

# Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites

*2023: A Year in Review*



**Weitzman**  
SCHOOL OF DESIGN  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Center for the  
Preservation of  
Civil Rights Sites

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# Director's Message

Greetings all,

It is my esteemed pleasure to introduce you to the inaugural Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites end of year report. This year's edition will cover research, teaching, and fieldwork initiatives promoted by CPCRS during the 2023 calendar year. There has been momentous change at the Weitzman School of Design. I took on the role as the Matt and Erika Nord Director of the Center, picking up the reins from my very capable predecessor, Randall Mason, Faculty Director and now Senior Fellow at CPCRS. Additionally, the Historic Preservation program, which recently celebrated 40 years in operation, became a university department in the summer of 2023. My position as Presidential Associate Professor is the first academic line to live in the newly formed department.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to CPCRS Manager Sarah Lerner and CPCRS Project Manager Steph Garcia, our organizational center of gravity. The commitment they have had to the work of the Center over the past few years has kept us afloat. While

Sarah has stepped away from her position to pursue other interests, her contribution to the Center has had concrete impact, from advising graduate students, conducting research on sites in Alabama that led to National Register of Historic Place listings, to supporting a range of programs and public lectures. Meanwhile, Steph has taken the charge of expanding our projects and partnerships right here in Philadelphia. Since she has been a Philadelphia resident for a decade, I have leaned significantly on her knowledge as I broaden my own understanding of the city in my new role. I would also like to thank CPCRS' dedicated advisory board, who have gifted us with their wisdom and expertise as we move into a new phase in the Center's life. Your input has been invaluable.

That said, be on the lookout for more great work in Philadelphia in 2024. This includes a webinar explaining the application process for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, public programs

offered through our continued partnership with Friends of the Tanner House, as well as a workshop on Philadelphia Register of Historic Places with the Young Friends of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. I am pleased to offer a new course in the Department of Historic Preservation at Weitzman entitled Revolutionary Approaches to Philadelphia's Black Heritage. Here's to more in 2024!

Sincerely,



Amber N. Wiley, Ph.D.  
Matt and Erika Nord Director

Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights  
Sites

Presidential Associate Professor in Historic  
Preservation

University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman  
School of Design



*(Left to Right) Khai Saunder, CPCRS Research Assistant; Christopher R. Roger, CPCRS Fellow; Steph Garcia, CPCRS Project Manager; Amber N. Wiley, CPCRS Matt and Erika Nord Director; and Robert Killins, CPCRS Research Assistant*



**The Center for the Preservation of Civil Rights Sites (CPCRS)**  
advances the understanding and sustainable conservation of  
heritage places commemorating American civil rights histories  
and Black heritage.

**Our focus is on the long Black freedom struggle in the United  
States, from the founding of the country to the present, though  
we recognize that important civil rights histories and legacies  
draw on many other experiences in the US and abroad.**

## How We Work

### *Everyday Spaces & Iconic Sites*

The CPCRS seeks to preserve the heritage of the United States civil rights in all its forms. This includes iconic sites already recognized as heritage places, vernacular buildings, cultural landscapes as well as the everyday spaces.

### *Always in Partnership*

We collaborate with preservation advocates, government agencies, stewardship organizations as well as other educational organizations engaged in remembering, studying and stewarding the legacy of the United States civil rights history.

### *Building on Traditions*

The CPCRS strives to honor and support our organizational partners' traditions of education, storytelling as well as community stewardship to remember the profound and significant civil rights stories — tragic and triumphant — across the country.

