Media and Communication
2026 • Volume 14 • Article 10990
https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.10990

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Remapping the Legacy of Enslavement: Street Names, Stealth Stickers, and the Living Black Atlas

Derek H. Alderman [1] and Joshua Inwood [2,3]

[1] Department of Geography and Sustainability, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, USA
[2] Department of Geography, Pennsylvania State University, USA
[3] Rock Ethics Institute, Pennsylvania State University, USA

Correspondence: Derek H. Alderman (dalderma@utk.edu)

Submitted: 23 July 2025 **Accepted:** 30 September 2025 **Published:** 17 December 2025

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Counter Data Mapping as Communicative Practices of Resistance" edited by Sandra Jeppesen (Lakehead University) and Paola Sartoretto (Jönköping University), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.i502

Abstract

This article interprets the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign, a grassroots counter-mapping project led by the artist-activist collective Slavers of New York, as a chapter in the broader Living Black Atlas. Started during the racial reckoning of 2020, the campaign placed unauthorized stickers on street signs and other surfaces across Brooklyn to reveal suppressed histories of slavery embedded in commemorative place names. The stickers transformed daily encounters with taken-for-granted road names into unexpected opportunities to confront prominent historical families who profited from enslavement and to acknowledge the contributions of enslaved Africans in shaping the city. The collective framed their campaign as a "guerrilla educational" action that disrupted memorial landscapes, challenged discourses of white innocence, and provoked broader conversations about racial justice and accountability. At a time when official institutions are increasingly retreating from confronting racism, small, temporary interventions, such as these Stealth Stickers, can play a crucial role in encouraging critical audits of commemorative infrastructures, layering counter-narratives onto public spaces, fostering embodied confrontation with historical truths, and remaking everyday places through bold, unexpected acts of resistance.

Keywords

Black counter-mapping; commemorative justice; memory-work; Slavers of New York; white innocence

1. Introduction

1.1. A Reckoning on Nostrand

The public can unexpectedly stumble upon histories of racial injustice in the most ordinary spaces. *The New York Times* captured one of those encounters:

> Last month, Vanessa Thompson stepped outside the juice bar where she works on Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn and noticed a green and white sticker on a light pole. She leaned in for a closer look. "John van Nostrand was a slave owner," it said. "According to the US census in 1790, the (Van) Nostrands owned 6 people." Ms. Thompson, who is Black, was dumbfounded. "I didn't even know anything about that," she said. "He could've owned me." (McShane, 2021)

When Vanessa encountered the sticker on Nostrand (Figure 1), the US faced a nationwide reckoning over race and remembrance. Starting in the summer of 2020, after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the country engaged in intense debates about the long-standing public valorization of racist historical figures. Statues, museums, highway markers, school mascots, and named places became highly charged arenas for these debates (Brasher et al., 2025; Emba, 2020; Gensburger & Wüstenberg, 2023; Richards et al., 2025).

Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists and allies called for removing monuments and renaming streets, schools, and parks honoring Confederate generals, enslavers, colonizers, KKK leaders, and segregationist politicians. Place names were key targets because of their ubiquity and how they embed and legitimize a particular view of history into daily narratives, performances, and movements (Alderman et al., 2024).

Figure 1. Stealth Slavery Sticker on Nostrand Avenue, Brooklyn, New York. © Michelle V. Agins and *The New York Times*, used with permission (McShane, 2021)

These de-commemoration struggles highlighted a key dissonance in American society: a contradiction between our values of inclusion and the continuing civic reverence shown to figures promoting oppression and white supremacy. Activists argued that this dissonance between everyday commemorations and US claims of equality reflected the ongoing, unresolved role of race and how racism is remembered in public spaces (O'Neill, 2021).

The green and white decal that Vanessa faced, along with many others walking through Brooklyn, was part of the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign organized by the artist-activist collective Slavers of New York. The group donated its time and resources to walk the city and place unauthorized informational stickers on road signs, light poles, subway stations, trash cans, and historical plaques, highlighting streets named after historical families who profited from the African slave trade (Madrigal, 2022). The stickers referenced historical records in displaying the estimated number of people enslaved by the streets' namesakes (Swindall, 2021).

The Stealth Stickers occupied a small but provocative place in the urban scene. Some opponents quickly removed them. For example, in the fall of 2020, "all of the stickers on Bergen Street in Brooklyn disappeared within an hour of going up" (McShane, 2021, n.p.). The Bergen family owned at least 46 people in 1810, according to the Slavers of New York. In other instances, the stickers remained—either physically on the landscape or through photos, news stories, social media, and word of mouth—shaping public discussion about slavery's legacy in New York. The Slavers collective revealed more than 200 family names on streets and public places connected to slavery. By 2021, the group had pasted over a thousand stickers across the city to confront residents with this hidden history.

1.2. The Guerrilla Education of the Slavers of New York

The Stealth Slavery Stickers represented a quieter and more subversive form of memory work compared to BLM protesters toppling and defacing monuments or city crews hauling statues and street signs to storage. Instead of advocating for renaming sites, the Slavers of New York intervened by layering historical truths onto public spaces to create what they called a "guerrilla educational" action. By juxtaposing official and "insurgent heritage" (Novoa, 2022) within the same space, the collective challenged the neutrality of street names, exposing their ties to enslavement, prompting dialogue on racial justice, and challenging the assumption that slavery played little role in New York. The Slavers joined a long history of political and pedagogical oppositional tactics meant to unsettle dominant social narratives and raise critical consciousness among people (Freire, 2005; Marighella, 1971). Labeling these stickers as "guerrilla" helps us understand how counter-memory work does not need to take monumental forms, especially when we need to insert unsanctioned, resistant lessons about the past into everyday spaces where official memory falls short.

