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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Applying Critical Race and Memory Studies to University Place Naming Controversies: Toward a Responsible Landscape Policy

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ABSTRACT

A number of U.S. universities are embroiled in debates over the longtime commemoration and valorization of white supremacy through the campus landscape. Recognizing place naming as a legitimate political arena, activists have called for—and in some instances succeeded—in removing from university buildings the names of historical figures shrouded in racial controversy. For the broader public and even sympathetic higher education officials, there is a lack of understanding about why these demands are important and even less recognition about the violence that racially insensitive place naming inflicts on the belonging of marginalized groups. Instead, the renaming of campus landscapes is understood as merely an act of political correctness and thus campus authorities have offered uneven and incomplete solutions in the name of progressive reform. Applying recent innovations in race and memory studies, specifically the ideas of wounded places and memory work, we situate ongoing university place naming controversies in a critical context. Specifically, we build on the recent work of law scholar Stephen Clowney and discuss the opportunities and challenges of developing a policy of landscape fairness that recognizes the power of place to transmit ideas about racial power across generations and the right of critics to challenge dominant historical narratives.

KEYWORDS

Critical place name studies; landscape fairness; memory work; political correctness; race and place

To explore how geographic scholarship on race and ethnicity can address and advance public policy and the role of social institutions in improving the life experiences of both dominant and minority groups, professors and students need not travel any farther than their own university or college campus. Universities support a sizable labor force and residential populations and comprise vast built environments of dormitories, lecture halls, offices, transportation routes, communication systems, and a range of institutionalized services. University administrators, alumni, students, and faculty engage in extensive policymaking and the creation of administrative procedures that have important sociospatial consequences for people and places. Although universities do function as “public spaces” (Gumprecht 2007), the right to claim public space and the power to express oneself have always been open to control, contest, and inequality (Mitchell 2003). Weaved throughout the practices of even the most progressive and enlightened institutions of higher learning are ideas about who matters or counts and whose interests should be served and protected through the design of campus landscapes. Often this entails balancing diverse interest groups, some of which have large financial interests in promoting a particular landscape narrative.

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A politics of belonging is materialized and negotiated through the geographies of university social life. A sense of belonging, although certainly experienced on a personal and emotional level, is a socially mediated matter shaped by wider policy discourses and institutional practices at colleges that have surprisingly gone underanalyzed by geographers of race (although see Inwood and Martin 2008). Universities shape the extent to which certain groups, especially people of color, feel that they belong on campus. Perhaps no group has known or felt this fact more than African Americans. Many of us are familiar with the violent resistance that awaited desegregation efforts in the 1950s and 1960s and longtime debates about affirmative action and ongoing conservative challenges to university diversity and racial and ethnic studies programs. Less well known, until recently, is the role that the university memorial landscape—specifically its array of named buildings and other places—has played in valorizing public figures with reputations for defending and perpetuating slavery, white supremacy, racial segregation, and disenfranchisement. These commemorated individuals can serve as a “hidden curriculum” that gives sometimes subtle, but often times overt clues about who belongs and whose histories are important to the development of the university and its identity.

Although the campus, as a racialized memorial landscape, can certainly be a place of exclusion, it can also be a site for carrying out what Schein (2009) called an “oppositional politics of belonging” (p. 811). The very presence of discrimination can be the source of its potential undoing and hence the university’s geography of naming and remembering can become a site where marginalized groups can lay claim to the campus and struggle to create a more inclusive and multicultural setting. Indeed, over the past few years, U.S. colleges and universities have been marked by the highly visible Black Lives Matter movement and other important antiracist struggles that have called for a renaming of campus buildings as well as a range of policy proposals—from criminal justice reform to “diverse faculty, more ethnic-studies classes, improved mental-health services for students of color” (Somashkehkar 2015).

We argue that the contemporary crisis over the campus place name landscape offers an important opportunity for geographers and other spatially oriented scholars to inform the treatment of race and racial difference by institutions of higher learning. In addition and perhaps more important, through our intervention we offer possible ideas to advance the development of progressive policies that ensure that the perspectives of people of color are included in major landscape decisions. Specifically our article applies recent innovations in race and memory studies to place ongoing university naming controversies in a critical context, one that characterizes the U.S. university as wounded by racism and the efforts of renaming activists as the memory work of both remembering but also recovering from these wounds. We briefly review how campus authorities at several universities in the United States have sought to address their place name controversies, and argue that these supposedly progressive reforms have been uneven and unsatisfying in completing the memory work of coming to grips with the legacy of white supremacy on campus. As a result, we apply geographical concepts to practical struggles and problems and conclude with a discussion focused on an approach to policymaking that might be helpful for social institutions to consider as they face growing calls for commemorative place name changes. Building on the recent work of law scholar Stephen Clowney, our intent is to discuss the opportunities and challenges of developing a policy of landscape fairness or responsibility that recognizes the power of place to transmit ideas about racial power across generations and the right of critics to challenge dominant historical narratives and encourage officials to actively contemplate landscape values they might otherwise neglect.

Universities as wounded places

To take the recent protests on university campuses seriously and place them in a necessary larger context requires drawing from recent work that explores the geography of racialized trauma and exclusion. The concept of wounded cities, developed by Till (2012), offers a productive way to analyze relationships between landscape and violence. Defining wounded cities as “densely settled locales that have been harmed and structured by particular histories of physical destruction, displacement, and individual and social trauma resulting from state-perpetrated violence” (Till 2012, 6), Till argued that cities are wounded and harmed over long periods of time (see also Nixon 2013; Springer 2016). Her

emphasis on the structural nature of this violence is well suited for framing the role of institutions, because of their longevity and social authority, in driving the racialization of the landscape. Thus, we contend that the concept of wounded cities can be extended more generally to include a wider array of geographies, including university campuses.