*Friends of the Tanner House Artist Lead Qiaira Riley with collaborator during a workshop. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Photo by Christian Hayden.*

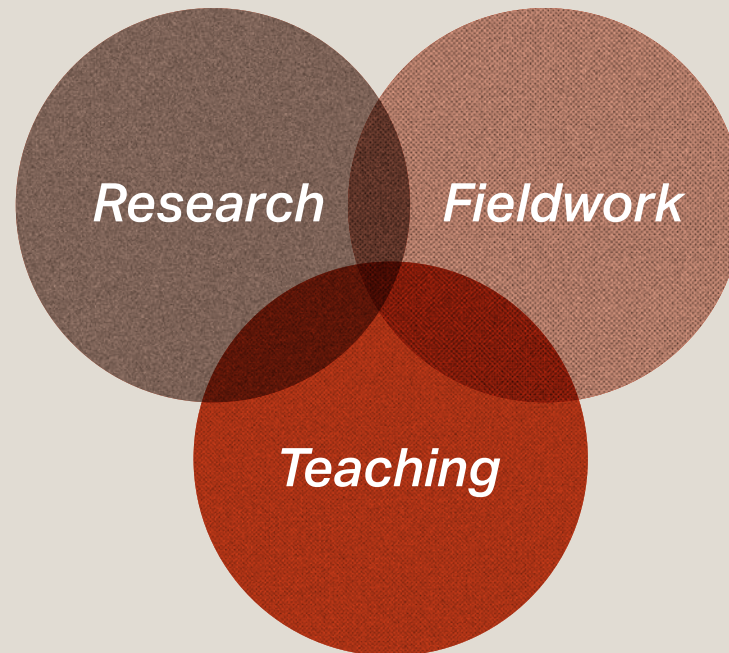


# What We Do

*CPCRS undertakes research, teaching, and fieldwork to explore issues and solutions related to amplifying civil rights histories and protecting Black heritage sites.*

## RESEARCH

CPCRS contributes to research about civil rights histories and heritage preservation through support of emerging scholars and practitioners in the preservation field with fellowships that allow them to pursue a diverse range of topics. They have the opportunity to publish issue papers and contribute to scholarly discourse through public presentations. We also invite preservation experts and thought leaders to share their work with the general public through in-person and online lectures.



## FIELDWORK

CPCRS organizes field projects to apply research and teaching to the practical challenges faced by sites, their organizations, and stakeholders. Fieldwork provides essential learning and research opportunities: testing replicable models, mapping out ideal processes, revising and redesigning policies, and practicing collaboration. All our efforts are directed to holistic approaches to preservation – in terms of scale, community needs, material realities, creative opportunities, management, and financing. To advance these goals we create opportunities for students to gain fieldwork experience in class and through paid internships.

## TEACHING

CPCRS builds on a long legacy of preservation education at the Weitzman School of Design and within the Graduate Department in Historic Preservation. Students and educators collaborate in classrooms, studios, labs, and in the field to bring preservation philosophies and principles to practice. Applied learning is central to our praxis, and classes offered in concert with CPCRS projects and initiatives are the perfect way for students to gain experience using the theories and methods of research and documentation in service to community partners.

# Research

## Events

### ***BARRY FARM: COMMUNITY LAND & JUSTICE IN WASHINGTON DC FILM SCREENING***

*March 1, 2023*

This award-winning documentary film, a collaboration between the Bertelsmann Foundation and the DC Legacy Project, tells the story of a journey for community, land, and justice. It is a story of Barry Farm and a story of Washington, DC. In the cycles of place and displacement, it is also a story of the United States. The film screening

was followed by a discussion with directors Sabiyha Prince and Samuel George that was moderated by Amber Wiley, Matt and Erika Nord Director of CPCRCS.

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### ***WHAT REMAINS: PRESERVING THE HERITAGE OF AFRICATOWN SYMPOSIUM***

*October 20, 2023*

This interdisciplinary daylong symposium at the Penn Museum brought together scholars, activists, and designers dedicated to amplifying the history of Africatown, Alabama through ensuring community-led processes for racial, environmental, and economic justice. Africatown, also known as Plateau, is a community north of downtown Mobile that was founded in 1866 by formerly enslaved West Africans who were brought to Alabama in 1860 on the Clotilda, the

last documented slave ship to arrive to the United States. The journey and the life of one of those founders, Cudjo (Kossula) Lewis is the subject matter of Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo."* The event was livestreamed, and recordings of the panels are available on the Weitzman School of Design YouTube channel. Student research assistant Robert Killins prepared much of the publicity graphics for the program.