Elsa Eli Waithe, a Black comedian and artist, helped start and lead the Slavers of New York alongside two non-Black collaborators—Maria Robles, a researcher, strategist, and advocate for students of color, and Albanian American artist and educator Ada Reso. The inspiration for The Slavers of New York arose during the early Covid-19 lockdown, when Waithe came across an online post featuring a 1790 census record listing family households in Brooklyn, including the number of enslaved people in each household. They quickly noticed some of the enslaver families' names also appeared on major nearby streets. After the murder of George Floyd inspired memorial protests, Waithe worked with Reso, a roommate at the time, to explore the educational potential of this discovery. As Waithe explained in an interview:

> Oh, wow. These are pretty prominent streets. I wonder how readily known this information [about families participating in slavery] is?…I wonder how many people know about the streets? We should figure out a way to get this in front of people. (Waithe et al., 2021, n.p.)

The importance of placing the history of slavery and Black struggle "in front of people" went beyond historical completeness. For Waithe, this knowledge was essential to public acknowledgment and atonement for the harms that had been erased or forgotten. They emphasized that documenting the histories of enslavement behind street names was not about directly advocating for a renaming of those roads. Instead, Waithe saw that the power of the Stealth Stickers lay in provoking dialogue that could lead to change, if people chose to do so. On this point, Waithe said: "I think if more people knew what their street was named for, or who it was named after, we can then foster another conversation about what it looks like to name and claim your neighborhood" (as cited in Raskin, 2021, n.p.).

The "guerilla" work behind the Stealth Stickers involved more than just publicizing slavery's imprint on New York; it also included efforts to turn archives into sites of activism. A key part of the stickers' educational approach was expanding the histories of slavery from the archives to street poles, embedding them directly into people's daily geographies. Robles was already conducting extensive archival research on slavery before joining the Slavers collective. She traced enslaver family names through census data, runaway slave ads, newspapers, and other records, mapping their presence across more than 500 locations in the city (Waithe et al., 2021). Robles' work helped determine where stickers would be placed and what detailed content they would include, making a suppressed past accessible and understandable to an unsuspecting public.

The insurgent pedagogy of the Slavers collective sought to challenge the silent dominance of named spaces and reveal how enslaved history was hidden in plain sight. Beginning our article with Vanessa walking along Nostrand Avenue is significant. Nostrand was one of the first streets targeted by the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign. Waithe noted the violence of finding many streets named after enslavers running through Black neighborhoods, with residents unaware of their racist histories (Waithe et al., 2021). New York's public spaces had long left the trauma of enslavement "unmarked and unremarked" (Tyner et al., 2012).

The power of the Stealth Stickers lay in catching passersby off guard, letting them uncover uncomfortable truths without protection. Communication becomes stronger when woven into the material infrastructures, mobilities, and spatial habits of life, thus reshaping how public space is experienced, contested, and imagined in new ways (McQuire, 2016; Morley, 2009). Reso, who focused heavily on the visual design of the Stealth Stickers, noted that the group abandoned the time-consuming idea of creating metal additions for official street signs because those could be easily removed by city officials (Tedford, 2022). With help from a local Black-owned printer, Comik Ink, they selected a sticker that could be produced quickly and in large quantities, then placed it on various urban surfaces—all in support of the guerrilla educational goal. The stickers were meant to resemble official street signs while also drawing communication cues from the familiar subway MTA service change notices that New Yorkers habitually check (Tedford, 2022). These choices helped turn daily encounters with familiar streets and street names into unexpected confrontations with the histories of racism, prompting the public to situate themselves in relation to the street name and its commemorated past. Vanessa, from our opening vignette, is encouraged to confront how Nostrand's legacy of white supremacy intersects with her own identity and place within the city. As a Black woman, she was employed at a business on a street honoring a family that, in her words, could have "owned me."

1.3. Objectives of the Article

The Stealth Slavery Stickers provide a valuable example of how community activists creatively use data, visualization, and storytelling to pursue historical justice and influence people's physical, cognitive, and emotional engagement with spatial memory. Our hope in this article is to provide conceptual language that highlights the analytical significance and political brilliance of the Slavers of New York's Stealth Slavery Stickers as a form of anti-racist memory-work and guerrilla education, and the salience of that activism in responding to the current political climate of retrenchment and resistance to racial reckoning. We view the Stealth Stickers as a moment of Black counter-mapping. The Slavers of New York appropriated the names of places and, by extension, the places themselves, to create and layer geographic knowledge that "talks back" (hooks, 2014) against a tradition of erasing Black history. In doing so, the Slavers transformed street names into emotional geographies and ethical frameworks for reconsidering the lives, struggles, and contributions of the enslaved. By adding new meanings to the city's text and spatial system of orientation and navigation, these stickers remapped how people perceive, move through, and interact with urban spaces and their associated memories (Jia et al., 2021). More than static, fetishized documents and databases often linked to traditional maps, these Black counter-maps are better understood by the work they do—guiding viewers and users not just physically and geographically but also politically, raising awareness and encouraging alternative connections with place and history (Yessler & Alderman, 2021).

Our interpretive framework situates the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign within the Living Black Atlas. The Living Black Atlas is an initiative that highlights, learns from, and shows solidarity with underrepresented counter-mapping practices, geographic knowledge creation, visual storytelling, and place-making politics that African Americans and their allies have long used in the fight against white supremacy (Alderman & Inwood, 2023). We view the guerrilla-style placement of stickers by the Slavers of New York in public spaces as a form of cartographic memory-work that pinpoints specific coordinates—namely, streets—where the ideology and practice of white innocence are directly challenged. Contesting white innocence on New York's lived street map disrupts a long-standing ignorance and denial of the city's involvement in the history of slavery and racial violence, as well as the erasure of Black people's struggles and contributions (Inwood, 2018; Pulido, 2023, 2025). We conclude the article by highlighting broader lessons from the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign. The tactics employed by the Slavers of New York may be particularly valuable in today's political climate, where official government bodies and agencies are either unable or unwilling to engage in difficult conversations about racial inequality or to pursue commemorative justice.

