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Narrating the Racialization of Space in Austin, Texas and Nashville, Tennessee

Abstract

People of color in the United States have been obligated to move through public space in particular ways, dictated by law and social custom. Narrators create cognitive maps of movement in the city shaped by racial codes of behavior. The maps change over time as law and social custom changes. The fluidity of the maps is also influenced by status, gender, class, and skin tone. This paper examines a rich body of oral narratives co-created with African Americans in Austin, Texas and Nashville, Tennessee from 2004 to 2014, focusing on how men and women narrate their concepts of racialized space. It moves from narratives about the larger landscape – the city – to smaller, more personal public places – the sidewalk and the store – to intimate sites of contact in the public sphere. Many of the narratives describe complex flows of controlled movement dictated by racial boundaries in the context of capitalism. The narratives form an urban ethnography of the power relations inscribed on the landscape by racializing movement in space.

Keywords: landscape, race, racialized space, African American, gendered space

The United States was one of the last Western nations to end slavery, and it did so not voluntarily, as was the case in Europe, the British

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Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Editor in chief: Jolanta Sujecka

Conception and academic editing of this issue: Maciej Falski

Empire, and most of the Americas, but as a result of a violent civil war. By the time of the American Civil War, the nation had become increasingly divided between slave and free states (Franklin, 1963/1995, pp. 1–12).¹ The Civil War legally ended slavery and reunited the country in 1865, but the racist theory and racial hierarchy that was created to justify slavery persisted. James and Lois Horton wrote that the theories used to justify slavery were also used to justify the Jim Crow system of racial segregation for most of the 20th century. “Thus, what we understand today as racism is largely a legacy of the slavery that formally ended nearly a century and a half ago.” (Horton & Horton, 2006, p. x).

After a brief period of biracial democratic government in the American South in a period known as Reconstruction, there followed a whole system of laws and social customs, called Jim Crow laws, that severely limited the economic, social and physical movement of African Americans.² The effect of the racial hierarchy based on skin color and the Jim Crow laws was transgenerational: multiple generations of African Americans were excluded from particular spaces, economies, occupations, activities, and participation in the public sphere. The result was systemic oppression that became so ingrained as to appear normal. White identity and white dominance over public space became naturalized (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 12).

George Lipsitz described the connections between racial oppression and restricted movement in space as the “the racialization of space and the spatialization of race.” He outlined the process that resulted in spatial and economic exclusion based on race.

The lived experience of race has a spatial dimension, and the lived experience of space has a racial dimension. People of different races in the United States are relegated to different physical locations by housing and lending discrimination, by school district boundaries, by policing practices, by zoning regulations, and by the design of transit systems (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 12).

The “fatal links that connect race, place, and power” expose people of color to a shared system of exclusion and inclusion that privileges whiteness and skews opportunities and life chances along racial lines (Lipsitz, 2007, pp. 10–23). Lipsitz referenced David W. Noble’s dis-

¹ John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (1963/1995, pp. 1–12, especially pp. 3, 11). Haiti was a notable exception, also ending slavery after a violent war. *The Emancipation Proclamation* provides a nuanced discussion of the impact of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation on the abolition of slavery in the United States.

² For an excellent discussion of Reconstruction as a brief period of biracial democracy, see Foner (2005).

cussion of the spatial imaginary and 17th century European conquest and settlement of North America. The association of freedom with “pure” space was historically based on the exclusion of “non-normative others” that ensured the accumulation of wealth for some while denying it to others (Nolan, 2002; Lipsitz, 2007, p. 24).

A whole architectural system was created in the United States to keep the races separate or to limit interaction. As Robert Weyeneth observed,

[w]hat might be called “white space” could be created either by the mandate of law or by the unwritten rules of social custom, but the intent was the same: African Americans were to be excluded from specific places by prohibiting their entry and use. Exclusion could characterize a variety of spaces, from public facilities like schools and parks to private establishments such as restaurants or gas stations. Sometimes signs were used to designate spaces for the exclusive use of whites, but much of the time signage was unnecessary because white space was commonly recognized and acknowledged by both races. (Weyeneth, 2005, pp. 13–14).