# BARRY FARM

COMMUNITY, LAND & JUSTICE  
IN WASHINGTON DC



*(Left) Poster for Barry Farm documentary  
(Top Right) Film screening of Barry Farm at the  
Stuart Weitzman School of Design  
(Bottom Right) Sabiyha Prince, Amber Wiley,  
and Samuel George*



Ann Cuss  
World Monuments Fund



Dr. Kwesi Daniels  
Department Head, Assistant Professor  
Taylor School of Architecture and  
Construction Science, Tuskegee University



Joycelyn Davis  
Organizer



Dr. Sylviane A. Diouf  
Author & Scholar



Mario Gooden  
Cultural practice architect and director  
of Mario Gooden Studio: Architecture +  
Design



Jerome W. Haferd  
Architect, public artist, activist, educator,  
and co-founder, BRANDT:HAFERD



Dr. Matthew Jordan-Miller  
Kenyatta  
Director of Justice & Belonging Initiatives  
at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart  
Weitzman School of Design



Renee Kemp-Rotan  
Urban designer, planner, and CEO;  
studioloran



Rashida Ng  
Chair of Undergraduate Architecture and  
Presidential Associate Professor at the  
University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman  
School of Design



Dr. Deborah G. Plant  
African American and Africana Studies  
independent scholar, writer, and literary  
critic



Veda Robbins, RN, BSN  
Descendant and Community Organizer



Nick Tabor  
Freelance journalist and author

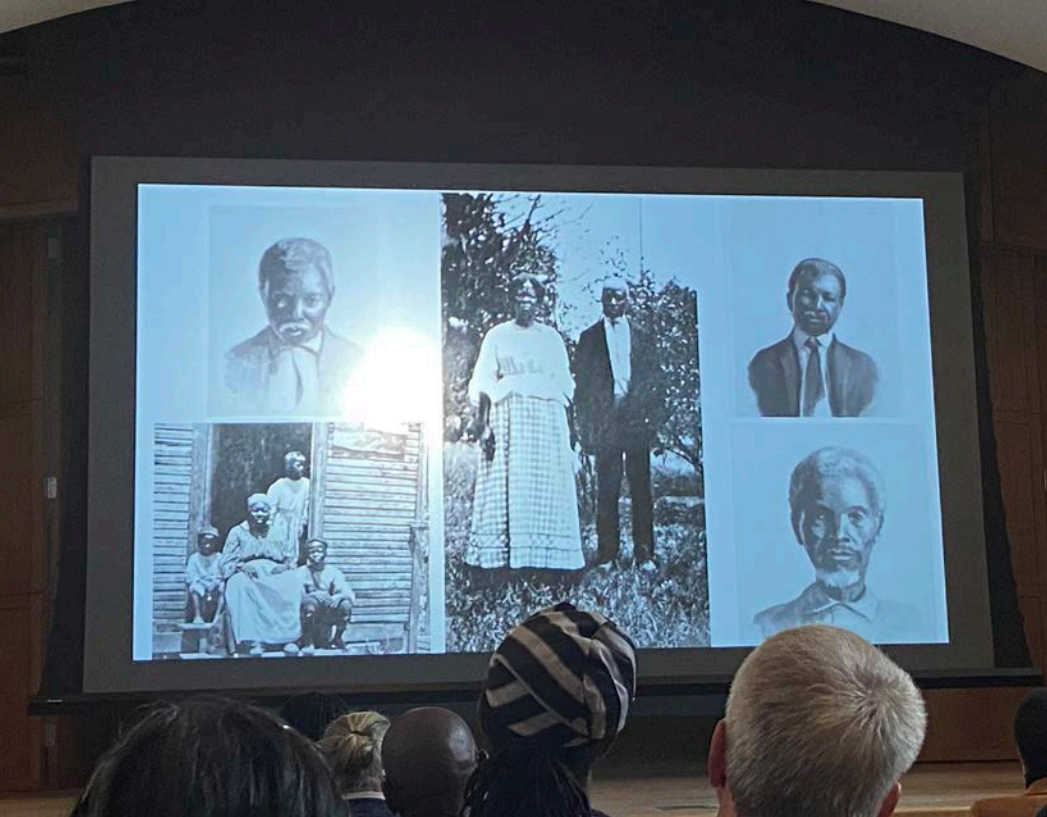


Dr. Amber Wiley  
Matt and Erika Nord Director



Dr. Major Joe Womack USMCR  
(ret)  
Executive Director of [africatown-chess.org](http://africatown-chess.org)  
Co-Founder of [africatownhpf.org](http://africatownhpf.org)

