

# productive critical

a journal of architecture  
urbanism and cultural theory

V1.1 THEORETIC ACTION

AUTUMN 2011



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## CriticalProductive: An Introduction

On behalf of the editorial team and editorial board, welcome to *CriticalProductive*, a new biannual journal of architecture, urbanism, and cultural theory!

As a Black American born in the 1960's and as an academic deeply invested in the discipline of architecture for over 20 years, I am confident that you, our readers, will benefit from the unique platform that *CriticalProductive* will provide for those who seek progressive discourse on the issues of the day ranging from informal urbanization to urban anthropology to race and aesthetic theory, and including the voices of academics and non-academics, designers and cultural thinkers who are themselves diverse. While *CriticalProductive* is a blind peer-reviewed academic journal, it is also a magazine with an explicit intention of making academic scholarship accessible to a broad audience.

The critical project of/for architecture is far from exhausted. While we can appreciate the instrumental power of technology and form to drive social behavior, we must also appreciate that social behavior has instrumentality of its own that may be independent from the technological or formal attributes of the object or commodity. In architecture, as in industrial design and social media, the theorization of social behavior and the

political is more than a mere corrective measure operating as a negative dialectic against the reigning capitalist, technological or formalist paradigms that impose their own instrumentality upon us. The genealogy of cultural theory, critical race theory, sexuality studies, feminism and gender studies, is ripe with examples of unfinished theoretical projects and incomplete revolutions — such as the black nationalist project, the project of critical race legal theory, modernism/modernity, Marxism, neo-Marxism, structuralism, post-structuralism, queer theory, etc. *CriticalProductive* will attempt to utilize the latent energy and historical legacy of these movements to leverage a contemporary conversation on how the most intellectually useful components of these unfinished works can be critiqued, renovated and transformed to be made relevant to the politics of the current era. *CriticalProductive* — both in its title and in its editorial content — will strive towards a critical and productive synthesis of interdisciplinary thought for the purpose of innovating the role of social theory and politics in the discipline of architecture.

Contemporizing the social ideals of the modernist era is not an academic or elitist exercise. The rampant urbanization of South America, Latin America, Africa, India

and Asia requires a broad intellectual lens, architectural and urban theories that recognize, and if necessary, foreground racial, class and social conditions as foundational to the intellectual project of architecture as such. This requires more than inclusion and diversity as appeasement strategies. It requires direct engagement with the persons, bodies, and subjectivities that are the objects of our discourse. The discourse of urbanization in this era — with the pressures of late Capitalism and global monetary flows — requires that the disciplinary connections between architecture and economics, anthropology, political theory, social theory, philosophy, social science, etc. be understood in relation to the visual and the mediated. Complicating the previously adhered to distinctions between first, second, and third world societies and economies is the ubiquitous accessibility of visual media and all that it entails. The locality of economic and other pressures “on the ground” are increasingly mediated by information flows with no national or class boundaries.

\* \* \*

Academic journals — whether accessed online or through print publication — are vital to the development and dissemination of new knowledge while it is happening.

*Appendix (1992–1999)*—an academic peer-reviewed journal for which I was a founding co-editor with Darell W. Fields and Kevin L. Fuller—contributed seminal scholarly and design essays that represented a major intervention in the dissemination of design and scholarly work on issues of race, gender, sexuality, and class. *The Harvard Architecture Review*, *The Cornell Journal of Architecture*, and *ANY* similarly represented unique intellectual platforms that all have their place in history. Our expectations for *CriticalProductive* are equally ambitious—we position this enterprise as both interventionist and complimentary: interventionist in that we will expose and develop discourse in areas of scholarship that are invisible; complimentary in that we will not duplicate editorial content that is already represented within other journals.

Our editorial board members are at the nexus of groundbreaking design and scholarship, and many of them are unapologetic agents of change within their respective institutions. They represent the disciplines of architecture, urbanism and urban design, Afro-American studies, American studies, ethnic and area studies, German studies and philosophy, law, and business. Collectively they possess the intellectual breadth

to referee a range of editorial content—both design and scholarship. They have provided invaluable thoughtfulness, creativity and intellectual guidance as we have labored over the past three years to launch this initiative.

*CriticalProductive* Journal is conceptualized within a larger constellation of media and event. *CriticalProductive.com* will expand upon editorial content in the print publication. Social media sites Google+, Facebook and Twitter will enlarge the audience for informal discussion of topics covered online and in print. *CriticalProductive* Symposia will provide yet another platform for intellectual exchange in academic and exhibition venues. To facilitate our audience’s movement through this diverse editorial content, the journal and online site will be organized as follows: 1) Context—An introductory essay on the journal theme by the Editor in Chief; 2) Précis—Topical and polemical solicited and unsolicited content, reprints of select online postings and letters to the Editor; 3) Dossier—Lengthy research essays, dissertation chapters and interviews related to the journal issue theme; 4) Brandspace—Medium-length essays and visual folios of works that explore the branding of space within urban and metropolitan contexts; and 5) Portfolio—Visual folio(s) of architecture, urban and

landscape design, creative design work, contemporary art and art installation work.

I want to acknowledge our benefactors and supporters—the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Cornell University College of Architecture, Art and Planning, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Pickard Chilton Architects, John Alexander, and Robert Joy. Thanks also to our editorial team for their dedication, professionalism and creativity! Finally, thank you to our inaugural contributors for their patience and for the quality of the work that they have contributed.

Milton S. F. Curry,  
Editor in Chief and Chairman  
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008

You Feel Me?  
Milton S. F. Curry

CONTEXT  
PRÉCIS  
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BRANDSPACE  
PORTFOLIO

# You Feel Me?

MILTON S. F. CURRY

... integration and segregation (related to both politics and perception) can scarcely lead us elsewhere than to the predicament of the American black community. There was, and is, the ideal of integration and there was, and is, the ideal of segregation; but, if both ideals may be supported by a variety of arguments, proper and improper, there remains the evidence that, when gross injustice begins to be removed, the barriers which were formally maintainable from the outside are just as reconstructable from within.

—Colin Rowe, *Collage City*



Emory Douglas, *Revolution in Our Lifetime*.

## THEORETIC ACTION

The significance of working within and outside of the walls of the academy was evident when the workers and students converged in Paris, Mexico City, and in the streets and campuses of the United States in 1968, to give voice to democratic, political, and social movements—consequently changing the trajectory of history. Embracing the concept of “theoretic action,” *CriticalProductive* is acting to revitalize theoretical discourse that has waned in recent years as preoccupations with computation and scientification of subjectivity have eclipsed the production of critical political and social scholarship that affirms new spatial configurations and their processes of conception.

The black radicalism of 1967–69 marked a historical moment in which the reigning paradigms of rational democratic order came undone in United States domestic policy. Aesthetics, as well as conventional political protest, can be said to “perform” the political as such. The linkage between the aesthetic projects of the ’60s era—whether in graphic design, art or architecture/urbanism—and the political projects of the time is critical to understanding

the nature of contemporary aesthetics as possessing both ideological and theoretic capacities. The Black, Latino and progressive movements occurring in North, South and Latin Americas in the 60’s had as great an impact on the transformation of culture as events and intellectual movements happening in Europe. This is not a renewed attempt at “American exceptionalism,” but, rather, a supplanting of the European bias that drowns out other voices, movements, identities, and cultural alliances.... This is the spirit of ’68 for me, *do you feel me?*

A critical analysis of the Americanized modern lifestyle is needed now more than ever, as the export of American land development protocols has taken place at a rapid pace in South Korea, China, Dubai, India, and other locations—supplanting local conditions with imported suburban morphologies. The most compelling and interesting problem for designers and policy makers alike is the seemingly simple question: What is the city? In this expansive realm of overlapping racial, ethnic, political, class, climatological, and other political constituencies that exist side-by-side in cities, what process and what image stands in for the real city?

The conceptual frame for this inaugural issue is the legacy of the 1968 civil rights era to recast the perspective from which class, race and space have been conventionally marginalized in the discipline of architecture. In Peter Gilgen’s and Naomi Beckwith’s essays in the Précis section, the aesthetic and philosophical formations brought about by European and American events in 1968 are understood to have repercussions on the way in which cultural memory functions. In the Dossier section, creative scholarship by Justin A. Doro and Richard M. Sommer/Glen Forley unveil latent racial subtexts to landscape and spatial logics that are foundational to how Americans cohere their highway-anchored landscape as well as their property rights as translated into suburban land plots. Similarly, the robust exchange between *Firing Line* host, William F. Buckley, Jr., and Black Panther Party co-founder, Huey P. Newton, reveals both a willingness on the part of a conservative and progressive to invest in public intellectual dialogue as well as unexpected synchronicity on the definitions of insurrection, and the notion of what constitutes a successful revolution.

The visual sections of the journal—Brandspace and Portfolio—resonate with topics discussed in previous sections. My interviews with Lance Wyman and Michael Gross, graphic designers who worked on various aspects of the 1968 Mexico City Olympics and Cultural Programs graphics campaign, detail how they were transformative and were transformed by the cultural and political environment of Mexico City as well as how their work provided a visual platform for political resistance. Lance Wyman’s and Hank Willis Thomas’ work operate as exposés of how the city can absorb cultural as well as corporate branding. In the Portfolio section, Amanda Wojick, Mounir Fatmi, and Raymond Depardon provide vastly different suites of images that memorialize 1968 while codifying their individual views into a visual logic that transcends simplistic interpretation.

Let your mind wander ... *you feel me.*



012

Peter Gilgen

Signs of History: 1968

016

Naomi Beckwith

The Aesthetic of Revolutionary Intent

CONTEXT  
PRÉCIS  
DOSSIER  
BRANDSPACE  
PORTFOLIO

PETER GILGEN

# Signs of History: 1968

1.

There is no need to join in the nostalgic celebrations of “1968” that have been much in evidence (especially in Europe) during the year of 2008. In the absence of such nostalgia and all its paraphernalia, when we adopt a more sober mode of reflection in its stead, we can better examine our own manner of speaking about “1968.” One thing becomes clear almost immediately: When we use this date as if it were a well-defined name, our intended reference is a sort of historical milestone or a threshold that cannot simply be crossed in the reverse direction so as to undo the first crossing.

Of course, as with any date that is invoked as the name of an “event” — something novel and entirely unpredictable that has interrupted and bent the flow of historical time — such naming may itself serve the goal of simplification; it may provide a handy term that reduces to all but mindless repetition the

reference to those hard-to-grasp occurrences that are of the highest complexity and therefore cannot be properly contained within the existing discursive order. In fact, events are recognized as such only in retrospect when their effects have become undeniable. However, to settle the matter simply by invoking a date that has become as ubiquitous as a brand name is merely to speak “as if in quotation marks.”<sup>1</sup> Yet such unheard-of occurrences demand that we invent new language and expand our linguistic possibilities as they call for a fresh, more expansive notion of “history.”

Perhaps, the events of 1968 — in the plural because they occurred in quick succession and often without any discernible connections all around the globe — are particularly unsuitable for neatly quotable language since they criss-crossed all sorts of established boundaries and proprieties. Social distinctions evaporated — at least for a brief moment — when students and workers joined ranks in Paris and Mexico City. The discrete spatial arrangements of developed and developing nations collapsed — at least in part — under the pressure of worldwide protests that were triggered by *local* instances of injustice,

but when taken as an aggregate, they amounted to a *global* paradigm of a new politics. Finally, it seems to me that “1968” could be read as a metonym of a novel temporality that is closely entwined with its global spatial dimensions.

2.

While the heterogeneous occurrences of 1968 cannot all be linked directly across the differences of local developments, political constituencies, and argumentative or even revolutionary styles, it does not seem that we claim too much when we state that “1968” — whatever the problems of such dating and naming may be — can (and perhaps should) be read as one of the first truly “global events” in the strict sense of the term: the unexpected and incalculable erupted simultaneously in numerous locations worldwide.

Such a reading could be premised on the moral reactions that we experience — even today, 43 years after the fact, when we witness the so-called historical events of 1968 in documentaries and reports, perhaps even on the occasion of one of those ritualized anniversaries that the media love to celebrate.

To be sure, “1968” remains an ambiguous sign that cannot be simply put into

the service of an optimistic philosophy of history. On the contrary, the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy — no less than the violent suppression of the Prague Spring or the later developments of the German extra-parliamentary opposition, from which sprang the murderous terrorism of the Red Army Faction — caution us against such instrumentalization that can complicate any narrative that marks 1968 merely as a way station on the road to better political and social arrangements. The other extreme — namely, to see every transgression of existing laws as nothing but the destruction of order and to hurl the accusation of bad faith at everyone who has taken the newly emerging constituencies and their demands seriously — is but a retrograde attempt to turn back the clock and undo that fateful year and everything it stands for.<sup>2</sup>

3. Avishai Margalit has attempted to answer the difficult question of whether remembering and forgetting can be the object of ethical considerations and whether there is, consequently, such a thing as an “ethics of memory.”<sup>3</sup> Does the claim that a certain event ought to

be remembered — or, as the case may be, forgotten — make sense?

There can be no doubt that in many rather distinct communities around the world common memories of the events of 1968 have persisted over the past 43 years and have in some instances even become what Margalit calls “shared memories” (51) — memories that through communal discussions, rituals, monuments, and other mnemonic means have congealed as one coherent version of the events in question.

Memory, however, is not a function over which we have ultimate conscious control, for we cannot remember on demand — at least not consistently. For this reason remembering and forgetting may not be considered, as Margalit concedes, “proper subjects for moral or ethical decrees and evaluations” (56). But he is quick to point out that this objection may well set an impossibly high standard for ethical accountability. Moreover, the situation presents itself quite differently when the shared memory of an entire community is concerned. The task in this case consists of the more modest obligation to assist in keeping the relevant memory alive. The resulting “mnemonic division of labor” (58) applies

synchronously as well as diachronically. In the latter case, it concerns the transmission of memory from one generation to the next. Under such conditions, when a memory evolves into a full-blown tradition, it has less in common with direct knowledge than with a belief that is justified by the community itself. Rather than a precise representation of the original occurrences on the basis of historical data, it has become, in Margalit’s memorable words, “a memory of memory” (59).

What is remembered is not a state of affairs that could be tested against established fact but a narrative that invests the remembered event with communal significance. The danger of such mythical memories is that they are of necessity closed — immune to falsification, they are also resistant to reinterpretation.

4. Margalit distinguishes between ethical and moral memory communities. Ethical memory communities are based on normative principles and on tight communal relations — such as families or nations. Moral memory communities, in contrast, do not require personal relations between their members. These abstract communities are organized around pragmatic

prescriptions that offer a minimal guarantee for peaceful coexistence (as opposed to a more substantial regulative idea of what is best). The memories at the center of ethical communities are most often positive and even heroic. In contrast, “the candidates for memory in the case of humanity as a moral community are negative ones, mostly of terrible acts of cruelty” (73), such as the Holocaust.

There are good reasons to agree with Margalit’s skepticism about the chances of success of a “community of commemoration” that would include all of humanity precisely because no such community has succeeded thus far as an actual “community of communication” (79). Besides, first-world dominance, whose pernicious effects have been evident in the more extreme excesses of globalization, may unduly restrict the range of admissible memories for such a global community.

These caveats cannot be ignored. Part of the problem, however, may be Margalit’s rigid definition of ethical communities that commemorate positive memories and in the process experience more personal involvement between members than would be warranted, or even possible, within their more

abstract moral counterparts. Perhaps it is not out of the question to conceive of a productive admixture of Margalit's ideal types. The most desirable mode of commemoration may ultimately belong to the more abstract type of community. But this would not exclude the possibility of certain local concentrations that could inform more limited ethical communities. In point of fact, I would suggest that the modes and communities of commemoration that are attached—tightly or loosely—to the signifier “1968” form a complex network of memory that has a global reach while nonetheless allowing and even requiring local inflections and intensifications. It should be clear that not just any and certainly not just one isolated event could be commemorated in this fashion. Rather, it is first of all due to the contingencies of history itself that the year 1968 would appear to be an appropriate object of such a memory complex. That year was marked by an unusual confluence of paradigmatic historical incidents that took place all over the world and included the future objects of positive as well as negative memories and, by extension, the seeds for numerous ethical as well as more comprehensive moral communities.

5. In his last finished book, *The Conflict of the Faculties*,<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant wrote of a “sign of history” (“*Geschichtszeichen*”) (7:84) that “*will not be forgotten*” (7:88). He had in mind less the French Revolution than the sign he had discovered in the risky and potentially dangerous stirring of a moral emotion, a sort of “*wishful participation*” (“*Teilnehmung dem Wunsche nach*”) (7:85) on the part of the distant and, strictly speaking, disinterested observer. Precisely the fact that Kant's observer is capable of suspending his own interests in this highly significant moment and is willing to incur the wrath of the political authorities for his show of enthusiasm is *the event that will be remembered*—not so much because it ought to be, but rather because it constitutes a historical benchmark of sorts below which humanity could only fall through willed forgetfulness. For whenever this moral emotion is stirred anew, it brings with it the recollection of its inception (which, to be sure, had to include the self-reflection that Kant provided).

Is not something similar at work in the occurrences of “1968”? Is not exactly this *something* at stake when we,

latecomers who are too young to have witnessed, let alone participated in, the events of “1968,” feel a conflicted moral stirring in us when we, from a safe temporal distance, commemorate the revolutionary demands of the students in Paris and New York and simultaneously mourn Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Bobby Kennedy, and the dead of My Lai? When we feel exhilarated and saddened, our enthusiasm and indignation point beyond the commemorated events that triggered them. They aim at a larger moral community and the regulative idea that constitutes its ultimate horizon.

This, it seems to me, is the legacy of the global network of events that bears the name “1968”: it is the benchmark that has been passed on to us in the hopes that we—the future of that past—will raise the bar further and perhaps create another, higher benchmark of our own making.

6. True, the Kantian idea of history may be too linear still. The concept of an event that changes history by marking a sort of threshold that cannot be undone would seem appropriate in the case of a singular, culturally identifiable history. But such

a concept strikes us as considerably less intuitive in a world that we perceive as irreducibly multifarious.

Perhaps the thought of a global event could best be illustrated by extending Wittgenstein's memorable comparison between language and an ancient city to history. “Our language,” Wittgenstein writes, “may be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.”<sup>5</sup> An event that deserves the name would function very much like yet another addition to this intricate urban landscape, an addition that has the potential to throw off the balance of the entire structure and create a new constellation of all the elements already in place merely by adding its own irreducible claim to significance. The new city consisting of  $(n + 1)$  elements is a city rebuilt from the ground up regardless of the fact that  $(n)$  elements had already been in place before. The force of the event is such that everything that went before is caught in its orbit and assigned a new place in the emerging structure: in one sense it preserves the old structure while

simultaneously distorting and reshaping it in its entirety.

7. The question that imposes itself when “1968” is discussed from a distance of 43 years concerns the nature of historical change. How do we conceive of such change? Do political, cultural, and technological shifts all work according to the same model, or would we give priority to one type of change over the others? If so, could alterations in different registers assume the lead role at different historical junctures? Although many of the exponents of “1968” may have perceived themselves as agents in the service of historical progress, it would seem more problematic to us, who have imbibed the lessons of postmodernity, to assume that there is one overarching historical narrative within which “1968” could be indexed and thus domesticated once and for all. This point has less to do with the Hegelian insight into the “cunning of reason”<sup>6</sup>—that is, a historical agent’s necessary blindness to the long-term effects and significance of his or her actions. Rather, it concerns the perspective of the observer of history, *our* viewpoint and its relation to the historical

events that are the subject of our analysis, our commentary, and perhaps even our desire “to give oneself, as it were a posteriori, a past from which one would like to descend as opposed to the one from which one actually descends”—an attempt always fraught with danger, according to Nietzsche.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the Hegelian solution is itself no longer acceptable to us, since we observe history in the full awareness that we *qua* observers are fully immersed in it—a point Kant had already made when he ascribed the status of an event to the emotions stirred in the observers of an epochal revolution. This is perhaps why the question of the advantage and disadvantage of history *for life* has to be a central concern of any treatment of historical occurrences that aspire to create a productive relation between past and present. From this vantage point, the historical can be reduced neither to the facticity of the past nor to the pressures of the contemporaneous, no matter how multifarious they may be.

Antiquarian history is too caught up in the mere preservation of the past. It lacks, as Nietzsche recognized, the necessary strength to “break and dissolve a particular past” (269) in the service of life.

In contrast, the presentist absorption

of past occurrences as lessons to be gleaned from history or in the form of monuments that are meant to privilege and commemorate certain historical moments and persons cannot do justice to the *events* in question. Rather, such an approach lends itself to a self-affirmation that has not been earned. Its ruthlessness amounts to the foreshortening of historical consciousness and vigilance by the—quite possibly questionable—consolation that, no matter how bad things may be, the world at large has definitely become a better place.

1 With this expression Jacques Derrida cautions against a certain usage of “September 11” in the interview with Giovanna Borradori contained in her *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003) 85.

2 For a telling and influential example of this latter tendency see Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), especially the chapter “The Sixties” (313–335).

3 Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2002).

4 Immanuel Kant, “The Conflict of the Faculties,” *Religion and*

*Rational Theology*, eds. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1996) 233–327. The translation included in this edition is Mary J. Gregor’s previously published version with slight revisions by Robert Anchor. Occasionally, I have substituted my own translations. All citations refer to the volume and page numbers of the *Akademieausgabe*, which are also included in the margins of the Cambridge edition.

5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text with a Revised English Translation*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) from section 18.

6 Hegel famously speaks of the

A viable alternative will have to steer clear of the antiquarian Charybdis and the presentist Scylla. It must allow for the hope that things can and do improve without giving in to the temptation of certainty. It will have read “1968” as signifying a complex constellation of individual events that remains open to future interpretations, rearrangements, and contestations and gives rise to a peculiar feeling on the part of the observer of history—namely, as Kant put it, a feeling “that borders closely on enthusiasm” (7:85).

“List der Vernunft” in his *Science of Logic*; see G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, 205 vols., eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969) 6:452.

7 Friedrich Nietzsche, “Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen, Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben.” *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 15 vols., eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich/Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag/de Gruyter, 1988; 2nd ed.) 1:243–334, here 270. The original reads: “sich gleichsam a posteriori eine Vergangenheit zu geben, aus der man stammen möchte, im Gegensatz zu der, aus der man stammt”; the translation is my own.