Since 2004, my graduate students and I have been co-creating life history interviews in the American South with people who identify as African American. We have spoken to more than 180 people, focusing on their racial experiences in the U.S. Many of the narrators grew up in Austin, Texas, a liberal city in the middle of a conservative state. Others came from rural Tennessee or grew up in Nashville, another pocket of liberalism in a former Confederate state. In their stories, the black men and women outlined the cognitive maps they created to navigate through racialized space. They narrated the landscape itself – the physical boundaries of the black neighborhood, the places African Americans understood they could enter and the places they understood they could not enter – and their behavior inside those spaces. As Elizabeth Guffey pointed out in her study of signs from the period of state-sanctioned racial segregation – Jim Crow signage – African Americans were constantly negotiating their movement in space, at all times aware of relational spaces, touch, interaction and the fluidity of certain spaces (Guffey, 2012). Before legal segregation formally ended with the *Brown v. Board* decision of Education Supreme Court in 1954, signs marked public spaces, indicating which ones were for white people and which ones were for “colored” people. With the *Brown* decision, the signs were removed but navigating the landscape remained complex (Guffey, 2012, p. 52).

Narrators described the normalization of neighborhood boundaries based on race during the era of legal segregation. Berl Handcox was aware of the boundaries constraining his choices of neighborhoods, housing and

access to wealth. He could not move out of the neighborhood designated for African Americans in Austin, Texas.

If you lived there, and if you were, “making a decent living,” and you wanted to move away from that environment... you couldn’t do so, because you were locked into something called “where your folk had to live” [...] You could move around a corner or two in East Austin, but you were still in East Austin.

He grew up in Denton, Texas, where it was much the same. “You had artificial boundaries: that this is your section. There’s no fence up there but you kind of grow up knowing what is [your section] [...]. Everything was separate.” His parents were concerned for his safety should he transgress the spatial and racial boundaries. “[Y]our parents [...] taught you how to [...] stay out of this [...] and that situation in order to perhaps even save your life. You were taught actually how to [...] navigate through the minefield” (Handcox, 2004).

Kathy Littlefield remembered a completely segregated life in Manor, Texas, fifteen miles east of Austin. “When I was growing up in Manor, then blacks stayed to themselves and the whites stayed to themselves [...] the blacks got along with the whites. The blacks just stayed on one side and the whites stayed on one side. [...] You know, like it was not like a line. It was just the... white people stayed there and black people stayed here” (Littlefield, 2009). Mattie Rose remembered the normalization of complete segregation in Tennessee. She almost never saw a white person. “For me it was just normal. There was nothing odd about it, because we did not know anything different. Even when I lived in Atlanta, I lived in an exclusively black area. Back then things were more segregated than what they are now. When you went downtown to shop [...] that was when you would see white people. You just did not see [white people]. They did not walk around in your neighborhood. I was trying to think if I could even remember [seeing a white person]. [The] utility people, you know like the electric [workers]” (Rose, 2009).

Moving through white space was difficult in the Jim Crow South if there was any claim of equal status, but permissible if African Americans traveled to work in specifically designated labor categories. African Americans were able to go outside of East Austin, the black section of the city, west to white areas as domestics or yardmen. Bertram Allen narrated a particularly vivid scene of the movement of black women’s domestic labor west across Austin.

East Austin was like a city within a city [...]. I know you’ve heard the story that the East Side had everything. The only thing they went over across town was mostly to work. If you didn’t do day work, you had to go to the field and pick cotton [...]. They called it day work, but it was just maid work. They’d take those busses [...]

downtown [to] Congress Avenue [...]. I told someone once, when I was little, that I used to hate that, all those black women dressed in their white uniforms. I used to refer to it as the sea of white dresses on Congress [Avenue], going to do day work. That's all they could do (Allen, 2008).

