

# Four Theorems of African Archetype and Landscape

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## ABSTRACT:

Today, designers must study and understand the culture of a place. In a “globalizing” world where standardization often rules with unfortunate consequences, it is imperative that professionals have strategies for understanding values and rituals of people, including their traditional ways of building community. Qualitative methods and grounded theory were used to interpret the human and historic landscape dimension of settlements in the United States and Africa.

The origin, evolution, and destiny of African-American settlements in the United States began as a precursory, multi-disciplinary dialog with the American landscape. Since the original hypothesis centered on socio-cultural and eco-physical factors influencing communities where inhabitants were “emancipated” to determine their destiny, slave villages were not extensively documented. The research was aimed at determining how African Americans had contributed to the built environment. Early communities did not adhere to traditional Western designs or to African building practices but were impacted by racial separatism and belief in ethnic superiority. As a result, African American structures and settlements were largely vernacular in nature, eclectic in style, and driven by the socio-economic, political, and physical context of the region.

Attention turned to African landscapes in order to understand the juxtaposition between African and western cultural archetypes. While the natural environment supports a diverse lifestyle, many aspects of the urban landscape are in flux and incongruent, depending on the tribes, customs, and environmental conditions. Unplanned settlements, with their incompatible environmental practices, co-exist adjacent to newly developed land uses.

Four theorems emerged from observation in Africa over a series of extended field visits dealing with layering of privacy, material use, relationship between developmental practices and belief systems, and cultural erosion related to the evolution of settlement and socialization. Observing and thinking critically about how culture is revealed and illuminated could aid in developing design strategies that would richly reflect tradition as the African landscape narrative expands.

**ON MEASUREMENT:** Integrating the human dimension in architectural research

**KEYWORDS:** Human dimension, socio-cultural landscapes, lessons



**Figure 1:** Farmland near Kampala, Uganda. Photographer: LBJWigfall

## I. INTRODUCTION

### I.1 BLACK SETTLEMENTS IN AMERICA

Too frequently, planners, architects, and preservationists assume that the past is pristine and linear, that places reflect only one kind of inhabitant, family, user, owner, purpose, or significance. For two hundred years, classical historical figures and resources were assumed to be the only important components of the American heritage. Researchers had a tendency to identify that heritage with Euro-American history, forgetting that America is an African as well as European “invention.” This attitude led to the investigation of black settlements in the United States as a response to Professor J.B. Jackson’s inquiry about contributors to the American landscape at Harvard University. Professor Jackson was a noted landscape critic and author who was fascinated with the American vernacular. He challenged students to expand the dialog about socio-cultural influences on the vernacular landscape. Initially, the investigation focused on the role of African-Americans in the development of the built American landscape between 1865 and 1920. Very limited information (written or oral) existed in mainstream publications about the accomplishments of the Negro following Emancipation. Generally, history recorded the life of pivotal statesmen, inventors, pioneers, and rebels, such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Pap Singleton, or Harriet Tubman. In general, people acknowledge and accept these jewels through the National Park Service designations but what about the community builders and architects of cultural places? Surely, there were individual “Negro” men, women, families, and whole communities that transcended the atrocities following Emancipation and challenges of national building. In addition to these obvious omissions, how did African Americans migrate to urban enclaves? Historical sources, like Nell Irvin Painter, referenced the great exodus from the South in 1879 to Kansas, but what about other settlements? As primary and secondary sources revealed over 800 communities had existed during this pivotal period in US history, the research expanded to include the identification, documentation and interpretation of neighborhoods, suburbs, towns, villages, and settlements across the United States. The national planning and design study intended to document black settlements as a dynamic entity. The research addressed the origin, evolution, and destiny of the communities in order to expose black settlements as a significant national phenomenon and to demonstrate the importance of historic and cultural resources. A more extensive study later investigated the regional planning dynamics of economics, socio-cultural, political, and physical elements in the survival of black communities. National Archives and Library of Congress records provided the most comprehensive overview of community development and helped establish a settlement typology for later evaluation. Oral history recordings and informants, usually community elders, confirmed and expanded the database. Cartographic, photographic, and geographic records supported information gleaned from census data, oral informants, and field studies.

