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Reparations!

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What does it mean to educate architects for social, political, and economic transformation? Today, this is a question broached by almost every domain of architectural production. In some ways this line of inquiry defines the relationship of modernity and architectural practice and education, established since the arrival of Europeans in the Americas and broadly intensifying after World War II. The field has slowly and reluctantly shifted from its aversion to acknowledging race and its mutually entangled legacies of colonialism and plantation slavery. In this slow, tedious, and erratic process, questions about environmental, climate, and social justice begin to shape new pedagogy and research goals. As the field expands, discussions about reparations loom on the horizon.

In order to understand the scope of reparations, this issue takes a closer look at the legacy of architecture as a tool at the service of development, progress, futurity, history, and the many other “universalizing” characteristics usually attributed to modernity. Grouped in three segments that respond to Futurisms and Other Systems; Bad Bodies, Bad Lands; and Riotous Repertoire, texts, images, and hues put in display the multiplicity of paths, visions, questions, and challenges that simultaneously provoke and are provoked by the mere thought and urgency of reparations. The footprint of the delirium that is Blackness and race produced by modernity

and colonialism—at some point interchangeable and today still linked—is architectural by default.¹ This architecture is not defined by imaginary disciplinary boundaries or professionalized credentials. Instead, it manifests in the material practices of legal repression and zoning, the collusion of capitalism, asymmetrical warfare and mass imprisonment, the violent imposition of predatory austerity policies produced by colonial debt, the convergence of biological and economic systems of exclusion and manipulation and, after all, the rule of necropolitics.² The extent to which the architectural field avoids acknowledging this is a willful choice and one that has repercussions on education and practice.

As evidenced in the conversation with Rasheedah Phillips of Black Quantum Futurism, the repressive regimes of the plantation’s legacy operate simultaneously in many fields. To think seriously about reparations is to tackle a quantum field of architectural, historical, legal, poetic, economic, activist, political, revolutionary, and artistic questions. If justice requires a collective ethical or governing framework, its actualization requires modes of law, policy, and adjudication. Under the current system, justice is largely mediated through contracts (Rousseau’s social contract included) and processes. If architecture aspires to justice, however, it certainly cannot count on conventional architectural processes and contracts to get there.³

This issue of the *Journal of Architectural Education* acknowledges

that not only do we need to summon multiple epistemologies to think about reparations, but that the footprint of modernity makes necessary a transcalar, global narrative and interlocking approach (to borrow a term coined by the Combahee River Collective).⁴ Because of how pervasive, multifaceted, and insidious are the damages inflicted by colonialism and white supremacy, discussions about reparations have to deal with two conditions simultaneously. On the one hand, they are projective or even futurist, as they think about time through reparative possibilities. On the other hand, they are wearisome or even cautionary, because as history has shown, to demand or even to think aloud about reparations (and challenge white supremacy) is to expect the force of potential backlash.

Some of this backlash is documented in the white supremacist insurgency that took place in Washington, D.C. on January 6, 2021, as photographed by Joseph Rushmore, and in the photos discussed by Dream The Combine as they reflect on life-altering memories about Minneapolis during and after the uprisings that followed the public lynching of George Floyd at the hands of the police.⁵ Included in this issue as visual reflections, these images serve as a reminder that white supremacy is always a looming threat to spaces of social justice and antiracist practice.

While the subject of this issue is clear, the fresh memories of these events and the many accounts of the

efforts to address the ubiquitous and ongoing legacy of white supremacy in the built and destroyed environment turned many of the conversations into a critique of reparations, especially as repair or restoration or compensation. Towards the end of this process, we started to ask ourselves more and more, should the goal be to repair what is here? Or do we need something else? To the extent reparations point toward the need for an extensively reimaged world, reparations require different forms of pedagogy.

