

INTRODUCTION

At the celebration of the bicentennial of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on October 12th, 1993, CBS news anchor Charles Kuralt delivered an address to the crowd of state dignitaries and alumni gathered in Kenan Memorial Stadium. Speaking for all “Tar Heels born and Tar Heels bred” on the anniversary of the founding of the nation’s first public university, Kuralt asked the audience to consider “what is it that binds us to this place as no other?” Describing some of the most enduring and beautiful images of the campus, Kuralt explained that “it is not the well or the bell or the stone walls. Or the crisp October nights or the memory of dogwoods blooming,” but instead that “our love for this place is based on the fact that it is, as it was meant to be, the University of the people.”³⁰ The epithet “the University of the people” has since been utilized by the institution to assert its commitment to operate on behalf of the public good for all citizens of North Carolina, perpetuating a widely-held view of the University as a public institution directed by a shared civic ethos. For many of the University’s alumni and the state’s citizens, the phrase “the University of the people” evokes the campus’s verdant beauty and liberal values, matched in spirit by the institution’s devotion to pursue *lux et libertas*—light and liberty—across the state and beyond.

Donelle Boose, a former racial justice organizer on the campus, saw the institution in a different way. “This beautiful place is built on some very ugly things,” she said. “What do I do

³⁰ Charles Kuralt’s speech at University Day, 12 October 1993 in the Charles Kuralt Collection, 1935-1997, #04882, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

with that? It is what it is, but what do I do about that? How do I function? What do I do differently?”³¹ This dissertation examines how Black students and workers engaged in movements for racial justice at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1951 to 2018 have answered Boose’s questions for themselves, and in answering them, challenged the University’s dominant cultural landscape of white supremacy—a landscape in conflict with the University’s mission to be a public university representative of and in service to the state of North Carolina.³² It is not the University’s perfunctory assertion that it operates as a public good for North Carolina’s citizenry, but instead the dynamic legacy of racial justice movements in Chapel Hill that have organized to oppose the University’s white supremacy that is responsible for any claim, however untrue, that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill presently operates as “the University of the people.” By examining how Black students and workers organized to move the University towards a yet-unrealized future as an institution that operates in accordance with its epithet, this dissertation orients future campus organizers towards a potential future for Chapel Hill as a place directed by a culture of reparative racial justice.

Creating a Cultural Landscape of White Supremacy

Whiteness is central to the development of space within the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Geographers Aubrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake explain that whiteness is “the normative, ordinary power to enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and

³¹ Interview with Donelle Boose by Charlotte Fryar, 17 November 2017, L-0451 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Hereafter, all cited interviews are in this collection and are abbreviated as such.

³² The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Mission Statement, Approved by the UNC Board of Governors, November 2009 and February 2014, Accessed 13 March 2018, <<https://www.unc.edu/about/mission/>>.

institutions and, in particular, by occupying space within a segregated social landscape.”³³ This dissertation employs Kobayashi and Peake’s definition of whiteness to understand how the University’s cultural landscape of white supremacy operates to sustain a racial hierarchy in which Black identities are excluded or limited.³⁴ The University, as a predominantly white institution, is structurally invested in “protecting the privileges of whiteness by denying communities of color opportunities” for economic advancement and cultural power.³⁵ The University’s whiteness is predicated on excluding Blackness. “The University of the people,” as it has been utilized by the University, has always meant the University of white people.

The defining feature of the University's cultural landscape is not just whiteness but white supremacy. In his book, *The Racial Contract*, philosopher Charles Mills argues that white supremacy, the “sociopolitical economic system of domination based on racial categories that benefits those defined and perceived as white,” is never acknowledged as “the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.”³⁶ Therefore, to understand the past and present cultural landscape of the University, its white supremacy must be named. Doing so, education scholar Robin DiAngelo argues, “makes the system visible and shifts the locus of change onto white people, where it belongs. It also points us [white people] in the direction of

³³ Owen Dwyer and John Paul Jones III, “White socio-spatial epistemology,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 1, No. 2 (2000): 209–221; Aubrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake, “Racism out of place: thoughts on whiteness and an antiracist geography in the new millennium,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, No. 2 (2000): 393.

³⁴ Steven Hoelscher, “Making place, making race: performances of whiteness in the Jim Crow South,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, No. 3 (2003): 657–686.

³⁵ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment In Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), viii.