## *What Remains: Preserving the Heritage of Africatown* Panelists



Event photos from What Remains: Preserving the Heritage of Africatown symposium. Philadelphia, PA. Photos by Steph Garcia.

# Research

## *CPCRS Fellows*



### **KENYATTA MCLEAN**

Kenyatta (she/her) is an urban planner and strategist interested in neighborhood resource distribution and heritage conservation. She is the Co-Managing Director of BlackSpace and a founding member. She works with organizations to deepen their understandings of spatial narratives with curated

conversations and to develop projects centered in racial justice. As an economic development practitioner, she developed strategies, engagement plans, and commercial corridor focused programming for multiple city-led neighborhood plans in New York City. Additionally, she advised and managed multiple commercial revitalization grants for nonprofits focused on low-to-moderate income commercial corridors across New York City. Kenyatta earned her BA in Afro-American Studies and Political Science from UCLA. She holds a Master's in City Planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she researched the power of narratives within historic preservation.

As part of her fellowship during Spring 2023, McLean explored the legacy of the Freedman's Colony in Manteo, North Carolina which seeded a coastal Black community that has remained years after the colony's end. Her research will explore how this Black community preserves and uses sites of significance and rituals to document their development over generations and remaining connections they have to Freedman's Colony members.



### **CHRISTOPHER R. ROGERS**

Christopher is an educator and cultural worker from Chester, PA. Until 2023, he previously served as the Public Programs Director for the Paul Robeson House & Museum, where he began volunteering in 2015. He earned his Ph.D from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education where he

studied neighborhood storytelling practices in West Philadelphia. He serves on the National Steering Committee for Black Lives Matter at School, supporting movements for racial justice in K-16 education by mapping, indexing, and expanding access to identity-affirming, justice-oriented educational materials. Most recently, he has been involved in coordinating the Friends of the Henry Ossawa Tanner House, aiming to stabilize and revitalize the North-Philadelphia-set National Historic Landmark honoring the legendary painter whom the Smithsonian notes as the most distinguished African American artist of the 19th century.

As part of his fellowship during the 2022-2023 academic year, Rogers extended his ongoing dissertation research which explores the intergenerational ways that West Philadelphia residents express Black personhood and transformative possibility through their multimodal poetics and place-making literacies. Rogers believes that the findings from this study can play an influential role in advancing a resurgent historic preservation praxis within cultural communities threatened by forces of dispossession, displacement, and erasure. Particularly in Black diasporic communities, the oral tradition and platforms for community storytelling have played a central role to sustain attachments to place and grassroots preservation practices. When engaged with care, these strategies unveil key intimate historical moments with implications to advance ongoing social justice organizing.

# BLACK PERSONHOOD & BLACK PRESERVATION

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## Black Personhood & Black Preservation

### *The Work of CPCRS Research Fellows*

In April 2023, CPCRS Spring 2023 Fellows, Kenyatta McLean and Chris Rogers presented their research to the Weitzman community and beyond. Their research spans topics from the legacy and preservation of the Freedman's Colony in Manteo, NC, to Black intergenerational expression in West Philadelphia.

A recording of their presentations is available on the CPCRS website.