Since the “Black Settlements in America” precursory research began, the database has been utilized for numerous preservation projects throughout the United States in an effort to empower African-American communities. Although these strategies for future development have been linked to cultural resources and traditions in this country, there was still great curiosity about the predecessors of slave communities and social structures that may have influenced certain patterns on the colonial landscape. Investigating the relationships between culture and the African landscape (especially Senegal where slave trading was most pronounced); ethnography and architecture; and lifestyle and environment was a logical step towards that understanding.

### I.2 PATTERN IN THE AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT

Since the original hypothesis centered on the socio-cultural and eco-physical factors influencing communities where inhabitants were “emancipated” to determine their destiny, very little attention was given to environments occupied by slaves or free men prior to 1862. As the earliest research uncovered primarily contraband camps, rural villages, and unincorporated towns, it was clear that these early communities did not adhere to traditional Western designs or to African building practices, which were discouraged by whites. After deeper investigation of early slave communities, it was clear that some cultural influences had directed the order and organization of these settlements. Several material culture historians had drawn connections between the design of southern slave

cabins and shotgun houses in both rural and urban settings. But was that all that exists? What about community/town planning principles and governance? How does the African landscape narrative inform African-American community development in the United States? Expanding the investigation by exploring African antecedents of the colonial period was a natural progression, enriching the original work by the new knowledge and a fresh perspective obtained only through additional field observation. Attention turned to West Africa, specifically Senegal and The Gambia, due to the prolific slave trafficking by the French and English from Goree Island. The following project objectives summarized early interests: 1. to advance the original research by exploring the antecedents of slave villages in West Africa (document settlement patterns, community organization, and land uses); 2. to identify Afro-centric patterns and socio-cultural influences reinscribed and interpreted in the Senegalese environment; 3. to observe trends and differences in landscape architecture in Senegal and the socio-political factors that shape it; 4. to juxtapose architectural design in Western culture and Senegal; 5. to expose students and the public-at-large to Senegalese culture through lectures, educational posters, and course content. (The posters would depict historic and contemporary environmental patterns, “genealogy of the land”, and aspects of community life.); 6. to assess the validity of the current research methodology in collaboration with Senegalese scholars documenting their village histories and folklore.

Although understanding the historical evolution of the landscape was most important to historic documentation, preservation, and tourism, as had proven valuable in the study of the American landscape, finding those antecedents would also inform future planning and design of communities in the United States as well as Africa where historic resources were being depleted by modern development without regard to cultural roots. Knowing how socio-cultural practices influence the built environment, and how pattern, whether land-related, behavioral, or culture-based, explains where, how, and why people live in certain circumstances became the focus of the first field studies in Senegal. Although a great deal of the Senegalese physical fabric was obscure and difficult to identify due to the influence of the ruling class, seeing and documenting the landscape firsthand was both an insightful and personally spiritual (emotional) experience.

Observations and photo-documentation in Senegambia provided the first theories about the patterns in the African landscape. Four theorems, focusing on material use, layers of privacy, development practices, and settlement patterns related to cultural erosion, emerged for testing with subsequent trips to West Africa and Uganda/Kenya over the next four years. Another extended observation as a Fulbright Scholar in Tanzania validated the premise behind the theorems and provided extensive examples in East Africa. Student projects in unplanned “urban” settlements revealed contemporary land use issues for later consideration.