³⁶ Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1.

the lifelong work that is uniquely ours, challenging our complicity with and investment in racism.”³⁷

My use of the term white supremacy to describe the University’s cultural landscape is extended to an audience of Chapel Hill citizens (seventy-three percent of whom are white) to help white people see the work of eradicating racism at the University as our obligation, instead of shifting responsibility, as this dissertation will show has been done historically, to Black students and workers.³⁸ To support this goal, this dissertation makes visible how white people’s “possessive investment in whiteness” has built a dominant culture within which Black Chapel Hill citizens—including Black students, workers, faculty, and town residents—are excluded from the University’s cultural landscape.³⁹ By citizen, I will always mean a member of a town or community, not a person in possession of legal citizenship. This includes permanent year-round residents of Chapel Hill as well as individuals who live in Chapel Hill only during the school year (*e.g.*, undergraduate students). I do not capitalize *white*, designating it as a social and cultural construct which is used to assert racialized social groups as deviant or property.⁴⁰ I do, however, capitalize *Black* to reference the name of a self-determined “racialized social group that shares a specific set of histories, cultural processes, and imagined and performed kinships.”⁴¹

³⁷ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard For White People to Talk About Racism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 33.

³⁸ Chapel Hill Data Book 2010, Part 3: Demographics, Accessed 31 October 2018, <<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=10030>>.

³⁹ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment In Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), viii.

⁴⁰ Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, No. 8 (June 1993): 1707-1791.

⁴¹ Michael Dumas, “Against the dark: Antiblackness in education policy and discourse,” *Theory into Practice* 55, No. 1 (2016): 12.

The white supremacy of the University's cultural landscape is determined by its racist institutional practices, which in turn, are shaped by the University's dominant culture in a feedback loop. Geographer Richard Schein explains part of this loop in the introduction to *Landscape and Race in the United States*, writing that "racial processes take place and racial categories get made, in part, through cultural landscapes." Relying on the theory of racial formation, which posits that race is a dynamic and fluid social construction, Schein uses the term "racialized landscape" to describe the evolving relationship of mutual production between cultural landscapes and racial formation through institutional processes and social categorization.⁴² This dissertation adopts Schien's term "racialized landscape" to explain how the University's cultural landscape serves to support its racist institutional processes and likewise, how its institutional processes contribute to the continued development of a white supremacist culture.⁴³ We can therefore understand that the white supremacy of the University's cultural landscape both produces and is produced by what geographer Daniel Trudeau calls the "territorialized politics of belonging," an institutional process that has racially bound the campus landscape in ways that "enforce exclusion and discrimination."⁴⁴

By considering the University's multiple and layered landscapes, this dissertation recognizes that any landscape is "part of a process of cultural politics," in which a landscape can be studied both as an object of analysis in itself and as a process of creating a shared institutional

⁴² Richard Schein Ed., *Landscape and Race in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 6.

⁴³ Derek H. Alderman and E. Arnold Modlin Jr., "The Historical Geography of Racialized Landscapes," in *North American Odyssey: Historical Geographies of the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Craig E. Colten and Geoffrey L. Buckley, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 274.

⁴⁴ Daniel Trudeau, "Politics of belonging in the construction of landscapes: place-making, boundary-drawing and exclusion," *cultural geographies* 13, No. 1 (2006): 422.

culture.⁴⁵ To differentiate between these two methods of cultural landscape analysis, I use the terms “campus landscape” to describe the built environment—*i. e.*, buildings, monuments, memorials, and other physical spaces—and “institutional landscape” to describe the processes at work in creating a shared culture of white supremacy within the institution. Together the campus landscape and the institutional landscape of the University coalesce to create its cultural landscape of white supremacy.

Examining the University’s institutional landscape within a wider study of its cultural landscape creates the conditions to consider the “routines, procedures, conventions, roles, strategies, organizational forms, and technologies” which maintain white supremacy.⁴⁶ Attention to the University’s institutional landscape also allows for necessary scrutiny to be applied to public assumptions about institutions such as the University, particularly their status as “the more enduring features of social life,” supposedly inviolable and impartial.⁴⁷ By attending to both the campus landscape and the institutional landscape of the University, this dissertation examines how and in what ways white supremacy manifests itself within Chapel Hill and how Black students and workers have organized to challenge it.

Black Freedom Striving In Chapel Hill Before 1951

The majority of prior histories of the University celebrate the institution’s championing of liberalism, academic freedom, free speech, and progressive politics, rather than interrogating

⁴⁵ Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, Brendan Bartley, and Duncan Fuller, *Thinking Geographically: Space, Theory and Contemporary Human Geography*, (London: Continuum, 2002), 141.

⁴⁶ James G. March and Jonah P. Olson, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics*, (New York: Free Press, 1989), 22.

⁴⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), 24.

its foundation in white supremacy.⁴⁸ John K. “Yonni” Chapman, scholar of the early Black history of the University, explains that these previous histories, in their trivialization of the legacy of racial justice movements, supply a harmful ideology which “bends our minds in ways that conform to the persistent norms of white supremacy that still permeate our culture.”