# The Aesthetic of Revolutionary Intent

## I.

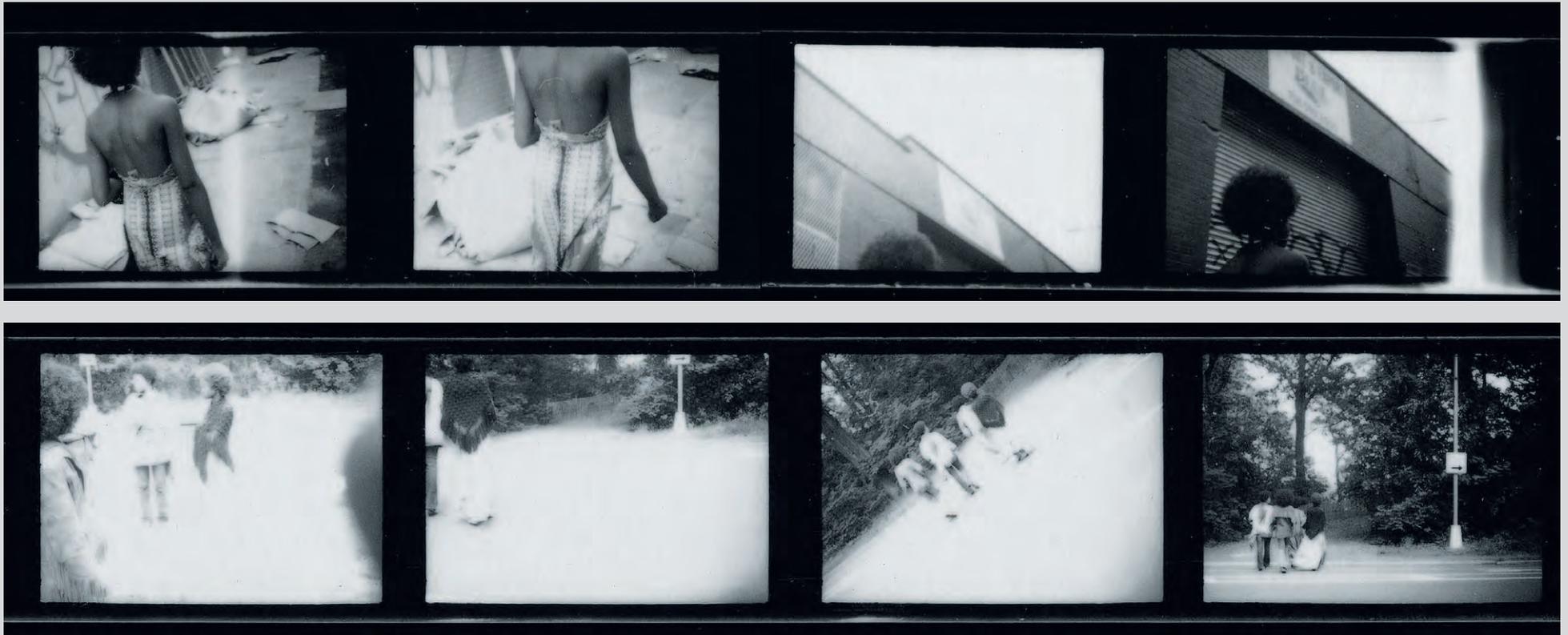
In 2006 the artist Mounir Fatmi sat down with David Hilliard to talk about the political platform and legacy of the Black Panther Party of which Hilliard was a founding member and Chief of Staff. There is a moment, touching in its capacity for empathy, when the former Panther denounces violence saying, “the death of any man diminishes the species of humanity.”<sup>1</sup> This sentiment reveals a humility that stands in opposition to the aggressivity and militancy commonly attributed to the Black Panthers, and seems sweetly anachronistic in an era of post-humanist ethics. The sentiment isn’t simply pre-postmodern; it is, in fact, pre-modern. Hilliard may or may not have been aware that he was quoting, almost verbatim, the upstart lapsed Catholic John Donne, who, in his “Meditation 17” from *Devotions upon Emergent*

*Occasions* of 1624 posits, “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.” Many an astute literary enthusiast would be able to reference the above quote, though the remainder of the meditation is more widely known. The rest of the text was immortalized by Ernest Hemingway in titling the novel hatched from his experiences while reporting on the Spanish Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Donne goes on to say, “and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” Thus an early 17th-century musing on mortality is revitalized as an ethicopolitical position in the 21st century, spoken from the lips of a 20th-century radical.

How big is three and a half centuries? The years between Donne and Hilliard cannot be adequately measured without noting the innumerable historical shifts that unfolded between the times of their shared moral stance. Though far too complex to discuss here in detail, consider Donne’s proto-imperial England: ascendant as a naval power, it was strong enough to support a merchant, and thus, slave trade to the first permanent American colonies. Those colonies, viable just four years before “Meditation 17” was written, eventually grew in fiscal might and Enlightenment fervor to declare

independence from Great Britain; full independence for its enslaved populations, however, was delayed until almost a century later, and, even then, ensuring the constitutional right to universal suffrage only came a full century after that.

It was at this latter point when Hilliard’s newly formed Black Panther Party for Self-Defense proposed its Ten-Point Program, listing a set of demands that, if satisfied, would provide equality for America’s black citizens, especially in urban areas. Complex, multifarious, and subjected to competing agendas, the Black Panther Party’s own internal structures and struggles mirrored the mid- to late-1960s’ fractalized social and political ethos across the United States and, indeed, across the world. Like so many other visual artists currently unpacking this era, Mounir Fatmi takes a revisionist look at the Black Panther Party to think through the political consequences of this late-1960s moment. From decolonization movements across Africa, to the civil rights and antiwar movements in the United States, to the popular demonstrations in Paris and Prague, the late 1960s, and more specifically 1968, stands totemic in the Western cultural imagination because it remains the



Coco Fusco, *Sightings 4* (B/W photos from a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert) (detail), 2004.

closest many post-World War II nations came to witnessing real political rupture. 1968 is not a year but a shorthand term for “revolution.”

“Revolution, I love you” was the apt slogan of the Paris uprising—encapsu-

lating exuberance at the prospect of radical social change. These popular movements happened against the giddy, psychedelic backdrops of sit-ins and be-ins, a budding Rastafarian movement, and Dutch flower power. Yet 1968 is the

emblematic year of the 1960s because it is the very year mass buoyancy contended with mass trauma. Before 1968 had finished, the year witnessed: the My Lai massacre and a battle outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; the

shootings that killed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy; the death of Che Guevara; an assassination attempt on Andy Warhol; and Black Power in full effect at the XIX Olympics in Mexico City, when track-and-field medalists, Tommie

Smith and John Carlos, raised their fists (as a symbol of the Black Power movement) at the award podium and elicited death threats.

1968 represents a particular image of radicalism as much as it represents a historical moment; and the image is enjoying a recent revival in several art projects. Both 2007 and 2008 saw numerous exhibitions reflecting on radicalism and its legacies in both the United States and Europe, and individual artists have been mining the period in their works. Sam Durant has edited a monograph on Emory Douglas, the Black Panther Party's Minister of Culture, to examine a particular iteration of revolutionary visual culture. Coco Fusco's 2004 video project, *a/k/a/ Mrs. George Gilbert*, mines an FBI archive to imagine the 1970s government surveillance program for activist Angela Davis. Though an accomplished academic even then, Davis was more notorious for her links to the Black Panthers. The collaborative project Otabenga Jones and Associates created a fictional artist persona who builds installations from ephemera redolent of the Black Pride movement — African sculptural objects, radical paperbacks, refuse from riots and late-1960s to early-1970s bric-a-brac

from black working-class homes. The Los Angeles-based performance collective, My Barbarian, pays kitschy, tongue-in-cheek homage to 1960s radical leftist politics, the sexual liberation movement, and other moments of countercultural transformation.

All of the above artists, in one project or another, have tested the limits of representations of antiracist radicalism, both past and contemporary. For instance My Barbarian's mellow song and video *Toward a Leftist Positionality* reiterates the language of anticolonial guerrilla activity, but the performance is depleted of all the emotive energy one expects from such a recitation, such as rage or indignation. The artwork makes apparent that a certain vernacular of radicalism is always coupled with a specific imagined performance of radicalism. My Barbarian's intentional failure to produce the "performing radical" illustrates the artist's reception of the era as an image, a form of performance, and a fiction even, and raises questions on the efficacy of radicalism as a utopian project. And if the late 1960s brought forth the proud black radical from the ashes of the New Negro, then the question remains, even 43 years later, of how black radicalism was politically productive as

an iteration of a utopian project — the ethical inclusion of all humankind in the body politic.

## II.

The beauty of the Black Panthers is that they had a beautiful look; with their bookish black turtlenecks, black leather jackets, voluminous black afros, and, yes, black pistols and shotguns. The Panthers lent an image to pro-blackness, to revolutionary intent, and even to the "blaxploitation" genre that followed soon afterward. The Panthers knew the value of a good picture, of course, installing Emory Douglas as the Minister of Culture, whose iconic, woodcut-like illustrations, composed of strong lines and flat, solid colors had the potent graphic impact of advertisements. What has come to be understood as the Panther aesthetic, however, has less to do with Douglas's designs and more to do with the party's uniform. Earlier in the century Marcus Garvey used standardized clothing effectively; his followers draped themselves in military garb while their leader accented his own ensembles with a touch of feathers and ostentation. Like Garvey, the Black Panthers intuitively understood that the

most successful uniforms were visually predictable, thus defining an identity for members, but touched with a bit of excess to discourage banality. The excess, in the Panther's case, was more affective than decorative. The uniform was a clear homage to urban street fashion and was intended to provide discipline for party members. But, despite the stated intent of the garb, Panthers (and Huey Newton, in particular) were "trapped within the frame of a potent, sexually vigorous, heterosexual black masculinity."<sup>3</sup> The affective excess, the fetish power of the Black Panther uniform, was that the clothes represented, yet barely contained, a sexy hostility. The uniform was both problematically virile and countercultural — a carnal affront to respectable bourgeois dress and values. The look attained a symbolic value that fused libidinal drives to revolutionary progressivism and lingers as the representative image — or the radical performance — of the Black Panthers.

It is within contemporary art practices that the symbolism and affective excesses of the late 1960s are taking shape and being examined and reworked. There are many ways to rework these excesses. One is the historiographic way, in which the



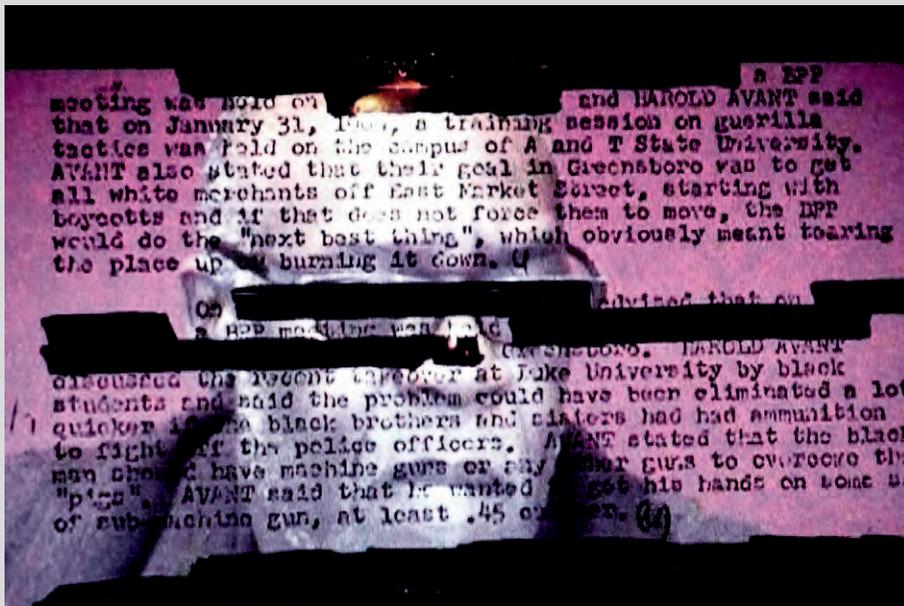
Emory Douglas, *Afro-American Solidarity with the Oppressed People of the World*, Poster from *The Black Panther* newspaper, 1969.

artist reissues and restages past information in the contemporary context, as did Sam Durant. Another is the performative approach, represented by Otabenga Jones and My Barbarian, in which the artist assumes the “radical” modes of collectivity and counterculture address, almost becoming 1960s-era subjects in order to create their art. Then there is a mode in which the artist resuscitates an archive, unpacks it, and often treats it as a form of fiction in order to offer revisionist accounts and expand the meaning of a historical moment.

The latter is the model Fusco used for her Angela Davis video and the one Mounir Fatmi adopts in his ongoing, multipart project on the FBI’s recently released Black Panther dossier, *Sortir de l’Histoire/Out of History*. Fatmi does not treat the FBI documents as an archive of factual information but as an image. When considered as images, the files can become the physical basis for an art installation, as they do when Fatmi has plastered gallery walls with pages and pages of documents, lending them a minimalist decorative effect. But, most important, the documents-as-image can be seen less as facts and more as a mode of representation subject to scrutiny and revision.

In the *History of History* (2006) video, created from footage of the David Hilliard interview, Fatmi juxtaposes two competing representations of the Black Panthers—Hilliard’s verbal versus the FBI’s textual representations. In this moving-image collage, pages from the federal files have been superimposed like a silkscreen over the interview of the elder statesman, opening up a space of negotiation between the interview and the running texts. As is common with such files, and particularly delightful in the context of competing images, the FBI pages are full of redactions, holes, caesurae, and missing information.

Fatmi takes his aesthetic cue directly from Andy Warhol, who often enlarged and silkscreened appropriated images directly onto hand-painted canvases. Warhol sourced his images directly from popular periodicals and employed the technique most effectively in his “Disaster” series of the early 1960s. This series repositioned traumatic moments in the news—the John F. Kennedy, Jr. assassination, civil rights marches turned police riots, execution chambers, fatal car crashes—from journalism onto a fine art canvas, so that the traumatic image competes with its own process of



Mounir Fatmi, *History of History*, 2006, video, 38 minutes. See also pages 118–125.

aestheticization. By juxtaposing mass media with fine art traditions, Warhol's "Disaster" series focuses attention on how images are framed and reframed for public consumption, forcing critical thought on the decoupling of the affective consequences of violence from the spectacle of violence. Fatmi, by borrowing Warhol's reframing technique, asks viewers of his video to adopt the same skeptical stance toward so-called objective information in the FBI files.

Just as Warhol's critical gestures are easily subsumed within his canvas's "pop" sensibility (in the pejorative sense), so are revolutionary gestures. When the Black Panthers gave a look to revolutionary intent—now known as "radical chic"—their uniform became fashion fodder even to the point of parody. Thus history's assessment of the Panthers has been more determined by the Panthers' image than by facts. Fatmi's project thus has a twofold purpose: to introduce the Panthers to his audiences and to rescue the Panthers' legacy from the *mise en abyme* of fashion references, from revolutionary failures, hysterics about violence, narratives of winners and losers, and from nostalgia that relegates all the Black Panther Party's relevance to the past.

Even though Paris, where Fatmi lives and works, had its own revolutionary moment in 1968, the artist chose the U.S.-based group as a model for his project. Why? Because the Black Panthers' goal for revolution was much more humble than the armed insurrection its detractors feared. The Panthers, ostensibly, were advocating for the investment and control of resources at the community level. And while that advocacy was sometimes based on Manichean notions of combating an imperial enemy, the valid question at hand was: What resources and tools will be necessary for the proper advancement of black people, especially in an urban context? For Fatmi, who is concerned with the representation of African immigrant communities in and around Paris, this is the primary question to pull out of history and into the present. Fatmi can only do so by decoupling the historic image of the Panthers—the hyperbolic performance of radicalism—from their still-relevant political goals. And in doing so, Fatmi reinvigorates the Black Panther's platforms as a tool for contemporary political action.

III.

Political writer, William F. Buckley, Jr., stood adamant against the social crises of the 1960s, having already founded the *National Review* magazine in 1955. His mixture of libertarianism, Catholic-based social values and adherence to neoliberal economic policies made him an architect of contemporary conservatism—a political position that is viscerally anti-Marxist and dependent on an idea of American exceptionalism. After previously supporting segregation in the southern United States, on the basis that the white population held the right to maintain political superiority, Buckley eventually amended his opinion, unable to justify the violence used to suppress black populations. His shift, mind you, was not based on any assumptions of inherent or deserved equality between the two racial groups. It is after this shift that in 1973 Buckley finds himself interviewing the Black Panther Party’s cofounder and Minister of Defense, Huey P. Newton, who opens the entire conversation with the hypothetical question of whether or not Buckley would have supported the American colonies’ insurrection against England.<sup>4</sup>

Remarkably photogenic, chain-smoking, and an awkwardly long-winded

conversationalist, Newton had clear intentions for his many ideas, though few clear ways of expressing them. Oftentimes Newton’s explanations would degenerate into what he himself called “a conglomeration of gibberish.”

Buckley, for his part, affected the practiced diffidence and biting wit of a British aristocrat under a thinly veiled frustration with his interviewee. And, when Newton made his first apologies for his “gibberish,” Buckley offered a somewhat sympathetic, “Why don’t we not talk about your limitations or my limitations ...”

However, it is at the limits of each of their respective logics—where their theories collide with facts—that history is most compelling. Newton came to realize how his important efforts at community organizing were frustrated by his initial advocacy for arming the community. Initially a self-defense measure against police brutality in the Bay Area’s black communities, guns became symbolic of armed insurrection and overwhelmingly symbolic of the Black Panthers themselves. After 1968 guns were more than a simple public relations problem for the Black Panthers; Newton probably came to realize that guns may be effective

as face-to-face deterrents but ineffective against the sniper-like attacks that felled Dr. Martin Luther King and the Kennedy brothers. “I myself reject violence,” Newton declared to Buckley, going on to say “...because I think the death of any man diminishes all of us because we’re involved with humanity.”

Dr. Newton died violently in 1989 from gunshot wounds to the face.

Mr. Buckley died in early 2008, in the midst of all the revisionist looks at the late 1960s. Buckley maintained his staunch

conservatism with zeal throughout the 1960s and ’70s, though later coming to repudiate the cultural conservatism and far-right wing elements of the modern Republican Party he was instrumental in shaping.

Christopher Buckley, the politically conservative son of William F. who was largely expected to carry on his father’s legacy after the elder’s death, resigned from his regular column with the *National Review* after endorsing Barack Obama during the 2008 Presidential campaign.

<sup>1</sup> Mounir Fatmi, “Interview with David Hilliard, Black Panthers,” *Hard Head* (artist’s book) (Amsterdam: Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, 2008), 100. This article is a transcript of the interview conducted by Mounir Fatmi and his colleague, Evelyne Toussaint. This interview became the basis for the video art work *History of History*.

<sup>2</sup> The novel is *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, first published in 1940 by

Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York. Or Hemingway, Ernest, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Reid-Pharr, *Once You Go Black: Choice, Desire, and the Black American Intellectual* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 141. In his book’s chapter on Huey P. Newton, Reid-Pharr discusses the fetishization of the black body in late 1960’s political discourse. He foregrounds sexual desire in

order to problematize both black nationalist attempts at articulating a new black subject and sympathetic non-black peoples’ misguided reception of this new black subject.

<sup>4</sup> Huey P. Newton, “How Does It Go with the Black Movement.” Interview by William F. Buckley. *Firing Line*. KLRN-TV. San Antonio, Texas, 11 Feb. 1973.



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PORTFOLIO

# Project of the American Dream: Founding Visions of the American City

JUSTIN A. DORO

*We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*

—Thomas Jefferson, the United States of America  
Declaration of Independence<sup>1</sup>

*Washington is the symbolic heart of our nation, and the physical expression of the Constitution with its three separate branches of government.*

—National Capital Planning Commission<sup>2</sup>

## We Hold These Truths to Be Self-Evident

As rhetorical utterances, “government” and “city” reside on the public side of the spatial dialectic of public/private. On the private side stand “property” and “dwelling,” respectively, which together form the first American Architecture: the architecture of Liberty. Washington, unlike any other American city, because of the direct link between government and city, always stands as simultaneously past, present, and future. Herein we are presented with the ever-present understanding of Washington as Monument.

A monument is “a structure, such as a building or sculpture, erected as a memorial.”<sup>3</sup> Within the architectural syntax, the object or structure is the signifier of a collective cultural memory (signified), erected as an architectural sign. Typologically this sign is always in relationship to a past or present event or person that in some way shaped the collective conscience of a people or person. The act of construction is the codifying of an experience, in the same way a memorial text is written to deal with the trauma, excitement, suspense, and so on of said event or person. This codification is the process of architectural construction; the monument typically is codifying such a heightened emotional experience of the past, which causes this process to become more exposed through the utterance than in the process of constructing, for example, a supermarket, wherein the experience is often habitual and to come.<sup>4</sup> As such, the monument, Washington, D.C., stands in for the past, present, and future American Dream.

In intention, Washington, District of Columbia (D.C.), stands as the physical manifestation of the Constitution of the United States of America (the Constitution). These two

structures act within their respective rhetoric as syntactical representations of the “American Dream.” Herein the values of a people are architecturalized in a system of government and in a city plan. As such, Washington alone, since its foundation, is simultaneously government and city, allowing for the evolution of a form of dialogue between the language used to capitulate a government, and the language used to capitulate a city. This founding, this simultaneous utterance, is what forms a second American Architecture: the architecture of freedom.

The private was systematically devised first, for without the liberation from starvation and poverty, man is unable to consider beyond his or her own well-being. A liberated man is capable of considering more than the self, which therefore demands a second architecture. This second architecture, “could exist only in public; it was a tangible, worldly reality, something created by men to be enjoyed by men rather than a gift or a capacity, it was the man-made public space or marketplace that antiquity had known as the area where freedom appears and becomes visible to all.”<sup>5</sup> The architecture of freedom is the formation of space within which man is compelled to speech and action. “Through [speech and action], men distinguish themselves instead of merely being distinct; there are modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but qua men.”<sup>6</sup> This space “is not the city-state in its physical appearance, it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be.”<sup>7</sup> While the space of the private is formed and often objective, the architecture of freedom bares the burden of being an object seeking to form, collect,

Fig. 1 Alex S. MacLean, Aerial view of Washington, D.C., 1991.



inform, or effect a space into being. Publicness is created out of the interaction of others. As such, this architecture is not as the private, an object, rather it is the space between.

This founded and formed didactic of public and private, seated at the heart of the American conscience, gives form and function to the pursuit of the “American Dream” and/or “Democracy.” The history of the project for the capital city of Washington, D.C., architecturally renders and stores the history of the American people in the search of these ideals. At the heart of this history lie the locating, protecting, and forming of liberty and freedom. The city of Washington, particularly in conception, and associatively in development, is an ever-expanding architectural palimpsest of American hope.