Our engagement with campuses as wounded places highlights the normalized violence that has structured (and continues to structure) what might at first glance appear to be an idyllic and apolitical landscape. To the contrary, campuses are wounded due to their connection to white supremacy (Wilder 2013; Bonds and Inwood 2016; Combs *et al.* 2016; Inwood and Bonds 2016). Characterizing the U.S. university as wounded might strike some readers as disturbing, but such a perspective denies that the college campus not only reflects, but emerged historically and geographically from racialized economic, political, and cultural institutional structures. Indeed, not only did many early university presidents and faculty members own slaves during the antebellum period, but a number of colleges (inside and outside the Southeast) used slave labor for the construction of their campuses and for work in their daily operations (Inwood and Martin 2008; Wilder 2013). Additionally, early universities were heavily invested in the purchase and sale of land to be worked with slave labor and turned for a profit to fund the school (Wilder 2013). It has been argued that the use of slave labor on college campuses was so influential that it determined the difference between financial success or failure for early colonial schools, suggesting that these institutions' reliance and dependence on the violence of enslavement extends well beyond the ending of the Civil War (Wilder 2013).

Importantly, universities also served as battlegrounds for the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1962, at the University of Mississippi, James Meredith's formal enrollment sparked a firestorm of riots and white mob violence in visceral reaction to the opening of the school to its first black student (Combs *et al.* 2016). Meredith's violation of the color line seemingly redefined the politics of racial belonging in the previously all-white Ole Miss campus, but the vitriol he encountered served as the foundation for reinforcing the resolve of white supremacists. President John F. Kennedy had to send federal troops to quell the violence. As recently as 2014, an Ole Miss student hung a noose around the statue of James Meredith on campus (Combs *et al.* 2016). This recent symbolic lynching of the James Meredith statue points to the role of universities as sites for contesting the memory of our racialized past and highlights the fact that universities remain open and unhealed wounds within the U.S. geography of race relations.

As a wounded place, universities have obviously seen and participated in specific, event-based violence and discrimination. Yet, the college campus as an institution is also complicit in carrying out less recognized, yet no less damaging structural violence that affects the physical and emotional welfare of people of color and access to spaces and resources. For example, admissions policies continue a tradition of giving preferential treatment and educational access to applicants whose parents also attended that university—sometimes called legacy admissions. Because white students are far more likely to have parents who attended college, legacy admissions act in many ways as affirmative action for white students (Lamb 1993; Massey and Mooney 2007). Furthermore, U.S. universities remain disproportionately white in terms of student and faculty rolls. Inequalities have been documented in the tenure process at predominantly white institutions and these professionals, along with students of color, document an institutional culture that does not fully recognize or proactively address the racialized histories that continue to frame campus and college-town life (Lee and Leonard 2001). As a result, we argue that far from being merely sites of symbolic forms of violence, wounded campuses reproduce structural inequalities and perpetuate geographies of white supremacy.

Recent campus building name controversies

Universities, like other sites of racial discrimination and violence, have been slow to come to grips with their legacies of white supremacy and the many conspicuous and subtle ways that the college campus has been marred historically and still today by racism and institutionalized exclusion. Our contention, and that of a growing number of activists, is that these wounds, due to a lack of care, have been left to fester and inflict psychosocial harm. These unhealed and unreconciled wounds are writ large through

the landscape and its infrastructure of monuments, memorials, and place names commemorating Confederate soldiers, Ku Klux Klan leaders, segregationists, and slave owners. As Wilder (2013) documented, these realities are found throughout the United States and not just predominantly in the southeastern states. Disturbingly, although the racist ideologies invoked by these historical figures have been officially discredited and challenged by many U.S. colleges, their continued memorial presence structures the everyday commemorative campus landscapes within which students, faculty, and the wider public interact. These landscape legacies of white supremacy are much more than relic or obsolete landscapes from a bygone era; rather, they are points of unresolved and unreconciled racial tension that actively limit the extent to which racial and ethnic minority groups engage with university campuses.

Campus memorials—including commemoratively named buildings—are not empty symbols. Inwood and Martin (2008) found that students of color perceived the University of Georgia campus as sometimes unwelcoming because the landscape concealed, rather than truly grappled with, the pain and struggle of desegregation. Even though the university had tried to commemorate the desegregation of the campus, it left out problematic understandings of the way that race had historically structured the creation of the university. As a result, we can see how whiteness continues to operate on campuses by creating seemingly progressive narratives that address race, but in ways that do not fully recognize the complexity of the history of white supremacy and cordon off the degree to which it might be challenged. Building from this insight we argue that it is important to recognize the way universities have handled controversies surrounding the renaming of places—ways that, despite sometimes good intentions, limit rather than expose the broader understanding of the fundamental role race plays in the university setting. In other words, although some of the strategies appear to be antiracism reforms, they nonetheless can still illustrate the limits to which colleges are willing to deal with their racialized wounds. In what follows, we explore place name controversies on select U.S. university campuses that have unfolded over the past decade to illustrate how universities have grappled with controversies arising from the toponymic commemoration of white supremacists. These illustrations are not intended to be exhaustive case studies, but instead provide insight into the varied obstacles confronting renaming activists and the arguably unsatisfying solutions offered by campus authorities in reforming and rewriting the campus landscape.