Our understanding of the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign is based on secondary sources, news coverage of the activism, published interviews with key figures in the collective, and public responses to the stickers. This article represents the first step toward a larger future project that will explore the motivations, counterarguments, design processes, and effects of this street-level reimagining of urban memory and naming. Although the Slavers collective was multiracial, we refer to the Stealth Sticker Campaign as "Black memory-work" and "Black counter-mapping." Elsa Eli Waithe's initial discoveries and questions inspired the Slavers of New York collective. Their views on place, memory, and accountability as a Black New Yorker living within and navigating the city grounded the project and shaped collaborations with Reso and Robles. Waithe, Reso, and Robles established their collective's epistemic stance, political goals, and intended outcomes by addressing the silences surrounding Black life and slavery in New York. While acknowledging that interracial coalitions have long supported the Living Black Atlas, we also recognize that such coalitions often involve negotiations and sometimes tension, a theme explored in the article.

2. On The Living Black Atlas

2.1. Theoretical Foundations

The Living Black Atlas draws inspiration from scholarly work in critical cartography and the rapidly expanding interdisciplinary field of Black geographies. Critical cartography views mapping not as an ideologically neutral or purely technical activity but as a political and cultural process that both reflects and challenges—or even reshapes—systems of power, racialization, and memory (Crampton & Krygier, 2005). Counter-mapping is a key feature of critical cartography, which involves creating maps that do not necessarily adhere to conventional cartographic standards and data norms, but instead challenge dominant spatial narratives and power structures (Dalton & Stallmann, 2018). Counter-mapping, along with the broader movement to decolonize maps, often highlights that historically marginalized groups—including indigenous communities, people of color, and women—have long produced maps that carry meaning for their lives, value their contributions and struggles, and serve as tools for social mobilization (Alderman & Inwood, 2023; Dando, 2017; Rose-Redwood et al., 2020). In many cases, counter-mapping supports a wider "restorative/transformative data science" paradigm, which redefines what constitutes data and storytelling, challenges existing power structures, and centers marginalized knowledge and experiences (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2023).

Black geographies encompass a range of interventions grounded in historical materialist and feminist traditions of critique, often confronting the reality that anti-Blackness is deeply ingrained in society's practices, spaces, economies, and histories. Yet, reclamation is also part of the project, as scholars emphasize that the humanity of Black communities challenges and extends beyond racism. This perspective highlights a rich, ever-evolving history of Black creativity, resilience, and resistance that develops anti-racist forms of geographic knowledge, creates spaces of freedom, and envisions and designs more equitable spatial futures (Hawthorne, 2019). Black geographies challenge traditions of Western thought and practice, including cartography, that tend to depict Black communities as "ungeographic" or placeless (McKittrick, 2006). Because mapping is a social power dynamic, Black people and places have long been reduced to data points on maps, often portrayed in pathologizing ways, and associated with crime, poverty, blight, and poor health (Eaves, 2020). As political tools of governance, surveillance, and control, mapping practices have historically contributed to Black dispossession, segregation, and even erasure in the service of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and nationalist and urban agendas (Alderman et al., 2025; Hawthorne, 2025).

Part of the violence caused by traditional cartography is epistemic, dismissing and downgrading Black ways of knowing and world-making while also denying "full knowledge of how racism works against and harms oppressed communities" (Inwood & Alderman, 2021, p. 3723). The Living Black Atlas is a "restorative" alternative to these cartographic inequalities, a reorganization of mapping focused on truth-telling and making interventions in how Black communities and their experiences are perceived, understood, and valued publicly. These efforts are essential to their healing from "histories of bondage, oppression, and generational poverty" (Lanier & Hamilton, 2020, p. 20). Alderman and Inwood (2023) argue that the Living Black Atlas can enrich and challenge orthodox ideas of cartography by incorporating and learning from Black lives, geographies, and knowledges that have long been neglected in scientific, governmental, and academic spheres. For those working within these spheres:

> Recognition of the Living Black Atlas is not just about acknowledging diverse, alternative mapping traditions but building a solidarity with them, making amends for past cartographic and social violences…and contributing to a reformation of the map itself and its ethical registers [and possibilities]. (Alderman & Inwood, 2023, p. 8)

2.2. Black Counter-Mapping Traditions

While the Living Black Atlas is an academic framework, it is most deeply shaped by generations of everyday Black social actors and communities who have created their own organic traditions of mapping, data activism, and storytelling as part of living with, against, and beyond racism (Cunningham, 2022; Hanna, 2024; Inwood & Alderman, 2020). These traditions join other liberatory Black-led efforts in settlement, commemoration, ecology, education, and infrastructure development (Hale, 2024; Hyman, 2025; Potter et al., 2024; Purifoy, 2023; Roane & Hosbey, 2019; Winston, 2021). The Living Black Atlas centers knowledge created through the lived experiences and spatial struggles of Black communities, often expressed through grassroots organizations and activist networks rather than limited to academic or professional "experts." Black community members, working both independently and in multi-racial coalitions, have long produced powerful forms of organic public intellectualism (Wright, 2019). These resistant traditions, in turn, have birthed generations of Black scholars and professionals whose geographic knowledge production is inseparable from this history of activism (NorthStar of GIS, n.d.). El-Amin (2019, p. 19) states that "Black people have [long] made and lived in their own maps," rather than always being limited by traditional, white-defined geographic boundaries and definitions that fail to capture the full scope of Black creative expression and lived realities (Hunter & Robinson, 2018). Black mapping appears across various historical periods, supporting the "plurality" of Black geographic and social struggles (Bledsoe & Wright, 2019).