Chapman argues that this distorted history has “two major failings with respect to racial justice and a realistic understanding of black freedom and the university today. First, such histories have suppressed the story of the University’s leading role in promoting slavery and white supremacy.” Second, these histories fail “to examine African-American contributions to the university and the impact of the black freedom struggle.”⁴⁹ Historian Jeanne Theoharis explains what is at stake in the maintenance of false or incomplete histories of racial justice movements in that they become “a key linchpin in the idea of an almost postracial America...In this version...injustice is aberrational and once revealed is eliminated in a country built to move past its mistakes.”⁵⁰ By diminishing the power and scope of racial justice movements in Chapel Hill under the dominant narrative of the institution’s liberalism, the University has consistently abused its responsibilities as a public institution of higher education.

This dissertation counters a portion of these inaccurate histories of Chapel Hill, beginning with the desegregation of the University by Black students in 1951, and explains how Black students and workers resisted the University’s racialized landscape by challenging its racist

⁴⁸ Major histories of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that focus on these themes include William D. Snider’s *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, 2004; William S. Powell’s *The First State History: A Pictorial History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, 1992; and Charles J. Holden’s, *The New Southern University: Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC*, 2011.

⁴⁹ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), vi.

⁵⁰ Jeanne Theoharris, *A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), xxi.

institutional processes. Although the history of the University prior to 1951 is not a focus of this dissertation, it provides essential historical context that future organizers would continue to reference as movements for justice have advanced. A short summary, referenced largely from Chapman's dissertation, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, is provided here. In the first decades of the University's history, the institution's attorneys acquired dozens of enslaved persons as escheated property along with real estate, receiving a commission on the sale of humans, which they passed on to the treasurer of the University's Board of Trustees. Enslaved persons constructed the University's built landscape, building the first dormitory, library, academic buildings, and the campus's iconic stone walls. Through the extraction of labor from freed but uncompensated or poorly compensated Black people post-Emancipation, the University continued to develop and maintain the campus. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Black citizens of Chapel Hill provided a majority of the University's non-administrative labor, working as janitors, carpenters, cooks, housekeepers, and groundskeepers. Black people provided the capital and labor necessary to create, sustain, and strengthen the University for which the institution has paid no restitution.⁵¹

The University of North Carolina, as one of the premier colleges in the American South for elite white men, was a leader in the national collegiate movement to establish an academic rationale for white supremacy and the continued enslavement of Black people.⁵² Historian Craig Steven Wilder explains in his groundbreaking book, *Ebony and Ivory: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, that more than using Black people to "raise

⁵¹ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 1-74.

⁵² Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 100-106.

buildings, maintain campuses, and enhance their institutional wealth,” American colleges and universities in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, “trained the personnel and cultivated the ideas that accelerated and legitimated the dispossession of Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans.”⁵³ Following Emancipation, the University’s leadership and alumni led the white supremacist campaigns that suppressed Black freedom striving and laid the foundation for North Carolina’s Jim Crow society, which remained entrenched in Chapel Hill until at least the 1960s.

In the wake of Jim Crow’s ascendancy, North Carolina became a leader in the New South movement, heralding a vision of progressive economic and social reforms in education, welfare, and labor that could transform the national image of the South from a rural retrograde society into a modern industrial region. As the fervor of social progressivism and industrialization took hold of North Carolina, the University became a crucial tool for implementing a new order of white southern liberalism, defined by “improving the quality of life for working-class southerners through unionism, improving race relations by...openly condemning white-on-black violence; pushing for more public funds for black schools; and greater interaction between the leaders of the black and white communities.” While the University received national commendations for its liberal approach to “race relations” through the 1920s, it continued to support and sustain the state’s Jim Crow social order which it had helped establish at the turn of the century.⁵⁴ And as North Carolina expanded its progressive reputation through the 1930s, its

⁵³ Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 10.

⁵⁴ Charles J. Holden, *The New Southern University : Academic Freedom and Liberalism at UNC*, (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2011), 20.

flagship university, under the leadership of one of the South's most famed white liberals, Frank Porter Graham, remained one of the most influential institutions in the South which supported and engaged in the systematic subjugation of Black people.⁵⁵

Through the 1930s and 1940s, several Black North Carolinians, notably human rights activist Pauli Murray, attempted to enroll at the University, presenting the institution with the opportunity to live up to its liberal reputation and become the first white institution of higher education in the South to desegregate its student body. But the University refused Murray's and her peers' applications, confirming its allegiance to Jim Crow. In 1949, Black law students from Durham's North Carolina College (now North Carolina Central University), a group which eventually included Floyd McKissick, Harvey Beech, James Lassiter, and J. Kenneth Lee, filed a lawsuit seeking admission to the University's School of Law. After the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Sweatt v. Painter, et. al.* in 1950, the case wound its way through the courts, and in 1951, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals decided in favor of the plaintiffs. Although the University appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, their request to hear the case was denied.⁵⁶

McKissick, Beech, Lassiter, and Lee entered the University's School of Law in the summer of 1951. The University admitted Edward Oscar Diggs to the Medical School that fall. Later when referring to Diggs's enrollment, the University described itself as the first white university in the South to "voluntarily" admit a Black student, ignoring the centuries-long history of refusing the enrollment of Black and Native people.⁵⁷ In 1954, following the Supreme Court's

⁵⁵ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 103.