#### Sign Versus Symbol: A Derridian/Hegelian Speculation

An investigation of the national capital of the United States of America, the spectral residence of the American Dream, focusing particularly on the city’s founding acts (the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, Thomas Jefferson’s sketches for the Capital City, and Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s sketches and Comprehensive Plan), traces the progression of the American People’s union from a nation to a State.<sup>8</sup> Nation and State are often used incorrectly as interchangeable concepts. In Randolph Bourne’s terms, “the “nation (or country) forms the basic idea of society” — concerning the “non-political aspects of people: its ways of living, its personal traits, its literature and art, its characteristic attitudes towards life; a concept of peace, tolerance, living and letting live” (Bourne, 357). “The State is the country or

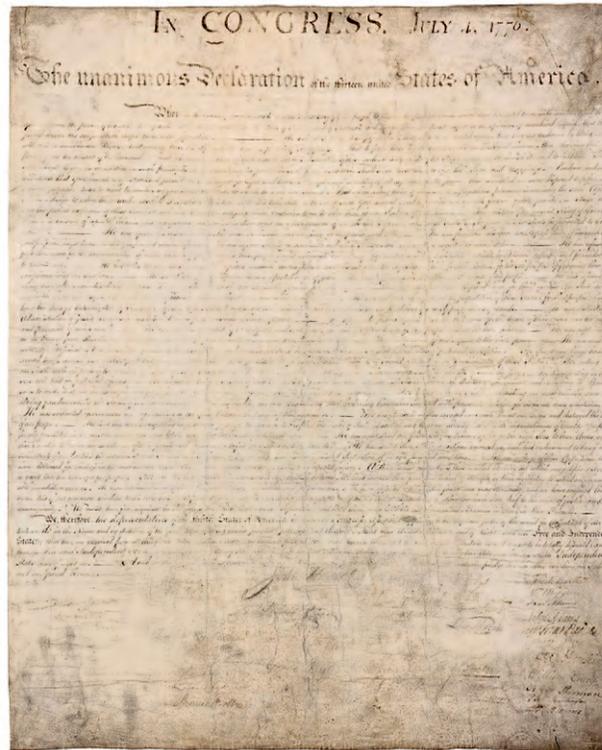


Fig. 2 Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, 1776.

nation acting as a political unit, it is the group acting as a repository of force, determiner of law, arbiter of justice” (Bourne, 358). Bourne goes on to describe the transition of America as nation, to America as State, as the ruination of a multiscaled society of free interaction, memorialized in order to reposit the dynamism of freedom for fear of losing liberty. This movement becomes crystallized in the enduring vision of Washington as a monument, rather

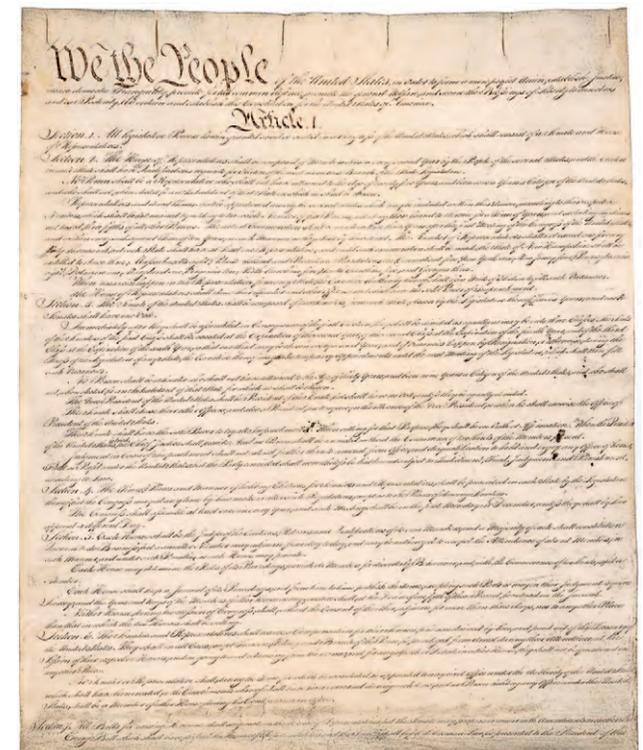


Fig. 3 The United States Constitution, 1787.

than as the dynamic and plural city that is the capital of a dynamic and plural nation. Washington is the graveyard of America.

Within its 100 square miles stands monument after monument, within which resides the specters of every American act in the name of her beautiful Dream. Her buildings stand as gravestones (the memorials), processions (the avenues), mausoleums (the government offices

## Washington as monument remains a symbol, a crystallization that contains the meaning of America.

and libraries), and funerary temples located on her grand lawn (the White House and Capitol on the Mall).

Washington as monument remains a symbol, a crystallization that contains the meaning of America. The symbol stabilizes, forms, and values democratic forms and practices, literally killing the necessary dynamism and plurality that is Democracy, constructing America as its antithesis, a State.<sup>9</sup> In this image of America we find the source of the idea of America as a “democratic State,”<sup>10</sup> which is almost a contradiction in terms. Randolph Bourne argues that the Constitution is a kind of contradiction to its own preamble, creating a State that might appear democratic through the names it gives to the bodies of its government, but in action remains as despotic as the monarchy of England. By allowing the executive branch complete control over foreign affairs, the Constitution sets the stage for the creation of a State, which unifies the “significant classes,” against foreign enemies and against anyone and anything that might be seen as potential threat to the preservation of the State. Similarly, the city of Washington stores the violence of Statehood in her many monuments, glorifying the sacrifice of life to an already sacrificed ideal.

A Washington as a dynamic and plural city that is the capital of a democracy, regardless of whether that democracy is representative or direct, must continually

and constantly produce, in the Derridian-Hegelian sense, signs, that are “America.” The symbol holds back the nation (or spirit) by “compelling the [nation] to an effort of mechanical memory.”<sup>11</sup> For Derrida, symbol means the representation of an intuition, which retains any portion of what naturally belongs to the intuition, and sign “is some immediate intuition, representing a totally different import from what naturally belongs to it” (Derrida, 83). The production of a sign, or “memory and imagination,” is temporal, potentially rendering “America” temporal. This temporality and transparency potentially renders “America” as a free nation, possibly understood as a free collective spirit represented to both the nation and other states.

### *Archive Versus Monument*<sup>12</sup>

Overlying the much more literal question of sign versus symbol is always the question of Washington’s programme. “Sign” and “symbol” are both uttered repositories, constructed as vessels within which memories are housed. What stands in question is the method by which the memories are housed. The monument is an object, and as such stands opaquely as other. It is a place in which memories are suppressed and repressed as a giving away, into a space that has been forever locked. The monument is the form of violent forgetfulness. The act that is remembered

is compromised by the violence of the singularity and permanence of the representative object. The archive is a field of relations under a subject, and as such stands transparently as collective. It is space within which memories are collected in order to remember and to preserve. The archive is the form of violent remembrance. The act that is remembered is re-created in service of the ever-present archive’s hope for the future.

### *Commencement and Commandment*

On July 4, 1776, the arch-patriarch of the American Nation, declared to the world, uttered in the most public fashion and private of forms, the grievances of a people who, for the first time, are given voice as such. In Thomas Jefferson’s letter to the King of England, “the American” was publicly archived for the first time. What had remained contained within the private letters and public forums of America since the late 16th century was put before the world in an act of commencement (physical, historical, and ontological), and commandment (nomological).<sup>13</sup> This “sign” stands as simultaneously the beginning of the United States of America and the authority by which the American People are united. The Declaration of Independence provides a fiction, a spirit of a nation, a future to come, the American Dream (fig. 2).

“The Declaration of Independence” signifies, in the rhetoric of a letter, a powerfully private form of signification, which, in this case, is purposefully and strategically reproduced as its dialectical opposite, a public speech. What makes this document, this archive, stand out above all the letters and speeches given before containing a vision of the American Dream is simultaneously its time

and its form. The “Declaration” is positioned as emanating simultaneously from the lips of all the American people, for the first time, as well as standing in perpetual reserve as the authority by which those voices are producing signs.

#### *Translation: An Exergue*

It is in the very nature of all signs and symbols to be translated, and this translation is often both linguistic and rhetorical. While the “Declaration” was translated to other languages such as French, it also was rhetorically translated into government systems and architecture, the two most powerful forms in the history of the project of the American Dream. It is the rhetorical form by which the American Dream is produced externally, therefore causing the sign the “Declaration” or the “Declaration of Independence” to always already be standing for the American Dream.

Ontologically the first translation is signified by the “Articles of the Confederation,” a “loose and growing nationalism,” unified not by a State, but by the nomological principle vested in the “sentiments of the Declaration.”<sup>14</sup> As “[e]very little schoolboy is trained to recite ... the new nation was falling into anarchy,” as a result of the lack of unified and strong power center (a State), therefore leading to the necessity of the Constitutional Convention. Randolph Bourne argues that rather than necessity, it was fear that drove the Founding Fathers to their founding act, the writing of the “Constitution of the United States” (fig. 3). It may have been fear disguised as necessity or it may have been necessity disguised as fear; regardless of the underlying cause, the “Articles” lacked the degree

of commencement and commandment the Founding Fathers demanded necessary for the American nation, causing the production of the “Constitution,” the seemingly ever-present archive of the American Dream. The “Constitution” will forever stand as the beginning of United States of America as State. While the “Declaration,” and consequently the “American Revolution” and the “articles,” are the founding acts of the American People, the signing of the “Constitution” by the Founding Fathers is the act by which the United States of America are founded. These two commencements are often considered to be dialectally opposite in their nomological form, which will remain the cornerstone of this study. In 1787 the “Constitution,” in Article I, Section 8, the “Residence Act,” provisioned for a seat of government, a locality within which the “machinery by which the nation, organized as a State, carries out its State functions.”<sup>15</sup> The two initial proposals for the city of Washington — a small sketch done in March 1791 by the arch-patriarch himself, Thomas Jefferson, and Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s plan drawn during the Summer of 1791 — stand associatively as retroactive signs of the American Dream, easily aligning beside the “Declaration” and the “Constitution,” respectively, as similar in nomological form. These plans are in fact subsequent translations of the American Dream, constructed in the rhetoric of Architecture. There have been many subsequent submissions to the project for the city of Washington, most of which easily align their principles with one of these two documents, and therefore stand not as exterior discourse with the architects of Washington, but simply as readings of the archive. For this reason, this study will locate itself around Jefferson and L’Enfant’s projects.

#### **The American Tongue Begins to Speak: Jefferson’s Impression**

*Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.*

—Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825<sup>16</sup>

*No doubt there is a grandeur in the Declaration of Independence, but it consists not in its philosophy and not even so much in its being “an argument in support of an action” as in its being the perfect way for an action to appear in words. And since we deal here with the written, and not the spoken word, we are confronted with one of the rare moments in history when the power of action is great enough to erect its own monument.*

—Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*<sup>17</sup>

With [Jefferson] came into being “radical America,” or rather the ambiguous conscience of American intellectuals, who acknowledge the foundations of the democratic system while opposing its concrete manifestations.

—Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*<sup>18</sup>

#### *Missive Speech*

On July 4, 1776, a sign was produced, known as the Declaration of Independence, which would forever change the fate of the American people. At present, most people would refer to “the Declaration” as a text or document.

These typological names can be understood as necessary in the context of what will occur in the history of the American people following the reading of “the Declaration.” If one looks at the original paper on which the words of the Declaration were drafted, and the plates created for the reproduction of “the Declaration” for distribution purposes, one might notice that on the page are not only words, but are also lines to indicate spaces, or pauses during the reading of the words. This begins to reveal the Declaration of Independence as a performance, intended primarily for the world stage, but also for stages of smaller scale, particularly within the “nation.”

“The Declaration,” at the time of its production, was, and could continue to be, understood most clearly as a sign. “The sign unites an ‘independent representation’ and an ‘intuition,’ in other words, a concept (signified) and a sensory perception (of a signifier).”

“The body of the sign [is] animated by the intention of signification, just as a body (Körper) when inhabited by Geist becomes a proper body (Lieb).” In this sense we return to the “nation” as the body, in this case “animated” as its proper role as a result of the production of the sign. Therefore, the American people are revealed to themselves as themselves, and as other. That other, in this case, is other than the British. “Hegel knew that this proper and animated body was also a tomb. The tomb is the life of the body as the sign of death, the body as the other of the soul, the other of the animate psyche, of the living breath.” The tomb is the receptor of the external. In this case it is the space within which the injuries and usurpations occur, are received, and then are stored, “maintain[ed] in reserve . . . the family crypt. It consecrates

the disappearance of life by attesting to the perseverance of death. Thus the tomb also shelters life from death. It warns the soul of possible death, warns (of) death of the soul, turns away from death.”<sup>19</sup>

#### Model

In March of 1791, Thomas Jefferson produced a Sketch of a plan for the Capital City (fig. 4), a city that was to be the reigning figure of his American dream, the metropolis of his dreamscape, and what in fact did he draw, an anti-urban metropolis. The word “metropolis” comes from the Greek words “meter,” meaning mother, and “polis,” meaning city or town. The central figures, the House for Congress and the House for the President, were formed from the established European traditions of Classical architecture, yet were stripped of their “inaccessibility.” They stand no longer as monuments to the State, but simply as the public house of the nation, yielding the capital not as a grandiloquent fantastic other, removed, in purpose and poise, from the metropolises of capital, but as a model city, as a capital of classical democracy residing as the meetinghouse of the nation, wherein scale is expanded horizontally rather than vertically. Anti-urban America is born.

Washington was to be a modest mother city, a city “of the people, by the people, for the people,” wherein the architectural translation of the metaphysical scale of the city is not also a physical enlargement, but rather a perceptual enlargement. The city stands not removed and other to the nation, as does the manifestation of State, rather, this project is a project of principle. The city is not about the accrual of capital for the sake of power, it is



Fig. 4 Thomas Jefferson, Sketch of the Capital City, 1791.

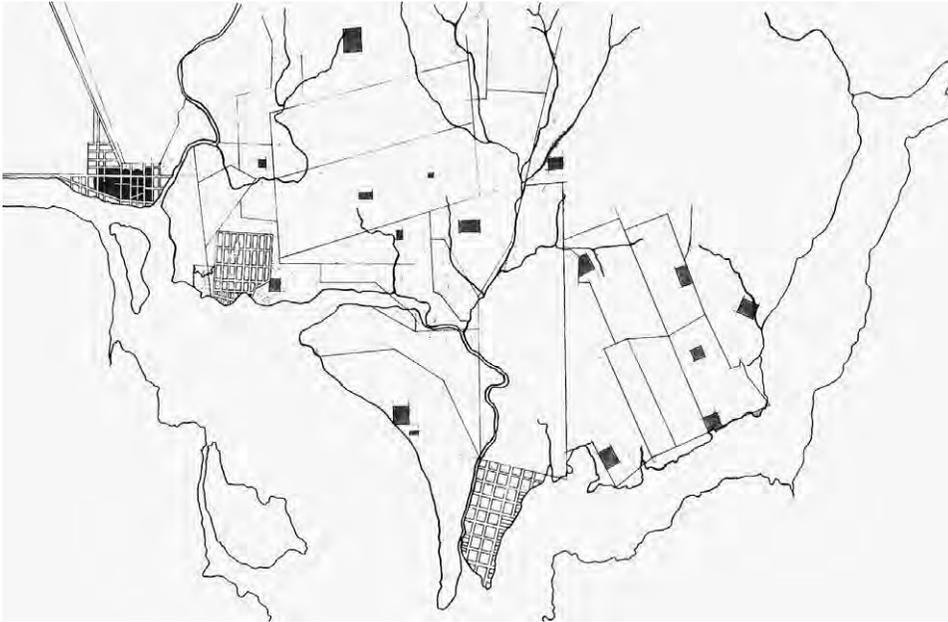


Fig. 5 Analysis of the Field of Opportunity on which Jefferson drafted his Capital City.

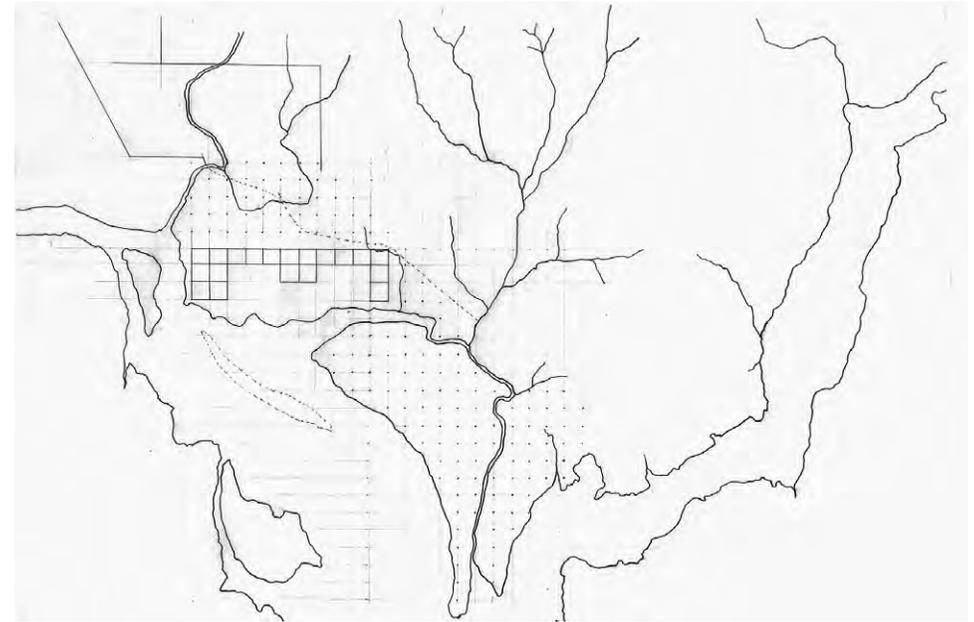


Fig. 6 Analysis of private structures in Jefferson's Capital City.

about the unsolicited expression of the united principles of America, wherein it stands not as a stately address, but as the shared mother of all the cities of America. In this way it is an architectural translation of the Declaration, for the form at the scale of nation is relatively private while the production is in the most public of forms.

The capital is constructed like a farm, with its plots, its out buildings, and at its center a meetinghouse. This meetinghouse is a meetinghouse among many, but is also the mother and model meetinghouse of the nation. It is the capital because it is the source, the expressed stable

principle by which the static and different values of a nation are held together.

#### *Agrarian: The Site of Liberty*

Jefferson approached site not as a landscape, but rather as a field of opportunity on which could be grafted a system of organization (fig. 5). As such, the land is no longer experienced and dwelled on, but rather is objectively portioned in service of a social order. For Jefferson it was not nature itself that was desirable, but rather the construction of a structure to support a natural system of

production. Jefferson's plans are drawings of boundary; line signifies the threshold between land and water, between public and private and of property. The boundary demarks a block, or proportion grouping that is then further divided into plots as in the sketches Jefferson included as a part of a note he drafted to Washington discussing his plan for the city. The note goes on to describe in great depth the actual size and shape of these plots, methods for acquiring the land, and the locations of public structures.<sup>20</sup> The spaces of public structure and public gathering are marked by the only manipulation of the rigid gridiron, either by the



Fig. 7 Matt Kozlowski, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, Charlottesville, VA, 2005.



Fig.8 State of Virginia Capitol Building, Richmond, VA.

leaving out of a boundary in the case of the public structures, or the distortion of the grid by the river, wherein Jefferson locates the market. Adjacency to water plays a crucial role in the situating of these structural anomalies. Water, as the time period's most expedient space of shipment, becomes a kind of vein of influx, feeding, connecting, and bounding the otherwise limitless organization and ambition of the grid. What casts the structure is not a drawing of streets, but rather a drawing of property, thus the city is the manufactured collective of adjacent properties and fed by the lifeline of water (fig. 6). What is drawn

is a space, but a space of private ownership, the purchased field of liberty.

At Monticello, Jefferson's own home, he constructed his American Dream – his (anti-)urban, (anti-)monumental, (anti-)federal, agrarian democracy (fig. 7). This project for a much smaller scale social organization is modeled in a similar fashion to the Sketch of Washington, with slight nuances to suit the different programme of plantation. The fields on which the crops are grown and livestock fed are like the plots of the city; the house, standing on the highest hill is likened to the public structures; and the lower wings

of the house, the slaves quarters, are like the market space. In Jefferson's note to Washington he does mention that the land is higher in the desired location for the public structures, but in the case of Monticello, rather than the water being the boundary from which the lattice expands, the hilltop becomes the structured center of ownership, from which the citizen can purvey his land.

America is presented through the ideal residence of the American citizen, wherein the landowner, free from necessity, is at liberty to concern "himself" with matters of public happiness, either within "his" home, or outside of

## Manfredo Tafuri describes this type of architecture as the vision of the “domestic heroism” of [Jefferson’s] classicism.

“his” own agrarian state. In essence it is simply the ownership and control of space, by which a man gains liberty in order to pursue freedom. It is important to note that Jefferson’s liberty was a result of the ownership of slaves, a tradition reaching back to Jefferson’s historic model of agrarian democracy, the Greeks. This property, along with capital invested in family, provides for the citizen’s, or male property owner’s, liberation from natural need, so that his focus can be beyond the self, and toward public happiness.<sup>21</sup> Monticello stands as Jefferson’s architectural translation of the term “liberty,” free from the bounds of need, a classical villa resides over its property, looking out beyond its own borders and up into the domed heavens, dreaming up “a more perfect union,” expressed outwardly as the structure itself.

### *Monument: The Dream of Freedom*

At the center of most of Jefferson’s architectural representations of American life stands some form of a classical temple, “ready-made in Europe, adapted to glorify the new democratic institutions made ‘sacred’ by this social temple.”<sup>22</sup> This object, often the most solidified and traditionally structured piece in Jefferson’s work, is intended to serve not simply as the formulated center of an organizational structure, but as a representation of the

ideal image of said structure. In the lengthy wake of the slow diminution of the power of the divine, mankind has looked inward for new epistemological forms as sources of hope. As such, these figures in Jefferson’s work serve to revive the strength of democracy and of the republic by rhetorical use of symbols of the societies who founded such ideals. In this way these structures stand as monuments to the history of the forms of social governance that are to lead this new people to a better life.

Jefferson’s project for the capitol building of the state of Virginia, in Richmond, is the most exemplary structure of this type. It “became a constantly referred to and repeated model (see Walter’s Girard College, Latrobe’s Bank of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia, the works of Strickland, etc.).”<sup>23</sup> The building type was founded as a form of accessible monument. Manfredo Tafuri describes this type of architecture as the vision of the “domestic heroism” of [Jefferson’s] classicism. The values (read: images of Reason) were imported from Europe already elaborated in all their weighty solemnity, but they were immediately stripped of anything that might isolate them from civil life. In other words, they were deprived of their aura of inaccessibility.<sup>24</sup> The House of the Gods, through displacement and a sited transparency, is transformed into the house of the People. This notion of domesticity as dual form for public and

private reveals the double negative inherent in the anti-urban hegemony of Jefferson’s architecture. Herein the form of the citizen’s house (Monticello, fig. 7) is the same as the citizens’ house (the Capitol of Richmond, fig. 8). The duality of form makes sense in the context of the developing bourgeois structures of public space as parlor and later coffeehouse, but as a result of the historical categorization of this form already produced in Europe, the necessity for a difference between forms of public and private becomes difficult.<sup>25</sup>

This typology is a result of its blurring of difference between forms of liberty and forms of freedom. As such, the success of this formal accessibility, the democratic space, is a result of the situating of this type in the urban structure. The appearance of the form still remains the same, yet as a result of the urban and social reinstallation, this structure as inhabited monument provides the grounds for the discourse on the organization of a society. This hyperbolic architectural allegory alludes to the ever-present consideration of the form of American government as a democratic Republic, rather than true democracy, wherein the laws of the nation are drafted by a selected few, elected from among the citizens. The space of general challenge is outside the space of discourse on governance. Within the structure of the making of this monument to the form of government, the vision of the dream lies in the accessible space around the distanced structure, as in the blocks noted in Jefferson’s sketch as the sites for the Capitol, the President, and public walks (fig. 10). The buildings sited alongside public spaces store the memory of violence, a violence that is apart from the abstract space of the collective consciousness.