## **2. BLACK SETTLEMENTS IN AMERICA**

### **2.1 PREMISE AND DISCOVERY**

Without question, human history is layered, intermeshed, fused, and even confused. As people migrated from continent to continent, and from rural to urban environments, they left remnants of their lifestyle for posterity. If historians, planners, and designers examine “the geology of the land” they can begin to understand this complex web of associations, uses, and physical manifestations. Only the land can offer an accumulative history of composite efforts. Research in an untraditional area such as vernacular or black material culture reveals that, in reality, extracting the chronology of African-Americans from this fabric is difficult because a great deal of their contributions were ignored or not cultivated. In most cases, there is more to be learned than appears on the surface. The passing of time is a key factor in the lesson. Designers understand that a building has a “skin”, or outer covering, which weathers or is altered over time. A building also has internal members and multiple additions that can reveal something about past lifestyles or attitudes. This same principle may be applied to landscapes but we must constantly remind ourselves that surface clues will be subtler, or even obscure, in the land-related resources than with architecture.

There were African-American settlements thriving in the West before Pap Singleton and the “exodusters” began their trek from southern oppression to the promised 20 acres and a mule in the

West. By the late 1800, migration of people of color in this country was a common phenomenon. This movement had begun prior to the dark slavery era. Africans came to the North American continent, specifically Canada, with the French, Irish, and other Europeans, settling peaceably in the Bay of Fundi as early as 1691. No doubt many of these settlers to the New World travelled with their North American neighbors, primarily Native Americans, across the border into America. Other people of color migrated across the Atlantic to the West Indies, but the majority of them came under slave trade to the southern states and remained in captivity until their death.

Much has been written about the slavery years – elaborate descriptions of the economic, socio-cultural plight of proud Africans transported into demoralizing conditions. Historians have portrayed this period of history as glorious for America while describing only the limited contributions that African-Americans made in their newly found homeland. Few historians offer other accomplishments made by them except: the economic benefits the southern majority derived from their “Negro” field hands’ and servants’ labor; and the contributions of individual, exceptional “Negro” leaders.

Collectively, African-Americans built their slave communities, established rural settlements and towns, and sustained urban enclaves despite potential perils from their southern owners or the weather. It is between 1865 and 1920, when African-Americans were free to establish their economic, political, socio-cultural, and physical manifestations, that we find the most prolific development of the race.

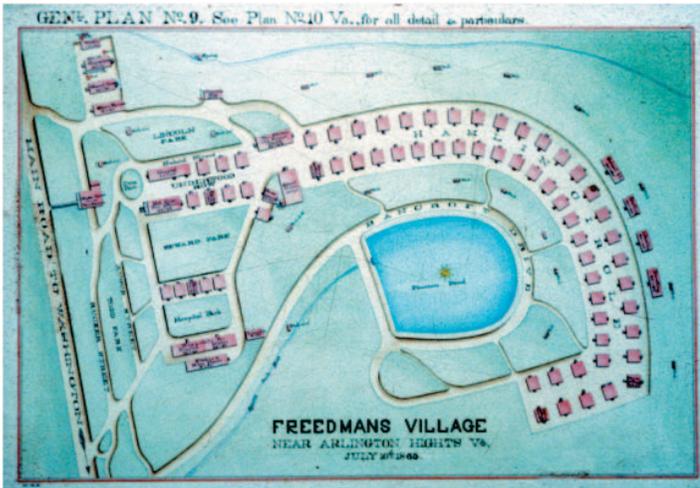
## 2 AFRICAN-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT TYPOLOGY

Prior to the Civil War, *slave villages* thrived as self-sufficient units on the landscape, producing the nation’s largest commerce – cotton. No plantation was organized the same. Most homesteads were segregated according to white owners and foremen, Negro house servants, and Negro field hands. In the south’s peak production period, plantations were strewn along the Mississippi River in clusters. The “big house” was usually located on higher ground, thus reducing the probability of flood damage. These family mansions were the epitome of glorious, southern lifestyle, contrasted by the humble frame or occasional brick one-room units (which had to be rebuilt independent of their day’s regiment with each overflow of the river) on the other side of the railroad track. Perhaps, the plantation stigma of living “on the other side of the tracks” followed Negroes to their American cities long after slavery. This notion about the land and how people live on the land is pervasive in the structure of our landscape today—large lots with expansive setbacks and dominant residences vs. dense cottages abutting the public easement with little opportunity for privacy.

