

Race also configures the hierarchies of the cultural landscape. The Though the interred remains of many of the town’s residents are still buried in portions of Selma’s antebellum cemetery, the presence of their white counterparts, they were often linked to portions of Selma’s antebellum cemetery, providing poignant insight into the lives of those interred. Their graves remain a testament to the presence of sites celebrating Civil War history. West Selma was posited for Selma’s white population.
Race played a significant role in the spatial organization of this precinct. Nineteenth-century census records indicate that this neighborhood had a significant resident black population. Because their residences were typically located at the back of property lots with limited street access, West Selma’s black population remained largely invisible.

Race also configures the hierarchy of Live Oak Cemetery, a key component of the precinct’s cultural landscape. The cemetery contains the city’s Confederate Memorial, the interred remains of many of the city’s founding white residents and is a critical link to portions of Selma’s antebellum history and memory. Live Oak Cemetery also provides poignant insight to the dual landscape occupied by blacks and whites. The graves of the cemetery’s black occupants are not clearly recognizable, for unlike those of their white counterparts, they carry no surnames. Deprived of the recognition offered by a surname, these headstones illustrate the peculiar limited space blacks occupied in antebellum Selma. It was a space in which they were present yet not wholly visible. With its physical connection to both the historic and civic cores as well as the presence of sites celebrating the history of its founders and defenders in the Civil War, West Selma was positioned as a cultural landscape of power and authority for Selma’s white population.
The eastern portion of the city lies east of the twelve-block core and continues to the city's eastern boundary, differing in many significant respects from West Selma. The grain of its major streets run north to south, effectively connecting the Alabama River with the city's major commercial and industrial precincts and the rural sites to the north. Initially platted as another residential precinct for the white community, East Selma evolved into a mixed-use area containing commercial, industrial, and residential components. The presence of industrial and commercial facilities undermined the value and the quality of the adjacent residential areas, making them less desirable for whites and therefore available for occupation by the city's black population.

While it is possible to point to similar aspects of racialized geography in American urbanism, what distinguished Selma's dual racial landscapes was the manner in which the city's black population was isolated from both Selma's formal political center and its cultural zone. West Selma contained the city's significant public political spaces, such as the county and federal courthouses which were both located west of Broad Street in the 12-block core area. East Selma evolved into the landscape of the black community because it was disconnected from these sites. The result was to render the black population socially and politically invisible by both consigning them to a series of separate and inferior spaces and limiting their access to the city's symbolic political/public spaces.

INVISIBILITY AND THE CONSTRUCTED LANDSCAPE By the early 20th century, the cultural and spatial boundaries inscribed by the city's design had evolved into two racially distinct landscapes, complete with separate housing, street typologies, and schools. The private, and more importantly, public spaces created in the twentieth century reinforced the nineteenth-century traditions of Jim Crow, determining that separate facilities for each race was the preferred method of exercising control and authority over the city's black population.

Housing as defined by its location, typology, and quality, characterized one of the substantial boundaries between black and white Selma. Other features distinguished the black residential area east of Broad Street and north of Jefferson Davis Avenue, such as housing types, which were generally limited to shotgun houses and to public housing projects built in the late 1950s, though remnants of nineteenth-century middle-class housing survived. Among the most distinctive features of this landscape were the streets, the majority of which remained unpaved as recently as 1960.

Perhaps the most important issue of these landscapes with respect to the issue of the invisible black population concerns the idea of dual political and civic spaces. Legalized segregation in the twentieth century sought to remove the black population from the public gaze by creating separate and distinct social and political spaces. While many black men and women regularly moved through the residential and commercial spaces of Selma's white community, negotiating these spaces was a complex affair. The public and civic spaces of West Selma describe a "space of appearance," a space which Hannah Arendt defined as a symbolic political realm where an individual may be seen through speech and through action. Political visibility and identity in this space were defined by Jim Crow laws, so that while blacks might literally occupy these spaces, their collective inability to vote and therefore access the political process rendered them invisible in these "spaces of appearance."

The Dallas County courthouse and the federal courthouse face one another from opposite sides of Alabama Avenue and, in conjunction with the former City Hall and public safety building, respectively mark the western and eastern boundaries of the city's historic twelve block core. Defined by short, square blocks, this area could be considered the white population's cultural, religious, and commercial center, distin-
guishing it as the symbolic public space, or "space of appearance" in twentieth-century Selma. Its location, scale, and collection of important buildings allow this space to be interpreted as the "real" civic center of Selma.