Fig. 9 The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

*(Anti-)urban (the Space of Freedom)*

Jefferson's most successful production of this formal integration – of order and liberty – is his design for the University of Virginia at Charlottesville (fig. 9).

The university campus, according to the Jeffersonian statute, must be an “academic village”: his agrarian ideology thoroughly imbues the pedagogical program. Organized on an open “U” scheme, converging on the central domed library, the university is divided into a series of individual pavilions – self-sufficient didactic nuclei complete with academic residences, joined together by a continuous portico. In the formal organization, order and liberty seek their integration. On the one hand the pavilions, all different from one another, demonstrate the extreme flexibility of classical models. (And it is significant that the walls dividing the gardens, placed between the didactic nuclei and the residences, are given an undulating form, astonishing for its formal liberty.) On the other hand the general plan and the strictness of the concluding rotunda explicitly allude to the stability, permanence, and absoluteness of the institution.

Jefferson thus produced the first eloquent image of what was to be the most dramatic effort of the intellectuals of “radical America”: reconciliation of the mobility of values with the stability of principles, the individual impulse – always stimulated to the point of anarchy or neurosis – with the social dimension.<sup>26</sup>

What is not mentioned in Tafuri's description of this project is the lawn itself. It is in fact the space that is made by

these structures that articulates one of America's first and most eloquently formed public spaces. Tafuri clearly spoke of the formal “liberty” taken in the residence halls, but it is also important in this context to understand that in the lower levels were also included residences for servants and slaves, perpetuating the bourgeois reliance on the statute of slavery for the provision of liberty. This collective form takes the character of Monticello, removes it from its

agrarian arcadia, and reproduces it as a part of a micro-urban organization. The library is a similar structure to the Virginia Capitol, yet in this case, the structure was created as a part of a new whole, rather than inserted into an existing social structure. The library borrows again from the forms of antiquity, but in this case the lineage is much more direct. Rather than being a descendent of the empirical and stately structures of the European Enlightenment,

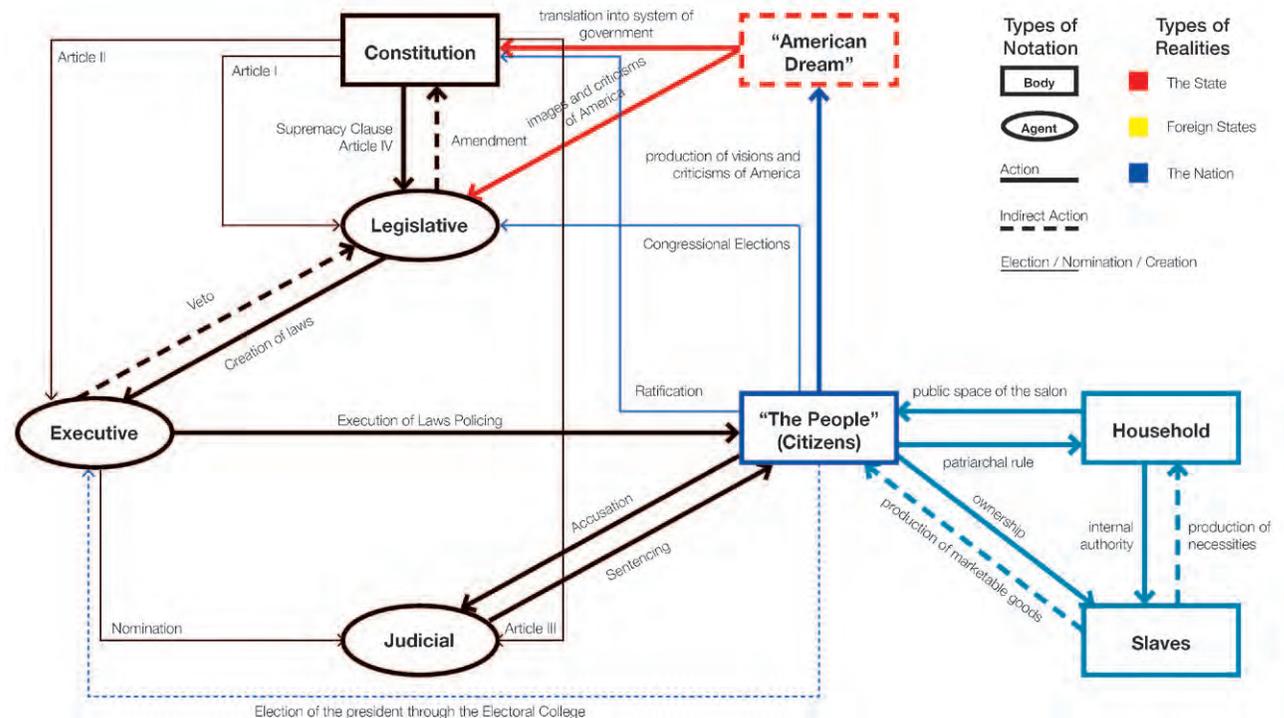


Fig. 10 Analysis of the public structures in Thomas Jefferson's Sketch of the Capital City.

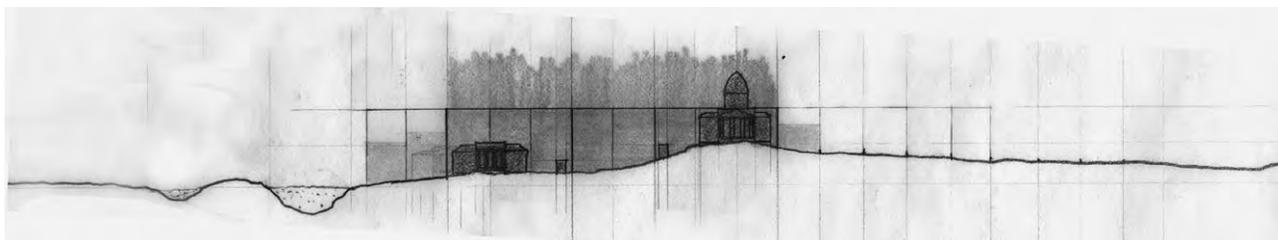
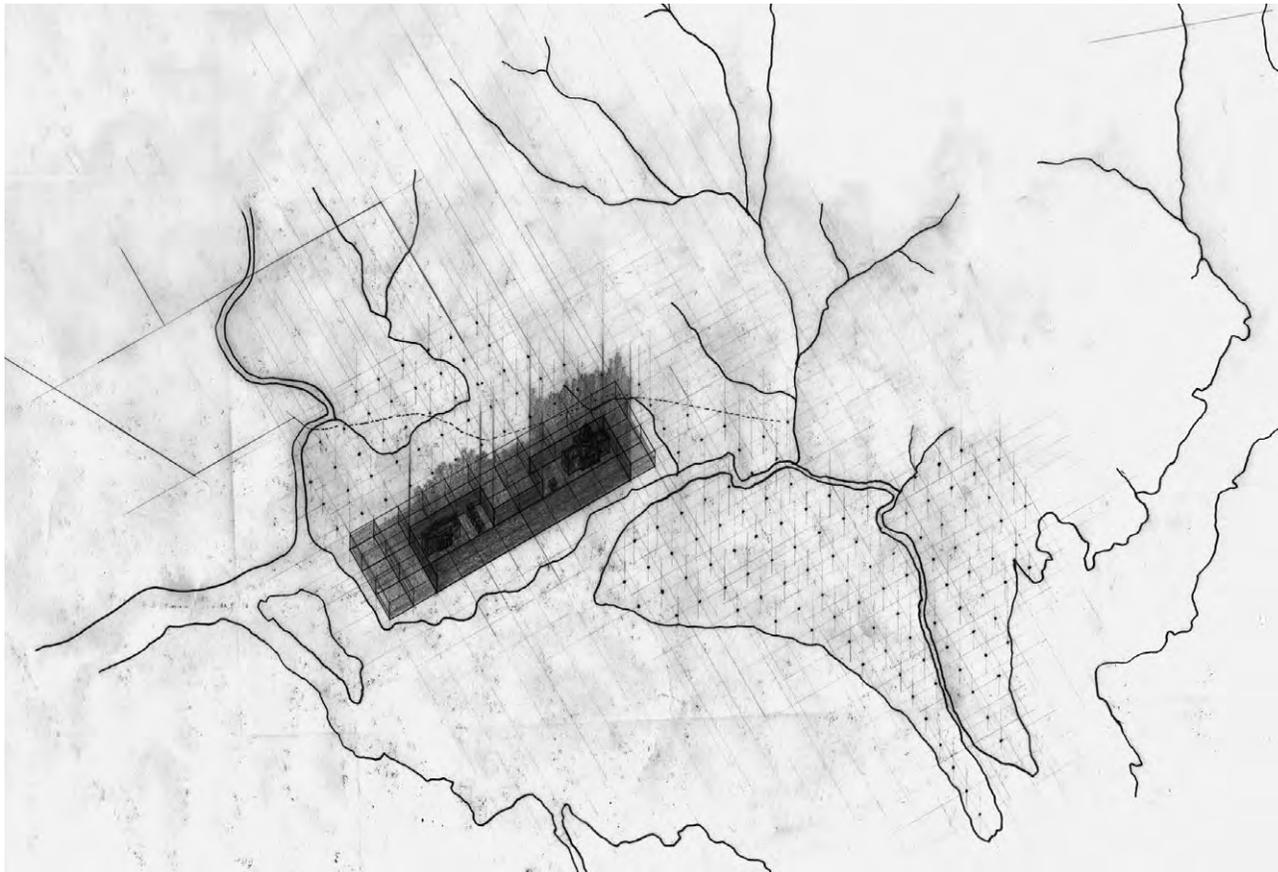


Fig. 11 Analysis of the power relationships in Thomas Jefferson's 1791 sketch of the Capital City.

which drew much of their classical vocabulary from the Roman and later Christian basilica, the library is a simple rotunda echoing back to the Pantheon in Rome. Similar to the Pantheon, the library is a collection or repository collective of the shapers of our worldview. Herein is the monument of the past future, the dream, connected to the present, the possibility, via a portico, which collectively frames a future present, the space of Freedom. Where is this future present? Where then is the formulated covenant that collectively pushes each to excel in the name of the good of the whole?

This space is not the collection of the residences, the rotunda, and the portico; it is what is collectively produced and continually reproduced by these structures as well as the inhabitants of these specific spaces. The most readable and formed element that utters the formulation of this space is the yard, and in particular, the perspective from within the yard. Within this space, the collective presence is visible, whether physically or as architectural symbols, and is perceivable as more than simply each experienced piece. This perspective of the collective form is a phenomenally transparent space, which, as a result of its contextually inherited programme, is the uttered half of the architectural dialectic simultaneously produced in this experienced representation.<sup>27</sup> As a result of the architectural framing, the yard is simultaneously the collective of the project and the absence within the project; it is both the ground and the temporal; it is the hope and it is the fear. Jefferson produced, at University of Virginia, a new scale of archive, still dressed in the structures of temples, but what is stored is of Man.

### *Private/Public*

Much like the University of Virginia, Jefferson's 1791 Sketch of the Capitol is for a new site. Programmatically, the design intention is much more in line with the Virginia Capitol for the obvious reason of both projects being a seat of government, but also the blurring of public and private re-enters this project as a kind of Jeffersonian precondition for urban life. The spatial diagram of power and governmental structure (fig. 10), in relationship to public and private for Jefferson's design, locates all structures on the same plane (fig. 11). This ground is that same field of opportunity on which the Jeffersonian grid is later cast. It is the open dreamscape of the liberated man, opportunistically producing for the self and the nation. On the field of opportunity is drawn a grid that extrudes up. Each plot, each liberated man, is given free reign within that horizontal block, to pursue the heavens above.<sup>28</sup> At the center are the formed monuments, seated, in on a waterfront yard. Jefferson does describe some of that open space to be utilized for a market, perpetuating the relative equality of public and private interest. This additional blurring is later consumed by the entrance of free trade, for commerce has no place within the cloistered structure of the "academic village." In the dynamic and social life of an urban organization, commerce must exist in order for the city to survive as such. The public space found at Monticello and at the University of Virginia survives as a result of liberation. In the urban setting, there exists competition with respect to private well-being, and therefore the public space of competitive production exists alongside the private space of competitive production.

### *Liberty and Freedom*

The consistent blurring of the public and the private stands in direct contradiction to the Habermasian necessity for distinct spaces of public reasoning and private practice.<sup>29</sup> Jefferson's models of agrarian democracy act as a representative allegory in space making for the competitive nature of both the market and "the political." Chantal Mouffe defines "the political" as, "the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations, antagonism that can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations."<sup>30</sup> Mouffe goes on to describe a form of democracy founded on "Agonistic Pluralism," wherein the rationalist model of spaces of exchange free of subjective individualization are revealed as utopic and contradictory, making place for free exchange as competition. The contradiction lies in the inability to truly separate private from public in the face of pluralism and dynamism in order to create consensus without violence.<sup>31</sup> This necessary space of Violence, an act Arendt refers to as "Revolution,"<sup>32</sup> bears with it a reciprocal contradiction wherein "reconciliation of the mobility of values with the stability of principles, the individual impulse — always stimulated to the point of anarchy or neurosis — with the social dimension."<sup>33</sup> This simultaneity of public and private bears a kind of anxiety, for in the face of plurality, principle becomes either holistically unfounded or perpetually temporal.

### **"Form[ing] a More Perfect Union":**

#### **The Establishment of the American Capital**

*We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

—The Founding Fathers, *The Constitution of the United States of America*<sup>34</sup>

The seat of power to them was the people, but the source of the law was to become the Constitution, a written document, an enduring objective thing, which, to be sure, one could approach from many different angles and upon which one could impose many different interpretations, which one could change and amend in accordance with circumstances, but which nevertheless was never a subjective state of mind, like the will.

—Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*<sup>35</sup>

Washington thus constitutes a sort of American "bad conscience," which, however, can exist undisturbed alongside the iron-clad laws of industrial development. What makes this passive duplicity possible is that the city is a monument; as a monument it is free to demonstrate continually and openly its own untimeliness.

—Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*<sup>36</sup>

## Beginnings

In 1787, America had declared her Independence from the British, had won the Revolutionary War, and had been functioning under the Articles of the Confederation. This new nation at this time had survived the revolution and therefore had liberated itself. The authority granted by the Declaration could no longer sustain the American people as such. In the heat of the Revolutionary War, the American people were joined by the prospective freedom from the violence committed on them collectively by the British government. Once liberated from the British, the Declaration as the projected future, had become the procured present, which therefore simultaneously freed the American people from both the authority of the British government and the authority of the Declaration. The completion of the process of deconstruction of the British authority through the violence of a declaration of negative authority demands in its very nature its opposite, a constructive utterance of authority.

The very short period following the end of the Revolutionary War and the drafting of the Constitution is often referred to as the Reconstruction period. Inherent in this choice of description is an obvious architectural allegory, used here to remind us that even though most beginnings, particularly at this scale, are a result of free action, which provides liberation, there is always a ground in which that foundation is dug. The United States of America was a newborn nation, still bloody from the pains of birth, deeply in debt to a naive and decadent regime on the cusp of a similar revolt, and held together by a loosely laid confederation created to overcome the British. With the Revolutionary War won, the uniting principle was



Fig. 12 Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Plan of Washington D.C., 1791.

lost, the common enemy was overcome, and therefore the State, or "the country acting as a political unit," was without commandment.<sup>37</sup> A break with the State ideal was in many ways the very reason the Revolutionary War was fought and justified, for under the State, liberty and freedom were given up to belief in an ideal. For action to occur, a new temporal State was created under the Articles of the Confederation in order to potentially lay the groundwork for a future Stateless nation.

If America was to survive as America, and not simply as a unified group of states, it was necessary that the fears of the wealthy class somehow subside. America needed to be reconstructed as herself, no longer as simply a unified group of states at war with Great Britain. America needed a god, per se. Arendt argues, "It is in the very nature of a beginning to carry with itself a measure of complete arbitrariness ... For a moment, the moment of beginning, it is as though the beginner had abolished the sequence of

temporality itself, or as though the actors were thrown out of the temporal order and its continuity ... In other words the problem of beginning is solved through the introduction of a beginner whose beginnings are no longer subject to question."<sup>38</sup>

### *Constructed Democracy*

With the Constitution ratified and George Washington seated as the first president, the young nation turned its attention to a new construct, a capital city. The question of site for the new nation's capital was met with much heated debate and disagreement. Similar to the process of ratification of the Constitution, a "bipartisan" compromise was necessary in order to allow progress to be made. In the case of the Constitution, compromise was made between what was to become America's first two political parties, the Federalists and the Republicans. The Federalist Party, headed by Alexander Hamilton and for the time being James Madison, was comprised of mostly northerners, and acted as the fearful party demanding a more central and powerful federal government. The Republican Party, headed by Thomas Jefferson, was comprised of mostly southerners, believing in the agrarian democratic dreams of the Plantation lifestyle. Obviously both parties wanted the national capital to be located in their region, so the North agreed to allow the new nation capital to be

constructed in the South on two terms: first, for ten years the capital would be located in Philadelphia and, second, the South would support the federal government in funding the debts of the former colonies.<sup>39</sup>

Consider the first of these two terms — a symbolic gesture, wherein the city of brotherly love, and the location of Independence Hall, will forever remain the historic center of patriotic America. The second, however, is a significant gesture, wherein the shift to a stronger federal government in service of the whole of the nation is given a formal jumpstart.

Now under "constitutional provision and legislative enactment," Washington sent Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French painter and architect who had served under Washington during the Revolutionary War, with Andrew Ellicott, an American surveyor, to survey and aid in the purchase of land for the capital, which had been authorized to be located on the Potomac River, somewhere between the mouth of the Anacostia and the Conogocheague Rivers.<sup>40</sup> The Residence Act, as the legislative enactment is referred, provided for three presidential appointed commissioners to "define and limit a district of territory" and "provide suitable buildings for the accommodation of Congress and of the president, and for public offices."<sup>41</sup> In response to the Residence Act, Washington, under the council of Jefferson, chose the land adjacent to

Georgetown as the site for these residences, after touring the local sites for some time. Prior to the site selection, Jefferson had written a note to Washington stating, "I have no doubt it is the wish and perhaps expectation [that the site should] be laid out in lots and streets." Jefferson, ever the "organizer of culture,"<sup>42</sup> continued in this note with a vivid description of the planning of the town, sites for public buildings, lot dimensions, layouts for blocks, and methods for land acquisition.<sup>43</sup> It is unknown whether the plan discussed in the previous chapter accompanied this note or if the plan was later given to Washington, but it is clear that the ideas mapped out in this note were given form in Jefferson's sketch. Washington reacts to the "agrarian and anti-urban"<sup>44</sup> architecture Jefferson describes by calling on L'Enfant to make, "a Draught of the Ground as will enable himself to fix on the Spot for the public Buildings."<sup>45</sup>

In L'Enfant he calls on the artist-architect for the visionary utopia, beyond the bounds of objective rationalism, as the subjective dreamscape that still reigns over America as guiding principle. Jefferson could see that an organized locale was needed, but for him, the city was merely organization, rather than urbanity as such. Washington saw that this site needed to be a city, and therefore saw that in L'Enfant he had an architect of cities, rather than an architect of organizations.

Of the many poorly written letters that L'Enfant wrote describing his vision for the capital city, most addressed to Washington, L'Enfant's first letter gives the most vivid description of the promise inherent in America. "No nation perhaps had ever before had the opportunity offered them of deliberately deciding on the spot where their Capital city should be fixed, or of combining the every necessary

**In L'Enfant he calls on the artist-architect for the visionary utopia, beyond the bounds of objective rationalism, as the subjective dreamscape that still reigns over America as guiding principle.**



Fig. 13 Landscape on which Pierre Charles L'Enfant drafted his plan for Washington, D.C.



Fig. 14 Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Sketch of Washington D.C., 1791.

consideration in the choice of situation – and altho' the means now within the power of the country are not such as to pursue the design to any great extent it will be such a scale as to leave room for that aggrandizement & embellishment which the increase of wealth of the Nation will permit it to pursue at any period however remote."<sup>46</sup> The plan of the city is to be as the plan of the nation (fig. 12), on a scale worthy of the nation to come, constructed to serve both as the city proper, the planned streets, spaces and public locales, along with the capital proper, the dwelling not only of the nation's officials, but also the repository of the nation's image of herself.

#### *Landscape Plus Power*

L'Enfant began his project responsibly, creating a "Draught of the Ground," approaching the landscape (fig. 13) as an existing system of spatial relationships. His initial drawing is a sketch of sightlines connecting the dominant features within the landscape, such as hilltops and ridgelines (fig. 14), which, already through this sketch, begin to be formed and structured by the authority of the plan. In this way, L'Enfant developed his plan from the French garden tradition, the pedagogy of his education.

Louis XIV's Palace at Versailles (fig. 15) is the quintessential model for L'Enfant. Versailles is the architectural

model of the absolutism and despotism, wherein an existing organization structure is constructed and formed as its true self through divine intervention. The King's authority is a birthright, gifted by God, and as such, its expression is articulated through the use of a plan. Orthographic projection as a whole is a form of representation that is never experienced in its entirety; rather, it is perceived spatially through a removed understanding from a divine perspective. In this manner, the architectural section through the landscape (a vertical cut) is used as a collector of existing sites of dominance that capture locations where perspective views are most poignant; these sections

are subsequently translated into a site plan that acts to constrict axial and perspectival connections between boundaries and monuments. These objectified lines become the laws by which an existing social order is made pure, through the divine intervention of these formal manipulations. The landscape is the nation, given form, connection, and purpose with the whole through subjection to devices of authorship.

This form of authority is a monumental establishment, constructed apart from its social reality, allegorically presenting the success of symbol in the authoritarian model. This type of symbol is a representational reminder of power gained through a formal violence made in the space of authoritarian distance. Versailles, a divine retreat, distanced from the social reality of Paris, need not be subject to the everyday because of the protection of that distance. In this way, the spatial diagram of the monarchy's reign is similar to that of the Judeo-Christian God, seated in heaven. The distance in the project of Versailles is exactly the same type of distance the Declaration of Independence was written against. The issue then becomes the establishment of authority without distance, for the project of America is a project of accessible authority. If the presence of a state is necessary, in the light of the discourse of the federalist formulation of the governmental structure as the Constitution, the project for a state of the people becomes one of the establishment of a State that is no longer opaque and removed.