Black teachers could only find employment at black schools or on Indian Reservations – in nonwhite environments. Charles Aikens noted,

When I first got out of school as a teacher, it was during segregation. There weren't many jobs available [...]. Black teachers didn't move from school to school. When they got a job, they stayed there [...]. I sent out a lot of applications, to Indian Reservations because one or two fellas got jobs at the Indian Reservation, where they would accept black teachers [...]. We were limited, because we had to go to a black school. Finally, I got [a teaching job at a black school] after two years (Aikens, 2004).

When Bernice Hart was asked when she first became aware of the differences between the black community and the white community, she responded, "From the day I was born." Everything made her aware of these differences: "Where you live, where you went to school, you know, everything, everyday life" (Hart, 2004).

Lipsitz described the American Civil Rights Movement as locating struggles against the oppression of race in the struggles over space.

AfricanAmerican battles for resources, rights [...] required blacks literally to *take places*. The famous battles of the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement to desegregate stores, lunch counters, trains, buses, and schools emerged from centuries of struggle over spaces, from a long history of struggle to secure freedom of movement in public, and from campaigns to enter, inhabit, use, control, and own physical places (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 16).

As the Civil Rights Movement, one of the most remarkable mass movements in American history (Hall, 2005), gained increasing media attention and resulted in social change, African Americans at the local level experienced changes in their expectations for their movement in space. Charles Aikens described a new awareness that came about as a result of the Civil Rights Movement.

That was just that era. That was the time of segregation [...]. We kind of took that for granted until then. It was before the protest movement came. I didn't feel bitter because I had to sit on the back of the bus because I had already always done that, and I couldn't envision not doing it. That awareness had not become apparent to me until the Civil Rights Movement. Then you sort of resented [segregation] when the awareness comes forth (Aikens, 2004).

Mattie Rose remembered having to get used to the changes in racialized space:

You didn't see [white people] [...] in your neighborhood. You didn't see them on a day-to-day basis. Going downtown, this was what you expected [...] so that when it started to change, I had [...] to deal with getting used to that more than just what I had grown on up with, when all of a sudden, black people were in places that they hadn't been before (Rose, 2009).

When cities were legally obligated to desegregate, they did so in limited ways. Berl Handcox commented that most interactions between whites and blacks took place in the schools but did not extend to the larger social environment of the city or neighborhood. Each race went its own way, back to its own racialized geography. Even in cities that had been integrated for a long period of time, the geography of race was substantially unchanged.

The schools were integrated, and the public transportation was integrated. The other public accommodations were integrated, but life there was what I would describe now as [...] a black society that did things in traditional ways that was not necessarily as it was done in another part of the state or the city. [...] I've learned since then that most of your interaction was in school [...] [and] most of it ceased at the locker, when you took off your uniform [...] or put your books away. They [whites] went this way and you went the other. Which is pretty much the way I've found it to be in all the cities that profess to have been integrated for so long (Handcox, 2004).

Movement in space was deeply connected to the development and later dismantling of black business districts in all black neighborhoods. "With the confinement of black residents to certain sections of the city came the spatial confinement of black entrepreneurs" (Wilson, 2007, p. 81; cf. Johnson, 1989). African Americans developed a range of black businesses in East Austin. As in other cities, because the Austin commercial districts were spatially confined, they could not compete in the larger economy, nor could they attract additional businesses necessary for economic growth. The spatial confinement was maintained by *de jure* and *de facto* housing segregation and racial discrimination by financial institutions. "With the full support of federal law, intentional racial discrimination was an explicit requirement of housing finance and related housing practices for most of the twentieth century" (Wilson, 2007, p. 81).

Tommy Wyatt, who writes and edits a Black newspaper in Austin, talked about the insularity of East Austin's business community.

I mean, we had two societies, that's the main difference. We had two societies and in Austin, Texas the only thing you had to cross over I-35 [interstate expressway 35]

for, probably, was to go to the bank. There weren't no banks over here. But all the other services you had. You had restaurants or cleaning and pressing shops or automobile repair shops. Whatever good or service you needed, it was sold in this community, so you didn't need the other side of town. When they put the expressway there, which everybody calls the dividing line between East and West Austin, it didn't bother anybody. Nobody went over there [West Austin] anyway (Wyatt, 2004).