Our first place renaming controversy comes from Oklahoma State University (OSU), which debated in 2006–2007 whether or not to rename its Murray Hall, which commemorates an early governor of Oklahoma, “Alphalpha” Bill Murray. Known for anti-black and anti-Semitic views, Murray essentially wrote Jim Crow laws into the state’s constitution. Efforts by the Student Government Association to petition for the renaming of the building were met with hostility. One senior student in political science suggested the building be named for Clara Luper, noted civil rights activist who led some of the nation’s first sit-ins in Oklahoma and the United States (Reese 2003; O’Colly 2006). Although the Faculty Council supported her recommendation, one faculty member in the Department of History opposed the un-naming publicly. He and another faculty member engaged in a fierce open-forum debate, and the university ultimately chose to keep the Murray name and erect a panoramic display that narrates the life and legacy of the governor. This display is located in the basement outside the main auditorium of the building and prompts passersby to consider how to “confront complex legacies” (Figure 1) and “what is in a name?” (Figure 2). This effort at contextualization without renaming the building is one way that universities have dealt with the toponymic commemoration of a white supremacist on campus. Although the OSU approach is consistent with a growing strategy on campuses that argues for using racialized commemorations to teach present and future generations about the evils and injustices of the past, it is noteworthy that carrying out such education requires that contextualized interpretations of historical figures be given prominent locations that truly affect the way the public understands and possibly values a building’s namesake. The extent to which Murray Hall’s panoramic display accomplishes that in its location outside the building’s main auditorium but in its basement is up for debate.

The University of North Carolina (UNC) handled a similar controversy quite differently. Saunders Hall, the home of the Department of Geography, commemorated Colonel William Saunders, an 1854 graduate of UNC and a former North Carolina Secretary of State widely known for leading the

CONFRONTING COMPLEX LEGACIES

ALFALFA BILL, OSU, AND MURRAY HALL

"One who understands his mind and character can interpret Oklahoma politics."
—Historian Apple Debe on Oklahoma: Foundation and Future, 1967

Murray Hall was named for William Henry Murray, one of the most influential, contradictory, and controversial figures in Oklahoma history. Some historians call him an enigma: a person who defies easy characterization. It is an appropriate description.

Known as "Alfalfa Bill" for evading that comparing Oklahoma farmers his political career, shaped Oklahoma from the state ground mentioned through the three decades that followed. An electrical engineer of the Oklahoma Territory, he also played prominent role in tribal politics during the last hours of Indian Territory and later served as territorial governor. Murray Hall was also known for his role in the national Progressive movement, especially opposing the concentration of corporate wealth and power that accompanied the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Murray also was a racist and anti-semitic. Like many white Oklahomans during his lifetime, he believed African Americans should be confined to the land and denied the rights of civic and political life. Murray was a leader of the party of government that imposed Jim Crow laws and segregation in Oklahoma. In a time he supported statehood during the American and Mexican frontiers, he had to have proved over the law. Murray's hatred of Jews was expressed most clearly in his remaining opposition to a combination of radical anti-Semitism and a deteriorating mind. During his period, Murray authored several laws and policies that were as hateful as they were inane.

From 1934 to 1972, and again from 1975-1984, the building named in his name served as a center for the study of Oklahoma's history. At work began in 2007, to reconstruct the past, to preserve the building and its memory. The new building is a testament to the history of the state. What is the place of the building in the history of the state? What is the place of the building in the history of the state? Should it continue to carry his name? Should it be renamed and just? Should it be renamed to address those questions.

Credits
 Curator: Dr. Bill Steiner, OSU History Department
 Research Assistant: Crystal Anderson, OSU History PhD Student
 Exhibit Coordinator: Brett Vance, OSU History Department
 With thanks to the following:
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- ▲ William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray, mid-career, circa 1902-1903. Oklahoma gallery and exhibit from 1993 to 1998.
- ▼ William H. Murray, in 1914, with his family. OSU History Department, Exhibit 101.
- ▼ Murray Hall in 1912, as named Murray named Oklahoma ADM Collins. He is posed with his children, his wife, and his secretary, Adeline E. Collins. Photo by Philip Mason, Henry (Franklin) B. Chapman, Robert Cole, and Alice Dyer.

Figure 1. Oklahoma State University asks passersby to consider confronting complex legacies of retaining the Murray Hall name. Photo taken by Thomas Craig. Used with permission.

expansion of the Ku Klux Klan in the state of North Carolina. University officials named the building for Saunders in 1922, citing his status as a leader of the KKK as a major qualification for his commemoration. Resistance to the name surfaced on social media with the #KickOuttheKKK slogan and protesters stood outside the building with #BlackLivesMatter signs and those that said “This is what Saunders would do to me” while invoking the powerful symbolism of lynching by hanging nooses around their necks (Figure 3). One professor unofficially renamed the building with a sign over her door that said “Hurston Hall” to honor African-American writer, anthropologist, and activist Zora Neale Hurston, who unofficially attended UNC prior to integration. After a year of deliberation, in 2015 the UNC Board of Trustees voted to remove the Saunders moniker and rename the building Carolina Hall. Questions circled about whether Carolina Hall was a suitable surrogate name or stand-in for antiracism and why the university chose not to go with the appellation of Hurston Hall.

