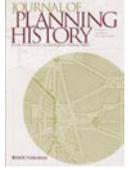


SACRPH

Society for American City and Regional Planning History
Founded 1986



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*Placed on this mountain with a rare chance to see
dreams once envisioned by folks much braver than me*

--Gil Scott-Heron, '95 South / All the Places We've Been'

26 December 2014

Dear colleagues,

I am afraid that the tenor of this annual appeal from the President will be less upbeat than usual, given the recent events in Ferguson, New York City, Cleveland, and elsewhere. The tragic deaths of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Rekia Boyd, and other African-American men and women at the hands of police underscores the peril and precarity of life for people of color in our cities.

Perhaps the silver lining is the upwelling of protest and resistance, as people take to the streets to demand serious, substantive change. And yet, as a historian of urban planning and politics, I cannot help but think we've been down this road before. Dr. King might have been right that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, but it sure takes a tortuous path. Let us hope that now the time is right for meaningful transformation; let's make it the right time.

As we ponder these hard realities, it is worth asking ourselves what we are called to do as scholars. How do we confront racial discrimination, state violence, and systemic injustice? Gil Scott-Heron, one of my all-time favorite artists, provides a wise point of departure in his tribute to Fannie Lou Hamer 'All the Places We've Been'. He enjoins us to begin from a place of humility for the sacrifices of those who have put their lives on the line for freedom. To do them honor, it is more important now than ever that we translate our knowledge and understanding of planning history for broader audiences in the struggle for social justice.

Of course each of us will take her own measure, and make her own path, according to conscience. At the same time, as an organization, there is much we can do to follow our departed colleague Marsha Ritzdorf's lead in putting race at the heart planning history. Past and present SACRPH members have written books like *Redevelopment and Race* (June Manning Thomas), *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Tom Sugrue), *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Carl Nightingale), *Suburban Erasures* (Walter Greason), and *The New African-American Urban History* (Ray Mohl and Kenneth Goings). Kimberly Prothro Williams has done groundbreaking work to preserve the legacy of U-Street, the Striver's District, and other major African-American communities. The late great Woody Farrar wrote a wonderful book for grade school children on African-American leaders and movements. Angel Nieves and Amy Hillier continue to show us the way to bring histories of segregation and resistance into the digital age for multiple publics.

These are just a few examples of the many ways that SACRPH members have contributed to the broader conversation about race, equity, and planning in America. We can and should build on this intellectual heritage. For some of us, this might entail involvement in protests, community groups, court cases, or planning efforts. For others, it might be the impetus to dust off those old notes and documents and move a scholarly project forward. For others still, it might involve work on a film, children's book, web site, digital map, or preservation campaign. There is much to do; fortunately, SACRPH is an organization full of active, committed people.

So I would like to direct this annual appeal to something more than raising general funds. I encourage SACRPH to make a renewed commitment to issues of race in the study of city and regional planning history--a commitment first established over a decade ago by SACRPH to honor the legacy of Marsha Ritzdorf. This entails not only more studies of how racial imaginaries shape official planning practices in the U.S. and globally, though that is a crucial part of the story. It also requires that we examine the ways in which communities of color have resisted plans and constructed alternative visions. And by communities of color, I mean not only African-Americans, but also the broad mosaic of peoples and identities that comprise the American city. To capture a broader and more inclusive story, we should expand the very notion of planning itself to include all of the ways diverse communities engage in city-building and city-shaping processes.

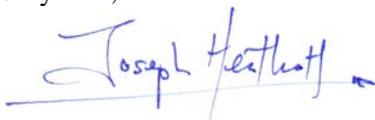
There are many ways that we as organization can accomplish this goal, but I would like to emphasize the following:

1. **I ask every member of SACRPH to invite someone new to join the organization.** Encourage that person to propose a paper for the conference and meet us in Los Angeles. It is imperative that we increase the diversity of membership across a range of experiences. We should redouble efforts to bring in new members from varied social, professional, and geographic backgrounds. We will do this in part by making our conference more welcoming to a broad spectrum of participants, but also through concerted outreach!
2. **SACRPH should establish awards for work on race and planning.** I am proposing to the Board of Directors that SACRPH create and fund new awards. One award could recognize an outstanding conference paper on the topic. Another might recognize an innovative project or achievement by a member, such as a film or web site. We could also create an award to recognize accomplishments in the arena of social justice by an activist, practitioner, or community leader based in the city where the conference takes place.
3. **We should increase the number of sessions on race, equity, and planning at our conference.** Ideally, papers that examine planning history through the lens of race, class, gender, sexuality and other lived experiences will be distributed throughout the program. However, at the Los Angeles conference, we have an opportunity to take stock of the state of planning knowledge through organized panels, roundtables, film screenings, and other events. To this end, we will work with conference chairs Matthew Lasner and Paula Lupkin to create such opportunities.

These are by no means the only ways for SACRPH to move forward, and we welcome your input on additional efforts. As you ponder a tax-deductible gift to SACRPH, please let us know how to direct your contribution. We are happy to receive general contributions, which help fund our conference and provide travel assistance to graduate students. But we also welcome support of the initiatives listed above. Contributions can be made by credit card via the SACRPH web site under the "Membership" tab, or by mailing a check to Secretary John McCarthy at the address provided on the first page.

It is my hope, shared by President-Elect Margaret Crawford, to have an active and expanded membership grappling with a range of challenges and opportunities. To this end, I look forward to working with all of you to build the organization and to realize its full potential and relevance as a professional society.

Very best,



Joseph Heathcott
President