Most slave cottages were arranged in a gridiron pattern in order to monitor the activities of slaves. Seemingly slaves built identical units, equal distance apart in long rows. When slaves had the freedom to select their settlement sites, cottages were scattered among the bottomlands in an attempt to both secure their settlements from the foremen and also from harsh environmental conditions. Most plantation foremen did not like the latter settlement pattern because it perpetuated successful escapes. Typically, cottages were built on grade with dirt floors and were subject to constant sweeping to reduce the dust. (This is a pattern found in urban African communities today.) In more affluent villages, units were built above-grade; in high water table conditions, even brick units. In any case, slaves attempted to arrange their units in ecologically stable areas, taking advantage of sun angles for appropriate shade, wind for cross-ventilation, and water run-off.

While the South battled for its precious right to retain servants as slaves, *contraband camps* were established as temporary living quarters for the protection and administration of Negroes fleeing that way of life. Freedom came early to Negroes in the North; President Lincoln’s proclamation in 1862 resulted in a great underground migration to northern cities prior to the close of the Civil War. For instance, over 10,000 Negroes flocked to forts, like Freedmen’s Village (near Arlington National Cemetery) that surrounded Washington, DC. By 1883, Village residents were forced to disband, founding new villages, such as Penn Rose, Halls Hill, and Queen City (The Pentagon). After 1865, *freedmen villages* continued as farm units, fostering pride in individual productivity.

Most freedmen did not travel long distances to the north; the majority of them found a safe haven with Union troops confiscating properties during the War. Many were considered contraband. Upon the close of the Civil War, Negroes with any articles or animals could register with the Bureau



**Figure 2:** Freedmans Village, at Arlington National Cemetery, was an unusual semi-circular development pattern built by slaves with varied farm lots along a secondary road system forming sub-communities. (National Archives, Quartermaster General Records)

and request relocation. The Bureau provided protection to travelling freedmen, land for settlement, and in some cases, animals and tools; and distribution of food and clothing. Many freedmen filed as family units, settling in clusters in a natural along the Mississippi River, in order to share equipment and farm responsibilities as well as defend against raids. They worked plots of adjoining land cooperatively, maintaining deep local identity and organization not obvious to outsiders. (These communities had names known by the residents but most were never recorded because of size and/or census taker fear of discovery.)

Frustrated with Reconstruction efforts, many Americans saw self-government and improvement as the only salvation for the Negro. *Rural villages* proliferated from Virginia to California, and Florida to Washington. Trained ex-slaves, left to run the plantation while the owner defended the Union during the Civil War, established many of these settlements. For instance, Isaiah T. Montgomery successfully managed Jefferson Davis's cotton production and commerce in town but after the War, Joseph Davis redeemed the family honor and property, leaving Montgomery to migrate north and found Mound Bayou, Mississippi. Isaiah and his brother were not the only African-American community developers in the western territory. Others like Zach Fletcher, Ben Carr, S.P. Roundtree took advantage of the Townsite Preemption Act to establish town companies, promoting their settlements in the south, and escorting families to their free government lands. Nicodemus, Kansas is one of the typical western townsites established using similar speculation methods, like Benjamin "Pap" Singleton Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association's development activities.

The *Black Town* was the ultimate governing institution, offering self-determination for Negroes. Between 1880 and 1920, black towns proliferated and flourished in the South and West. Incorporated political bodies were founded to perform various functions, such as railroad towns (Mound Bayou, Mississippi or Kendleton, Texas); industrial towns (Buxton, Iowa); college towns (Prairie View, Texas); resort towns (Lincoln Hills, Colorado); market towns (Boley, Oklahoma); and migratory towns (Allensworth, California).

As part of the New Deal programs, the government attempted to relocate marginal farmers onto government farmsteads. This *rural resettlement* strategy was not necessarily targeted at African-American farmers; on the other hand, successful settlements were established using their labor. Most of the units were designed in regional offices and built by the farmers on location; therefore, the builders adapted units according to environmental circumstances.