When desegregation came, Wyatt linked the movement in physical space to a complex movement in economic space. The people "most able to go" went to better opportunities in a larger sphere of capitalism. The effect on the insular black business community was devastating. "So when, when the integration came, what happened was, many of your black institutions were broken up, because the other large institutions could offer better opportunities" (Wyatt, 2004). The mix of social classes changed dramatically, leaving only the poor and lower middle classes in East Austin, and as a result the mix of businesses changed.

Many of the stalwarts of our community [...] the most educated and the most experienced [...] were taken out because they were the people who were mostly able to integrate [...]. What you have is a dispersal of economic class. [...] The people in the upper income bracket of the African American Community no longer live here because they don't have to. [...] In the early days, when I came here, everybody lived in this community. Whether you were an upper income physician or a lower income janitor, you all lived in the same neighborhood. When the Public Accommodations came in, physicians and attorneys and dentists – all the people were able to buy houses on Cat Mountain, in Far West Austin and Balcones [wealthier white neighborhoods] – that's what they did, which they should have, because that's where they could afford to live and that's where their property value was better. [...] That left this community stripped of much of its economic resources. What you had left over here were just the [...] people in the low income housing and [...] the lower middle class [...]. When you take that kind of resource out of a community, it leaves the community lacking in a lot of ways. That's why many of these businesses we talked about that were open are closed, because the people who had the resources to support them are no longer here (Wyatt, 2004).

By the mid-1970s, the East Austin landscape could be read as poverty. Alysia Friday said she could see the difference.

You could see the divide. You could see – I don't want to call it poverty, because it wasn't all poverty – but you could see the difference in the buildings. You could see the difference in the houses. The landscape changed dramatically. You could just see it. You knew that [you] were entering into a part of town that was like, hmmmm. [...] You knew that you were entering into a Black community [...] because you could see that (Friday, 2007).

The movement to the wealthier neighborhoods was itself complex for African American families. Myra McDaniel became the first African American Secretary of State in Texas, serving from 1984 to 1987. When she first moved to Austin and she and her family bought a house in a wealthier white neighborhood, her children did not relate well to the African American students who were bussed into their mostly white school.

We were living in Northwest Hills, in the White neighborhood, so our kids went to neighborhood schools. [...] By the time that we came along, you could buy a house anywhere we wanted to and it was the area that most of the faculty was moving into at that time because it was a nice neighborhood that the faculty could afford. [...] They were bussing [African American] kids in from East Austin who really ended up not having much in common with my children because many of them came from very low-income families and neighborhoods. That was not true for my kids. They had some friends who were African Americans who were children of [...] professional people, but not many friends from kids who were [bussed into] school with them (McDaniel, 2004).

Clarence McGowan was one of the first African American judges appointed in San Antonio, Texas. Like McDaniel, he purchased a home in wealthier white neighborhood. While they were comfortable in the neighborhood in terms of social class, both McDaniel and McGowan described the racialized micro-aggressions they experienced as they were reminded, on a regular basis, of their “outsider” racial status in the white space.

McDaniel’s husband found a house he liked that belonged to a University of Texas faculty member. The owner called to say,

“Someone is coming to look at this house today but if you want it, it is yours because the people next door told me they did not want African Americans moving in and nobody is telling me what I am doing with my house. So if you want this house, it’s yours.” It was very funny because it was an elderly couple who lived next door on that side [who objected] and they built a six-foot fence for privacy. My husband is 6’ foot 8” and so we just laughed [because he could see and be seen over the fence]...The other neighbors were all very welcoming (McDaniel, 2004).

Clarence McGowan remembered a range of behaviors meant to maintain separate social spheres despite his physical presence in the space of the neighborhood.