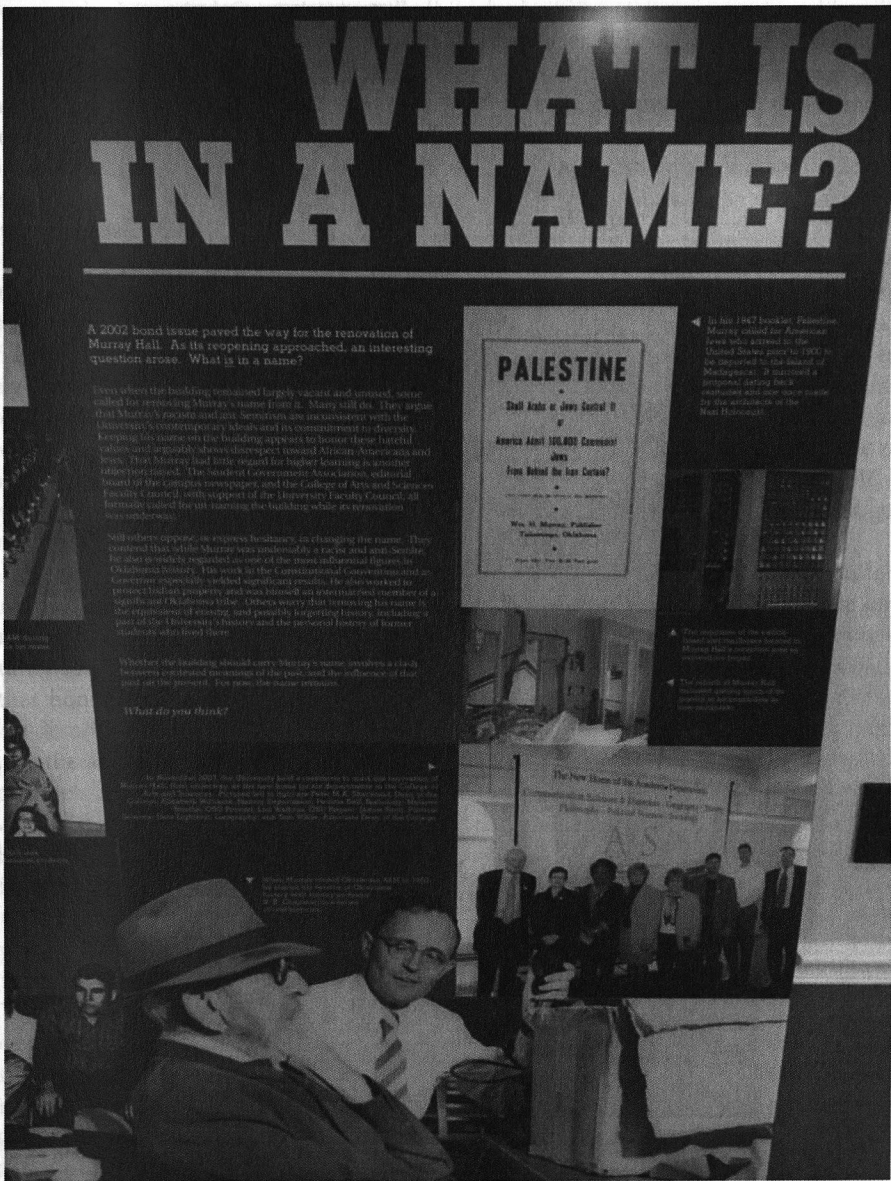


Figure 2. Murray Hall display asks passersby to consider the meaning of the commemorative place name. Photo taken by Thomas Craig. Used with permission.

The UNC case prompts this larger question: To what extent does the use of more generic names like Carolina Hall, which appear on the surface to be unifying, progressive campus decisions that take a “colorblind” approach to remembering the past, actually represent a step forward in coming to grips with the landscape legacies of discrimination and violence? Arguably, Carolina Hall signals an attempt to move on from valorizing the overt white supremacy of past generations without dealing with the structural wounds that supposedly race-neutral policies produce in the neoliberal university. Important to the goal of African Americans and other marginalized groups creating an oppositional politics of belonging is not simply removing symbols to white supremacy but also resolving the invisibility of people of color within the university’s social memory, suggesting that decommemoration alone is not enough but countercommemoration is also required (Figure 4). This is especially clear in UNC’s case given that students involved in the protest movement held up a banner bearing the words “Can you