⁵⁶ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 167-170.

⁵⁷ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 169-172.

decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the University returned to court, ultimately failing in their effort to block undergraduate desegregation. In the fall of 1955, Ralph Fraiser, John Brandon, and LeRoy Fraiser became the University's first Black undergraduate students, though none chose to finish their degree at Chapel Hill, in part because of the discrimination they faced while enrolled there.⁵⁸ David Dansby became the first Black undergraduate student to graduate from the University in 1961, though he later reflected that during his time in Chapel Hill, he was regarded as "pretty much a pariah."⁵⁹

Because the desegregation of the University had not been marked by violence as in other southern states, North Carolina's white citizens largely commended the University for the civility and order with which the process of desegregation had been conducted. However, this process revealed the University's commitment to "resist the dismantling of Jim Crow for as long as possible" in its refusal to use its power during the expanding civil rights movement to commit to racial justice. Although the state had developed by the 1950s a reputation as an "inspiring exception to southern racism" which was manifest in its flagship university, historian William Chafe explains in his landmark book, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, that in reality, "North Carolina's progressive image existed side by side with social and economic facts that contradicted profoundly the state's reputation."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Leah Aslemash, "Leroy Fraiser, one of the UNC's first African-American undergraduates, dies," *The Daily Tar Heel*, 3 January 2018.

⁵⁹ David Dansby, phone interview by Brian Williams Suttell, 14 June 2016, quoted in Suttell, Brian Williams, *Campus to Counter: Civil Rights Activism in Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina, 1960-1963*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2017), 117.

⁶⁰ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 5.

For North Carolina's public K-12 schools, the Pearsall Plan, a moderate policy framework for gradual desegregation, allowed the state to argue that its protracted and localized plan for desegregation was simply a way to reduce the potential for violence, rather than a modern policy mechanism used to stall the efforts of civil rights campaigns across the state. Likewise in higher education, the University was revered across the nation for its modern and non-violent approach to desegregation, supposedly marking the institution as one "free of the bigotry and close-mindedness associated with the Deep South."⁶¹ But in fact, the University's slow desegregation process, conducted through the courts and without regard to the wellbeing of the Black students who eventually enrolled, continued a now centuries-long process of the institutional exclusion of Black people from the intellectual and cultural life of the University.⁶² The University may have desegregated, but it has never used its power to fully integrate.⁶³

Challenging the Anti-Black Institution

This dissertation begins with the history of Black students' and workers' resistance to white supremacy at the University after the institution's legal desegregation, demonstrating how the University consistently sought to exclude Black identities and diminish any movement that challenged the University's white supremacy. Activated by the knowledge of this history of the University as a site of enslavement and as an institution which produced and maintained the structures of Jim Crow, Black students and workers protested the ways in which the University

⁶¹ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 5, 54.

⁶² John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 168-170.

⁶³ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 7.

reflects and enacts systemic racial inequities within its institutional and campus landscapes. Operating from this same historical context, this dissertation demonstrates that the University is not just a predominantly white institution with a difficult racial history, but an institution defined by its continued practices of anti-Blackness.⁶⁴

I use the term “anti-Blackness” to describe the ways in which cultural processes that “allow a social recognition of the humanness of others systematically excludes this possibility” for Black people.⁶⁵ Robin DiAngelo explains that “most fundamentally, anti-blackness comes from deep guilt about what we [white people] have done and continue to do; the unbearable knowledge of our complicity with the profound torture of black people from past to present.”⁶⁶ In this way, we can understand contemporary anti-Blackness as directed by the legacy of past anti-Blackness. Within the institution, anti-Blackness is reproduced in two main ways: “the extraction of labor from the Black body without engaging the body as a laborer, but as property, and the mechanisms (*e.g.*, stereotypical narratives) that institutions use to police, control, imprison, and kill.”⁶⁷ Black students and workers opposed both of these institutional processes in their own movement-making, organizing against the ways in which the institution expects and extracts the labor of Black Chapel Hill citizens, while simultaneously operating to control and contain their identities and bodies.

⁶⁴ Peter Wallenstein, *Higher Education and the Civil Rights Movement: White Supremacy, Black Southerners, and College Campuses*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

⁶⁵ Michael Dumas, “Against the dark: Antiblackness in education policy and discourse,” *Theory into Practice* 55, No. 1 (2016): 13.