I lived across the street from a fellow who was a very prominent dentist here in San Antonio. [...] I was at the neighborhood association meeting and he came up to me and said, “McGowan, I really appreciate you living in this neighborhood. You have really kept that corner nice. I’ve been living in this neighborhood as long as you have, and I’ve never said a word to you

but you are a good citizen.” I said, “You know, you are a good citizen, too. I’m glad that you’re in this neighborhood.” [...] He’d been living over there across the street from me, passing up and down the street, until the year 2001 before he would even say anything. You see what I’m saying? I mean, it’s still there. They just don’t show it but it’s there. [...] Next door to us was a fellow who was in the military. I’d meet him out in the yard sometimes, and he said, “Well, you know, I’m part Indian.” Whether he was telling me that in order to let me know that he [...] had some dark blood in him, too, you know? [...] One day [...] I’m out [...] in my yard [...] mowing – I like to mow, trim my own yard – and [I was wearing] stuff that people usually wear when they are cleaning the yard. This guy stops and he says, “Hey, boy [...], you want another job doing a yard?” I said, “No, I would go do other yards, but I got my house paid for now. I live here, you see, and I got it paid for, so I just do my own” (McGowan, 2004).

Both McDaniel and McGowan limited their movement because they felt threatened when traveling in Texas in their official capacities as Secretary of State (McDaniel) or as a practicing attorney (McGowan). Myra McDaniel: “There were certainly things that happened that did not happen to people who were not African American or women, mostly to African Americans because it is Texas.” She made speeches all over Texas but when she was in East Texas or parts of West Texas, “The sheriff would send somebody to follow me around to make sure that nothing happened to me.” The sheriff in West Texas told her, “My deputy will follow you to the line, and when you get back in town you’ll be okay. But we don’t want anything to happen to you here.” When she was scheduled to go to Vidor, Texas, “The people in Vidor asked whether I was going to bring the DPS [Department of Public Safety] with me because other than that they could not assure my safety, so we decided that we just didn’t need to go to Vidor.” (McDaniel, 2004). Clarence McGowan went to various part of Texas to represent black clients who felt they could not get a white lawyer to honestly represent them. He said he often feared personal violence. “Most of the places where I went to represent people out of town, in situations where there was a racial bias involved, I didn’t stay there at night.” When he was in the small town of Franklin, Texas the judge took it as a matter of course that McGowan would leave at night.

I didn’t stay in Franklin at night. I went back to my hometown in Bryan and stayed every night [...] [because] I might’ve been missing the next morning. In fact, I told the judge, I said, “Now judge, I’m not going to be here in the evening, so if anything comes up after you dismiss for the day, would you just please hold it till the next day?” He said, “I can understand, I can understand” (McGowan, 2004).

The relationship between racialized space and a racialized economy was in sharper focus as cities and towns slowly and selectively desegregated spheres of activity. Sam Biscoe, who served as a judge in Travis County, Texas, described the landscape in Tyler, Texas, where he grew up, as “100% segregated. In those days, when we saw whites at the school, it was the postman or the superintendent, who would visit once a semester as part of some auditorium program.” Even as legally mandated desegregation opened up employment opportunities, they were in an arena of inequality.

Except for working and going downtown, my experience in Tyler was pretty segregated, and when it was desegregated, it was pretty much in the employment context, and you were not really quite viewed as equal there (Biscoe, 2004).

Arthur McDonald narrated an explicit connection between racialized space and economic opportunity. He went to all-black schools until he was in the eighth grade. When he attended a desegregated high school in Austin in the mid-1960s, he became aware of the vast differences in wealth and opportunity based on race.

While it didn’t so much make me angry at the time, yet I was aware, even sitting at Austin High, that that was a vast [...] not so much cultural but economic difference between the [...] majority of my Anglo friends and the [...] majority of my African American friends. I could look at the difference in housing; I could look at the difference in mainly opportunity for jobs (McDonald, 2007).

He reflected on the impact of restricted movement on the lives of his parents.

My father, who [...] is one of the most brilliant men I’ve ever known, because of segregation and economic apartheid could not go to school here. He had to go all the way to California to get his Master’s. The best job that he could get would be that of a high school professor. Actually, my father had the ability to have succeeded greatly in an open society. My mother was way before her time. I wouldn’t call her a feminist, but yet at the same time she was very strong and she was really astute in how to work with people. My wife and I often talk about it. [It] would have been interesting to see if, given the same opportunities that we have been given, what she would have achieved (McDonald, 2007).