*Urban Enclaves* were fragments of black settlements that flourished beyond the city limits and were consumed by urban growth. These enclaves were segregated pockets of African-Americans families within or near the city. After slavery, a number of freedmen migrated to urban environments for services and employment, but the majority remained on work farms in the South. With railroad expansion in the south, Negroes cut routes through thick swamps, fought to move Indians west, and helped establish railroad towns. For example, Negro railroad men comprised more than 44% of the incorporators needed to establish the City of Miami, Florida; once founded, they were disenfranchised. As cities grew, the “enclave” represented an unwanted pocket of low-income citizens at the city’s core. The value of downtown property made it increasingly advantageous to redevelop those areas. Urban renewal schemes eventually destroyed many of the enclaves, leaving a handful of isolated structures among high-rise development.

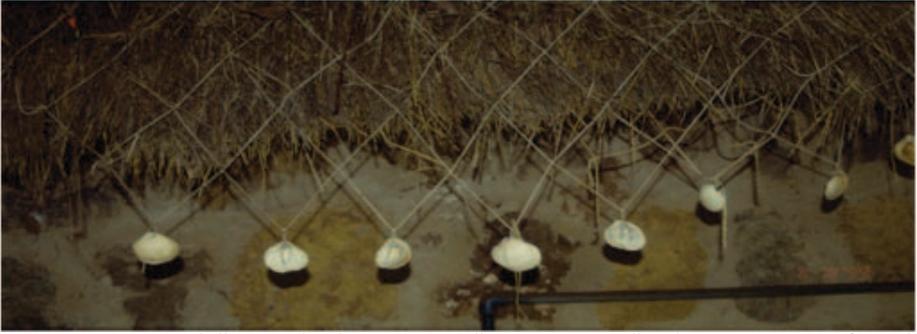
*Alley Dwellings* were a specific type of urban enclave, established in the late 1860, as carriage houses and frame shacks developed for the enormous Negro population influx from the South. In some cities like Washington, DC with superblocks, the redevelopment of these large neighborhoods was administered by the Alley Dwelling Authority that realized too late that the availability of replacement housing was essential in reclaiming the alley dwellings. Thus, the DC Housing Authority was created to oversee the early form on urban renewal. Ironically, the nation experienced a similar phenomenon by the Authority’s predecessor – The Department of Housing and Urban Development—during the 1960s.

### 3. PATTERN IN THE AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT

As a result of several trips to West Africa, four theorems of African archetypes developed for further testing as travel permitted to East Africa (specifically Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania), South Africa, and Botswana. Data collected in the field is analyzed using grounded theory to establish the theorems. Key elements are marked with a series of conditions and circumstances, which are extracted from the field observation. The conditions are grouped into similar concepts, for instance, construction habits, lifestyle or patterns of living, and environmental patterns, in order to make them workable. Framing the field data was based upon the application of building materials, observation of spatial relationships, understanding of cultural practices, and documentation of colonial settlements and villages. These concepts are the basis for the creation of the four theorems, or hypotheses. Developing metaphors for each concept made them more comprehensible and, in some cases, palatable. Later, sharing the observations with African architects in Senegal, Kenya and Tanzania, and African-American architects in the United States were designed to test the four theories and glean feedback.

#### 3.1 JOURNEY IN TIME, PLACE, AND CULTURE

Four theorems emerged from observation in Africa dealing with layering of privacy, material use, relationship between developmental practices and belief systems, and cultural erosion related to the evolution of settlement and socialization. *Life is Circular*, an African Proverb, addresses how natural materials retrieved from the ocean are temporarily utilized in construction as architectural detail, road aggregate, and/or concrete mix but eventually deteriorate and are returned to natural origins. *Over The Wall* addresses layers of privacy and distinct customs that grew out of shared rituals and values at a cultural crossroads. The courtyard house provides a private, protected outdoor space where women of an extended family can meet and work, and children can play. The Process of Becoming speaks to the intrinsic relationship between “piecemeal” construction and the belief that all of life is striving to reach higher levels of awareness. This self-knowing process happens over time with great patience and deliberateness just as construction of a habitat occurs. *Trash in/Treasure out* explores the cultural erosion that occurred due to colonialism.