Some of these Black cartographies have been used directly as tools for protest. In the early 20th century, the NAACP mapped locations and frequencies of lynching murders to advocate for federal legislation protecting Black Americans (Alderman et al., 2021). The research department of the 1960s civil rights organization SNCC created "power maps" to identify and track the power structures and institutions supporting racial discrimination in the Deep South (Inwood & Alderman, 2020). Since 2008, a group of Black women called We the People of Detroit have mobilized data and mapping, along with education, to demand greater water justice for poor Black neighborhoods, whose health and social vulnerability are disproportionately threatened by municipal water shutoffs (Sysling, 2024).

Moving and traveling have long been essential for the survival, resilience, and freedom of Black people, leading them to navigate hostile landscapes by creating cartographic tools and wayfinding strategies that transcend traditional physical maps. The body itself can serve as a form of mapping as it moves across places, forming socio-spatial connections in self-determined ways. Those who liberated themselves from slavery deployed advanced environmental knowledge and landscape reading to avoid capture (Miles, 2024). Later, travel guides such as the *Negro Motorist Green Book*, produced through painstaking compilation, field reconnaissance, and crowdsourced data, were created by and for Black travelers to bypass denied services and threats common on highways during the Jim Crow era (Bottone, 2020).

Black mapping also emerges as an artistic form that is equally political. Early- and mid-20th-century illustrator Louise Jefferson created pictorial maps that highlighted Black historical figures, institutions, and

cultural landmarks across the US, asserting the legitimacy of people of color within a predominantly white nation (Yessler & Alderman, 2021). More recently, when artist-activist Tonika Lewis Johnson developed the Folded Map Project, she photographed and compared addresses on racially segregated sides of the same street in Chicago. Johnson has highlighted socio-economic disparities between the paired addresses and encouraged residents from the north and south sides to communicate and socialize with each other to bridge divisions caused by racism (Lane, 2020). Johnson's folding of Chicago's street map reflects how the Living Black Atlas is inherently improvisational and relational, creating a form of cartography dedicated to a feminist ethics of care and collaboration, rather than simply sharing information about the world.

2.3. Processual Mapping and a Black Sense of Place

Describing the Living Black Atlas as "living" recognizes that these alternative cartographies are in a constant state of emergence as Black communities appropriate, transcend, and redefine traditional ideas about mapping in response to social change and struggle (Alderman & Inwood, 2023). The value of Black mapping lies not in detached data visualizations or official scientific standards, but in how it reflects the politics of Black life and is actively used for freedom-making, community-building, healing, and self-determined acts of living, working, and finding joy and respite (Allen, 2020).

The Living Black Atlas demonstrates what McKittrick (2011) famously referred to as a "Black sense of place," an intimate yet contested sense of being and belonging. This sense of place can highlight resistance, creativity, and alternative geographies through which Black communities express their presence, histories, rights, and visions for a just future. Yet, it also includes knowledge production and storytelling focused on the painful exclusions, struggles, and violence that shape Black connections with place (e.g., Morrison, 1970) as well as discussions with Afro-pessimist thought (McKittrick, 2006).

Fully understanding the Living Black Atlas requires viewing maps through a process-oriented lens, which values lived experiences and emotional geographies that form the foundation of cartographies. Maps are dynamic, open-ended processes of knowledge creation that come from not only data points but also from contingent, context-dependent relationships among people, places, and power (Kitchin & Dodge, 2007). Notably, a process-oriented perspective recognizes the generative agency and performative effects of maps. They not only record reality but also actively help shape it (Corner, 1999; Crampton, 2009; Del Casino & Hanna, 2005).

The Living Black Atlas is not just a static collection of map artifacts with its value limited to its representational messages. Instead, the Atlas is better understood as a social-cartographic practice embedded within and supporting a larger project of Black world-making and "livingness" (McKittrick, 2021). Black livingness reveals the liberatory power of storytelling, showing that Black humanity exists beyond pain, statistics, or marginalization. This acknowledges that Black communities have long told their stories on their own terms as they create places where they can belong and work toward abolition, opportunity, and safety. By viewing the Atlas as part of this broader politics of Black storytelling, we can see the many forms that Black counter-mapping and geographic knowledge production can take, including things like the Stealth Slavery Stickers.

2.4. The Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign as a Chapter in the Atlas

Nimoh (2025) examines how Black residents in Washington, D.C.'s Anacostia neighborhood utilize storytelling to create maps of their communities that underscore their sense of place. These maps contest or *unmap* traditional, white-dominated cartographies that often exclude or distort Black places, even those places like Anacostia with long histories as Black community hubs. Residents also *remap* their community to develop knowledge systems and storytelling practices vital for surviving racism and to affirm belonging on their own terms. Seemingly neutral or common-sense spatial categories and inscriptions, often reinforced through traditional place naming and mapping, obscure the relational nature of how exclusion and belonging are imagined and materialized through narratives, symbols, and memories (Price, 2004).

As a chapter in the Living Black Atlas, the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign marks a pivotal moment in the process of unmapping and remapping urban space and memory. The oppressive power of New York's street names, as it becomes mapped onto documents, asphalt, and people's perceptions and interactions, comes from the fact that the names don't readily seem to be part of a history of racism. Their everyday appearance masks the idea that the city is built historically upon enslavement. The Stealth Stickers challenge the symbolic power of urban names, even if only temporarily, by questioning the conventional portrayals of specific, prominent city landmarks and founding families as unrelated to race and politics. In doing so, they open space for a counter-narrative about memory and location that affirms the existence and importance of the history of racial injustice and oppression. While the stickers are clearly meant to expose and highlight the historical complicity of certain New York families in slavery, they also function as a physical and political overlay—adding a layer of meaning to the map of everyday spaces—filled with an explicitly Black perspective on place and shared knowledge of the past. The Slavers of New York transform places with commemorative names and the maps of meaning they form into sites of racial reckoning. Stealth Stickers work to reframe the meaning of streets, buildings, and other public areas by inserting the story of the enslaved into a visual and narrative space that the place name historically dominated, a space that was once solely controlled by the enslaver.