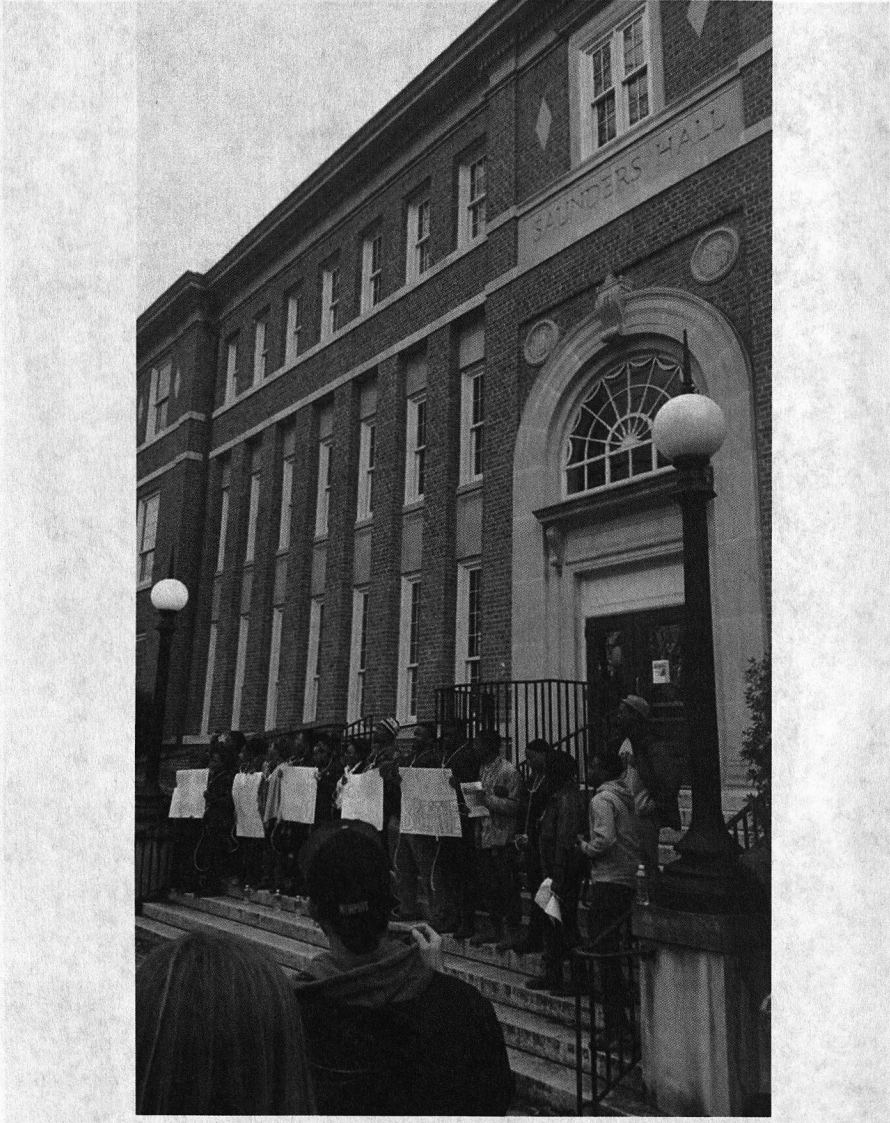


Figure 3. Students gather outside Saunders Hall in 2015 to demand the name be changed to Hurston Hall. Photo taken by Omololu Babatunde. Used with permission.

see us now?” (Figure 5). However, there will be few future chances for the Chapel Hill campus to engage in such landscape change because the UNC Board of Trustees soon after voted to ban changing building names at the university for the next sixteen years—another indication of the institution’s unwillingness to address the broader landscapes of inequality on campus.

Other place naming controversies must maneuver through layers of bureaucracy and legislation at different scales to be renamed. Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) recently petitioned the Tennessee Historical Commission to rename Forrest Hall—which commemorates Confederate general and Ku Klux Klan founder Nathan Bedford Forrest. After several months of deliberation, a task force of professors, students, politicians, and community members ultimately decided that Forrest’s name did not belong on campus, although that decision was not without heated opposition. The university requested that the Historical Commission rename the structure to the Army ROTC Building (because it is home to the Army ROTC Department), following UNC’s logic of selecting a colorblind name that would presumably skirt around additional controversy or public media attention. It remains to be seen

whether or not the Historical Commission will allow the building to be renamed, and it will be especially hard to justify given Tennessee's Heritage Preservation Act, which prohibits the renaming, removal, or relocating of any military monument or item honoring a military unit or person. The Southern Heritage News and Views (2013) website, self-described as dedicated to defending the honor of the Confederacy, celebrated the act as "one of the greatest documents in modern history for the protection and preservation of this state's and nation's military history and heritage." Such state-level legislation could prove a significant barrier to local activists and students seeking to rename places on university campus landscapes.

It is important to note that Southern land grant universities like OSU, UNC, and MTSU are not the only institutions dealing with place name controversies. Ivy League schools like Stanford, Yale, Princeton, and Georgetown have also been embroiled in commemorative place name debates. Stanford has two freshman dorms, a campus building, and a campus street named for Junípero Serra, a Catholic missionary who colonized California for Spain in the eighteenth century and is implicated in the conversion of Native Americans to Catholicism, the suppression of their culture, and ultimately subjecting indigenous people to disease and violence. The undergraduate student senate passed a resolution requesting the university rename all structures honoring Serra in early 2016, and like MTSU, decisions about whether or not and how to rename these elements of the memorial landscape must go through another round of bureaucracy and have yet to be resolved.

Yale University has been among those universities receiving the most national attention for its campus renaming controversy. As an elite East Coast Ivy League school, its commemorative legacies are more attractive to media coverage outlets because they represent in the U.S. imagination the backbone of the country's historical prowess and progress. The campus contains John C. Calhoun Hall, a residential hall that honors the seventh vice president of the United States, who not only owned slaves but notoriously described slavery as a "positive good" for U.S. society. The building received national news attention in the summer of 2016 when a campus cafeteria worker named Corey Menafee used his broom to punch a hole in a dining hall stained glass window that depicted slaves carrying bales of cotton. Menafee works in the building and is not connected to broader student-led efforts to rename the building, but grew tired of looking at the image day in and day out. Recently, freshman student activist Branson Rideaux dressed as a slave in shackles and stood outside the contested building on campus to protest the election of President Donald Trump with a sign around his neck reading "Property of John C. Calhoun and 56,682,202+ American voters" (Figure 4). Rideaux is quoted as saying that for him, the link between Calhoun and Trump is obvious: "[they both] run on messages of hate" (JETmag.com 2016).

In November 2016, Yale released a document outlining the procedure for administrators and trustees to consider building name change requests. The policy came in response to the growing tension on campus surrounding the Calhoun name. The report states, "There is a strong presumption *against* renaming a building on the basis of the values associated with its namesake. Such a renaming should be considered only in exceptional circumstances" (Yale University 2016, italics added). It goes on to outline principles for consideration that include the extent to which the legacy of the namesake is fundamentally at odds with the mission of the university, the extent to which the legacy was contested in the time and place in which the namesake lived, whether or not the university honored the namesake for reasons at odds with the mission of the university, and the role of the namesake in forming community at the university.

The burden of determining the degree to which the namesake was contested in the time and place at which the honoree lived is particularly odd and seems to favor crystallizing the names of white supremacists in place, because presumably support for the institution of chattel slavery cannot be judged against modern conceptions of morality. To request a building be renamed, an application must be submitted that states the grounds on which the name should be changed and specifies how the principles on renaming require that the name be changed. The report is to be reviewed by the university president, following consultation with cabinet members, who will decide whether or not to appoint an advisor who has relevant knowledge and expertise about the subject to advise the president on the matter.



Figure 4. A banner and sidewalk chalk represent the informal renaming of Saunders Hall to Hurston Hall. Photo taken by Omololu Babatunde. Used with permission.