**Figure 3:** Sea or cowry shells are used as decoration on walls, as accents or wall/curb trims, as aggregate for roads and buildings, and as fabric patterns. Photographer: LBJWigfall

### 3.1.1 Life is circular

“Life is circular” is an African proverb usually spoken in West African cultures. Africans, like most people of color in history, utilize every aspect of their environment, especially the natural elements around them. Historically, seashells were the medium of exchange in pre-colonial Africa, Indian and Pacific Islands, Caribbean, and North America. As Western European explorers settled the continent, indigenous cultures were eroded by cultural imperialism. Alternative forms of money superseded the “cowry” shell, the most common species of shells used as currency. Throughout the centuries, cowry shells have been utilized in numerous ways – tools, bulk source of calcium in horticulture, components of musical instruments, ritual objects, religious symbols, personal adornment, arts and crafts, and/or architectural decoration – due to their strength and variety of shapes. Seashells are crushed and mixed in the soil for farming nutrients and/or aggregate for road surfaces, paving, concrete, or wall surfaces. Shells are hung from eaves, door openings, and/or walls as decoration. They are embedded in curbs, sidewalks, sills, baseboards, moldings, cornices, fireplaces, and floor surfaces to enhance the texture, color, and visual interest of elements. Even fabric for women’s clothing is adorned with large shell print patterns in traditional East African settings. Using the seashell as the metaphor for the proverb, the shell is photo-documented from the sea, depositing on the beach, through various uses in African culture until it disintegrates and returns to the sea with high tides. This circular process of natural materials is particularly prevalent in Senegal and indigenous cultures influenced by England and France. “Life is Circular” demonstrates how cultural philosophy and environmental design coincide.

### 3.1.2 Over the wall

The wall is a very important component of the village and habitat, defining these levels of privacy and space. Although there were boundary walls and fences to mark villages and neighborhoods, the theoretical construct—“Over The Wall”—was based upon urban walls that either defined the public-private realm or neighboring properties. Because the street is densely populated with pedestrians and cars, the design of walls is critical to the owner and to the public. Height and thickness of walls vary according to the function of the wall and the combination of natural and manmade materials in response to the function. Family or community activities, depending on the nature of the wall, occur behind the wall, protecting personal interaction and belongings from sight. Walls are usually too tall to see over and thick enough to muffle sound from the street. Passing through the opening in the wall leads to an open court in middle class houses trimmed with small planting as noise buffers on the street side, a small tree or African pavilion for shade, and/or a colonnade to interior spaces. Less fortunate, inner city compounds are usually filled with washboards, clotheslines, well or water pump, goats and small animals, and miscellaneous household utilities. Both spaces are well swept each morning to remove debris, insects, and excess dirt. Children play in this outer space protected from public scrutiny by the wall. Beyond the larger court is often a smaller, more intimate space before the front door. This space may be separated from the previous court by a level change,



**Figures 4 and 5:** Natural and Manmade walls separate street activities and provide the first layer of privacy for families. Walls, which define the compound in rural settings, are used to protect and screen the family, regardless of socio-economic status. Photographer: LBJWigfall

upright plant material or another wall and gateway, but minimally a material change, usually tile, in affluent residences. This division of space before entering the house establishes public-private spatial sequence, layers of privacy, and noise reduction into the house. Visitors to the house find similar layers of space within the living unit—a parlor or receiving room meant to act as the interior court, screening private, lower level rooms from houseguests. These rooms may function as extended family bedrooms, small family gathering spaces similar to a den, and/or a kitchen, and generally have connection to another courtyard or rear, very private exterior space. These lower spaces have strong adjacent relationships with the outside although their interiors are not obvious and rarely seen except an occasional glance when beads or fabric door coverings are parted. The second floor, separated by a grand staircase, houses the social and living spaces, usually larger and more formal configurations for entertaining personal guests. This part of the house and floors above have very high ceilings as well and appear very lavish with gold detailing, various tiles, and lighting. Even the most modest urban homes exhibit some of these characteristics, exemplifying the importance of levels of privacy in society, marked by the wall.