*(Top) Promotional material for fellows event.  
(Middle) Kenyatta McLean presenting her work on the legacy of the Freedman's Colony in Manteo, North Carolina.  
(Bottom) Christopher R. Rogers presenting his work on Black intergenerational expression in West Philadelphia.*



**NATIONAL REGISTER  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Elizabeth Donison  
*MSHP'23*



**ALABAMA  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Taha Mughal  
*MSD-HP'23*



**PHILADELPHIA  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Monique Robinson  
*MSHP + M.Arch'24*



**NATIONAL REGISTER  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Carrick Reider  
*MSHP + M.Arch'24*



**GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Anusha Khansaheb  
*MSHP'24*



**COMMUNICATIONS  
RESEARCH ASSISTANT**  
Robert Killins  
*MSHP'25*



**TANNER HOUSE RESEARCH  
ASSISTANT**  
Khai Saunders  
*MSHP'24*

## Research

### *Research Assistants*

CPCRS engages graduate student research assistants throughout the academic year and over the course of the summer. As you peruse this report, you can see the various projects that research assistants supported, from events to research, design, and communications.

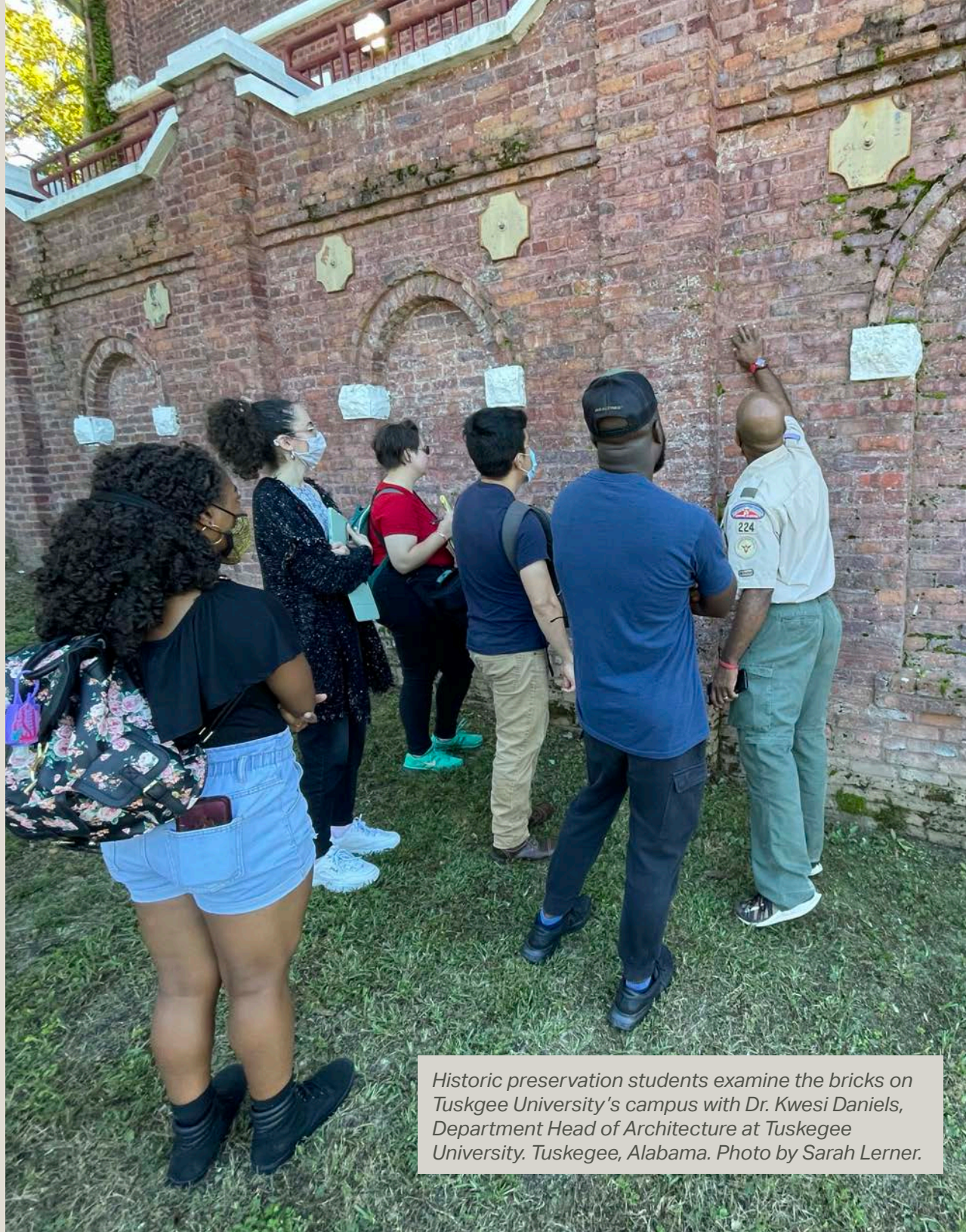
# Teaching

## *Spring 2023 // HSPV Heritage and Social Justice*

**INSTRUCTED BY RANDY MASON  
AND BRENT LEGGS. OFFERED IN  
COLLABORATION WITH TUSKEGEE  
UNIVERSITY AND DR. KWESI DANIELS  
AND TAUREAN MERRIWEATHER**

This course explored connections between heritage, historic preservation, and the pursuit of social justice. The central propositions of the course were: 1) that heritage and social justice are both reparative practices; and 2) exploring connections between these two realms is a worthwhile and even urgent pursuit.

Engaging with scholarship, advocacy and organizing work, research on specific places, and contemporary design practices, the course framed several overarching questions: How can historic preservation and other design and humanities professionals contribute to more equitable and just societies? How can our professional work be organized to result in greater equity, access, and social justice? How can heritage conservation and other design fields be deployed as means of repair to address longstanding and widespread injustices?



*Historic preservation students examine the bricks on Tuskegee University's campus with Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Department Head of Architecture at Tuskegee University. Tuskegee, Alabama. Photo by Sarah Lerner.*

# Fieldwork

## *Alabama*

### **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

CPCRS in partnership with Tuskegee University Robert R. Taylor School of Architecture & Construction Science, the Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium (AAACRHSC), and the Alabama Historical Commission, supported research and writing of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nominations for Black heritage sites. The