⁶⁶ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard For White People to Talk About Racism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 94.

⁶⁷ T. Elon Dancy, Kirsten T. Edwards, and James Earl Davis, “Historically White Universities and Plantation Politics: Anti-Blackness and Higher Education in the Black Lives Matter Era,” *Urban Education* 53, No. 2 (2018): 180.

To oppose the University's anti-Blackness, Black students and workers constructed a counter-history of Chapel Hill which operated against the dominant narrative of the University's reputed liberalism, and served as a model for their movements as they organized towards both a refiguring of the campus landscape and the institutional landscape. This counter-history, crafted over decades and in segments by campus organizers, challenged the hegemonic cultural landscape of white supremacy. As education scholar Carmen Montecinos writes, "the use of a master narrative to represent a group is bound to provide a very narrow depiction of what it means to be Mexican-American, African-American...and so on..."⁶⁸ To negate the master narrative of the institution's liberalism, student organizers engaged in counter-storytelling, which critical race theorists Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso explain is a "tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege."⁶⁹

Through counter-storytelling, students and workers connected with the legacies of their predecessors within the context of their own movements, while also "challeng[ing] the perceived wisdom of those at society's center."⁷⁰ This dissertation, therefore, not only documents a history of racial justice movements beginning in the mid-twentieth century, but also interprets how successive campus movements used the historical legacy of Black freedom striving in Chapel Hill to inspire and guide their own vision for a broadly transformed campus and institution. My use of the term Black freedom striving, rather than Black freedom struggle, is informed by

⁶⁸ Carmen Montecinos, "Culture as an ongoing dialogue: Implications for multicultural teacher education," In *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference*, ed. C. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 293-294.

⁶⁹ Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, "Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, No. 1 (2002): 32.

⁷⁰ Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso, "Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, No. 1 (2002): 36.

Chapman's definition of the term as "any effort to survive or resist the ways that white supremacy limits and denies African-Americans," encompassing "the actions of individuals, as well as collective struggle" and highlighting the power of everyday and individual acts of resistance to white supremacy.⁷¹

Although the legacy of Black freedom striving in Chapel Hill is significant, there is no constant progressive trajectory of increasing justice for Black citizens. But the movements of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have succeeded in transforming certain spaces within the campus landscape. As historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage explains of these efforts to transform the campus, "the civic landscape of the South looks the way it does because of both persistent inequality etched and erected in public spaces and dogged efforts to revise the same terrain."⁷² Thus, the University's campus landscape now displays a stark division between white institutional power and Black student and worker power, the latter as physical representations of the achievements of past racial justice campus movements.

"Diversity Without Justice"

Despite some changes, the broader landscape of the University remains dominated by white supremacy, a persistent cultural condition supported by institutional processes which provide the foundation for the University's current cultural paradigm of "diversity without justice," which Yonni Chapman argues, "ensures the power of the past to continue shaping the future." The institution has never committed to active anti-racist policies, while speciously

⁷¹ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), vi.

⁷² W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 7.

stating its dedication to diversity, non-discrimination, and inclusion. Under the power of the “diversity without justice” paradigm, progress towards a total refiguring of the institutional landscape of the University in pursuit of racial justice is unstable, as is the physical landscape of spaces within the campus that support Black Chapel Hill citizens.⁷³

Operating within this paradigm, the University celebrates the racial diversity of the student body while simultaneously containing and eliminating spaces created by Black students and workers, and ignoring and destroying movements which contest the institution’s anti-Blackness. This dissertation adopts feminist theorist Sara Ahmed’s understanding of institutional diversity, in which “diversity becomes about changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organizations.”⁷⁴ Therefore, the institution’s endorsement of the racial diversity of the student body is solely for the benefit of whiteness, an example of what the critical legal scholar Derrick Bell termed “interest convergence,” in which white institutions only support desegregation if there is value for institutions in doing so.⁷⁵ Through the logic of interest convergence, the University uses the rhetoric of diversity to reproduce white supremacy, rather than seeking to truly alter the whiteness of the institution.

By refusing the institutional narrative of increasing racial justice for Black Chapel Hill citizens, ostensibly to be seen in the diversity of the institution, this dissertation situates the racialized landscape of the University not within the past, but in the present, highlighting the

⁷³ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 191.

⁷⁴ Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity In Institutional Life*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 34.

⁷⁵ Derrick A. Bell, “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,” *Harvard Law Review* 93, No. 3 (Jan 1980): 518-34.

inconsistency between the institution's support for diversity and the white supremacy of the University's culture and campus. This inconsistency is evident in institutional enrollment data: in 2018, the percentage of Black students enrolled at the University fell to 7.8 percent, marking the smallest percentage of Black students at the University in thirty years.⁷⁶ This small minority now walks to class surrounded by glossy banners hanging from the marble columns of administrative buildings that display primarily non-white faces, images supplied by the institution to support their superficial claims to be a racially diverse institution.