### 3.1.3 The Process of Becoming

Many Africans are Muslim by faith, adhering to the Six Articles of Faith. Muslims also have beliefs about life, salvation, and afterlife. For a Muslim, the purpose of life is to live in a way that is pleasing to Allah so that one may gain Paradise. Like Christianity, Islam teaches the continued existence of the soul and a transformed physical existence after death. This conscious intention to perform good works for salvation and strive to achieve a higher level of spiritual existence can be summarized as a “process of becoming”. Observation of the indigenous construction environment suggest a similar attitude, one of building “the temple”, in this case, the home, in piecemeal. At first glance, the community, cluttered with piles of sand in the street for making brick and miscellaneous building materials stored on every lot, appears in disarray, as if devastation has occurred. Destruction seems immanent. This perception proved quite contrary to the actual undertaking. Inquiry yielded an individual building process based upon the availability of funds to proceed. Most residents in urban neighborhoods explained the process of homeownership depended upon the owner to participate in cooperative building practices, laying as few as one row of bricks when affordable. This construction pattern is distinctly different from western or corporate practices to secure the majority of the funding prior to building in order to substantively complete the project. In the former case, the society accepts and supports piecemeal building practices in the same way it understands and encourages individual striving in life towards a pleasing outcome, paradise. This “process of becoming” in Muslim belief exemplifies the patience in sacrifice and submission to the environmental circumstances of building another temple—the home—an important tenet of their faith.

### 3.1.4 Trash In/Treasure Out

This controversial theorem explores the cultural erosion that occurred in African settlement due to colonialism. As Western Europe invaded and colonized the African continent, certain distinct, indigenous customs and beliefs were superseded. This eroding of African culture can be metaphorically compared to the effect of the sea along the African shore and the derogatory use of “White Trash” to refer to a class of whites in the United States. Historically, settlements were established along the Africa coastline, avoiding penetration inland and hostile tribes without native guides. The deposit of manmade debris along the shore represents this invasion today. As the tide recedes, shoreline is eroded in the same manner, slave traders confiscated Africans as workforce in the Americas. Before natural resources, such as minerals, diamonds, animals and habitat, were extracted from the Continent, native people were its treasure. Today, this erosion process, like the effect of the sea, continues in the flow of labor, culture, art and artifacts, fabric/fashion, and style primarily to Europe and the Americas. Slowly, what culture remains is minimized and replaced by western development ideas, thus, cultural erosion. Evidence of corporatocracy thrives in most developing African cities, partially because of the comparative investment in the economy made by these companies and proliferation of their urban design standard. Ultimately, these cultural differences and architectural nuances will have a profound impact on the African landscape, as urban expansion continues to encroach upon rural development.

## 4. CONCUSION/PARTING THOUGHTS

History is not complete until we have a thorough accounting and understanding of all of the formative forces that shaped the landscape narrative of a place. Expanding the process of observation and review beyond the standard boundaries leads to key insights and new sources for consideration. This broader approach, watchful for typical behavioral and/or landscape patterns, does not assure a higher-quality interpretation but it offers a greater number of identified resources and documented layers of history. Utilizing qualitative methods, grounded theory, and comparative analysis techniques, the final stage of interpretation will more appropriately define the essence of the resource. The synthesis of complex and subtle layers of documentation and the use of metaphor can offer a more palatable, and often comprehensive, landscape theory.