NHRP is maintained by the National Park Service as the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. We support students and recent graduates from Penn, Tuskegee, and beyond, to write the nominations and collaborate with local Black heritage stewards.

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### **LISTED!**

The St. Paul Baptist Church and Armstrong School near Tuskegee and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives Rural Training and Research Center in Sumter County, were listed on the NHRP as a result of this work. The nominations were co-authored by Sarah Lerner (CPCRS manager) and Dr. Shari Williams (Ridge Macon County Archaeology Project) and Elizabeth Donison (student research assistant) respectively.

### **IN PROGRESS...**

A third nomination for the Ramah Baptist Church in Lowndes County, Carrick Reider (student research assistant), is in the final stages of revision before submission to the Alabama Historical Commission.





*Professor Kwesi Daniels of Tuskegee University leads students on a tour of the historic Armstrong School. Macon County, Alabama. Photo by Sarah Lerner.*

*Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Department Head of Architecture at Tuskegee University, and members of the St. Paul Baptist Church visit the church cemetery. The Armstrong School can be seen in the back right. Macon County, Alabama. Photo by Sarah Lerner.*





Entrance to Federation of Southern Cooperative Rural Training and Research Center, established in 1967 to create community-based economic development opportunities throughout the rural South for black farmers and rural communities. Sumter County, Alabama. Photo by Elizabeth Donison.



*CPCRS Research Assistant Elizabeth Donison conducting research at the Federation of Southern Cooperative Rural Training and Research Center during her summer internship. Sumter County, Alabama. Photo by Sarah Lerner.*

*Ramah Baptist Church. Lowndes County, Alabama.  
Photo by Carrick Reider.*



## SUSTAINABLE SITE MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENTS

These assessments directly address the typical challenges identified by the AAACRHSC's ongoing work and advocacy, including scarce financial resources for historic preservation and maintenance work, extraordinary demands on volunteer managers, and access to professional advice for technical preservation and design.

Building on the success of summer 2022's pilot project site assessments for First Baptist (Brick-a-Day) Church and United (formerly Trinity) Lutheran Church Parsonage in Montgomery, Randall F. Mason, CPCRS senior fellow, is leading another round of sustainable site assessments in Alabama, currently supervising assessments for the Safe House Black History Museum in Greensboro and Brown Chapel AME in Selma. Student research assistant Taha Mughal worked with CPCRS manager Sarah Lerner to support site assessments this summer.