Context

Editorial projects like this don't happen in a void and they take place in contexts that are oftentimes simultaneously ripe for discussion and antithetical to their intentions. We're editing this issue a couple of years after the Black Lives Matter uprisings of 2020 and the many calls for institutional change and social and ecological justice that followed. But if we're to learn something from the 1960s (the obvious reference year for 2020), collective demands for social justice that sought out structural and systemic changes in the architectural, legal, and economic spheres took place as mass incarceration (US), apartheid (South Africa), and the White Australia Policy were consolidated as part of the legal system across three different continents, making white supremacy officially a planetary law.⁶

Have architecture, the legal system, and the economy stopped floating in the toxic fluid of colonialism and white supremacy? If so, since when? While the topic of reparations has circulated broadly in political discourse for the past decade with the work of activists and scholars like Angela Y. Davis and Ta-Nehisi Coates, architectural media and education have generally ignored reparations and the imaginaries they entail.⁷ There are a number of conversations outside of architecture about reparations, many of which directly address the built environment, urbanism, planetary climate

crisis, postcolonialism, art history, and aesthetics. Here we are thinking from Ta-Nehisi Coates to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *Race for Profit* and Jesse McCarthy's cultural essay collection *Who Will Pay Reparations for My Soul?*⁸ We are looking at California's Reparations Task Force and hearing Pakistan's call for climate reparations at COP27 in Cairo. We are also reading Black Studies, broadly, from Dorothy Roberts to Saidiya Hartman and Denise Ferreira da Silva.⁹ "We may be in disarray and disagreement about what to do about it, but at least Black studies takes as a premise that our society is in a terminal emergency."¹⁰

Reparations! Where Are Reparations?

What are the processes of reparation? What are the outcomes? What matter gets repaired or undone or redone or replaced in the midst of reparations? Do reparations require utopia, or just the end of racial capitalism?¹¹ Who will design the reparations, what skills will they need, and what habits will they need to abandon? Is there space for joy, liberation, empowerment, solidarity, and care in the process of reparation? How do we measure reparations? What is the footprint of the rupture, of the damage done? Are reparations just a step towards abolition of the current system and the construction of other worlds? What role does architecture play in this process? What other forms of thinking and making need to convene in order to make the change happen?

As many of the contributions and conversations address, in order to begin to answer some of these questions, this issue considers reparations beyond conventional disciplinary architectural boundaries. While it may not come as a surprise that architecture is identified repeatedly in its complicity with the regimes that make reparations necessary, some of the answers to these questions go as far as demanding the undoing of architecture as a discipline.

When we asked in the editorial call, "*What if reparations do not require inventing processes of wealth transfer from scratch but rather redirecting flows that are already here?*," it helped us frame discussions about where those transfers may currently be redirected. Geographer Jovan Lewis shares the intersection between his research and public agency as a member of California's council on reparations. Meanwhile, a conversation with Sean Connelly on Hawai'i and Juan Carlos Quiñones' online review of Bad Bunny's *reggaetón* video "El Apagón" ("The Blackout") that contains the documentary of investigative journalism "Aquí Vive Gente" ("People Live Here") address ongoing colonial struggles in the occupied Pacific archipelago and in Puerto Rico.¹² While almost half a world apart, these two archipelagos share very similar histories: both occupied by US forces in 1898, and today still affected by the presence of military occupation and waste, the tourism-industrial complex, as well as neoliberal experiments of real estate, infrastructure, and utilities.

Unlike many fleeting and fashionable architectural topics, to deal with reparations is to engage with mounting urgency and constant planetary awareness. In the period that elapsed from outlining the editorial call to the writing of this introduction, the ongoing effects of colonialism have been manifested in the floods in Pakistan, the water crisis in Jackson, Mississippi, the further occupation of Palestine, the oceanic threat to Fiji, the mounting deaths of environmental activists around the world, colonial debt and continuous blackouts in Puerto Rico, another imperial takeover in Haiti, as well as the assaults on reproductive rights and voting rights, both of which particularly affect Black women and other historically racialized, marginalized, and disenfranchised peoples.

Many of these issues highlight the importance that Black feminism plays in discussions about reparative justice. In this framework, Black feminist critiques and epistemologies

have historically provided the groundwork for analysis by means of identifying interlocking oppressions and imagining, as attested by the many radical imaginaries rendered by Afrofuturist practices.