Alysia Friday arranged to go to school in a wealthy white section of Austin. She did not want to go to school with the children from her district as, “they were just bad kids; they fought all the time.” Being in what she described as “that whole other world” of West Austin was a “wake up call” for her.

They lived in mansions. They had everything. They didn’t struggle to buy uniforms. They didn’t struggle to get their equipment. [...] They were all very smart. [...] They had a better education. [...] When you’re in that world for a moment [...]

and you've been to their houses and you've even just seen the interaction with the parents and the children, that's a wake up call. When you get back on the other side of I35, that's a whole other ball game. It's like, "Okay, come back to reality here." (Friday, 2007).

For many women, the inside of stores became highly racialized spaces that involved complex power negotiations. In response to racial micro-aggressions – denying service, implying low status – customers could, and did, refuse to engage in consumer transactions. A clerk in a Nashville store racialized an ordinary consumer transaction in a Sears Department Store by allowing white customers to move in front of Betty Turner's mother in line.

On Saturday is when we would usually go and do all of our shopping. One Saturday, we went there just before Easter, as we needed to get an Easter dress for me and my brothers needed suits. My dad had worked a lot of overtime [so we could get new clothes]. There was this huge candy counter in Sears and they had an attendant that would have to get the candy for you. You could buy it in bulk [...] and scoop it into the little bags and weigh it. [...] We'd shopped all day, and my mom was going to treat us. We had been standing a good while. It was kind of crowded, because [...] it was the holiday season. [...] My mom was dressed really nice. She always dressed up to go anywhere. [...] This white lady came up and got in front of my mom and ordered what she wanted. My mom said, "Excuse me, we were here first." The attendant just went on and took care of that lady. I could see my mom getting more and more angry. [...] Then another woman comes up and the attendant says, "May I help you?" My mother said, "We were here first." The attendant said, "You will wait your turn." I was holding my mom's hand, and she said, "Let's go." I'm pulling back going, "No, we got to get the candy. We didn't get the candy yet." My mom said, "Let's go." So we left. We didn't get any candy. I was so angry at my mom because I didn't understand yet. "Look it's right there! [...] All the candy in the world is in front of us. Why can't we [have some]?" When we got to the parking lot, by then I'm crying, "Mom why didn't we get the candy? You said we could have candy!" She said [...] "Never, ever, ever, take a backseat to anyone. I would rather do without than for us to have to wait to get that candy." [...] That was a way of teaching me principles. You don't take a backseat just because there's something that you want. If you can't receive it with dignity, then you'd better not get it, because the price will be too great in the long run (Turner, 2011).

Mattie Rose was in a store with her former husband shopping for a diamond ring. The clerk attempted to limit their purchase, and their sense of "belonging" in the jewelry store by questioning their ability to participate in a luxury purchase.

My ex-husband and I went shopping for a ring. I had told him that I wanted a diamond that you could see. Of course we went in the store and right away we

were ignored. When we got the attention of a sales person and we told him what we wanted, he came back with a 12-point diamond. That kind of upset me because that was not what I wanted. My ex-husband asked him if he had anything larger. He came back with a 25. He asked him if he had anything larger. He came back with a 1/3 of a caret. [My ex-husband] had to become kind of aggressive, and let them know that what he wanted was at least a half caret diamond. The sales person's response was, "Do you know how much that cost?" His response was, "I didn't ask you how much it cost. I told you that was what I want." [...] When we got the half caret, he told the sales person to put all of them in the one ring, which totally just blew him away. The clerk responded, "How are you going to pay for this?" We said, "American Express." When he called American Express, he said something that he shouldn't have said. When you make a large purchase they always ask to speak with you to make sure that it is you making the purchase. They will ask you what was the last thing you bought or some little something so they will know it's you. After I had answered the question, the sales lady said, "Put the sales person back on the phone again. I want to talk to him." You could tell [...] whatever he had said must have been something negative [because] when he got off the phone, he said, "They told me to just give you whatever you want, because you don't have a credit limit." [...] You run into that. There's nothing unusual about that. People just assume that if you are black, there are certain things you cannot have (Rose, 2009).