The seventy-year history of racial justice movements that this dissertation examines is supported largely by oral history interviews with former students, workers, and faculty who engaged in or supported these movements. These individuals attended, taught at, or worked for the University over a half century and gave their interviews to the Southern Oral History Program. To these narrators, this dissertation is deeply indebted. Individually and collectively, narrators describe an institution defined by a pervasive culture of historical denial of the subtle forms of racism that have persisted at the University long after its desegregation and relate the history of the movements that organized for the University's transformation towards racial justice. Narrators explain the ways in which the University operates to contain the dissemination of histories of Black freedom striving and repress attempts by students and workers to build on the progress of their predecessors. But narrators also reveal the ways that they and their peers successfully utilized the legacies of prior movements to continue to organize towards the creation and contestation of specific campus spaces, and eventually, towards the reclamation of the University as a place directed by the legacy of Black freedom striving in Chapel Hill. In

⁷⁶ Fall 2018 Headcount Enrollment Diversity by Education Level and Race/Ethnicity, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Updated 4 September 2018, Accessed 3 October 2018, <<https://oira.unc.edu/reports/>>.

sharing their efforts to create, contest, and reclaim space in Chapel Hill, narrators challenged the culture of historical denial at the University, constructing their own narratives to oppose the dominant public perspective of the University as a beacon of liberalism.⁷⁷

Spatial Organizing Frameworks: Creation, Contestation, Reclamation

Over the past two centuries, Black workers created a series of Black spaces on campus to support their communities within and against the cultural landscape of white supremacy, and beginning with their arrival on campus in 1951, Black students engaged in the same practice.⁷⁸ In their oral histories, narrators together chart a series of these Black-created spaces, what education scholar Frank Michael Muñoz calls “counter-spaces, formal and informal, social and academic spaces, created and inhabited by marginalized individuals...critical sites of resistance to insidious racism on college campuses.”⁷⁹ These counter-spaces, as theorized by Daniel Solórzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso, serve as “sites where deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained.”⁸⁰ The stories of these Black-created counter-spaces are a crucial portion of the counter-history that Black students and workers crafted to oppose the public perception of the University as merely a predominantly white institution, rather than a white supremacist

⁷⁷ William A. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

⁷⁸ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 144-160.

⁷⁹ Frank Michael Muñoz, “Critical Race Theory and the Landscapes of Higher Education,” *The Vermont Connection* 30, No. 1 (2009): 59.

⁸⁰ Daniel Solórzano, Miguel M. Ceja, and Tara Yosso, “Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students,” *Journal of Negro Education* 69, No. 1 (2000): 70.

institution. bell hooks in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* explains the way in which Black people within white institutions inevitably create Black spaces: “Black folks...who enter universities of privileged cultural settings willing to surrender every vestige of who we were before we were there...must create spaces within the culture of domination if we are to survive whole, our souls intact. Our very presence is a disruption.”⁸¹

These spaces constitute what critical race theorists Gloria Ladson-Billings and Jamel Donnor describe as the “liminal space of alterity,” that is, in the context of Chapel Hill, a space at the edges of a white supremacist culture within which Black identities and experiences are created, and from outside of which white people maintain a boundary defined by white supremacy. But these counter-spaces of Black alterity were not solely sites of subjugation, but rather, they engendered experiences through which Black students and workers could move “beyond the normative boundary of the conception of Self/Other” and begin to challenge the ways in which white supremacy controlled the cultural landscape of Chapel Hill.⁸² Space creation for Black students and workers thus became the first major organizing approach utilized by campus organizers to challenge the institution’s white supremacy.

Although Black students and workers continued to organize to create informal Black counter-spaces, they eventually sought to directly contest spaces which symbolized and enacted racist institutional processes across the broader cultural landscape. Within this organizing framework, the built landscape, understood by Black students and workers as a reflection of the white supremacy of the cultural landscape, became a specific focus as students organized against

⁸¹ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990), 147.

⁸² Gloria Ladson-Billings and Jamel Donnor, “The moral activist role of critical race theory scholarship,” in *The landscape of qualitative research*, ed. N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 281.

particular spaces across the campus. Organizers targeted monuments, public art, and building names as manifest representations of the institutional white supremacy they sought to expel from Chapel Hill. As the principal organizing framework for racial justice movements shifted from space creation to space contestation, increasing numbers (but never a predominance) of white students began to assist movements previously supported largely or only by Black Chapel Hill citizens. The transition between these two organizing frameworks—creation and contestation—does not follow a linear timeline, but in general, earlier Black student- and worker-led movements focused on space creation, which later gave way to multiracial movements which contested how the University represented and enacted white supremacy across the campus.