Enslaved Africans are referenced on stealth stickers only by number (e.g., "the (Van) Nostrands owned 6 people"), and McKittrick (2013) has rightly highlighted the problems with reducing Black life to mere numbers. However, this quantified Black presence causes an emotional rupture in how memory is mapped onto the city's geography. Although the stickers appear only to inventory the enslaved, comparing these counts with those who held Black people in bondage adds an ethical weight, drawing attention to previously unindicted enslavers and a demand for accountability. Enumeration, in this respect, is not just about tallying lives but also about unsettling silences. In the future, pairing the stickers with additional public storytelling and a more detailed counter-mapping of the specifics of enslaved lives would reveal greater humanity behind the numbers.

Counter-mapping, in general and especially in the context of Black livingness, refers to cartographic storytelling that (a) pushes back against historical and contemporary discrimination and power structures that would erase or delegitimize Black ways of being in the world and (b) challenges traditional notions about what maps and data should look like and the work they should do (Yessler & Alderman, 2021). The Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign embodies both forms of Black counter-mapping. First, it challenges dominant spatial narratives by exposing the hidden histories of slavery embedded in the names of New York streets, thereby asserting commemorative justice within spaces that would otherwise sanitize or silence these

legacies. Second, the stickers defy cartographic convention because they don't resemble maps in a traditional sense. They nonetheless conduct cartographic work by marking space, disrupting the visual consumption of landscapes, and inviting the public to engage in re-mapping the meaning of everyday environments.

As Kelley (2021) argues, Black geographic knowledge has long existed in creative cultural productions not confined to the official tenets of geography and cartography. The Stealth Stickers are part of this tradition of fugitive mapping, which involves the extra-legal affixing of historical narratives about slavery's legacy onto signposts and other urban surfaces, viewed by some as vandalism and by others as revolutionary truth-telling. Kelley (2021) also draws our attention to the capacity of words and narratives themselves to operate as "prose-maps," which work to narrate and disseminate geographic knowledge about Black life previously written out of conventional conceptualizations of cartography.

The highly localized way Stealth Stickers are placed and experienced doesn't create a single, unified view of New York. That very characteristic is key to the counter-mapping performed by stickers. Traditional cartography has long claimed to provide a complete and objective picture of the world, without acknowledging the biases and exclusions inherent in mapping (Crampton & Krygier, 2005). The Stealth Stickers, through their guerrilla approach of meeting people where they are, re-map urban memory through everyday encounters, as people move through the city, one street at a time, thus unsettling the idea of a single, definitive map. If a wider cartography is created by the Slavers collective, then it underscores a deep irony. New York promotes itself as a place of refuge and opportunity, celebrating the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, yet simultaneously downplays its historic profits from enslavement and continues to valorize enslavers through the very names of its public places.

In sum, the Stealth Sticker Campaign is a vital yet previously under-examined chapter in Living Black Atlas. It reveals and expands the role of mapping in social struggles and as a tool for resistant memory-making. The stickers work to redefine how the public produces knowledge about race, showcasing a Black presence—though not entirely or unproblematically—within spaces that uncritically commemorate historical enslaver families, and encouraging people to engage with and navigate landscapes and histories in more just ways.

3. Memory-Work of Contesting White Innocence in New York

3.1. Black Counter-Mapping as Memory-Work

As we have suggested so far, the Living Black Atlas explores a wide range of Black spatial expressions that have served (and continue to serve) various social and political purposes. Memory and commemoration are central to affirming Black life and legitimacy in the face of inequality. They have been the focus of notable Black counter-mapping—such as documenting and preserving Nashville's hubs of musical innovation destroyed by highway construction in the 1960s, and the emotional atmospheres created by the Equal Justice Initiative's monuments and markers to remember victims of racial terror lynching (Bliss, 2024; Carter, 2024). Moving from an oppressive society requires a reckoning with past injustices and engaging in what Till (2012) and D'Ignazio and Klein (2023) call the "memory-work" of publicly confronting histories and ongoing legacies of discrimination. This memory-work includes efforts, in various forms, to create new commemorative structures and practices that challenge inequalities in representing historical injustices and highlight silenced Black lived experiences within dominant narratives of memory and space. Memory-work actively challenges and aims

to repair the sanitized and exclusionary stories traditionally told by the dominant society about perpetrators and victims of racial injustice. The power of this memory-work lies not only in changing narratives about the past but also in fostering dialogue and building social capacity to accept responsibility for historical injustices rather than denying them (Till, 2012).

Hanna (2024) highlights maps, especially Black counter-mapping, as a form of memory-work. He focuses on John M. Washington, a formerly enslaved man who escaped bondage and created a map in the 1870s detailing "where his experiences of enslavement and emancipation unfolded" in Fredericksburg, Virginia. As Hanna notes, Washington's cartographic work was not just for himself or his personal recollection but aimed at a broader audience and was part of a political effort to shape collective or social memory. His map directly challenged efforts by white Southerners at the time to erase the truth of enslavement from national memory as they violently ended Reconstruction and began rolling back Black political and economic rights. During this period, the nation saw the rise of the "Lost Cause myth," which downplayed and denied the brutal realities of slavery. The Lost Cause quickly captured the minds of many white Americans and was embedded in numerous memorials, from street names to statues to souvenirs at plantation museums (Potter et al., 2022). According to Hanna (2024), scholars and National Park Service officials have recently republished and widely circulated Washington's map to challenge the continued influence of the Lost Cause and its denial of the realities of slavery.