#### *Balance of Powers*

The "constituting act" separated the powers of the federal government into three branches, which would be the

basis for the creation, sustainability, and maintenance of the nation. The first of these, laid out in Article I of the Constitution, is the legislative branch. The purpose of the legislative branch is to make the laws, which act as the spoken institution (or metaphysical promise) of the federal government. The job of the legislators, therefore, is the creation of the structure of the agreement between governor and governed. This job though, is not a type of speech or action, but a type of work. "[T]he Greeks ... did

not count legislating among the political activities. In their opinion, the lawmaker was like the builders of the city wall, someone who had to do and finish his work before political activity could begin... To them, the laws, like the wall around the city, were not the results of action, but products of making. Before man began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the polis and its structure the law."<sup>47</sup> The working hands

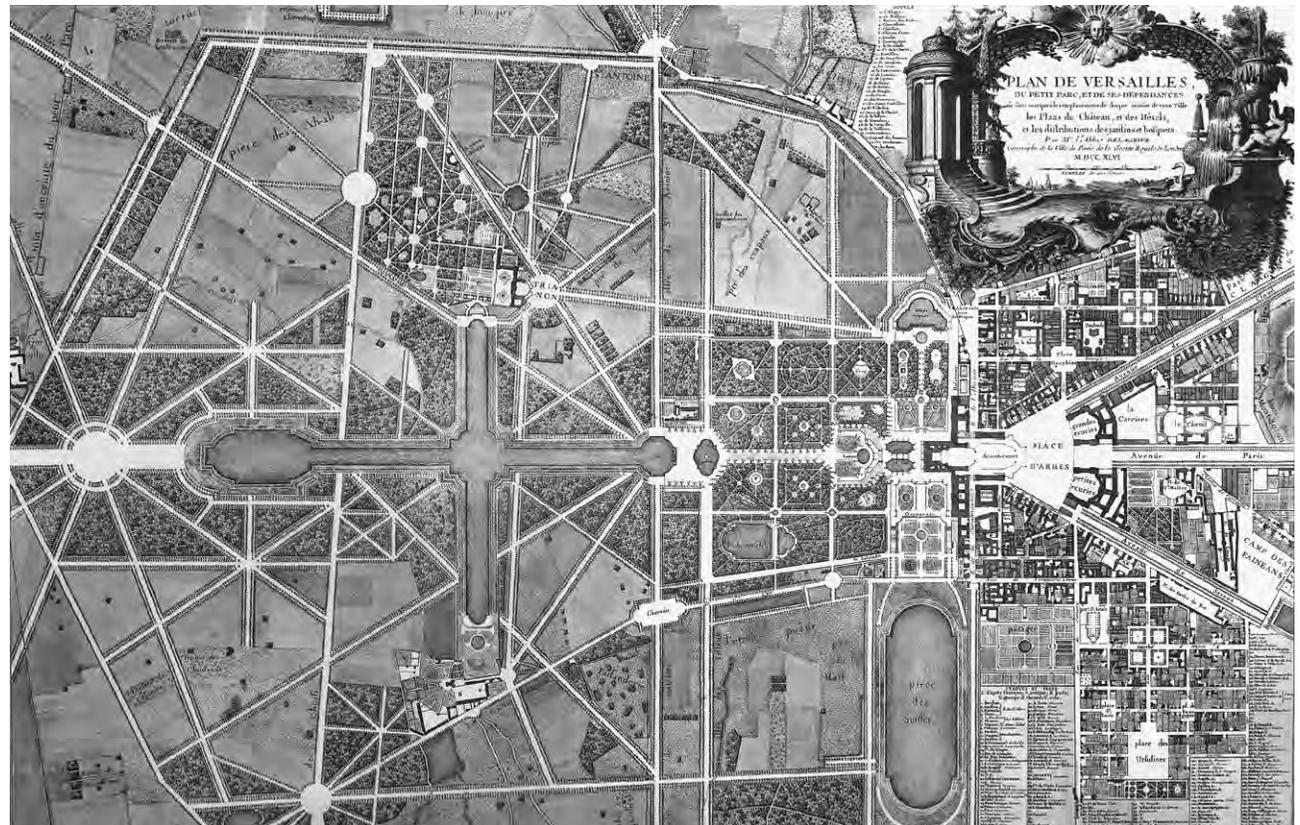


Fig. 15 Louis Le Vau (architect) and Andre Le Notre (landscape architect), Palace of Versailles for King Louis XIV, 1682.

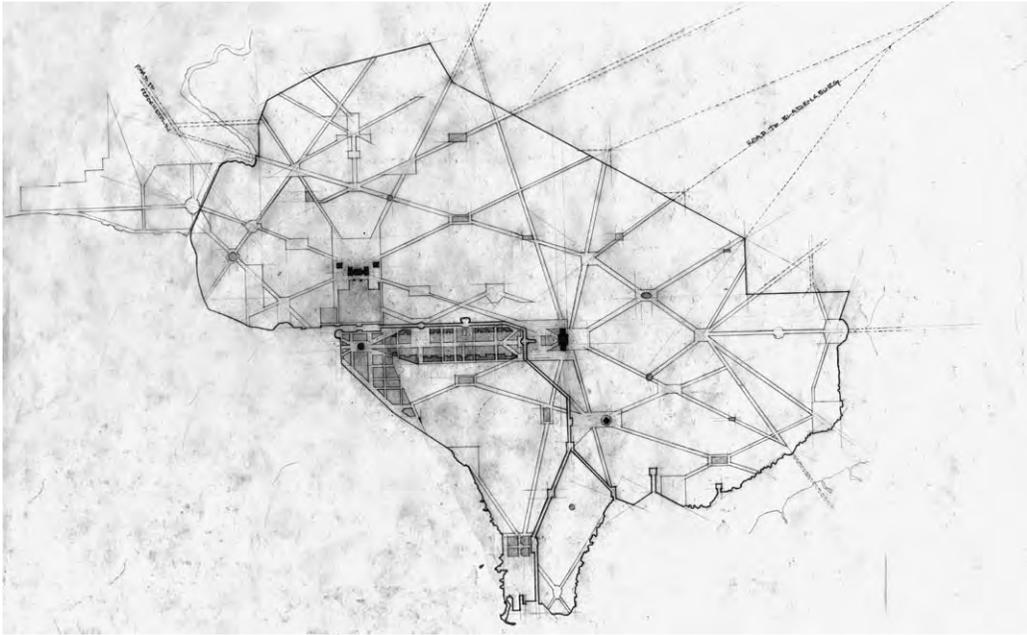


Fig. 16 Analysis of the public structures in Pierre Charles L'Enfant's Plan for Washington, D.C.

of the legislature built the structure of the national agreement, which then created a body politic.

The security provisioned by the “walls around the city” is stabilized by the legislatively justified deeds of the executive branch. Once the institution is formed, through the making of the law, there is a need for a solidified structure to protect that covenant. The executive branch, headed by the president, the commander and chief of all militaristic groups associated with the federal government, acts as a policing agent. A nation is sustained by the protection of the law and protection of the citizens from their enemies,

both foreign and domestic, and through the subsidized execution of labor and work. The subsidization of labor and work is a form of maintenance, but not maintenance of the structure of the nation, for it provides necessities that relieve the body politic of pure responsibility to the self, and allow time for responsibility to the nation.

L'Enfant provides space for the housing of these two structures on the two most prominent rises on the site. In the formal logic of the French garden, these stately institutes are positioned on the control points, but in a formal manipulation they are seated in a space that is

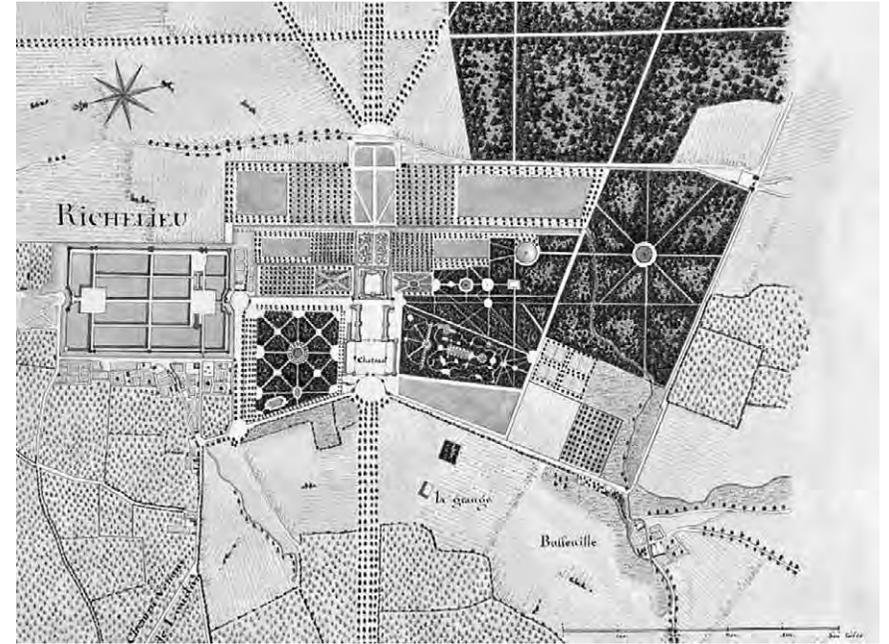


Fig. 17 Jacques Lemercier, Chateau de Richelieu, Richelieu, France, 1642.

larger than their own monumental field of influence, the Mall (fig. 16). At the French town of Richelieu, a similar formal structuring of a balance of power exists in a planned ideal town (fig. 17). Richelieu was built by the order of the infamous 17th-century cardinal who served as first minister to Louis the XIII – Armand Jean du Plessis de Richelieu, Cardinal-Duc de Richelieu.<sup>48</sup> Cardinal Richelieu had been raised in the village on the site where he was to erect the town of Richelieu. For the project, Richelieu hired Jacques Lemercier, the architect of Sorbonne and the Palais Cardinal in Paris. Lemercier’s project for Richelieu

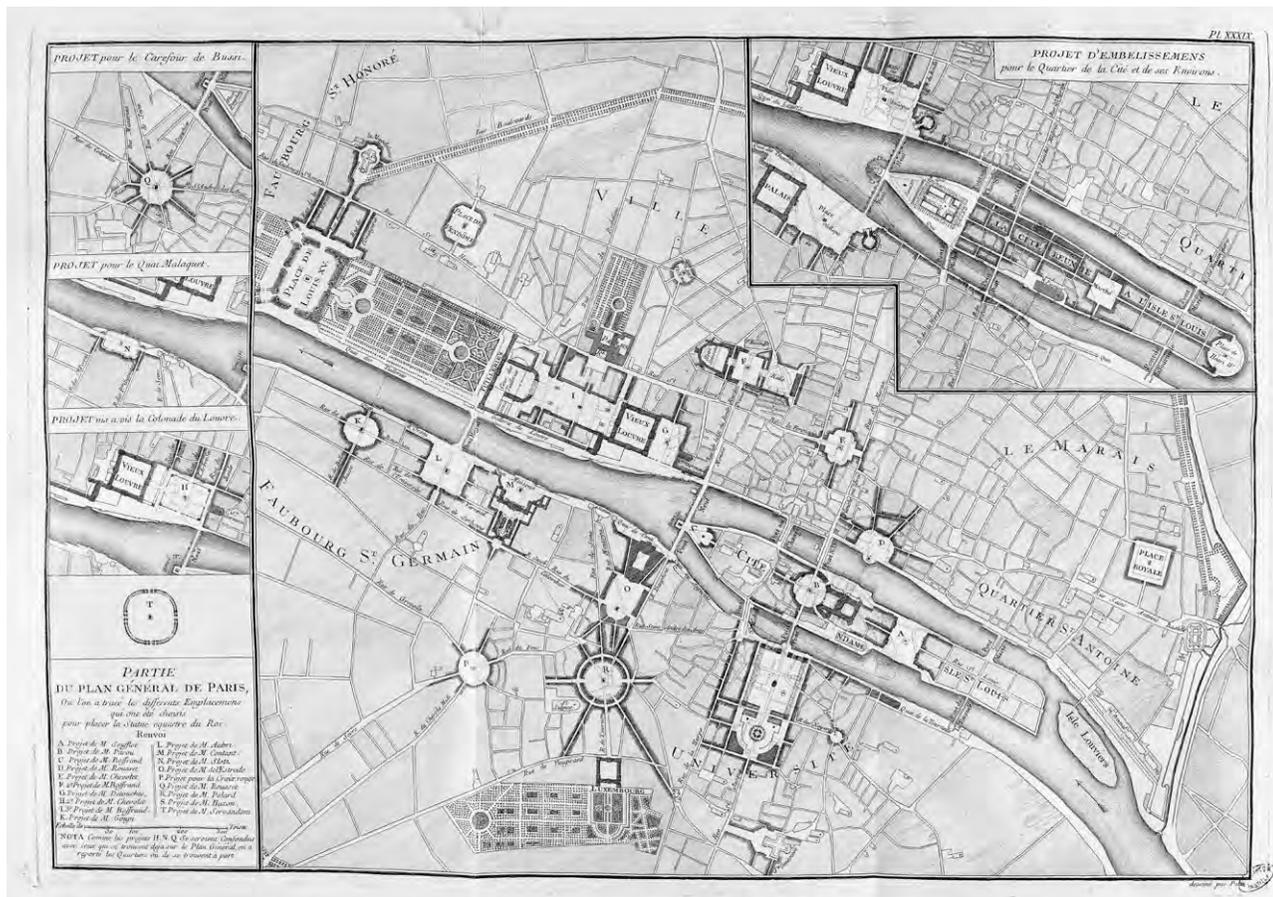


Fig. 18 Pierre Patte, Monuments erected in France to the glory of Louis XV, 1765.

is fashioned around the developing balance of power created by the relationship between the cardinal and King Louis XIII. The plan of the town is essentially two scales of representation of urban siting of two forms of power, the power of the State and the power of the Church. At the

large scale the site is divided into two halves, one half a structured and fully planned walled town and the other a formal garden with a palace for the cardinal at its center, similar in diagram to the siting of Versailles in relationship to Paris. At the smaller scale, the walled town is shaped as

a rectangle with the dominant axis being created by the forming of two centers at which were seated the Palais Royale and the Palais du Cardinal. The connecting axial street is lined with the typical market and civic structures for the time. Every plot in the town was planned, and even the residents were required to use an approved builder for any structure erected within the town walls.<sup>49</sup> Richelieu stands as an even more paternal image of the Washington to come that L'Enfant drafted. Richelieu provides a formal language for the separation of power and town in its large-scale dialogue of town and garden, and the internal separation of power. L'Enfant lifts the dumbbell diagram of the town of Richelieu, and subjects it to the formal positioning of the government as two necessary bodies located perpendicular to the center of the nation. Where the dumbbell of Richelieu is about a separation and line of connection as dialogical control, Washington becomes about the connector transforming the relationship of the two locales of power as subject to the dialogical center located where the Washington monument now stands. The demarcation of physical center of the nation stands in for the American people. The monument as structure, standing taller than all others in the city, is an archival reminder of the presence of the nation as audience to the performative presence of (their) government.

### Squares and Avenues

In "Monuments Erected in France to the Glory of Louis XV," 1765, Pierre Patte highlights monumental spatial projects within the city of Paris (fig. 18). This systematic structuring of public squares with centered monuments and connective avenues serves as a model for the diagrammatic

insertion of grand spaces of authority rather than structures of authority. In this way, L'Enfant adapts this model to serve as the connective devices within the city. The nodal structure provides for a formed trajectory of construction for the city, as well as constituted neighborhood centers within the city (fig. 16). The scale of L'Enfant's plan is thus given a sort of formal logic for growth and construction, allowing for already instituted public sites that have direct links to the even more dominant spaces of the city, rather than subsequently developed ones.

If the government were limited to the legislative and executive branches alone, the most likely result would be tyranny. In a model where only these two branches exist, the lawmakers built a framework by which the country is run, kept in check by the intentions and works of the President, which is in turn kept in check by the legislation's ability to impeach the President. This form of government lacks any direct input from the people, except for possible revolutions enacted toward these two bodies and the citizens' right to vote, whether directly or indirectly, for the representatives in these bodies who serve them. In this model, the President holds the ability to take control, for he holds the weight of the violent body, the military. Without some sort of further check, this structure would inevitably lead to tyranny, or in the case of today, would have tyrannical qualities. This structure lacks the necessary maintenance provided for in the potential for speech and action to occur on any citizen's part.

The third branch of the government, the judicial branch, was the first key to our nation's continual development (fig. 19). The court system acted as a civil stage on which

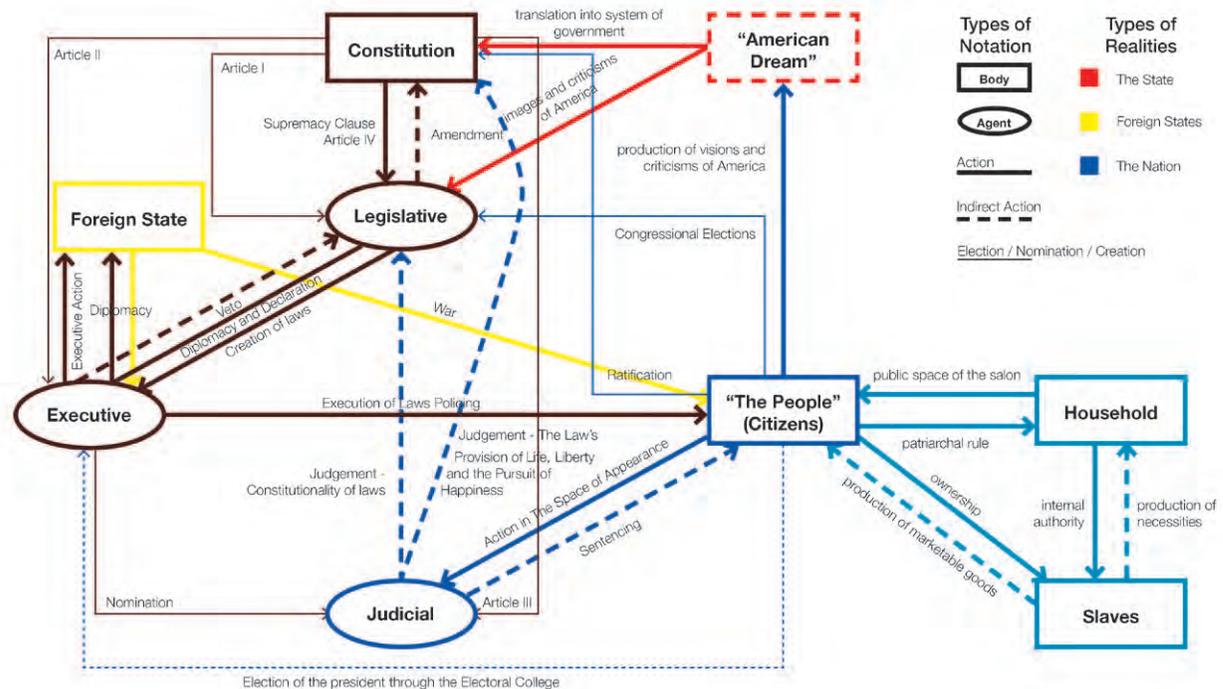


Fig. 19 Diagram of the United States government structure after the establishment of judicial review.

revolutionary performances could occur and then be judged by a group of citizens. Its inherent specificity to its context mediates discrepancies between written laws and specific events. The civil nature of the space is protected by the judges, who are appointed by the executive branch to act as an "auditor," or provide "an invitation for the other to listen and respond."<sup>59</sup> The potential of the stage of the courtroom is made clear in situations like specific gun cases, wherein the question is not only whether the shooter is responsible for those he or she murders; the question

also becomes a matter of whether the salesperson of the firearm, the store where the firearm is sold, or the manufacturer can be held responsible. Therefore, if individuals or institutions that are subservient to the government are held responsible, there is a possibility that the government may be held responsible because of its regulations or lack thereof. This furthermore, calls into question the benefits and present meaning of the second amendment. Here there is an advocacy for change, and even revolution. This third branch allows the citizens to enter the government, and

thus creates a stage for the discussion and judgment based on the “mutual promise” of revolutionary words and deeds, or, as Arendt calls it, a “space of appearance.” “It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.”<sup>51</sup> The judiciary branch allows for the entrance of humanity and plurality into the governing body most readily, thus breaking it down as a completely solid institution. The government becomes a plastic space, being reworked constantly to meet the needs of its citizens.

Nowhere in L’Enfant’s plan is a site noted for the Judiciary Branch. Initially this seems like a kind of prescribed formalizing of the State as a protected figure, removed from the nation as itself, monumentalized as the city of Washington, D.C. This thesis leads to the assumption that the American people were left out of the architectural representation of the Constitution. The American people were not left out. The Supreme Court was first located in the lower levels of the Capitol building. “[S]urprisingly, despite its role as a co-equal branch of government, the Supreme Court was not provided with a building of its own until 1935, the one hundred and forty-sixth year of its existence.”<sup>52</sup> This was not a mistake.

L’Enfant’s plan does exactly what Jefferson does with the siting of government buildings, but in the case of this stage for interaction, what is formulated is the space of the Mall, the public site of America, with the capitol building as backdrop. In the foundations of the capitol building, the structured dialogue of the people and the government occur about the foundations of the country.

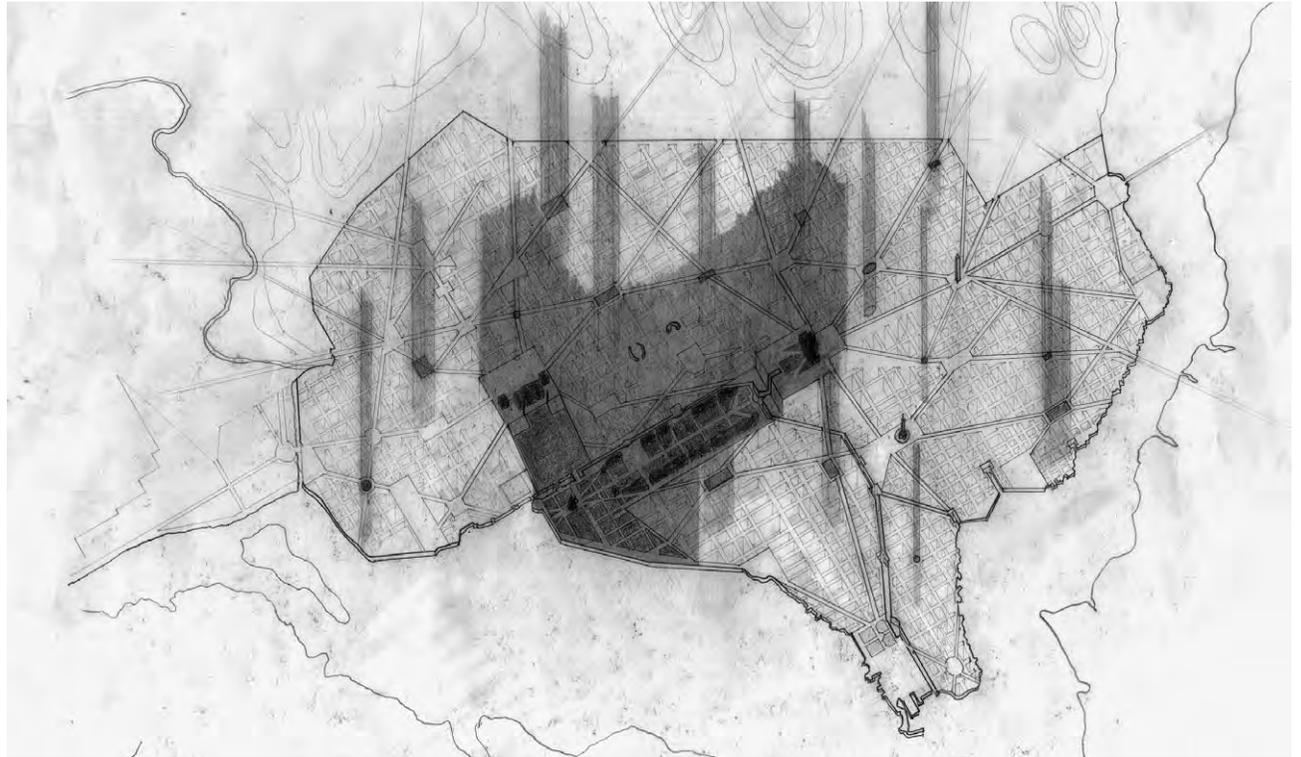


Fig. 20 Analysis of the power relationships in Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s plan for Washington, D.C.