A new organizing framework, beginning in the late 1990s, then subsiding, and now intensifying since 2015, has emerged as a synthesis of both space creation and contestation. As Black students and workers have enacted this third organizing approach of reclamation, they are conceptualizing the University's racialized landscape not as a selection of spaces to create or contest but as a place to be reclaimed from the institution itself, utilizing the long legacy of past racial justice movements to do so. Reclamation, as an organizing framework, can be understood as an assertion of ownership of the University as a place and all relational notions the sense of that place holds, separate from the creation of counter-spaces, which does not necessarily infer the effect of the institution's history on the capacity for ownership, and also distinct from the contestation of spaces of white supremacy, which does not involve the assertion of ownership. The University's white supremacy operates to prevent Black ownership in all forms—ownership of the self, place, and history. Thus, reclamation, as a radical approach to place-based action, simultaneously orients “collective attention towards both what is not here in the present moment

and towards a means of getting there in the future.”⁸³ The initiation of this new organizing approach has necessitated the development of a new sense of place for Black students and workers within the University.

The primary sense of place for Black people at the University as described by many oral history narrators prior to this shift squares with geographer Katherine McKittrick’s definition of a Black sense of place as “not a steady, focused, and homogeneous way of seeing and being in place, but rather a set of changing and differential perspectives that are illustrative of legacies of normalized racial violence that calcify, but do not guarantee, the denigration of Black geographies and their inhabitants.”⁸⁴ In this formulation, Black people within the place of the University experience the legacies of past and present anti-Black violence, which, in the case of Chapel Hill, *does* undertake to denigrate Black geographies (*e.g.*, Black student and worker created counter-spaces) and their inhabitants. Therefore, the formation of a new sense of place, oriented around the history of Black freedom striving in Chapel Hill, is imperative, if students and workers are to clearly view themselves as actors against the oppressive anti-Black conditions of the institution.

As organizers have developed this understanding of the University as a place determined by the legacy of Black freedom striving, they have begun to assert ownership over the University, reclaiming the history and place of the University as their own. McKittrick explains that “Black diaspora struggles can also be read, then, as geographic contests over discourses of

⁸³ Regis Mann, “Theorizing ‘What Could Have Been’: Black Feminism, Historical Memory, and the Politics of Reclamation,” *Women’s Studies* 40, No. 5 (2011): 576.

⁸⁴ Katherine McKittrick, “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, No. 8 (2011): 950.

ownership. Ownership of the body, individual and community voices, bus seats, women, ‘Africa,’ feminism, history, homes, record labels, money, cars, these are all recurring positionalities...these positionalities and struggles over the meaning of place add a geographic dimension to the practices of black reclamation.”⁸⁵ Ownership, then, has become a crucial aspect of the discourse of place-making which calls for Black students and workers to reclaim the University in co-ownership with all campus actors. Reclamation is the organizing approach which positions organizers as emplaced actors in Chapel Hill, able to fully utilize the legacy of the past to reclaim their right to self- and place-possession from the anti-Black institution. To reclaim in this way—by asserting ownership over the place of the University—repels the white supremacy of the institution, and provides a critical direction forward for future campus organizers, which this dissertation seeks to outline and examine for future implementation.

Chapter Summaries

The histories of Black freedom striving at the University are permeated by the histories of the multiple places that the University surrounds and occupies, significantly the Town of Chapel Hill. Although this dissertation is focused primarily on Black student-led movements for racial justice, the damaged relationship between the University and the Black communities within the Town of Chapel Hill and Orange County requires attention to movements led by the University’s Black workers, many of whom were and are citizens of Orange County and descendants of enslaved persons in Chapel Hill. In examining Black student- and Black worker-led movements, this dissertation insists on the importance of “the gordian knot that ties race to class and civil rights to workers’ rights” and the entwined nature of women’s activism and Black freedom

⁸⁵ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 2006), 3.

striving.⁸⁶ However, it does not pretend to be comprehensive in its discussion of the entanglements of racial justice movements with those for gender equality and labor activism.

Although non-Black Chapel Hill citizens of color have challenged racist institutional processes of exclusion at the University, contributing significantly to Chapel Hill's powerful histories of resistance, this dissertation is primarily concerned with movements led by Black students and workers. This attention to the experiences of Black students and workers at Chapel Hill is intended not to ignore the experiences of other citizens of color, but to examine how one racialized social group has challenged white supremacy and pointed potential ways forward for other racialized social groups to seek justice in Chapel Hill. This dissertation also holds a specific focus on organizing led by undergraduate and graduate students and low-wage workers, and discusses only minimally the activism of faculty and administrative staff. This focus necessarily limits the scope of this study, and therefore, not all contested spaces on the campus are discussed.⁸⁷

In order to describe both the histories of specific campus movements and the ways in which students and workers utilized the legacies of their predecessors, this dissertation is organized by the specific spaces within the campus landscape that organizers sought to create, contest, or reclaim. Divided into nine chapters that advance in a loose chronology from the desegregation of the University by Black students in 1951 to the recent toppling of the University's Confederate Monument in 2018, this dissertation explores spaces of resistance that

⁸⁶ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, No. 4 (March 2006): 1239.