Alderman et al. (2025) also explore Black-led mapping as a tool for memory-work that not only acknowledges the historical harms of racism but also addresses more recent injustices of ignoring and denying those truths. They observe a recent increase in mapping activism, where Black communities and allies utilize cartography, archival methods, and data science to recover public recognition of the anti-Black effects of various harmful practices and policies beyond just slavery. Ongoing community-based cartographic and memorial initiatives across the US document the displacement and destruction of communities of color caused by urban renewal and interstate highway projects, as well as racial segregation and economic exclusion related to redlining and whites-only restrictive covenants (Binoy, 2022; Walker & Derickson, 2023). Though not always explicitly stated, much of this Black counter-mapping fundamentally challenges how "white innocence" is embedded in and normalized through traditional maps, memorials, named places, and other everyday spaces.

3.2. White Innocence and Rupturing Northern Denial

Many of America's commemorative spaces reinforce white innocence, a set of discourses and practices that deny or erase the critical role of racial inequalities, including slavery and settler colonialism, in shaping and maintaining the nation (Pulido, 2025). White innocence recognizes that notions of hate and privilege do not fully explain how white supremacy is created and sustained through memory. Racial dominance can come from a state of denial or unawareness among white individuals about the realities of racism and their role in supporting it (Inwood, 2018). A white innocence perspective closely examines the powerful influence of seemingly simple historical and spatial narratives, which often silence or distort the stories of Black and Native peoples and their ongoing struggles, all while disavowing white individuals and institutions from any connection to or responsibility for white supremacy.

According to Pulido (2025), this lack of honest accounting of a racialized past that supports white innocence has proven crucial for maintaining the US settler state because it offers a troubling "moral legitimacy" in the

face of histories of racialized violence and dispossession. Pulido also notes that embedding and preserving white innocence in cultural memory, because it often leads to a centering of prominent and seemingly heroic white historical figures over people of color, can create an "empathy gap," which limits or prevents public identification with traditionally minoritized groups. This issue of rebalancing the distribution of empathy is a significant concern for counter-mapping activism, as Black memory-workers seek to do more than ensure historical fairness or accuracy. More deeply, they aim to change how broader audiences perceive, discuss, and feel about the place of Black people in those histories. Although not a primary focus of Pulido's discussion, the whitewashing of history that underpins the politics of innocence-making—and the resulting inequalities in empathy and emotion—can be deeply internalized by historically oppressed communities of color, sometimes fueling acts of resistance but also dampening political consciousness and critical awareness.

While the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign can be seen from many perspectives, we interpret it as a challenge to white innocence and a crucial part of its guerrilla educational goal of reshaping how people understand New York's history of slavery. Elsa Eli Waithe saw evidence of a destructive innocence regarding enslavement's legacy in Brooklyn, whether happening consciously or subconsciously, and spoke about the consequences of this lack of public awareness: "A lot of people don't know what's around them. And if you don't know what's around you, then you have a hard time affecting any sort of change" (as cited in Swindall, 2021, n.p.).

Ada Reso explained why the Slavers of New York sought to move histories of enslavement out of the archives and into public view, emphasizing how racism embedded in place naming continues to shape contemporary inequalities faced by New Yorkers:

> Mainly, our goal is to just educate people about the legacy of slavery and how it persists in the present day. We don't advocate for changing the names in any way. We hope that, if people feel so inclined to change names, they create their own groups and engage in political action. What's really interesting is that some of the naming of places for slavers happened more recently than you would imagine. Like Boerum Hill wasn't called "Boerum Hill" until 1964 or so, when that name was resurrected as part of the gentrification of Brooklyn. You can see directly the entanglement of the history of slavery and gentrification. Bringing this man's name back into the neighborhood is a symbol of violence. The persistence of these names and links carries this space through history (as cited in Waithe et al., 2021, n.p.).

The Slavers of New York recognized that genuine racial reconciliation stems from cultivating a relational understanding between the past and the present (Tedford, 2022). The strength of the Stealth Stickers, as a street-level community counter-remapping effort, lies not only in exposing denied racialized histories but also in linking them to ongoing disparities, such as the use of enslavers' names to market gentrifying neighborhoods that displace Black residents. As Jansson (2019) reminds us, the politics of gentrification are mediated through cultural signs and symbolic place-making, including, in this case, street naming.

The Slavers of New York viewed street names as powerful tools for confronting the denial of slavery because of their deep integration into daily life and role in navigation. Waithe understood that the city's early street names had become disconnected from the histories of the people they honor (Tedford, 2022). Place names comprise a few words and can't narrate history in the same detail as museum exhibits or monument inscriptions. These narrative limits often lead street names to further erase the problematic

histories they commemorate. The Slavers were not only challenging the reinforcement of white innocence regarding the complicity of the city's early families in supporting slavery; they were also opposing the role of street names in institutionalizing and maintaining that denial of history.

In deploying the Stealth Stickers, the Slavers collective developed a creative visual tool to enhance the storytelling of named streets and public spaces, aiming to increase awareness of these hidden histories and alter people's connection to and perception of their environment. The uneven politics surrounding how and why specific family names become memorialized in public place identities, along with the Slavers' concern about the histories of racism associated with those families, partly motivated the Stealth Sticker Campaign. They understood that the same economic power driving the enslavement of Black people also influenced which names appeared on road signs. Waithe challenged that power and explained how the projection of white innocence and denial of racialized power led to biased and incomplete cultural memory: "Some of the folks [honored on street names] were just people who had land. People who had money. So why does that get remembered? Why does that get into culture?" (as cited in Swindall, 2021, n.p.). In response to accusations that they were making trivial issues, Waithe argued: "In the grand scheme of things, is the street name oppressing me? Maybe not as much as the justice system does, but it just goes to show how pervasive, how down to the capillaries of racism, that it affects [the names of] our streets" (as cited in Sarai, 2021, n.p.).