Despite all that has been revealed, this investigation of black settlements and African patterns in the landscape has generated more inquiry and question. How is environmental practice transferred and manifested? Further study about village and compound design should further explain the systematic order of slave settlements but the larger question will require more rigor and discipline. Exploring the historical construct of the African landscape has become only a small component of the evolving research goals. Just as exemplified in the original study, it is imperative that any study also focus on current trends and differences juxtaposed against western philosophies of design. Understanding how culture is revealed and illuminated on the African landscape aids in developing strategies that will richly reflect its tradition and culture as the country grows. A multidisciplinary approach, soliciting other African scholars with in-depth knowledge of everyday situations, goals, attitudes, and values, is imperative. Consequently, understanding historical cultural landscapes, whether in the Americas or Africa, will not only generate a healthy curiosity and appreciation about our collective history but also underscore the significance of documenting and re-examining our threatened resources. Too often, lack of knowledge and exposure shapes the designer’s responsibility to create more efficient and contextual spaces for people. Although history has come full circle, we stand in this timeless place for one brief moment. Let it be a transforming experience, not a disservice to our great heritage.



**Figure 6:** Entrance to Slave House on Goree Island, Senegal, West Africa. Photographer: LBJWigfall

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## ENDNOTES

**African-American** (also referred to as Black American or Afro-American)—residents of the United States who have at least partial African ancestry. Most African-Americans are the direct descendants of captive Africans who survived the slavery era within the boundaries of the present United States, although some are—or are descended from—immigrants from African, Caribbean, Central American or South American nations.

**Black**—a racial classification of humans, usually people with all possible kinds of skin pigmentation from the darkest through to the very lightest skin colors, including albinos. It is also used to categorize a number of diverse populations together based on historical and pre-historical ancestral descent. (Reference: descendants of the Black Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas by way of the Atlantic slave trade). Among the members of this group, dark skin is most often accompanied by the expression of natural afro-hair texture. The term black was used throughout but not frequently as it carried a certain stigma. With the successes of the civil rights movement a new term was needed to break from the past and help shed the reminders of legalized discrimination. In place of Negro, black was promoted as standing for racial pride, militancy and power.

**Negro**—used in the English-speaking world to refer to a person of black ancestry or appearance, whether of Africa descent or not, prior to the shift in the lexicon of American and worldwide classification of race and ethnicity in the late 1960s. Negro superseded “colored” as the most polite terminology, at a time when “black” was more offensive. The term “Negro” is now widely considered to be obsolete and it is not commonly used. It is still used in some historical contexts. Modern language uses: Black; additionally, Black African for people native to the African continent, and African American for people in U.S.A.

**Exodusters**—African Americans who fled the Southern United States for Kansas in 1879 and 1880. After the end of Reconstruction, racial oppression and rumors of the reinstatement of slavery led many freedmen to seek a new place to live. Many migrated to, and then settled, primarily in Kansas because of its more progressive and tolerant reputation. Of note however, western migration of African-Americans was not limited to the Exoduster period, and places like Nicodemus, Kansas thrived for some period before, during, and after the Exoduster movement. Similarly, in following years (although not part of the original Exoduster movement of the 19th century) in the early 20th century black migrations to the American West and Southwest—generally known as the Old West -- would continue, and several additional all-black towns would be established, especially in Indian Territory, which was to become the current state of Oklahoma.

**Muslim**—The word Islam means ‘submission to God’ and an adherent of Islam is called a Muslim. For a Muslim, the purpose of life is to live in a way that is pleasing to Allah so that one may gain Paradise. Like Christianity, Islam teaches the continued existence of the soul and a transformed physical existence after death.

**White Trash**—an American English pejorative term referring to poor white people in the United States, suggesting lower social class and degraded living standards. The term suggests outcasts from respectable society living on the fringes of the social order who are seen as dangerous because they may be criminal, unpredictable, and without respect for authority whether it be political, legal, or moral. It is used among blacks as an attack against whites. Use of “white trash” epithets has been extensively reported in the African American culture. Black authors have noted that blacks when taunted by whites as “niggers” taunted back, calling them “white trash.” and black parents taught their children that poor whites were “white trash”. The epithet appears in black folklore, as when slaves (when out of earshot) would refer to harsh overseers as a “low down” man, “lower than poor white trash,” “a brute really.”