⁸⁷ Other spaces that might be considered in future studies include the Student Body Statue, the Campus Y, the Latinx Education Research Hub in Peabody Hall, the American Indian Center in Abernathy Hall, among other spaces.

stretch the length of the campus landscape, from its southernmost dormitories to its northernmost academic quad.⁸⁸ The varied length of these chapters should not suggest a difference in significance of the usable pasts of certain spaces over others, but rather that the histories of certain spaces—particularly Black student created spaces—have not been thoroughly documented in primary source materials.

This dissertation begins by exploring the legacy of the *South Campus* residence community as the predominant location for on-campus housing for Black students and the significance of the conversations surrounding that legacy in the creation of future Black counter-spaces. *Lenoir Hall and Manning Hall* considers the 1969 Foodworkers' Strikes led by Black female low-wage workers and supported by members of the Black Student Movement, and describes efforts to commemorate the strikes in the early 2000s, examining the strikes as a movement that sought to both contest and create spaces. *Upendo Lounge* and *The Fishbowl* detail the histories of both spaces as social and academic hubs crucial to the creation of a community for Black students from the 1970s through the 1990s, explaining the way in which the University oversaw their eventual abatement as spaces essential to the social lives of Black students. *The Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History* explores the student movement that created a free-standing Black Cultural Center, the relationship between the space now and the legacy of that movement, and the role of the Stone Center as an institutional academic counter-space for Black students.

⁸⁸ Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the monument that most University community members know as “Silent Sam,” as the Confederate Monument. In referring to the monument by its colloquial nickname, “Silent Sam,” individuals aid in the continuance of a sexist stereotype of women. A legend states that the Confederate soldier atop the monument, which carries no powder box, will only shoot off his gun if a woman who is a virgin walks by. Without a powder box, the soldier will theoretically never shoot. The nickname detracts from the significance of the fact that the nation’s first public university had on its campus a monument to student veterans who fought against the United States and for the continuance of the enslavement of Black people.

Beginning in the 1990s, the organizing approach of racial justice movements began to shift from efforts to primarily create Black counter-spaces towards campaigns that sought to contest spaces of white supremacy and/or reclaim them from the University. *Cheek-Clark Building* tells the history of the housekeepers movement of the 1990s from its origins to a successful settlement with the University, with attention to the housekeepers' bold excavation of the University's history with enslavement and demands for symbolic and material reparations from the institution. It also explores housekeepers' approach to using histories of Black resistance to reclaim space on the campus. *Saunders Hall* tells the stories of the various student organizations which formed to contest the academic building named to honor William L. Saunders, the former Grand Dragon of the state's Ku Klux Klan, charting how each successive student organization used the work of prior organizations to demand that the University remove Saunders's name from the building, and eventually, reclaim the space from the institution. *McCorkle Place* explores the memorial dialectic between two monuments—the Unsung Founders Memorial and the University's Confederate Monument—and the student movements that identified that dialectic. It explains how student movements organized for a transformation of the space of McCorkle Place towards the reclamation of the University as a place owned by all campus actors. A final chapter explores potential future policies for enacting a paradigm shift towards reparative justice at the University, including the establishment of a truth commission, the creation of a counter-campus, and the delivery of material reparations to past and present Black Chapel Hill citizens.

Together, the history of campus movements for racial justice across these spaces demonstrates that Black students and workers are responsible for any claim that the University may make that it operates as “the University of the people.” But despite some successes in

challenging white supremacy, the University's cultural paradigm of "diversity without justice" continues to operate to ensure that white supremacy dominates the University's cultural landscape.⁸⁹ Even as Black students and workers have successfully created and contested specific spaces within the campus, loss or dilution of the power of other spaces of resistance has occurred. The predominance of the institution's white supremacy remains largely static, even as opposition to the University's practices of anti-Blackness within its cultural landscape has recently increased. While under this cultural paradigm, movement towards an expansive refiguring of the University into a place of reparative justice can be slow, if not regressive. But without recognition of the history of the Black students and workers who have continued to envision and guide racial justice movements, we, as historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall explains, "undermine our will to address the inequalities and injustices that surround us now."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ John K. Chapman, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1793-1960*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006), 191.

⁹⁰ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, No. 4 (March 2006): 1262.