The Calhoun controversy at Yale highlights several things. The first is the connections between campus place naming controversies and wider social tensions including the current political climate, the recent presidential election, and controversies surrounding other commemorations of white supremacist people and institutions. The second is the degree to which commemorative place naming is recognized as a social and political act that actively produces knowledge about the past, rather than passively recording objective facts and producing authentic historical narratives. Yale's report says that there is a strong presumption against renaming a building on the basis of values associated with a namesake. Does this not ignore the fact that commemorative place names have always selectively communicated (and silenced) sets of values through the memorial landscape? Finally, it highlights the degree to which place naming practices produce socially fair and just memorial landscapes. Who has access to the place naming process and to what extent do other universities include or exclude students from that process?

The Yale report and resulting policy arguably limit the likelihood of campus place name change, but the procedures put in place nonetheless informed the university's decision about Calhoun Hall. Under the growing pressure of protests, Yale's president and governing board announced in February 2017 that the contested residential hall would be renamed, citing recommendations from an advisory committee created as a result of the new policy. Yale also announced that Calhoun's name would be replaced by noted female computer scientist, Navy rear admiral, and 1930s alumna Grace Murray Hopper. The decommemoration of Calhoun and the elevation of Hopper was an important moment of memory work, particularly when one considers the scarcity of places across the United States named for women. Yet, what appears to be a progressive reform of the campus landscape does not fully recover a black sense of place. Critics questioned why a moniker honoring an African American

alumnus would not identify the renamed hall. Moreover, even as Yale's president announced the defrocking of the defender of slavery, he reaffirmed his conservative views about renaming buildings and repeated the common refrain of not wishing to erase history ("Yale's smart choice" 2017). This suggests to us that the current Yale policy cordons off the degree to which white supremacy could be challenged on and through the toponymic landscape.

Perhaps a brighter example of the ways that universities have attempted to deal with their legacies of white supremacy and make a place for African American memory is the case of Georgetown University (GU). In the fall of 2015, GU convened the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation to explore the university's role in the institution of slavery, to engage the community in dialogue, and to outline a set of recommendations on how to guide future efforts, according to the working group's website (Working Group 2016). In September 2016, the group released a report detailing those next steps for the university. In the report's section titled "Recommendations to the President," the first recommendation is to permanently rename two buildings on campus. These two buildings, once named McSherry and Mulledy Halls, formerly commemorated two university presidents who organized the sale of Jesuit-owned slaves to help pay off campus debt in the 1830s. Although the two buildings were renamed Remembrance and Freedom Halls, respectively, in 2015, the report suggests that these names are inadequate to sufficiently remember the ties between the university and the institution of slavery.

Instead, the working group's report suggests the buildings be named Isaac Hall and Anne Marie Becraft Hall to honor two people of color. Isaac Hall would honor the first enslaved person named in the articles of agreement between Mulledy and the other men to whom he agreed to sell slaves. Isaac's full name is not known. Anne Marie Becraft is described in the report as "a woman of color, a trailblazing educator, a person with deep family roots in the neighborhood of Georgetown, and a Catholic religious sister in the nineteenth century" (Working Group 2016, 36). Each of these suggestions would move beyond the current colorblind renaming practices on the campus (Freedom Hall, Remembrance Hall) and move toward actively remembering the life of an enslaved person and a local influential woman of color. This is a bold recommendation considering UNC's Carolina Hall and MTSU's Army ROTC Building selections as surrogate names and memorials, which do not actively voice narratives that remember people of color and perpetuate a forgetting of the African American experience, even if the replacement is perceived by authorities as conflict-averse. It remains to be seen whether or not Georgetown's president will accept these recommendations from the working group.

Renaming as memory work

A perspective that takes racialized wounds seriously recognizes that the politics of memory are important for understanding any place that has experienced "difficult histories of state-perpetrated violence" (Till 2012, 7). The case of GU and the other university building name controversies illustrates the difficult work required to adequately remember the legacies of white supremacy that have so deeply wounded universities. The politics of remembering and forgetting are hotly contested on campus landscapes across the nation, whether they are public land grant schools in the southeastern United States or elite private schools on the coasts. The broad effort to bring recognition and visibility to silenced historical narratives and memories is what Till (2012) called "memory work." Memory work, among other things, creates new forms of public memory, is committed to building social capacity, and opening up opportunities for marginalized people to lay claim to a sense of belonging on the memorial landscape.

The concept of memory work is an apt metaphor for reminding us that how we remember and come to terms with traumatic pasts is not a passive, inevitable process, but one that decidedly requires certain measures of physical, intellectual, emotional, and political labor. Civil rights struggles in general, whether they revolve around public commemoration or not, can be conceptualized as involving a reworking of the spatial and social patterns of inequality (Alderman and Inwood 2016). The work of (re) naming places, in particular, has not traditionally been viewed as being part of the active practices of social (in)justice. However, recent scholarship in critical memory and naming studies suggest otherwise—that the power to name and remember gains one access to the power to define a sense of place

(or out of place), not only for oneself but for others who internalize, use, and draw identity from these memorialized place names (Azaryahu 2011; Alderman and Inwood 2013).

We argue that naming and renaming buildings on university campuses offer the opportunity to engage in a form of memory work. Universities that construct new buildings can take the opportunity to name them after their own Isaacs and Anne Marie Becrafts. Campuses considering renaming buildings can carefully select surrogate names that are not benignly colorblind but instead actively remember and honor the lives of people of color. Ultimately, for renaming to engage with the important and consequential work of memory, changing the name is just a start (Inwood and Alderman 2016). The selection of a surrogate name to replace the old one is important in the process of grappling with universities' legacies of white supremacy, and in winning approval for the use of one surrogate name over another (or to even have a surrogate for the African American experience). This entire process requires creative political practices of activists and other reformists. This resistant memory work, although dependent on protest tactics and applying pressure within the institutional setting of the university, will ultimately require the establishment of more general policies to guide campus landscape memorial change and renaming decisions.