The fact that Selma is comprised of two racial landscapes extended the opportunity for the development of an equivalent symbolic civic and political space in its black neighborhood. In East Selma this space is found on the street which connects two of the city's oldest black congregations, First Baptist Church and Brown's A.M.E. Chapel. These churches served as markers in a landscape that emerged during Reconstruction when the black population was again politically disfranchised. Like many other black churches, First Baptist and Brown's A.M.E. fulfilled a dual role, providing spiritual sanctuary as well as a symbolic political representation for the black community. Just as the courthouses charged the meaning of the street in white Selma, so too did these churches in East Selma. During the voting rights demonstrations their verve spilled out from the sanctuary and onto Sylvan Street, the street these two communities shared, claiming this space as the symbolic political space of the community.

While its counterpart in West Selma directly from urban structure, that street was superimposed onto a morphological grid. This space does not read as a "space of appearance" in the city where access and visibility were the limits of blacks, this is precisely the role that East Selma played in its development.

The voting rights movement and political space. The Dallas C.C. became focal points of the movement as the city and county's large black population gathered. Pettus Bridge represent the compontent of the strategies of political action and political precincts the county's black residents to be both figurative and literal reflections of the city's civic space.
e of appearance" in twentieth-century urban landscapes allowed this space to be

While its counterpart in West Selma derived its significance, visibility, and power directly from urban structure, this space was much less visible largely because it is superimposed onto a morphological structure that was never intended to support it. This space does not read as a "space of appearance," yet within the dual landscapes of the city where access and visibility to the more formal public realm were denied to blacks, this is precisely the role that it served.

The voting rights movement ultimately dissolved the boundaries of Selma’s civic and political space. The Dallas County Courthouse and the Edmund Pettus Bridge became focal points of the movement’s strategy to achieve political inclusion for the city and county’s large black population. Both the Dallas County Courthouse and the Pettus Bridge represent components of Selma’s political and cultural landscape not easily adapted to the strategies of duality and invisibility. Anchoring the city’s civic and political precincts the county and federal courthouses represented the inability of black residents to be both figuratively and literally visible within the formal political space of the city and the county.

*above* Martin Luther King Street (originally Sylvan Street)—
the civic space of Selma’s black community; 
*right* View of Dallas Avenue, Selma, Alabama.
The Pettus Bridge crosses the Alabama River and is the literal and symbolic entry into the city of Selma. Ironically, given its prominent position in the city’s urban structure, it is one of the few components of the urban landscape that did not easily lend itself to the racialized geographies established throughout the city. Neither by design nor by traditions of use does the bridge avail itself of the distinctions of the dual, differential scale of the typological distinctions that define primary entry with white users and secondary entry with black users. In a city replete with redundant cultural systems and whose urban landscape was designed to create spatial, political hierarchies designated by race, the bridge is eloquent in its simplicity. It is in fact the bridge’s lack of “flexibility” in negotiating the dual geographies of Selma’s racial landscape that caused it to be the focus of the events of Bloody Sunday. The Bloody Sunday confrontation and its aftermath were a challenge to the long standing political hierarchies established by the strategies which had previously rendered blacks “invisible.”

8 On Sunday, March 7, 1965, a group of black residents of Selma and Dallas County attempted to march to Montgomery to dramatize their lack of political enfranchisement. This first march from Selma to Montgomery was led by John Lewis and was violently concluded at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge by Alabama State troopers. The date became known as “Bloody Sunday.” A second unsuccessful march followed and ended peacefully. Two weeks after Bloody Sunday, a third march left Selma and was successful. The marchers, led by Martin Luther King Jr., followed Highway 80 to Montgomery, camping along the way. They arrived five days later at the State Capitol. In 1996 Congress designated Highway 80 (including sections of Selma and Montgomery) a National Historic Trail.

SPACES OF MEMORY AT THE

Train tracks crisscross Memphis, so that with clicking and clacking cars lumber goings, of goods and peoples who travel and crossing, echoing the blues and the:

Under the sway of slavery and race of African-Americans were forced and communal bonds under the enslavement or expected to bury violence and anguish. As part of this and in hope of securing a better African-Americans re-imagine. This imaginative effort permeates the cultural, and artistic traditions. For African-American collective history and lore have passed on through non-monumental means—for instance, the haunting Memphis blues. As novelist Maya Angelou says, “If we were a people much given to might raise monuments and sacrifice blood, but slavery cured us of that weakness. However, to have it said that we succumb to the dedication of our poets (I musicians and blues singers).”

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