A radical practice of imagining, Black Quantum Futurism introduced us to temporal reparations and the significance of collective housing as both an output and input into a frequency of ongoing time for reparations. In order to understand the extent to which time, as we know it, required coordination and decision making, we must bring up the archive that Black Quantum Futurism generated for their Time Zone Protocols.¹³ Black Quantum Futurism's project researches and archives the production of standard time. The archive documents how colonial powers constructed the relationship of Greenwich Median Time to global space. With that archive as a reference, the project speculates various forms of temporal reparations.

A conversation with Kecanga-Yamahtta Taylor addresses the ghetto, or urban segregated Black space created in the twentieth century, as a form of internal colony. Taylor's notion of predatory inclusion shifts the focus from the usual lists of exclusion—such as redlining that excluded Black neighborhoods from financing, or suburbs that excluded Black and Brown residents. Predatory inclusion accounts for the means by which the housing market generates profit from segregation. Twentieth century architecture history focuses on urban towers and suburban white flight. What analysis can we bring to the urban residential building stock that remained? Taylor's analysis charges the role of architecture in twentieth century wealth extraction. How are notions of architectural character and type entangled in patterns of resource extraction? How do we consider this aspect of urban built form and teach the dynamics of urban space as one of an internal colony?

By reflecting on some of her recent works that seek to question, confront, and upend the legacy of the settler-colonial state, history, and architecture, Mabel O. Wilson questions if it's worth repairing the destructive legacy of capitalism and Western modernity. The destructive legacy includes their epistemologies, institutions, and ways of subjugating, enslaving, oppressing, and erasing, first, Black and Indigenous life and eventually, threatening life across the planet. Poetry as a critical medium and as a device to generate other ways is highlighted by both Wilson and Tina Campt, who discusses Black feminist poethics, situating the intellectual labor of Black women in relation to the aesthetic and imaginative work of reparations.¹⁴

Operating across different geographies, territories, historical narratives, temporalities, material realities, and speculative scenarios, "Reparations!" aims to be simultaneously a tool to think about architecture's footprint in a world of continuous crises and exacerbated precarity, and a field guide to question, critique, and imagine emancipatory futures.

Contributions interrogate displacement and erasure—as in the historical (mis)treatment of Muslim cemeteries in the US (see Samiha Meem's "Bad Bodies"), and describe ongoing struggles for emancipation by Black Indigenous, Black, and Indigenous peoples, as narrated by Thabisile Griffin in "Lessons from the Black Indigenous Atlantic." These stories and many others contribute to this issue's cautionary consciousness, while reflections on historical, preservation-focused, and studio pedagogy practices render potential frameworks to look at and think about buildings, infrastructures, narratives, subjectivities, sites, and other case studies of our next steps toward reparations.

The issue does not address many of the contemporary spatial topics that call for reparations today—from climate reparations for Pakistan to decolonization of debt

and infrastructure in Puerto Rico to undoing mass incarceration throughout the United States. Nor does it address various forms of resource extraction or regional infrastructure that might be analyzed through the perspective of reparations—from unsafe drinking water in Jackson, Mississippi to the corporate plunder of groundwater aquifers from Mexico City to Michigan.

Rather than traversing a geography of potential sites of reparation, this issue reflects and lingers. Interviews ruminate about intersections of housing and fiction, aesthetics and refusal. Articles linger on studio techniques from the margins and practices of repair and redress. There are beautiful images of violence and emptiness. We hope that you notice the gaps between these contributions, as much as the richness within them. Repair is not enough, but the techniques of repair are here and significant. Our conversations call for science fiction, but the terms of publication—not only of this journal, but the discipline—call for other modes of scholarship.

Saidiya Hartman recently said in an interview about her book, *Scenes of Subjection* (1997),

Abolition requires uprooting the order of value and overturning the vertical order of life that created the system. A more far-reaching vision of abolition is imperative.¹⁵

As a whole this issue starts to invite speculations between abolition and reparations. Do reparations empower society toward the promise of abolition? Or would an abolitionist society enact the diverse reparations that the past requires? Yes, both.

Author Biographies

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Publishers, 2020), and the upcoming book *Universal Principles of Architecture* (Rockport Publishers, 2023).