#### *Grafted Monument*

L’Enfant’s plan builds off of Jefferson’s plan, but takes it to a more historically symbolic level through the introduction of layering. Jefferson’s plan was based on a grid of squares, which coincides with his agrarian ideals, and the city center was a kind of dumbbell with the accommodation of Congress and the President acting as the two weights, with the lawn as the connecting bar. Jefferson’s Plan was also

located further west of the site than L’Enfant’s and was smaller and less rigid. L’Enfant chose to retain the grid as a starting point, holding true to the Cardinal directions. A section of the grid along the river on the peninsula was delineated as the public lawn formed in an L shape, with the Capitol at one end and the White House at the other; and at the crossing of the two axes was to be a statue of Washington, but was later changed to the Washington

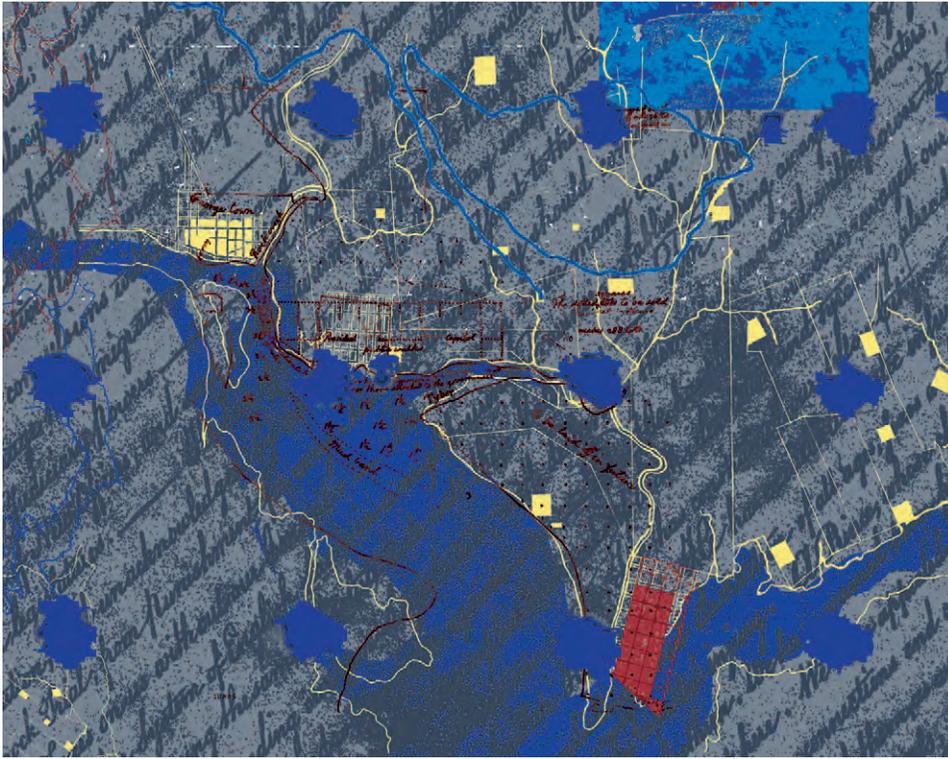


Fig. 21 Analysis of Thomas Jefferson's American Dream.

Monument. His monumentalized layer acts as the physical center of the city and ideal center of the nation. In fact, the zero-mile mark of national land distribution is the Washington Monument, which only furthers the notion of the lawn as the central public space in the nation. A third layer is added in order to heighten the presence of certain squares throughout the city. The squares, which are to act as civic centers for their surroundings, are connected

by diagonally planned avenues, which are to be the grand streets of the city. The avenues are to be civic thoroughfares supporting their surrounding neighborhoods and further monumentalizing the character of the city. There were also spaces delineated for markets and the naval yard. The plan was disproportionately large for the current population of the area, but L'Enfant insisted on the need for such a scale in order to make a monument to the nation (fig. 20).



Fig. 22 Analysis of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's American Dream.

The design of Washington was a nostalgic enterprise, enacted to reflect the grandeur of old times but also to give a familiarity to the symbolism present in the structure of the city and the Constitution. This familiarity allows the public access to the syntax of the Constitution, and thus makes the reality of such a structure more easily readable to public. He took up the agrarian American model, developed by Jefferson. "This heroic aspect was presented

as value, as constructed reason, as a quality capable of unifying the divergent ideals of the composite society of the young United States, it has also to be presented as an accessible, diffusible, social value.”<sup>53</sup> He then grafted into the American tradition a more nostalgic mode of design, developing what Tafuri calls a “new nature. The models derived from the Europe of Absolutism and despotism are now expropriated by the capital of democratic institutions, and translated into a social dimension certainly unknown to the Versailles of Louis the XIV.”<sup>54</sup>

### *Bad Conscience*

The second layer of the city is a nostalgic one, reflecting the absolutism and despotism of European models. Tafuri states, “An ideology realized in terms of urban images, the allegory of a political organization whose socioeconomic consequence is a rapid and mobile evolution but which here wishes to present itself immobile in its principles. The city of Washington gives form to the immobility and conventionality of those principles, there represented as ahistoric.”<sup>55</sup> The ahistoricism and nostalgic character of this layer of the city works almost literally as a roof garden.

The layer keeps the vertical expansion of the democratic grid to a level below the heights of the Washington Monument and Capitol building, so as not to compete with the authoritarian symbolism of these monuments to the state and the ideals of the nation. This plane metaphorically floats above the nation as manifestation of its ideals. One mentions the federal government and images of Washington come to mind. It is the physical structuring of a nation, made up of monument to a past ideal. This ideal is the governing power of the state, and the way in which the state hovers over the city is a greater expression of the perverse despotism of the design and realization of Washington, D.C. The roof garden is a space for removal from the public world for contemplation and mental structuring of a life. In the case of the federal government, the lawn, Capitol, White House, and avenues with their civic squares act as such. The removal from the everyday life and the monumentalizing is necessary so that the ideals are reflected in the construct and appear to be similar to images of heaven or utopia. I do not agree that the project is outside of history, but its method of historicism makes it universal. As Tafuri states, “Thus the representation of the

stability of values can show itself for what it is. That is to say, a conventional but real aspiration, which must be satisfied by keeping it carefully separated from the forces of development from technology’s continual revolutionizing modernity.”<sup>56</sup>

### **Epitaph: Two Archives**

Jefferson and L’Enfant’s American Dreams stand side by side as a kind of projected formal dialogue of private/public, liberty/freedom on the one hand, and, democracy for America on the other. As such, “Thomas Jefferson’s American Dream” (fig. 21) and “Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s American Dream” (fig. 22) were constructed as new architectural representations of the oppositional representations created in 1791. The representations were created through the layering of all of the archival documents, ideas, texts, and drawings contained within the essay above. The drawings are therefore rhetorical manifestations of the essays.

### Notes

- 1 Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.
- 2 *Extending the Legacy: Planning America’s Capital for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Planning Commission, 1997), 3.

- 3 *The American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982) defines “memorial” as follows: Something venerated for its enduring historical significance or association with a notable past person or thing; An object, such as a post or stone, fixed in the

- ground so as to mark a boundary or position.
- 4 For a further study into the relationship of architecture to semiology as briefly referenced in this paragraph, see George Baird’s ‘Meaning in Architecture’ (1968/69).
- 5 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

- (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 124.
- 6 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 176.
- 7 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 198.
- 8 Randolph Bourne, “The State” (in

- The Radical Will: Selected Writings 1911–1918*, New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 355–395.
- 9 Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 34.
- 10 Randolph Bourne, “The State” (in *The Radical Will: Selected Writings*

- 1911–1918, New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 388, 355–395.
- 11 Jacques Derrida, “The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hege’s Semiology,” trans. Alan Bass, in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 69–108.

- Derrida proposes that Georg Hegel developed a semiology throughout the body of his work in small passages. This text is being used to define the terms "symbol" and "sign," and their relationship to memory and monument.
- 12** Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- 13** Refer to Jacques Derrida's definition of archive as commencement and commandment in *Archive Fever, Archive Fever* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1–6.
- 14** Randolph Bourne, "The State" (in *The Radical Will: Selected Writings 1911–1918*, New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 388.
- 15** Randolph Bourne, "The State" (in *The Radical Will: Selected Writings 1911–1918*, New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 358.
- 16** John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 3.
- 17** Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 130.
- 18** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976), 26.
- 19** Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology," trans. Alan Bass, in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 82.
- 20** John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991).
- 21** For more on Jefferson's understanding of the role of slaves and his prominent, but also relatively timely racism, refer to *Notes on Virginia*, 1784, Adrienne Kock and William Peden, *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), 173–268, particularly the passages titled *A description of the Indians established in that State?* and *The administration of justice and the description of the laws?*
- 22** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 29.
- 23** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 29.
- 24** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 28.
- 25** The topic of the Bourgeois Public Sphere in the context of this project is positioned and criticized in the sixth chapter, wherein the project's theoretic site is founded.
- 26** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 29–30.
- 27** Colin Rowe and Robert Slutsky's canonical essay, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal", *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), serves as the groundwork for the aesthetic and formal siting for this project.
- 28** This description of the "block" in the capitalist city is derived from the works of Rem Koolhaas, particularly *Delirious New York* (New York: The Monticelli Press, 1994) and the appended 'City of the Captive Globe' (1972). Koolhaas derives his critical rhetoric of architecture from the history and potential of the "block." Considering that the "block" is an American Formulation, this project critically pursues the development of its dialectical opposite as the production of Freedom, which is always contingent on the production of Liberty.
- 29** Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989).
- 30** Chantal Mouffe, *Deliberative Democracy or Agnostic Pluralism*, in *Political Science Series 72* (Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies, 2000), 15.
- 31** Chantal Mouffe, *Deliberative Democracy or Agnostic Pluralism*, in *Political Science Series 72* (Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies, 2000), 8.
- 32** Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 18–20.
- 33** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 30.
- 34** The U. S. Constitution, Preamble.
- 35** Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 157.
- 36** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 34.
- 37** Randolph Bourne, "The State" (in *The Radical Will: Selected Writings 1911–1918*, New York: Urizen Books, 1977), 358.
- 38** Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 206.
- 39** Refer to John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), particularly the second footnote, which provides other references on the locating of the federal city. Reps describes Jefferson's account of his part in the compromise, a meeting with Alexander Hamilton. The form of this meeting, particularly Reps's description, set the stage for the project that is to come out of this compromise, Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for Washington.
- 40** John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 1.
- 41** "Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States," as it appears in John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 2.
- 42** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 25.
- 43** John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 2. Refer also to footnote 5 on p. 2.
- 44** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 26.
- 45** Thomas Jefferson, *The Thomas Jefferson Papers*, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1900), 19:68.
- 46** L'Enfant to Washington, New York, September 11, 1789, as found in John W. Reps, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capitol Since 1790* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 2.
- 47** Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 194–195.
- 48** "Cardinal Richelieu." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal\\_Richelieu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_Richelieu)>.
- 49** "Richelieu, Indre-et-Loire." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richelieu,\\_Indre-et-Loire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richelieu,_Indre-et-Loire)>.
- 50** John McGowan, "Must Politics Be Violent? Arendt's Utopian Vision," *Hannah Arendt & the Meaning of Politics*, (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1997), 277.
- 51** Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 198–199.
- 52** Quoted directly from [www.supremecourtus.gov](http://www.supremecourtus.gov), the official website of the U. S. Supreme Court. This quotation is found in the site's description of the building housing the U. S. Supreme Court.
- 53** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 28.
- 54** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 32.
- 55** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 35.
- 56** Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 36.

# Highway Beautiful: The 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March

RICHARD M. SOMMER  
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*The time will come when we will not confine our marching to Washington. We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our own "scorched earth" policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground – nonviolently. We shall fragment the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of democracy. We will make the action of the past few months look petty. And I say to you, WAKE UP AMERICA!*

–John L. Lewis, deleted portion of his speech at the March on Washington, D.C. (1963)

*Beauty belongs to all the people.*

–President Lyndon Johnson at the signing of the Highway Beautification Act (1965)

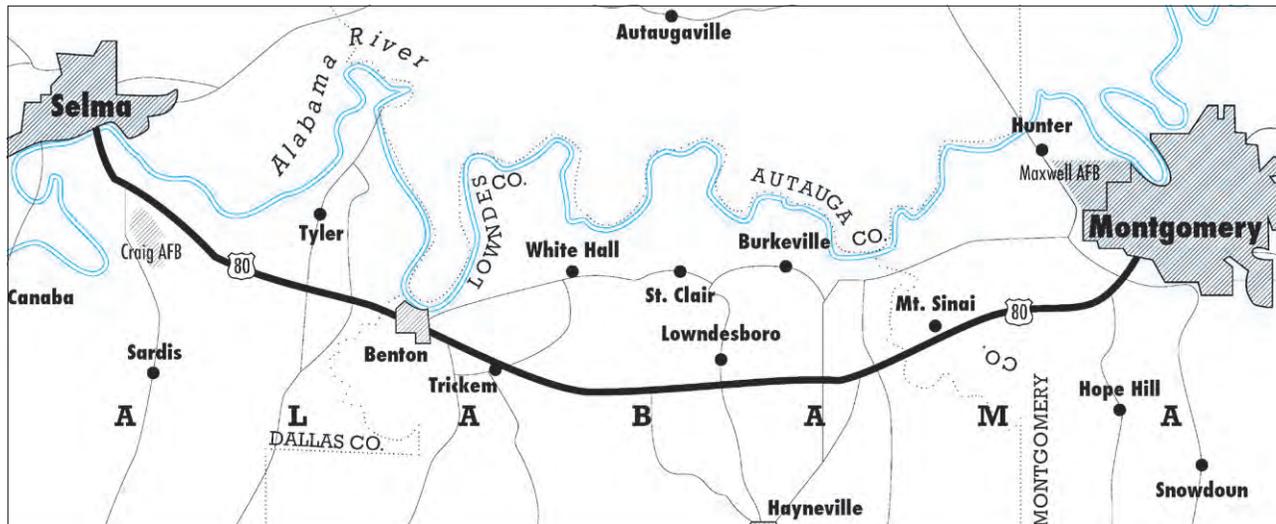
The 1965 Selma to Montgomery, Alabama voting rights march along highway U.S. 80 represents a critical moment in the history of American democracy, where the tension between maintaining civic order in the country's most public of spaces, and exercising a basic act of citizenship fell into crisis. Despite all that has been said and written about the march from Selma to Montgomery, important aspects of the built infrastructure central to this historic event have not been well understood. Our purpose here will be to emphasize the local, and moreover, spatial politics at work in the intersection between the personal act of walking, its more conscious performance in the collective protest march, and the American highway. The collective walk along U.S. 80, as a democratic activity, highlights contradictions between the practices of the 1960s civil rights and highway beautification movements, and opens questions about the relationship between the aesthetic and political ambitions of this period. That is, if the federal solution to the commercial "blight" of the 1960s infrastructural landscape lay in applying aesthetic blandishments of nature to the country's largest network of public space (the interstate highways), was there an analogous change in aesthetic to the spaces in which the ugliness of racial segregation and the suppression of constitutional rights took place?

The protest walk along a highway is a particular kind of civil as well as civic disobedience in which peaceful protest intervenes in what is commonly held as uncontested space. In an urban context, civil disobedience is inherent in the common spaces of the city. The tacit understanding of the street is that it harbors the potential for collective protest.<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, the highway becomes a staging ground for

protest only by imposition. Given the social compact of a highway – the acceptance of a minimum of limits (i.e., speed, alcohol consumption) in return for maximum efficiency – the collective protest walk is a civic intrusion into a mono-functional space that intensifies the more familiar and historically sanctioned act of civil disobedience.<sup>2</sup> And yet, in the context of the Jim Crow South, an additional layer of limits consisting of implied social practices and unstated cultural codes existed for its African-American population that operated on a state and, moreover, a local level, effectively compromising the American myth of the highway as an unfettered space. The collective transgression of the highway by southern blacks, in other words, implicated an entire spatial, and in turn, social structure.

There is a history of long-distance protest walks in the United States, some of which precede the dominance of the automobile. Among them were the 1894 march for jobs from Massillon, Ohio to Washington, D.C. by "Coxey's Army" and the 1913 march for women's suffrage from New York City to Washington, D.C. by the "suffrage pilgrims."<sup>3</sup> In 1963, well into the automobile age, there was an attempt at a "Freedom Walk" from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi by members of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to protest racial segregation.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery initiated by James Bevel of SNCC and advanced by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was distinct for receiving widespread public support, the protection of the federal government, and extensive national media coverage in the effort to advance the civil rights of African Americans.<sup>5</sup> However,





Map of Selma to Montgomery March.

the voting rights march not only transgressed a vehicular space as a means of calling attention to the demand for federal enforcement of its own legislation, but also, and perhaps more significantly for the African-American residents of the immediate area, the march challenged the very authority of a racist citizenry to act with impunity over all aspects of daily life.

**The Lines Drawn: Putting the March in Context**

The march from Selma to Montgomery, sanctioned under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (“the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances”), was the culminating event in a nearly three-month-long campaign

for securing federal voting rights legislation centered in Selma, Alabama. Involving thousands of participants over a span of five days and four nights from March 21 to 25, the march galvanized national and international media attention triggered by the violent suppression of an initial attempt known as “Bloody Sunday.” As a result, media scrutiny through live televised broadcasts and extensive documentary photographs secured the historical and national importance of the Selma voting rights campaign. Thirty years following the march, the federal government commemorated the event by designating the route as a National Scenic Trail. This designation seamlessly merges a tragic yet celebratory historical moment with a national program to re-categorize disparate sites under a shared aesthetic of natural beauty. Yet, seen in its more local

context, the voting rights march was a sublime act of civil disobedience, a defiant walk through a landscape of official and unofficial acts of violence perpetrated by a state against its own people. The Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march revealed what U.S. 80, as part of the national highway system, had rendered invisible – a sectional landscape whose social order and “Confederate culture” belied a national consensus in which the notion of a transcontinental network of highways denoted unrestricted mobility. U.S. 80, to paraphrase Dell Upton, traversed a landscape between Selma and Montgomery that was seen as well as unseen.<sup>6</sup>

The 1925 adoption of the federally designated numbering system to coordinate U.S. highways emphasized the notion of the road as above all a technological accomplishment. The system rationalized what had been a series of commemorative regional and transcontinental roadways into an interstate network of hard-surfaced roads, and made them legible through a systematic numerical designation indexed to direction as well as region. Odd numbers indicated north-south routes with numbers increasing from west to east coasts. Even numbers indicated east-west routes with numbers increasing from south to north. In the South, the highway numbering system neutralized a history of creating commemorative roads that extended back to the period of southern progressivism of the early 20th century in which the memorial highway was another means to maintain not only the historical memory of the Confederacy within a modernizing context, but also its racist culture.<sup>7</sup>

The section of U.S. 80 between Selma and Montgomery was initially part of competing commemorative highway

proposals. In 1913, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, a group committed to the preservation and dissemination of a Confederate culture, proposed a southern transcontinental route from Washington, D.C. to San Diego passing through most of the southern state's capitals, with official markers and local monuments (comparable to the transcontinental Lincoln Highway proposed during the same period) and designated as the Jefferson Davis Highway, after the first and only president of the Confederacy whose home was in Montgomery.<sup>8</sup> In 1914, the Dixie Overland Highway Association proposed a similar southern route extending from Savannah, Georgia to Los Angeles, California. As a statement of North-South reconciliation, the 1915 Dixie Highway, dubbed the "great Peaceway," was to link Chicago with Miami, intersecting with the Lincoln Highway.<sup>9</sup> Whether as an effort of sectional partisanship or regional boosterism, the road as a means to commemorate Confederate icons was part of a southern progressivism that sought to consolidate a politics favorable to a middle-class white society. Nevertheless, reconciliation of northern and southern whites in the interest of national and economic unity could not obviate the full spectrum of associations the name Jefferson Davis evoked. In an 1890 commencement address at Harvard University on the significance of Jefferson Davis, W. E. B. DuBois wrote, "I wish to consider not the man, but the type of civilization which his life represented: its foundation is the idea of the strong man – Individualism coupled with the rule of might – and it is this idea that has made the logic of even modern history, the cool logic of the Club."<sup>1</sup> For Du Bois, Jefferson Davis was not merely a commemorative figure but the



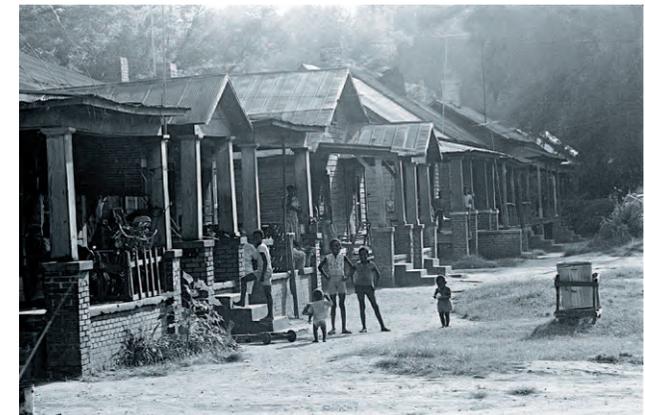
John F. Phillips, U.S. 80, Lowndes County.

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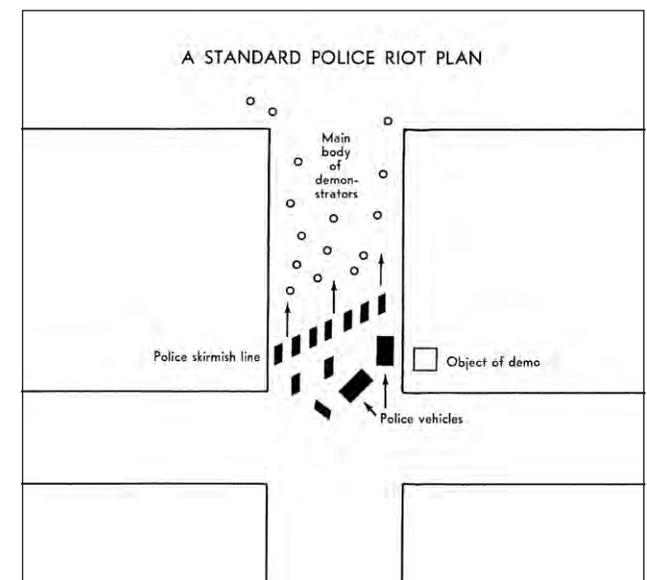
adumbration of a repressive, strong-arm mentality that transcended sectional identification.