Also essential to the creation of the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign was the murder of George Floyd, the growth of the BLM movement and protests, and broader national discussions and debates about whether it is appropriate to glorify racist historical figures through sites of remembrance. Waithe noted that some of the motivation behind the stickers came from a conversation they had with a white friend about removing a Confederate statue in Waithe's hometown of Norfolk, Virginia (McShane, 2021). The friend dismissed the statue and its ties to slavery and racism as just a "southern issue," which Waithe found strange and wrong based on census records showing how New York families had enslaved Black people. In explaining how white people and institutions try to deny responsibility for racial injustice, Inwood (2018) describes the practice of "spatial confinement," which involves keeping memories of racism limited to specific places or regions, preventing understanding of how systemic and widespread its legacy really is.

While the Slavers of New York aimed to reveal the hidden history of enslavement behind prominent families and places named after these influential figures, they also sought to challenge the broader denial of northern involvement in slavery. During a media interview, Maria Robles noted that the region's collective memory and self-image often erased the history of enslavement and explained how researching the history of street names worked to break the illusion of northern white innocence. She discussed how the Slavers collective's guerrilla education altered her own view of the city's past and its roads:

> I started to think about how slavery happened in the North as well, and how we never really talk or hear about it. Not talking about it is a way of essentially erasing the history. It's always, "Oh, that happened in the South and it was bad. But we're [in the North, we're] liberal and great and so progressive." And while that might be true in some regards, it's certainly not true historically. Obviously, the slave trade existed in New York as well. But it isn't always obvious to many people. I then started thinking about the street names in my neighborhood, Flatbush. Lefferts, as in Prospect Lefferts Gardens, shows up a lot [in slave owner data]. Who are these places named after? I started researching in Brooklyn, but then expanded to the rest of New York. (Waithe et al., 2021, n.p.)

The Stealth Sticker campaign was not the first time we saw a challenge to the idea of white innocence regarding northern, especially New York, involvement in the trading and owning of enslaved people. The 1991 discovery of an African burial ground in lower Manhattan, containing the remains of thousands of free and enslaved souls, and Black community resistance against the site's erasure became a point of reckoning for a city that had long portrayed itself as morally separate from the South's legacy of slavery (Frohne, 2015). While the stickers are a smaller, unofficial, and more fleeting record of northern racism than the burial ground, which is now a popular national park site, they form a memory map of unjust white and Black relations that confronted people at many street corners and lampposts, and they speak to a widespread scale of enslavement in New York City that scholars have begun to document thoroughly (Harris, 2023).

Although not the primary focus of most public discussions about the Slavers of New York, the stickers did more than challenge the denial or erasure of New York's connection to slavery. It also made important—even if limited—steps toward creating an embodied public map that showed, from one historic household to another, the vital role enslaved Black labor played in building and shaping New York City (Getachew & Kebede, 2022). By displaying the number of enslaved people held in bondage by individuals and families, the stickers ensured that the achievements of streets' namesakes are not only viewed differently morally but also understood in the context of the Black labor that built their wealth. Importantly, there is a long-standing white innocence or denial about the wealth historically created on the backs of enslaved Africans. This wealth has influenced generations of investment and development in the North and across the country, continues to ripple through and generate capital, prompting us "to ask what we collectively owe to enslaved people and their descendants?" (Inwood, 2023, p. 49).

3.3. Public Reception and Tensions of Stealth Stickers

The effectiveness and impact of counter-mapping and memory-work depend on how broadly these efforts spread across various places, connect with, and influence other social groups and struggles, and foster dialogue and potential political action. When asked about people's reactions to encountering the stickers and being forced to confront, rather than disavow, the historical realities of slavery and racism, Waithe, Reso, and Robles reported receiving widespread support for their efforts, even as many people expressed shock and repulsion by the named streets (Raskin, 2021). We do not yet have a complete understanding of the impact of the Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign; that would require a separate study. However, we do know that this counter-mapping initiative set off public reaction, both on the streets and within the media. The Slavers collective made strong posts about their Stealth Sticker Campaign using their then-active Twitter (now X) and Instagram accounts (Sarai, 2021). Their aim to challenge dominant narratives of New York's racial history, especially regarding slavery and racism, was widely shared at the time through social media and local and national media coverage (e.g., McShane, 2021; Raskin, 2021; Waithe et al., 2021). This demonstrates how Stealth Stickers not only brought material disruptions to New York's streetscapes but also circulated across virtual platforms, influencing digital place-making (Halegoua & Polson, 2021).

The Stealth Stickers were discussed during a New York City mayoral debate in June 2021: "Residents and even debate moderators used the project as an opportunity to ask candidates whether they would change streets and institutions bearing the names of enslavers if elected" (Sarai, 2021, n.p.). Stuyvesant High School is another strong example of the Slavers of New York's broader impact. The school honors "Peter Stuyvesant, the director-general of the Dutch colony that gave rise to New York, [and who, in the 17th century,] enslaved 15

to 30 people on his 62 acres" (McShane, 2021, n.p.). The collective's targeting of Stuyvesant through stickers helped inspire students to research his role in slavery and other injustices and frame debates about possibly changing their school's name (Jia et al., 2021).