Notes

- 1 The concept of the “vertiginous assembly” and the delirium that is Blackness and race is borrowed from Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
- 2 For colonial debt in the context of Puerto Rico, see Rocío Zambrana, *Colonial Debts The Case of Puerto Rico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021). While Achille Mbembe identifies “slavery as one of the first fields for the implementation of biopolitics,” Sayak Valencia argues “Necropolitics desecralizes biopolitics and commodifies the processes of dying. If biopolitics is understood as the art of managing people’s lives, capitalist demands have made it so that living and all of the processes associated with it are converted into commodities, which includes what we understand as necropower, since this represents the management of the final and most radical processes of living: death itself.” Sayak Valencia, *Gore Capitalism* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2018). For more on necropolitics see Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
- 3 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract; or, Principles of Political Right* (1762).
- 4 See Kecanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combabebe River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).
- 5 Marcus P. Nevius, “The Legacy of Racial Hatred in the January 6 Insurrection,” JSTOR Daily, February 24, 2021, <https://daily.jstor.org/the-legacy-of-racial-hatred-in-the-january-6-insurrection/>.
- 6 As many abolitionist scholars and activists have highlighted, there’s a direct relationship between slavery and forced labor of prisoners in the US context. This condition is articulated in the Thirteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, as it outlaws slavery with the exception of prisoners: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” Constitution of the United States: Thirteenth Amendment, Constitution Annotated, <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-13/>. James Kilgore in conversation with Ruth Wilson Gilmore explains “Prisons such as Angola in Louisiana and Parchman Farm in Mississippi cruelly imitate the conditions of slavery, replete with a majority Black agricultural workforce being supervised by armed White men on horseback. They generally grow crops for consumption by government entities, including prisons.” Ruth Wilson Gilmore and James Kilgore, “Some Reflections on Prison Labor,” *The Brooklyn Rail*, June 2019, <https://brooklynrail.org/2019/06/field-notes/Some-Reflections-on-Prison-Labor>.

- 7 See Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.
- 8 Kecanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Jesse McCarthy, *Who Will Pay Reparations for My Soul?: Essays* (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2021).
- 9 By centering on the lives of subjugated Black women, the work of Denise Ferreira da Silva and Saidiya Hartman offers critical ways to challenge ideas about subjectivity in relationship to bondage, race, gender, coloniality, and debt. These concepts become central when engaging with ideas about reparations. See Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Unpayable Debt* (London: Sternberg Press, 2022) and *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007).
- 10 McCarthy, *Who Will Pay Reparations*.
- 11 In her work as a prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore explains how all capitalism is, by its very nature and mechanisms, racial capitalism. See Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition,” live streamed session from the Socialism 2022 conference, Chicago, September 3, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyBEf8VPfuY&ab_channel=HaymarketBooks. See also Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition* (New York, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2023).
- 12 Bad Bunny’s “El Apagón” music video transitions to the documentary “Aqui Vive Gente,” produced by independent investigative journalist Bianca Graulau. In 2020 we had discussed the role of Bad Bunny in a postcolonial imagination in the context of loudreading in Puerto Rico. See Cruz Garcia and Nathalie Frankowski, “Loudreading in Post-colonial Landscapes (to the beat of Reggaeton),” *Avery Review* 48 (June 2020), <http://averyreview.com/issues/48/loudreading>.
- 13 See <https://timezoneprotocols.space/>
- 14 Denise Ferreira da Silva explains how the “Feminist Poethics of Blackness” include “the outline of a description of existence without the tools of universal reason, and the narratives of science and history that sustain the transparent trajectory of the subjects of universal reason and of its grip on our political imagination.” As such, these Feminist Poethics of Blackness operate as a form of critique of the project of modernity of which architecture (in its Eurocentric etymology and epistemology) has been a historical instrument. Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Toward a Black Feminist Poethics,” *The Black Scholar*, 44:2 (2014): 81–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2014.11413690>.
- 15 Elias Rodriques, “How Saidiya Hartman Changed the Study of Black Life,” *The Nation*, November 3, 2022, <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/saidiya-hartman-interview/>.