The challenge to southern blacks that the naming of a highway for Jefferson Davis posed was not merely one of abstract symbolism but was also evident in the material composition of the roadway. The social consequences of a paved versus an unpaved road in the South transcended the facilitation of commerce. Implicit social practices proscribed a black motorist from passing a white motorist or wagon-driver on a dirt road for fear of committing the insubordinate act of kicking up dust.<sup>11</sup> While the hard-surfaced interstate highway may have ended such a social infraction, the unpaved road continued to serve the interests of Jim Crow society into the 1960s. Among the additional issues Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. raised during the Selma campaign, one was the paving of roads in the black section of the city. King wrote that, "In Selma, our four points encompass voting rights, employment opportunities, improved inter-racial communication, and paved streets. The last demand may appear to Northerners to lack some of the historic importance of voting rights. To the Southern Negro the fact that anyone can identify where the ghetto begins by noting where the pavement ends is one of the many offensive experiences in his life. The neighborhood is degraded to degrade the person in it."<sup>12</sup> Brown Methodist Chapel was the headquarters of the Selma voting rights campaign. The church fronted onto Sylvan Street, which served as the rallying point for the start of the marches, and, at the time of the voting rights march was unpaved, while U.S. 80 continued to be popularly referred to as the Jefferson Davis Highway.<sup>13</sup>

As the Jefferson Davis Highway, U.S. 80 between Selma and Montgomery passed through the heart of the Alabama Black Belt, part of a region of the South that had once been the center of cotton production extending from Virginia to eastern Texas.<sup>14</sup> Selma, popularly known as the "queen city of the Black Belt," had still maintained the aura and some reality of the antebellum South. Observing the 1963 voting rights drive in Selma initiated by SNCC, historian Howard Zinn wrote, "Selma has an unreal air about it. It is as if a movie producer had reconstructed a pre-Civil War Southern town – the decaying buildings, the muddy streets, the little cafés, and the huge red brick Hotel Albert, modeled after a medieval Venetian palace. A mule draws a wagonload of cotton down the street. But cotton is just hanging on. At one time, 627,000 acres in the area grew cotton. Now it's down to 27,000 acres."<sup>15</sup> Selma, as a center of munitions production during the Civil War, was virtually destroyed by the end of the war.<sup>16</sup> The destruction of Selma had lingering effects on both a real and perceived notion of Selma as a place driven by history. The journalist John Herbers, who covered the Selma voting rights campaign for the *New York Times* wrote, "If the black belt were not the area most ravaged by war and the most oppressed by Reconstruction, as it believed itself to be, it nevertheless was the most embittered."<sup>17</sup> The area of the Alabama Black Belt perhaps most representative of postwar hostilities was Lowndes County, situated between Selma and Montgomery, and which U.S. 80/Jefferson Davis Highway passed through. Lowndes County provided the most dramatic example of the consequences of the disfranchisement of the black voter. In 1965, the county had a population of over 15,000, 80 percent of whom were black. No blacks were registered to vote and no



John F. Phillips, Unpaved road in Selma, Alabama, 1965.



"A Standard Police Riot Plan," diagram, from *A Manual for Direct Action*, Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey.

African American had voted in Lowndes County in over 60 years. By contrast, over 100 percent of the approximately 1,900 whites of voting age were registered. Notably, the primary threat of violence during the voting rights march centered in Lowndes County rather than in the cities of Selma or Montgomery.<sup>18</sup>

### Starting Point: Selma as Object Lesson

On January 2, 1965, one day after the anniversary of the 1863 enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation that freed slaves within the Confederacy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC arrived in Selma, Alabama, to announce the beginning of a voting rights campaign.<sup>19</sup> Selma was to be an object lesson on the disfranchisement of the southern black citizen. Though southern blacks were not excluded from registering to vote, policies such as literacy exams, oral exams, the character voucher of a white person, restricted scheduling of voter registration, intimidation by white employers, as well as death threats and physical violence, effectively reduced if not eliminated the black vote. Selma, the seat of Dallas County, was representative of such practices. In Dallas County in 1964, 2 percent of the black voting age population was registered to vote compared to 66 percent of the white voting age population.<sup>20</sup> The primary site of the Selma campaign was the Dallas County courthouse in downtown Selma. The courthouse would become the focus of a series of nonviolent direct actions to register large groups of black citizens and to protest the disfranchisement of the black voter. The tactic of nonviolent protest anticipated but did not encourage violent resistance from the sheriff of Dallas County, Jim Clark, a figure notorious for having assembled

## The Johnson administration's campaign for highway beautification, introduced in January 1965, was part of a more comprehensive effort to respond to environmental blight by posing the all-purpose notion of natural beauty as central to America's national identity.

a mounted posse of some 200 deputies (a number of whom were Ku Klux Klan [KKK] members) armed with clubs, electric cattle prods, bullwhips, and guns in order to enforce the subjugation of the black residents of Dallas County to white rule.<sup>21</sup> Supporting Jim Clark was the segregationist Citizens Council of Dallas County, the largest such organization in the state with approximately 3,000.<sup>22</sup> Through setting the conditions for a violent police confrontation against nonviolent citizens, King and the SCLC hoped to gain enough national media attention in order to provoke the federal government to enforce its own recently passed legislation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited the continued use of discriminatory practices in voter registration that overwhelmingly disfranchised southern black citizens.<sup>23</sup>

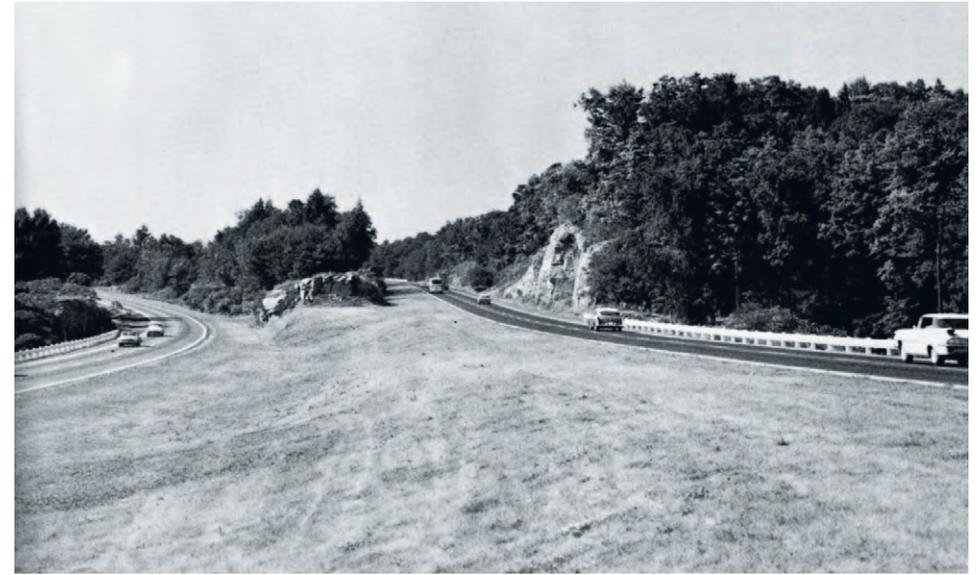
The nearly three-month campaign consisted of repeated demonstrations, thwarted attempts to register voters, an unprecedented demonstration by black schoolteachers, a forced march of black teenagers to the outskirts of Selma, mass arrests that totaled 3,800 people, and the killing of three civil rights participants. These events included the "arranged" arrest of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph Abernathy by Selma police chief Wilson Baker, and the violent spectacle of "Bloody Sunday,"

perpetrated by the Alabama state troopers. Though "Bloody Sunday" exceeded the level of violence anticipated by King and the SCLC, it achieved the goal of focusing national attention on Selma. The public outrage and attention over "Bloody Sunday" transformed what had initially been planned as a memorial march dedicated to Jimmie Lee Jackson, a local resident killed by a policeman during a nighttime protest march, into a national event—a 54-mile walk from Selma to Montgomery along highway U.S. 80.<sup>24</sup>

Coincident with the civil rights march along U.S. 80 and the implicit challenge to a Confederate culture's historical and sectional claim to the highway, was a federal reassessment of the interstate highway as a national public space. The Johnson administration's campaign for highway beautification, introduced in January 1965, was part of a more comprehensive effort to respond to environmental blight by posing the all-purpose notion of natural beauty as central to America's national identity. As President Johnson noted in his speech outlining proposed legislation for highway beautification the day after "Bloody Sunday," "Certainly no one would hazard a national definition of beauty. But we do know that nature is nearly always beautiful. We do, for the most part, know what is ugly. And we can introduce, into all our planning, our programs, our



Rondal Partridge, Highway 66, Arizona.



New Mexico landscape.

building, and our growth, a conscious and active concern for the values of beauty. If we do this then we can be successful in preserving a beautiful America."<sup>25</sup> Regarding highways, Johnson noted, "Our task is twofold. First, to insure that roads themselves are not destructive of nature and natural beauty. Second, to make our roads ways to recreation and pleasure."<sup>26</sup> Implicit in Johnson's aspiration to "elevate" the experience of driving along a highway was the separation of culture from commerce. Influential publications such as Peter Blake's pictorial essay *God's Own Junkyard* (1964) identified the overbuilding and commercial exploitation of highways as a main culprit in the degradation of the landscape (see images above). In

response, the Johnson administration pursued policies that would require highways to provide a scenic experience of the surrounding landscape and put limits on advertising billboards.

In identifying pleasure driving as the number-one form of recreation in the United States, public opinion polls in 1965 supported the notion that the highway should provide an aesthetic experience.<sup>27</sup> Spearheaded by First Lady "Lady Bird" Johnson, the highway beautification campaign opened at a "Women-Do-er's Luncheon" at the White House. One featured speaker advocated a program for planting "masses of flowers where the masses pass."<sup>28</sup> While the planting of flowers along highways was part

of a more general promotion of beauty as a palliative for the social ills brought on by "ugliness" (crime, juvenile delinquency, mental health), it also served to support the regulation of billboards along highways.<sup>29</sup> Beauty was to be a natural right for all Americans. President Johnson noted that, "beauty must not be just a holiday treat, but a part of our daily life. It means not just easy physical access, but equal social access for rich and poor, Negro and white, city dweller and farmer."<sup>30</sup>

Though criticized at the time for pandering to a domestic notion of beauty represented by ladies' garden clubs and "citizens' roadside councils" while ultimately deferring to the interests of the billboard industry,



Citizens Council billboard, March 25, 1965.



Charles Moore, Selma scene, just before the Bloody Sunday events.

Johnson's beautification legislation did result in a national endorsement of "the scenic" as a means to evaluate a surrounding landscape according to criteria ranging from natural features to historical significance.<sup>31</sup> By attaching the obligation to beautify the roadside to funding, federally designated highways superimposed a scenic aesthetic that would have the effect of filtering out local, territorial expressions. In reporting on the voting rights march, Renata Adler commented on the highway scenery in Alabama noting, "For the first few miles, the highway was flanked by billboards ('Keep Selma Beautiful, Cover It With Dodge'), smaller signs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Citizens Council), diners, and gas stations." Yet, the voting rights

march not only passed through a landscape of commerce and local boosterism that masked the threat of violence to an outsider, it also contended with a more visible, political threat. Just east of Selma along U.S. 80, the first of four billboards posted by the Montgomery County Citizens Council depicted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at a purported "Communist training school."<sup>32</sup> Although the focus in Selma was on voting rights, for Martin Luther King, Jr. the larger context was the exclusion of southern black society from full participation as citizens in a democratic nation. Prior to waging the Selma voting rights campaign, King pointed out the fallacy of a larger sense of national identity for southern blacks, stating, "The simple fact is that federal

law is so extensively defied in the South that it is no exaggeration to say that the federal union is barely a reality. For the Southern Negro it is more a tragic myth.... The most tragic and widespread violations occur in the areas of police brutality and the enforcement against the Negro of obviously illegal state statutes." Moreover, King noted the hypocrisy of a United States promoting the spread of democracy abroad in the waging of a cold war, and its inability to secure civil rights for its own citizenry. Cold war and civil rights politics collided in repeated incidents of African diplomats driving to Washington, D.C., and being refused service at segregated highway rest stops.<sup>33</sup> For African-American citizens, the besiegement of southern

blacks went beyond the naturalization of Jim Crow statutes to effectively wage what Bruce Catton called a “cold Civil War.”<sup>34</sup> Alabama state troopers, for example, displayed the Confederate flag on their uniforms as well as their patrol cars. Alabama state trooper headquarters, under the benign title of the Department of Public Safety, begged the question of who was included in the public and whose safety was being secured.<sup>35</sup>

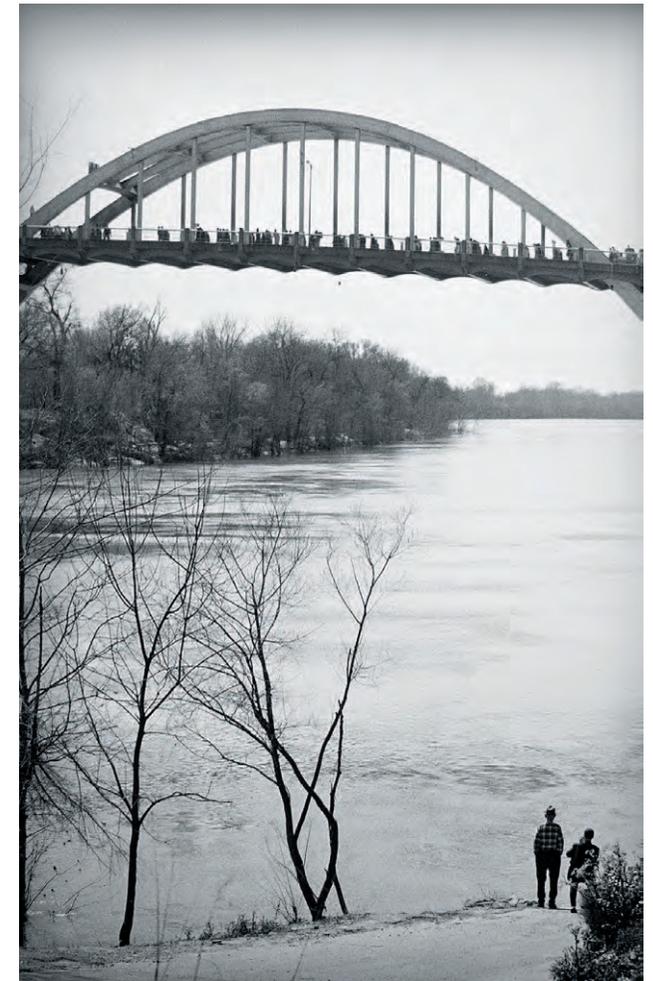
The Alabama state troopers’ violent suppression of the first attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery on Sunday, March 7, is an indication of the not-so-cold Civil War that existed between southern states and their black citizenry. After one minute of a two-minute warning to end the march, 50 Alabama state troopers who had assembled on the far side of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the city limit of Selma and the divide between Dallas and Lowndes counties, charged into the group of some 600 marchers, led by Hosea Williams of SCLC and John Lewis, head of the SNCC. Using clubs, whips, electric cattle prods, horses, and C-4 tear gas to induce nausea, state troopers beat the marchers back into Selma and to the sanctuary of Brown Chapel Methodist Church, the organizing site of the voting rights campaign. The violent actions of the state troopers resulted in injuries to over 90 of the marchers. Those treated were sent to a blacks-only hospital outside of Selma.<sup>36</sup>

The ABC network highlighted televised broadcasts of the attack by interrupting *Judgment at Nuremberg* to show footage of the incident. The juxtaposition of Nazi perpetrators of mass murder and Alabama state troopers committing mass violence did not go unnoticed. In the days after the attack that came to be known as “Bloody

Sunday,” protests demanding federal intervention in Selma appeared across the country including a sit-in at the White House during a regularly scheduled tour, and an extended sit-in organized by SNCC and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at the Liberty Bell, at the time located in the entryway of Independence Hall in Philadelphia. *New York Times* columnist James Reston noted, “It is the almost instantaneous television reporting of the struggle in the streets of Selma, Ala., that has transformed what would have been mainly a local event a generation ago into a national issue overnight. Even the segregationists who have been attacking the photographers and spraying black paint on their TV lenses understand the point.” Public outrage and congressional pressure for a response to “Bloody Sunday” accelerated the additional voting rights legislation that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been seeking and that the Johnson administration had been preparing since November 1964.<sup>37</sup>

On March 15, President Johnson gave a televised address outlining his legislation for what was to become the Voting Rights Act to a joint session of Congress that was watched by over 70 million viewers. The new legislation addressed many of the evasions deployed by states that continued to disfranchise blacks and proposed the intervention of federal registrars in states slow to register black voters. The primary demand of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s voting rights campaign for federal intervention in discriminatory southern voting procedures had been met.<sup>38</sup>

One week earlier, the day after the televised broadcast of the events of “Bloody Sunday,” the President also gave a speech on the administration’s plan to introduce legislation



Men Watching Marchers Crossing Edmund Pettus Bridge, March 21, 1965.

on highway beautification as a means to protect the surrounding landscape along interstate highways from the spread of billboards and junkyards, and, “to make our roads ways to recreation and pleasure.”<sup>39</sup> Over the course of the following weeks, the effort to complete the march from Selma to Montgomery and the passage of highway beautification legislation, part of the Johnson administration’s vision for a “Great Society,” unfolded as parallel movements that exposed the racial and class fissures of the interstate highway as a cultural rather than a technological construct.

Pending the outcome of a court hearing reviewing the permit for another attempt to complete the march to Montgomery, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. staged a second controversial march of some 1,500 people, approximately 450 of whom were clergy, who had traveled to Selma from around the country in expression of solidarity following the violence of “Bloody Sunday.” The second march, held on March 9 and known as “Turnaround Tuesday,” repeated the standoff with the Alabama state troopers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but in what was later acknowledged as a prearranged agreement, no arrests were made. King and his supporters knelt down, prayed, then turned around and walked back into Selma. Journalist Andrew Kopkind noted, with skepticism, the effectiveness of the performance:

If you have never heard 2,000 Negroes and whites sing “We Shall Overcome,” hands joined and swaying in eight-abreast rows on U.S. 80 just east of the Alabama River, there is little that can be said to convey the experience. Civil rights demonstrations are now so old hat that hardly anyone not actually participating feels the essential drama. But for about 10 minutes, the



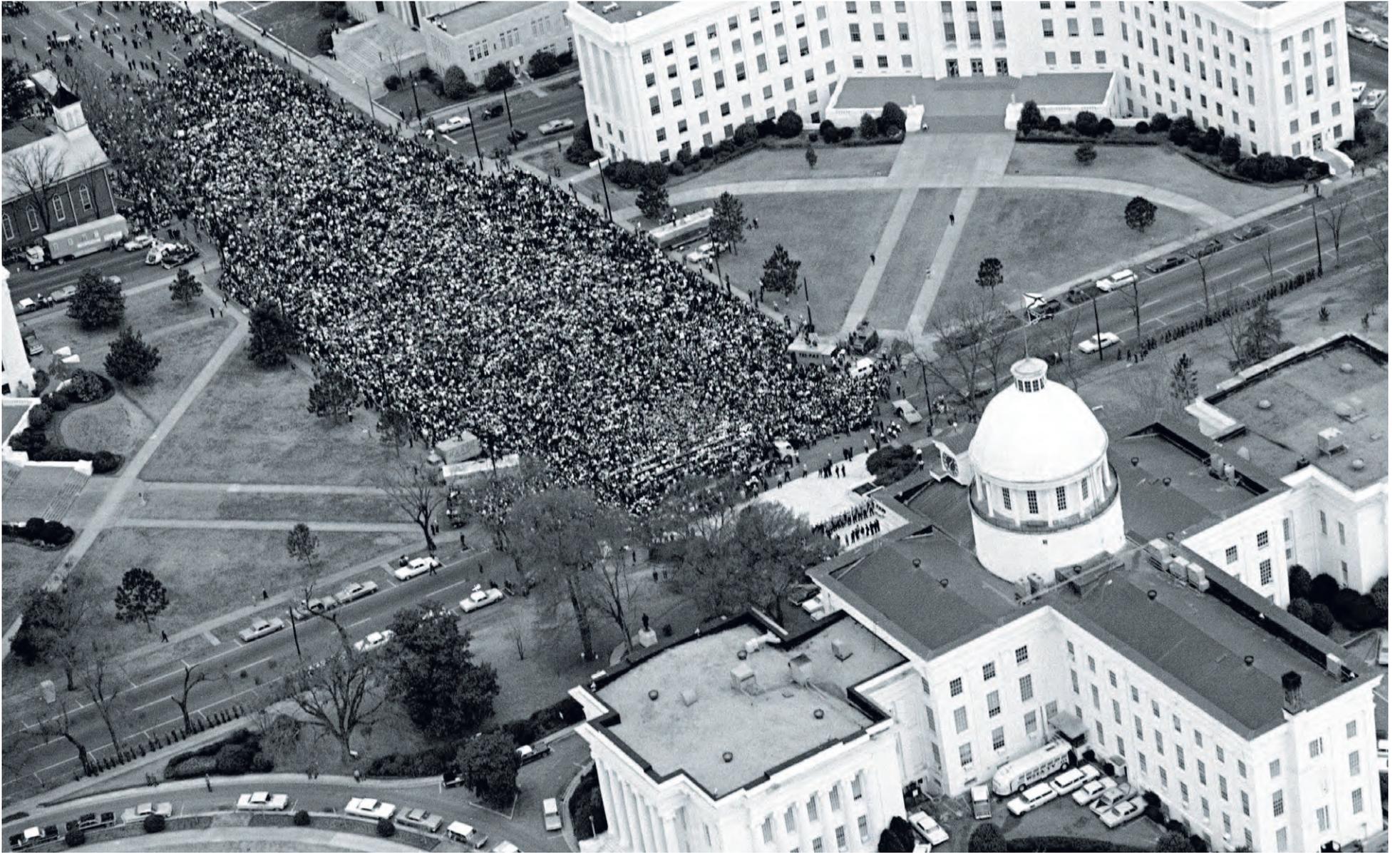
Spider Martin, Bloody Sunday.

incredibly complex, overplanned, overreported, and certainly unresolved Selma voting rights campaign was invested with a kind of profound passion that the world of pseudo-events rarely sees. Then it was over. Like characters in a play, King and Cloud spoke their lines and went through their motions. If it was not rehearsed, it could have been.<sup>39</sup>

That evening three men looking to punish white supporters of the black civil rights activists attacked a group of visiting clergy, resulting in the death of Rev. James Reeb of Boston two days later.<sup>40</sup>

On March 17, two days after the president’s voting rights speech, Judge Frank Johnson of the Federal District

Court ruled in favor of allowing the march from Selma to Montgomery to proceed and issued an injunction preventing the state authorities from interfering with the march — despite testimony from state troopers that marchers along a highway posed a traffic hazard. Judge Johnson’s ruling was based, in part, on the appropriateness of the highway as a site of protest. He weighed the public’s right to have unobstructed access to the highways against the scale of injustice that was being protested. Johnson wrote that, “it seems basic to our constitutional principles that the extent of the right to assemble, demonstrate and march peaceably along the highways and streets in an orderly manner should be commensurate with the enormity of the wrongs that are being protested and petitioned against. In



The arrival at Montgomery Capitol.

this case, the wrongs are enormous. The extent of the right to demonstrate against these wrongs should be determined accordingly." The stated purpose of the march was to present Governor Wallace with a petition outlining the grievances of black residents of Alabama, in particular the issue of voting rights.<sup>42</sup>

The potential for violence that surrounded the march can be measured by the amount of security the federal government provided. Following Governor Wallace's refusal to mobilize the Alabama National Guard, President Johnson federalized 1,800 of them. In addition, Johnson authorized 100 FBI agents and 100 U.S. marshals along the route, stationed over 500 military police near Selma and another 500 military police near Montgomery, and placed 1,000 regular infantry troops on alert at Fort Benning, GA.