*The Safe House Black History Museum sign near museum entrance. Greensboro, Alabama. Photo by Taha Mughal.*



**"The work to identify, elevate, and protect these sites is key to understanding not just Black history, but US and world history. It is also central to fighting structural racism and historical disinvestment in Black communities."**

**Amber N. Wiley  
CPCRS Matt and Erika Nord Director**

# Fieldwork

## *Philadelphia*

### PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Through our partnership with the Society for the Preservation of Philadelphia's African American Assets (SPPAAA) we began work on nominating Black heritage sites to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The Philadelphia Register is an inventory of properties that have been designated

as historic by the Philadelphia Historical Commission. A nomination for New Barber's Hall researched by CPCRS nomination writer Drew Barnhart was submitted to the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

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### HENRY OSSAWA TANNER HOUSE

CPCRS' partnership with the Friends of the Tanner House (FOTH) has resulted in a Mellon Foundation Humanities-in-Place grant supporting an arts-rich participatory visioning and preservation planning process that invites community voices to provide input into the rehabilitation and proposed re-use of the Henry Ossawa Tanner House. Between October and December FOTH lead Christopher Rogers, in partnership with CPCRS, hosted three community engagement projects with artist partner Qiaira Riley and two preservation planning workshops with design and preservation thought leaders. Student research assistants Monique Robinson and Khai Saunders have

supported the Tanner House research and programming over the course of the year, while student research assistant Anusha Khansaheb designed the FOTH logo seen below.







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Barber's Hall. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Photo by Drew Barnhart.

Participants in the "Plastic on the Sofa" collage workshop, the second event in community based artistic visioning process for the Tanner House. Philadelphia, PA. Photo by Christian Hayden.



HENRY O. TANNER  
(1859-1937)

While living here, Tanner studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. His earlier works portrayed the ordinary lives of African-Americans. After moving to Paris, Tanner painted religious subjects and won international acclaim.

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION 1991



Members of the design team outside of the Henry Ossawa Tanner House. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Photo by Christopher R. Rogers.

# Board of Advisors

2023

**Bill G. Adair**, Independent arts and culture consultant

**Kwesi Daniels**, Ph.D., Head of the Department of Architecture, Robert R. Taylor School of Architecture and Construction Science, Tuskegee University

**Mark L. Gardner**, Principal at Jaklitsch/Gardner Architects (J/GA)

**Brent Leggs**, Executive Director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, National Trust for Historic Preservation

**Matt Nord**, Senior Partner at Apollo Private Equity

**Kevin Penn**, Managing Director at American Securities, LLC

**Monica L. Rhodes**, Rome Prize Fellow 2023, Loeb Fellow 2022

**Aaron Wunsch**, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Historic Preservation and Landscape Architecture, Weitzman School of Design

# CPCRS In the News

2023

- “Honor Black History All Year Long Through Historic Preservation,” *Hidden City*, March 2, 2023
- “Mellon Foundation awards \$150K planning grant to Friends of the Tanner House and Penn preservation center,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 1, 2023
- “Discover America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places for 2023,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, May 9, 2023
- “National Trust for Historic Preservation names the Tanner House and Chinatown to its 2023 most endangered list,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 9, 2023
- “Henry Ossawa Tanner Was One of the First World-Famous Black Artists. Now, His Home Is in Danger,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 31, 2023
- “Preserving the Legacy of Civil Rights and Black History,” *Research at Penn*, July 2023
- “Weitzman’s Amber Wiley: Illuminating the Black freedom struggle in the built environment,” *Penn Today*, July 13, 2023
- “Emergency stabilization work finally begins at the historic Henry Ossawa Tanner House,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 25, 2023
- “NEW: 5 Alabama spots join National Register of Historic Places—in the Black Belt, Mobile + more,” *Bama Buzz*, August 14, 2023
- “Design milestone heralds more expansive approach to preservation,” *Penn Today*, September 13, 2023



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