Without some administrative guidance and the formal writing of memory work into university policy, the movement to reclaim the university as a wounded place and to transform it into a more just landscape of racial identity and belonging will be left to the particularities of individual campus disputes or, in the case of UNC and Yale, the preemptive creation of campus policy that clearly confines the kind of necessarily radical memory work that can even be proposed to authorities, not to mention approved. As mentioned earlier, an imperative exists not only to study and to critique the renaming of components of the infrastructure (e.g., buildings, street names, or other facilities) on a particular U.S. college campus, but also to assist our university colleagues through an applied-policy perspective on the pursuit of this important memory work of place renaming. In doing so, we build on the work of Clowney (2013), who developed a landscape impact assessment (LIA) to make the renaming process more equitable and outline steps toward creating a fairer and more socially just campus memorial landscape. In the following section, we discuss Clowney's vision of a policy of landscape fairness and identify the opportunities and challenges that accompany it. It is impossible to formulate a flawless policy, but Clowney provided potentially important guidance in reorienting how decision makers and authorities approach landscapes as sets of values and meanings and the responsibility that is owed to the public in paying attention to the historical needs and wounds of marginalized people of color.



Figure 5. Students hold up a banner that reads “Can you see us now?” in an effort to render visible the forgotten and long-silenced histories of people of color on the University of North Carolina campus. Photo taken by Omololu Babatunde. Used with permission.

Toward a policy of landscape fairness

Yale's recent renaming policy asserts that (re) naming places based on values creates a strong a priori presumption against changing the name. Given this context, what would a policy of landscape fairness look like? Clowney (2013) recognized the powerful capacity of the landscape to "uncritically smuggle" ideas about race and racial hierarchy into "the ether of everyday existence" (9). He offered a "comprehensive procedural strategy to integrate consideration of the built environment into the fiber of municipal decision making," terming it the LIA (Clowney 2013, 44). The purpose of an LIA is to stop the production of discriminatory public spaces by encouraging local governments to consider the racial ramifications of actions that alter or affect the landscape. It would also require decision makers to consider the impact that the built environment has on the meanings communicated through the landscape, provide a written assessment of those meanings to the public for consumption and review, and relay a report outlining public feedback about the features of the built environment back to decision makers.

Clowney (2013) argued that such a report would empower African American communities to have their narratives heard, push local officials to consider race-conscious information in an era of color-blindness when making decisions about landscape design and change, and mitigate the psychological harm that discriminatory public spaces impose on African Americans and their sense of belonging. Ultimately, an LIA is an attempt to implement a formal legal procedure that works toward fairness in landscape representation. Till (2012) suggested that the right to represent that past is intricately tied to the process of democracy and that "attending to, caring for, and being cared for by place and those that inhabit place are significant ethical and political practices that work to constitute more democratic" spaces (5).

There are many challenges associated with dismantling the robust political machinery that stands in the way of counter memory work and that might interfere with the implementation of an LIA. First, there is the question of how an LIA might apply to already existing discriminatory or under- or misrepresented public spaces. In other words, how could adopting an LIA apply to existing naming controversies? Clowney (2013) suggested that an LIA would need to implement a sunset clause to address already existing naming controversies. A sunset clause would grandfather in existing place names and subject each of them to the scrutiny of an LIA. Local governments and universities alike might find that subjecting every existing structure on a campus, for example, to such a policy would be an unwise or wasteful use of time and resources, and elect instead to only subject those names that have caused controversy to undergo the process of approval by an LIA. Then what about place names that go largely unchallenged that might still in fact honor people whose legacies could be at odds with the university's stated values? The question of how to apply an LIA to existing place names might need to be explicitly considered.

Additionally, there is the challenge of engaging and moving beyond the discourse of so-called political correctness, which is invoked by both conservatives and liberals in unhelpful ways that reduce struggles over symbols, names, and memory to simply a matter of semantics rather than the very real patterns of social (in)equality that underlie patterns of cultural representation. There will inevitably be university presidents and other administrators who argue that the implementation of an LIA is a project in political correctness with no real added value to the campus environment. It is here that we would point to the role academic geographers can play in publicly engaging if not challenging the discourse of political correctness. Academic geographers can draw on critical place name studies to highlight the socially constructed nature of the memorial landscape to argue that place names have never been neutral markers of location that objectively recorded history. Instead, they have always been enmeshed with relations of political power and have been actively creating our selective, collective memories. Indeed, what is dismissed administratively as a project in political correctness is more effectively conceptualized as a matter of social and political justice from the standpoint of people of color like Corey Menafee who have lived and worked daily under the burden of memorialized reminders of white supremacy. Academic geographers can help combat the discourse of political correctness through partnering with university administrators as they work to implement an LIA and engage the public with conversations about how and why commemorative place names matter. Faculty members

and students alike can thus play a central role in cultivating a responsible geography of memory (Till and Kuusisto-Arponen 2015) on their own campuses.

Another challenge related to the discourse of political correctness is the notion that taking down place names that commemorate white supremacists is somehow erasing history. This anxiety over erasing the past is selective and misguided for several reasons. As we argued earlier, place names do not and never have existed in a vacuum; rather they serve as sites of struggles over the right to access and belong in public space and to selectively narrate the past. Additionally, place names are not objective historical imprints on a *tabula rasa* that accurately or objectively record—much less interpret—the past. A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) found that about a third of the U.S. schools that bear the names of Confederate soldiers and generals were constructed and named between 1950 and 1970, suggesting an effort to resist the civil rights movement and valorize the lost cause historical myth, rather than to objectively record or contextualize the past. Demonstrating to campus decision makers that place names are enmeshed in these wider networks of social and racial power and not part of an objective historical narrative is key to convincing them to remove the names of white supremacists and for engaging the difficult work of memory.