### Act III: Walking the Line

After Act I: "Bloody Sunday," and Act II: "Turnaround Tuesday," the march finally commenced on Sunday March 21. Thirty-two hundred people left Selma, comprised of, "civil rights leaders and rabbis, pretty coeds and bearded representatives of the student left, movie stars and infants in strollers. There were two blind people and a man with one leg. But mostly there were the Negroes who believe they have been denied the vote too long." The first night, in accordance with the federal court order, most marchers returned to Selma by bus, car, and a special train in order to reduce the number of marchers to the 300 who would continue into Lowndes County where U.S. 80 narrowed from a four-lane to a two-lane highway for just under 14 miles. The 300 chosen to continue the march were primarily those who were beaten or arrested during the Selma voting rights

campaign. Surrounded by Army troops as well as Alabama National Guard troops with the Confederate flag on display over their left breast pocket, and with soldiers guarding intersections and searching for explosives around bridges and wooded areas, the 300 marchers passed through a landscape of marshes, small swamps, and trees draped with Spanish moss. As the *New York Times* observed, "Lowndes is lonesome country, and the marchers, if not afraid, are at least a little nervous."<sup>43</sup>

Bracketing the walk through Lowndes County was a more pageant-like parade of thousands that left Selma and entered Montgomery, consisting of local residents, out-of-town supporters, clergy, civil-rights representatives, labor leaders, academics, politicians, and entertainers.<sup>44</sup> At the end of the week, some 25,000 people assembled in front of the Montgomery Capital, site of the 1861 inauguration of Jefferson Davis as president of the Confederacy. Following speeches that included one by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., an aide to Governor Wallace refused an attempt by a group of marchers to submit a petition of grievances. At the end of the Montgomery rally and the withdrawal of the security forces, organizers warned marchers to leave the city quickly. Organizers of the march had arranged for drivers to take participants back to Selma. One of these volunteer drivers, Viola Liuzzo, a nurse from Detroit, was shot and killed by three members of the KKK while driving with Leroy Moton, a SNCC volunteer, along U.S. 80/Jefferson Davis Highway just outside of Lowndesboro on a return trip to Montgomery.<sup>45</sup>

Media reporting on the march ranged from proclaiming the historical significance of the event to criticizing the motivation for the march. One argument was that



Matt Herron, Big Swamp, Lowndes County, March 21, 1965.



Bruce Davidson, Line of troopers at the Capitol.



Viola Liuzzo crime scene, U.S. 80.

once the Johnson administration announced new voting rights legislation, the Selma voting rights campaign lost its primary grievance. Moreover, the goal of attracting national media attention had succeeded as a result of the accumulating arrests and the violent spectacle of “Bloody Sunday.” As one journalist later noted, “First and foremost, [violence] is a powerful catalyst to arouse public opinion. If the 600 Negroes who were tear gassed and beaten in Selma had walked all the way to Montgomery without a violent incident, we would still be awaiting a voting bill. Nor is Selma an isolated case.” Yet, while the potential for further violence may have induced national media attention (CBS news provided live coverage of the entry into Montgomery), the completion of the march was an unseen victory in the waging of a “cold Civil War” consisting of nonviolent struggle over a common space with different identities – between a civil rights claim to U.S. 80 and a states’ rights claim to the Jefferson Davis Highway.<sup>46</sup>



Carol M. Highsmith, Viola Liuzzo memorial, U.S. 80.

While conceived separately in 1965, the Voting Rights Act and the Highway Beautification Act both involved the federal government in creating laws to impose national standards on state and local conditions, in this case laws concerning civil rights and the beautification of public space, respectively. Ensuring that hitherto marginalized African-American citizens achieved their rights to political representation and “improving” the appearance of highways would seem incongruous – and unequal – goals. Yet, these projects and the movements they grew out of exemplify the two main, competing strains of American democracy as they were manifested during this period: the guarantee of voting rights stems from the collective desire to participate in the formation of a more perfect union and the more individualistic desire for physical mobility and social access via interstate highways. Absent the clear connection between rights and access, many Americans, especially in recent history, would be hard pressed to

choose which of their freedoms most allows them to improve their station in life – their right to vote or their capacity to change where they live or work and thereby reinvent themselves. The U.S. interstate highway system has profoundly influenced the configuration and fortunes of every American city and town in the last half of the 20th century, and thereby the lives and opportunities available to their inhabitants.

Taking on the highway in 1965, at perhaps the most active moment of highway construction and related works of urban renewal, President Lyndon Johnson ventured that while the United States may be a society too large and diverse to share a national definition of beauty, it could probably agree on what is “ugly.” Johnson’s added sleight-of-hand, that outside of cultural questions of beauty, Americans can agree that “nature” (taken in a purely scenic sense) is always beautiful, fits within a long history of associating the greatness of the nation with its natural inheritance, rather than its built or recorded history. During the signing ceremony for the Highway Beautification Act, Johnson recalled his trip back to the White House along the (scenically planned) George Washington Memorial Parkway the day before, after recovering from surgery and a hospital stay: “I saw Nature at its purest. The dogwoods had turned red. The maple leaves were scarlet and gold.... And not one foot of it was marred by a single unsightly man-made obstruction – no advertising signs, no junkyards. Well, doctors could prescribe no better medicine for me.”<sup>47</sup> In 1965, perhaps Americans could agree that the commercialization of the landscape that could be seen so plainly through the windshield on any highway was ugly and that more nature and less culture was the cure. Was

there a similar level of agreement that the actions of the southern states against their African-American citizens were an ugly blight on American society?

How did the march from Selma to Montgomery, and the events that precipitated it, come to be represented within the landscapes in which they occurred? Thirty years after the voting rights march, U.S. 80 between Selma and Montgomery received successive designations as an Alabama State Scenic Highway (August 1995), a National Scenic Byway (December 1995), an All-American Road (January 1996), and finally, a National Historic Trail (November 1996). These designations demonstrate that the voting rights and highway beautification acts ultimately became conflated in the slow transformation of the Jefferson Davis Highway from an interstate highway to a National Historic Trail. The highway's successive designations and the public programming that has accompanied these changes have transformed what was a sublime experience of walking for five days through a threatening landscape into a one-hour tourist drive (not including stops corresponding to the voting rights march along the route) along a road passing through "the gentle rolling hills of Lowndes County."<sup>48</sup> By 1996, the two-lane highway of U.S. 80 passing through Lowndes County had been widened to a bucolic four-lane highway. Among the footnotes along the now-benign stretch of U.S. 80 in Lowndes County is a small marker, sponsored by a group of SCLC women, commemorating the site where Viola Liuzzo was murdered. A wrought-iron fence surrounds the memorial to protect it from vandalism.<sup>49</sup>

#### Notes

1 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1988).

2 Prior to the march, President Lyndon Johnson had hoped to avoid the potential for a violent confrontation between voting rights marchers and Alabama authorities by suggesting that protesters travel to Montgomery by bus rather than by walking. Michael Beschloss, ed., *Reaching for Glory: Lyndon Johnson's Secret White House Tapes, 1964-1965* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 219.

3 Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Viking, 2000).

4 The "Freedom Walk" was an attempt to repeat the walk of CORE member William L. Moore, a white postal worker, who after walking 60 miles, was shot and killed along Interstate Highway US 11 in northeast Alabama. As the national media of some forty journalists as well as a sizable group of hecklers followed a group of five white and five black members of CORE and the SNCC, Alabama state troopers interrupted the walk at the Georgia-Alabama border and arrested the group charging them with disturbing the peace. Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 179-180. Also, Claude

Sitton, "10 on Freedom Walk Seized at Alabama Line," *New York Times*, 4 May 1963, p.1. On protest marches to and within Washington, D.C. see Lucy G. Barber, *Marching On Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

5 Perhaps the most comparable precedent for the voting rights march was the 1930 "Salt March" led by Mahatma Gandhi where nearly eighty men walked 240 miles from Ahmedabad to Dandi.

6 Dell Upton, "Seen, Unseen, and Scene," in Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi, eds. *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 174-179.

7 On the effort to preserve a Confederate culture see, Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy And The Preservation Of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003). The primary period of activity of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, from 1895 to 1918, coincided with the period of Southern progressivism and initially involved building Civil War memorials across the South but also extended to promoting the Confederacy through pro-southern textbooks, flying the Confederate flag, and promoting Confederate heroes such as Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis. On the role of Southern progressivism in the

promotion of racist practices see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 92-97; Sheldon Hackney, *Populism to Progressivism in Alabama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 326.

8 As a result of the introduction of the U.S. highway system, the Jefferson Davis National Highway was broken up into several routes such as U.S. 1, U.S. 15, U.S. 29, U.S. 80, U.S. 90. The nationwide system facilitated mapping as well as tourism, yet states, not the federal government, remained the controlling body of the roads.

9 The western terminus of the Dixie Overland Highway was later changed to San Diego. On the occasion of the Civil War sesquicentennial, the *New York Times* saw the Dixie Highway as a statement of north-south reconciliation. See "The Dixie Peaceway," *New York Times*, 4 April 1915, sec. 3, p.2.

10 W. E. B. DuBois, "Jefferson Davis as a Representative Citizen," in *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1987).

11 In 1911 Progressive governor B. B. Comer established the Alabama State Highway Department to supervise the building and maintenance of roads; Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble In Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 235, 335. Litwack also

raises the concern at the time over black ownership of automobiles and the independent mobility they afforded.

12 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Let Justice Roll Down," *Nation* 200:11 (15 March 1965): 270. Journalist Renata Adler, reporting on the voting rights march for the *New Yorker* commented on the unpaved road of Sylvan Street that passed through the George Washington Carver Development, a black housing project, and Brown Chapel, the primary meeting place for the voting rights campaign, without recognizing the possible racial politics behind it. Renata Adler, "Letter From Selma," *New Yorker* 41:8 (10 April 1965):121-122+.

13 Early in the scheming by the administration of Alabama Governor George Wallace to counter the voting rights march was a proposal to install signposts along U.S. 80 designating it the "Jefferson Davis footpath" for the duration of the march. Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-68* (2006; New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2007), 26.

14 The Black Belt ostensibly referred to the fertile soil of the region, yet the Black Belt of the 1960s, perhaps not surprisingly, also had the highest concentration of African Americans in the country. John Herbers, *The Lost Priority: What Happened to the Civil Rights*

*Movement in America?* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1970), 3, 5.

**15** Zinn, SNCC, 147. During the Selma voting rights campaign, Martin Luther King, Jr. was the first black to register at the Hotel Albert, testing the 1964 Civil Rights Act that prohibited the segregation of restaurants, hotels, and train station waiting rooms. John Herbers, "Dr. King Punched and Kicked in an Alabama Hotel," *New York Times*, 19 January 1965, p.1.

**16** Describing the battle of Selma on April 2, 1865, historian Benson Lossing wrote, "General Winslow was assigned to the command of the city, with orders to destroy everything that might benefit the Confederate cause. Selma soon presented the spectacle of a ghastly ruin. Ten thousand bales of cotton, not consumed, were fired and burnt; and all the foundries, arsenals, machine-shops, warehouses, and other property used by the Confederates, were destroyed; and some of the soldiery, breaking through all restraints, ravaged the town for awhile." Benson J. Lossing, *Pictorial Field Book of the Civil War*, vol. 3. (T. Belknap, 1874; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 518.

**17** Herbers, *Lost Priority*, 6. At the start of the centennial commemoration of the Civil War, Montgomery held a week-long celebration of the 1861 inaugural of Jefferson Davis including tours of the White House of

the Confederacy, a commemorative ball, and a pageant on "The Man and the Hour" with a cast of 600 persons. Howard N. Meyer, "Rally Round What Flag?" *Commonweal* 74:11 (9 June 1961): 271. Jon Wiener notes how the flying of the Confederate flag over southern state capitals started mostly in 1961 with the beginning of the Civil War centennial celebrations. See Jon Wiener, "Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights: The Civil War Centennial in Context, 1960–1965," in Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds., *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 237–257.

**18** Lowndesboro was the only town in the largely rural county. Branch, pp. 101–102; Roy Reed, "Negroes Suspend Selma Protests," *New York Times*, 7 February 1965, p.44. Andrew Kopkind, *Ramparts* 13:7 (April 1975): 8–12+.

**19** The African American community had celebrated January 1 as Emancipation Day. Although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) initiated the drive to register black voters in Selma, King and the SCLC attracted national media attention. The distinction between the two groups – the SNCC working at the local level of community organizing and grassroots politics, the SCLC using the national media to draw the attention of the federal government in order to

legislate change – not only highlighted the different political strategies within the civil rights movement, but also contributed to the complex sequence of events that became the Selma campaign. On the activities of the SNCC in Alabama see Zinn, SNCC. On the differences between the SNCC and the SCLC see Staughton Lynd, "The New Radicals And Participatory Democracy," *Dissent* 12:3 (Summer 1965): 324–333.

**20** Despite the 1870 adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution as well as the passage of the federal Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964, the strategy of the federal government, to enforce federal law through the court system rather than through direct federal intervention, stymied meaningful electoral reform in the South. The Fifteenth Amendment states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." On the 1957, 1960 Acts see David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting rights act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 11–16. Alabama effectively disfranchised the black vote, and some poor white votes, in the 1901 amending of the state constitution through the introduction of a poll tax, literacy exams, and the requirement

of vouching by a white person. The effect was to make voting registration nearly impossible for the black citizen as well as for poor whites yet without violating the Fifteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. By 1946 and intensifying in the early 1960s, the federal courts repeatedly cited Alabama and Dallas County for discriminatory voting practices. When the SNCC went to Selma to organize a black voter registration drive, the *New York Times* noted, "Selma is one of the hard core areas of segregation. Dallas County has long had a plantation economy. Negroes for many years have outnumbered whites in the county, but now the two races are about equal in number. Voter registration, however, has been almost 100 per cent white." *New York Times*, 27 Sept. 1963, p.30; John Herbers, "Speed Negro Vote, Alabama Is Told," *New York Times*, 5 February 1965, p.1.

**21** A *New York Times* profile described Sheriff Clark: "James Gardner Clark Jr., during his 10 years as sheriff, has made a career of keeping Negroes in line. He is formidable at the head of a posse. His night stick pistol and cattle prod swing from the tooled leather belt that girds 220 pounds, only a few of them excess. He is 43 years old. The dark hair below his gold-braided cap bristles with gray. His blue eyes sparkle with good humor when things are going his way, but turn

leaden when trouble is brewing." *New York Times*, 12 February 1965, p.58. Also see "Civil Rights," *Time* 85:12 (19 March 1965): 23; "Five Battles of Selma," *Ramparts* 4:2 (June 1965): 17–52.

**22** Citizens Councils, white civic groups with chapters around the country, were committed to preserving racial segregation. The group was formed in response to the 1954 Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* which declared separate but equal schooling unconstitutional. Zinn, SNCC, 148.

**23** Selma Police Chief Wilson Baker, formally known as Public Safety Director, posed a more moderate challenge to both King and Clark. Baker recognized how the violent reaction of Clark only strengthened King's claim for the federal government to intervene in Selma. Baker's battles with Clark were a significant subtext in the politics of the Selma voting rights campaign. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Behind the Selma March," *The Saturday Review* 48:14 (3 April 1965): 16–17+.

**24** A policeman shot Jackson on February 18 in the town of Marion, north of Selma. Jimmie Lee Jackson, 26 years old, had attempted to protect his mother from being beaten by the police. Jackson's death eight days later precipitated the SCLC announcement of a memorial march from Selma to Montgomery to take place on Sunday March 7.

**25** *Beauty For America*, 2.

**26** *Ibid.*, 6.

**27** William M. Blair, "Johnson Asks More Open Space And Landscaping for Highways," *New York Times*, 5 January 1965, p.16.

**28** Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1970), 238.

**29** "Ways to Beautify America: Exclusive Interview With the First Lady," *U.S. News and World Report* 58:8 (22 Feb. 1965): 74; Elizabeth Brenner Drew, "Lady Bird's Beauty Bill," *Atlantic* 216:6 (Dec. 1965): 68–72.

**30** *Beauty For America*, 2.

**31** Drew, "Lady Bird's Beauty Bill"; Johnson signed the Highway Beautification Act on 22 October 1965. The bill restricted the posting of billboards to beyond 660 feet of the highway. On the politics of billboard regulation see Catherine Gudis, *Buyways: Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 211–226.

**32** Adler, "Letter From Selma," 124. The Citizens Council of America supposedly planned to set up some 800 identical billboards around the country. Roy Reed, "Rights Marchers Push Into Region Called Hostile," *New York Times*, 23 March 1965, p.1. The purported "Communist training school" was the Highlander Center in Tennessee. Established in the 1930s as part of the progressive labor movement, by the 1950s Highlander had become an active participant in

the civil rights movement and inter-racial education. Branch, p. 162.

**33** Martin Luther King, Jr., "Hammer of Civil Rights," *Nation* 198:11 (9 March 1964): 232. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in November 1964 confirming international concern over the US civil rights movement. See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 182–183.

**34** Bruce Catton, "100 Years After Appomattox – The Unfinished Business of the Civil War," *New York Times*, 4 April 1965, sec.6, p.29.

**35** The building was described as "undoubtedly the most elaborate highway patrol office in America." See "Five Battles of Selma," *Ramparts*, 31. Governor George Wallace changed the name of the Alabama state police to the more militaristic sounding Alabama state troopers.

**36** The SNCC, skeptical of the efficacy of a spectacle such as the march and critical of the tactic of nonviolent direct action as a lure to violent reaction, did not officially support the march. As with earlier demonstrations, the SCLC expected the march to be interrupted by a mass arrest. As a result, little preparation was made for the walk to Montgomery and Martin Luther King did not participate. David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross; Martin Luther*

*King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 397; John Lewis, whose skull was fractured by a state trooper, noted: "This wasn't like Birmingham, where chanting and cheering and singing preceded a wild stampede and scattering. This was a face-off in the most vivid terms between a dignified, composed, completely nonviolent multitude of silent protestors and the truly malevolent force of a heavily armed, hateful battalion of troopers. The sight of them rolling over us like human tanks was something that had never been seen before." John Lewis, *Walking with the Wind; A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 324, 331.

**37** "Sitdown Inside White House Protests Selma," *New York Times*, 12 March 1965, p.1; "Liberty Bell Protest," *New York Times*, 13 March 1965, p.11; James Reston, "Washington: The rising Spirit of Protest," *New York Times*, 19 March 1965, p.34. Tom Wicker, "Johnson Pledges Vote For All," *New York Times*, 14 March 1965, p.1.

**38** The major impact of the Voting Rights Act was to allow federal registrars to take over the voting registration process in those states with a low percentage of registered black voters, thereby ending what had been the practice by southern states of using the court system to

challenge and delay any changes in federal laws.

**39** Message to Congress, 8 Feb. 1965; President Johnson stated that: "Certainly no one would hazard a national definition of beauty. But we do know that nature is nearly always beautiful. We do, for the most part, know what is ugly. And we can introduce, into all our planning, our programs, our building, and our growth, a conscious and active concern for the values of beauty. If we do this then we can be successful in preserving a beautiful America." *Beauty For America; Proceedings of the White House Conference on Natural Beauty*, May 24–25, 1965 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 2.

**40** Andrew Kopkind, *The New Republic* 152:12 (20 March 1965): 8.

**41** Branch, pp. 79–81.

**42** Ben A. Franklin, "March to Montgomery Hazardous, Troopers Say," *New York Times*, 16 March 1965, p.31; Garrow, *Selma*, 112; Roy Reed, "Hundreds Pour Into Selma For March to Montgomery," *New York Times* 21 March 1965, p.1; "Judge Johnson devoted six pages of his opinion to the complex legal tension between the Negroes' right to march over a public highway in an orderly and peaceful manner and the rights of the state of Alabama and its citizens to be protected from the consequences of a civil rights protest in hostile country." See Ben A.

Franklin, "U.S. Court Allows Alabama March," *New York Times*, 18 March 1965, p.1.

**43** Garrow, *Selma*; Fendall W. Yerxa, "Johnson Calls up Troops, Deplores Wallace's Acts; Alabama March On Today," *New York Times*, 21 March 1965, p.1; Paul L. Montgomery, "The Marchers on Highway 80 Are of All Sorts and One Belief," *New York Times*, 22 March 1965, p.27; Roy Reed, "Freedom March Begins At Selma; Troops On Guard," *New York Times*, 22 March 1965, p.1; Roy Reed, "Rights Marchers Push Into Region Called Hostile," *New York Times*, 23 March 1965, p.1. Andrew Kopkind attributes the origins of the national Black Panther Party to the formation of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization by the SNCC, Stokely Carmichael, and others. The organization used a crouching black panther as its emblem. Kopkind notes, "It was only logical that black power was born in Lowndes, the blackest and most powerless place in America." See Andrew Kopkind, "Lowndes County, Alabama: The Great Fear Is Gone," *Ramparts* 13:7 (April 1975): 10.

**44** The last night of the march featured entertainment by performers such as Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, Tony Bennett, Leonard Bernstein, Ella Fitzgerald, and Pete Seeger. Ben A. Franklin, "Top Entertainers in Alabama Tonight," *New York Times*, 24 March 1965, p.33.

**45** Liuzzo was the third person killed as a result of the Selma campaign and has the added historical footnote of being the only white woman murdered as part of the civil rights movement. Compounding the KKK killing of Liuzzo, apparently for committing the transgression of a white woman riding in a car with a black man, was that one of the KKK participants (and later indicted as the shooter) was an FBI informant. See Mary Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1998; Gary May, *The Informant: The FBI, The Ku Klux Klan, and the Murder of Viola Liuzzo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

**46** Jan Howard, "The Provocation of Violence: A Civil Rights Tactic?" *Dissent* 13:1 (Jan. – Feb. 1966): 96. On the media's attraction to violence, Howard noted, "Violence is dramatic, and Americans like the dramatic. Mass media will give extensive coverage to violence and threats of violence while they ignore more subtle injustices against the Negro and more subtle attempts to remedy injustice."; Fred W. Friendly, *Due To Circumstances Beyond Our Control...* (New York: Random House, 1967), 171–172; However, Andrew Kopkind noted that media coverage decreased as the march entered Lowndes County without any incident.

**47** <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/beauty.htm>

**48** The quote is from the National Scenic Byways Program website. See [www.byways.org/explore/byways/2050/stories/46881](http://www.byways.org/explore/byways/2050/stories/46881). As part of the National Historic Trail system, the route also includes a Lowndes County Interpretive Center, one of three planned centers operated by the National Park Service.

**49** By 1997 the marker has been defaced several times. Stanton, p. 21.