Supported by the passage of three key civil rights acts – the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that outlawed segregation in businesses and public places and banned discriminatory practices in employment, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that banned racial discrimination in voting practices, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 that prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings³ – African Americans affirmed their right to deracialize particular geographies. People were conscious that being part of a larger national movement was critical to their success. As Clarence McGowan said,

We just abided by the law and those who were able to work against it began that work long, long years ago. At that time it was still the law and it was still being enforced. You would suffer physical consequences if you got out and tried to change individually. It took group action over many, many years to change that. (McGowan, 2004).

³ The Civil Rights Act of 1964, "outlawed segregation in businesses such as theaters, restaurants, and hotels. It banned discriminatory practices in employment and ended segregation in public places such as swimming pools, libraries and public schools" (The Civil Rights Act, n.d.).

"The Voting Rights Act (VRA) bans racial discrimination in voting practices by the federal government as well as by state and local governments." ((Voting Rights Act, n.d.)

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), as amended, prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions, based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, and people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and disability ((Fair Housing Laws and Presidential Executive Orders, n.d.).).

The Texas and Tennessee narratives reassert Lipstiz's description of the Civil Rights Movement as "taking places," as they describe their movement into previously all white spaces, or spaces that had been understood – with or without signage – as being off limits to people of color.

Before the collective movement the narratives reveal acts of resistance in space on the part of individuals. Bernice Hart's maternal grandfather's individual action could not change the racial geography, but it did establish a boundary of another sort: the line whites might fear to cross. He took a gun with him and intentionally rode down a street forbidden to Blacks. Nobody bothered him and importantly, the often expected threat of later violence did not materialize.

Both my parents came from Hondo, Uvalde [Texas] and that area. They just grew up with certain rules. Blacks knew that they can't cross the line here and they just abided by it, so they didn't ever have no problem [...]. They had said that certain times of the day [...] that blacks could not be on this particular street. [My mother's father] got on his horse and went to the end of that street and rode it totally to the end of it with his shotgun across his legs. Nobody bothered him. [...] He just said, "They say we can't go. We pay taxes like everybody else and that street does not belong to them. I'm-a show them." [...] And nobody did anything afterwards (Hart, 2004).

Yet, as James Lawson pointed out, individual acts of disruption or resistance work best when they are part of visionary thinking that includes a strategic plan.⁴

While individuals narrated their own particular life histories, the similarities, even in states as different in history and identity as Texas and Tennessee, are striking. The oral histories raise issues of the particularities of gender as women negotiate the micro-racism of shopping, an experience that continues to haunt the lives of women of color. They highlight the impact of segregation and targeted desegregation on the black business community, which were once thriving in a limited sphere of capitalism, describing how as larger, but still limited, opportunities arose, the dispersal of black business patrons led to the demise of the black business district. The dispersal of wealth had as dramatic an impact on a black multi-class community as it did on black businesses. The narratives offer a visual analysis of the racialized landscape – women's labor moving west as a sea of whiteness, arriving in the black neighborhood and seeing the difference in housing – as well as social insights – biracial friendships stopping at the locker room door, mothers constantly moved to the back of the line in the

⁴ Rev. James Lawson comments at "No Voice, No Choice: The Voting Rights Act at 50," Middle Tennessee State University Democracy Project Constitution Day, Murfreesboro Tennessee, September 17, 2015.

candy store. Most importantly, the narratives explore the nuanced ways in which people navigated the physical landscape of race and the consequent landscape of capitalism. They texture theories of racialized space by providing first-person accounts of the consciousness people brought to the constantly changing boundaries of race, space and class.

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Note

The research was supported by: The University of Texas at Austin, the Houston Endowment, the Summerlee Foundation, and Middle Tennessee State University. No conflicts of interest exist.