Although the challenges to implementing an LIA might seem steep, there are also many opportunities that such a policy can create. These opportunities include but are not limited to (1) halting the production of discriminatory campus space; (2) requiring university administrators to consider or at least take responsibility for the meanings (re)produced in and through the landscape and its named features; (3) providing written assessment of student, faculty, and public feedback and creating points of intervention in a naming process that typically happens behind closed doors; (4) empowering African American students, faculty, and communities to have their narratives heard, both throughout the (re) naming process and ultimately on and through the landscape itself; (5) producing race-conscious information in the age of colorblindness for decision makers to consider; and (6) mitigating the psychological harm or violence that discriminatory public spaces impose on African American students, faculty, and members of the community.

The core of an LIA lies in the production of a draft impact assessment that “analyzes how a proposed project would affect the meaning of the landscape” (Clowney 2013, 45). Because this document is the “marrow” of an LIA, it is important that it is given thoughtful compliance (Clowney 2013, 45). The impact assessment would “compel governments to describe the landscape at issue, chronicle its history, clarify what the space means to the people who [inhabit it], and explain whether the proposed construction efforts would negatively impact minority populations or ingrain ideas about racial power” (Clowney 2013, 45–46). The LIA would also compel a university administration to inform campus citizens of reasonable alternatives to any proposal that is found to negatively affect minority communities. At this stage the LIA would also need to include nonarbitrary reasons the administration used to move forward with or reject the proposed construction. Finally, a period of public review and comment of the proposal would inform campus citizens about the construction and elicit their views about moving forward with it. This would provide an opportunity for landscape interventions by students, faculty, concerned citizens, or activists who often have little say in the landscape design process, especially naming places. After a period of public hearing, the findings should be conveyed to the appropriate landscape decision makers—which must include representatives of minority groups—and a final document produced that responds in detail to each of the public’s concerns much in the same way that environmental regulatory compliance dictates. This is perhaps the most critical LIA component because it would force officials to grapple with criticisms and considerations they might have otherwise overlooked. Clowney (2013) argued that such a procedure works because it empowers minority and other marginalized communities to have their voices heard in an official capacity, changes government behavior by forcing better informed decisions, and ultimately undoes the violence of memory.

We argue that an LIA would also engage with the geospatial work of African American resistance (Alderman and Inwood 2016) and create black geographies (McKittrick and Woods 2007; Bledsoe, Eaves, and Williams 2017), which places emphasis on using places to recover the history of the African American struggle for equality and self-determination. It has the potential to transform landscapes characterized by dispossession through dominant narrations of social memory into places of inclusion

where African Americans in particular can lay claim to a sense of belonging and citizenship, also grounding their stories within official local and campus commemorative accounts. African American citizens who suggest alternative place names (Clara Luper at OSU, Zora Neale Hurston at UNC) during the period of public hearing will have a renewed opportunity to create geographies of race and memory by highlighting by name the ways in which African-American communities and historical figures creatively resisted and survived systemic oppression and contributed to the campus's sense(s) of place. Ultimately an LIA provides an opportunity to actively resist the taken-for-granted social and spatial order and create new spaces—black geographies—on campus.

Conclusion


Sadly, the analysis of the university as a site of racialization is not commonplace within the field of applied geography, although a number of colleagues use their campuses as laboratories for teaching environmental and social issues (Hudak 2003; Bardekjian, Classens, and Sandberg 2012; Hansen, 2017) and other scholars examine the range of planning issues that face colleges in the areas of transportation, sustainability, and housing (Balsas 2003; Jensen and Winters 2012; Nejati and Nejati 2013; Seitz *et al.* 2014). Geographers would not think twice about traveling halfway around the world to study inequalities and struggles in another country or continent, but somehow the world right outside the window of our faculty and student offices goes underanalyzed. In spite of this neglect, the college campus as a social institutional landscape has shaped and continues to shape the sense of belonging and dignity of generations of students, including those coming from African American families traditionally denied access to these places of higher learning and social opportunity. Recent protests by students of color and white allies over the valorization of racist historical figures through the design and naming of the campus built environment offer an opportunity for critical cultural geographers of race and memory not only to study these issues, but also perhaps make “landscape interventions” and inform the rewriting of public spaces and places in ways that are sensitive to the historical and contemporary experiences of traditionally marginalized social actors and groups. It is within this intellectual and political context that we have written this article and it is our hope that geographers will increase their willingness to critically analyze their campus landscapes in terms of social justice, following the excellent examples of Cravey and Petit (2012) and Barnd (2016).

This article suggests that universities are wounded places in need of memory work to mend the wounds of racial violence. It also offers an applied policy perspective on how universities as institutions can work toward creating a campus landscape that is fair and socially just. In recognition of the powerful role institutions play in the racialization of the landscape (Frazier, Henry, and Tettey-Fio 2016), our article highlights some of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing an LIA, which would require university administrators to consciously consider the impacts of the built environment on its inhabitants. An LIA might disrupt the neoliberal emphasis on efficiency and productivity in administrative decision making, but also stands to help mitigate the psychological trauma imposed on African American students, faculty, and staff who live and work on campuses that under- or misrepresent and distort African American historical narratives while championing white supremacist ones. Although we have focused here on applying an LIA to work to resolve the invisibility on campus of African Americans in particular, further research on place naming and renaming controversies should consider how other axes of identity like ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are affected by the struggle over the toponymic landscape. Ultimately, we argue that universities should consider developing an LIA when faced with place naming controversies and as a matter of practicing fairness in the work to recover the campus landscape from its role in valorizing white supremacy.

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