The Slavers collective recounts facing opposition from some white New Yorkers unwilling to confront history. For example, a man yelled at and followed one of Waithe's friends, who volunteered to put stickers on Bergen Street. A white resident of Carroll Gardens tore down affixed stickers (Sarai, 2021; Waithe et al., 2021). But what was especially striking were the reactions of Black residents, who, like this person with a Nostrand address, said: "It doesn't make me feel proud of living on this street" (as cited in McShane, 2021, n.p.). Waithe told Sarai (2021, n.p.) that other Black passersby's reactions ranged from citing "the pain of being reminded of the history" to "feelings of apathy about why this is a worthy enough cause to take up." Responses from Black residents became even more charged when the multi-racial makeup of the Slavers collective became clear. For instance, some expressed concern upon seeing stickers placed in Black neighborhoods by collective members perceived as white. Ada Reso recalls her own experience with this:

> Once he [Black resident] read [the sticker], I saw his face drop and he's like, "Why are you posting this? I don't want to be reminded of this. We've moved past this."…And he also made a comment about me…."White people coming into this neighborhood, can't you do something more useful instead of digging this up?" (as cited in Sarai, 2021, n.p.)

While the Living Black Atlas is rooted in Black visions and lived experiences, its counter-mapping and memory-work can be supported by collaborators from diverse racial backgrounds, including white allies (e.g., see Alderman et al., 2025). However, as the Slavers of New York example demonstrates, these multiracial collaborations—though beneficial in many ways—can also be sources of tension. Reso and Robles acknowledged the importance of not "making decisions for Black people about how they should reckon with the history of slavery" (Waithe et al., 2021, n.p.). Yet, their involvement reveals the complex politics of representation that arise when traumatic histories are brought into public spaces. The reception of the Living Black Atlas can vary depending on who is perceived as delivering the message, especially when communities are managing their own unresolved wounds, trust issues, and the need to safeguard their memory-work and neighborhood boundaries.

4. The Difference a Sticker Makes: Counter-Mapping in the Age of Retrenchment

Some may overlook the political importance of placing stickers on street signs or utility boxes. We tend to see resistance and re-education as necessarily significant or dramatic, but the Living Black Atlas invites us to rethink this. It highlights the geographic knowledge, counter-maps, and storytelling of everyday Black activists and communities—working independently or in multiracial collaborations like the Slavers of New York—to challenge white denial, dismantle racial systems, and resist silencing Black voices and histories.

The Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign appears inactive now, and some of its goals have yet to be achieved, like creating a mobile app and an online map of New York's slavery history. Nevertheless, the Slavers of New York teach valuable lessons about memory-work, counter-mapping activism, and guerrilla education. Their tactics in Brooklyn transformed everyday memorialized and named spaces into sites for confronting racism and fighting for justice. This insurgent pedagogy is especially crucial today amid setbacks in civil rights and neglect of socially responsible commemoration and place name reforms.

The second Trump administration is hampering efforts by government agencies, universities, and historical sites to promote truth about the nation's racialized history and current racism (Chappell, 2025). The grassroots counter-mapping efforts by the Slavers of New York are not only interesting academically but also politically essential. Marginalized groups' heritages have always risked being co-opted, sanitized, and used by the settler state responsible for discrimination and violence (Rose-Redwood, 2016), but this is especially the case now. Without state accountability for confronting difficult histories, developing disruptive strategies in public spaces becomes crucial for forcing reevaluations of heritage. As addressing systemic racism becomes increasingly reduced in schools, libraries, and national parks, small acts like placing stickers on light poles or subway signs may serve as vital tools to promote critical questioning of social injustices and power structures.

We do not suggest that Stealth Stickers alone can accomplish all the memory-work needed in America. This issue is more than just the sticker. Critical cartography emphasizes de-fetishizing maps, revealing the labor involved in mapmaking and how maps perform social roles (Tyner & Tyner, 2025). Behind the Stealth Slavery Stickers are practices of counter-memory and counter-mapping that have applicability beyond simply subverting the New York streetscape.

4.1. Critical Heritage Audits

Central to the Stealth Sticker Campaign was a grassroots audit of New York City's historical and geographic records, including identifying families who profited from Black enslaved labor and recognizing streets bearing their names. D'Ignazio et al. (2022) discuss the broader value of communities using critical audits to challenge oppressive heritage landscapes by quantifying and visualizing the scale and structure of social injustice that would otherwise be normalized, and exposing how Black, Indigenous, and other oppressed groups are silenced and excluded within public memory and space. While audits—and the stickers they may produce—are not, by themselves, enough to create change, they have the potential to inspire new community-led political education and calls for institutional accountability and reform.

4.2. Symbolic Accretion

The Slavers of New York demonstrated the political significance of layering different commemorative messages within the same space, engaging in what is known as "symbolic accretion" (Dwyer, 2004). The process of adding diverse meanings and stories about the past to the landscape can provoke the shock, questions, and debates that challenge dominant, power-laden interpretations of history. This is especially true in cases like the Stealth Stickers, where an insurgent message about heritage is linked to an official and seemingly unquestioned narrative. Such practices, whether authorized or not, can have value far beyond New York. As current government-led efforts to remove racist monuments and place names become more difficult, and as some activists advocate for overlaying much-needed context and a Black perspective onto existing landscapes of memory, a tactic of accretion may prove increasingly significant.

4.3. Walking as Cartographic Memory Practice

Moments of counter-cartographic memory work are energized when audiences consume and internalize them, helping to co-construct acts of resistance through their bodily engagement and participation with

these “spatial narratives” (Potter et al., 2022). The Slavers of New York recognized the value of their stickers in interrupting and disrupting people’s everyday experiences of walking, requiring them to physically stop, look up, read, react, and perhaps reflect on their location within a broader context concerning the memorialization of historical enslavers. A realization that may be valuable to other communities is the insight made by scholars of the Stolpersteine Project: the installation of small, cobblestone-sized brass plaques set into European sidewalks in front of buildings where victims of Nazi persecution once lived freely before being deported or murdered. More than mere transport, walking is a key part of how people confront historical truths, especially when they encounter those truths along their daily routes, often unintentionally (Cook & Van Riemsdijk, 2014). Walking represents an embodied form of mapping practice capable of de-stabilizing dominant stories, identity formations, and spatial structures, all while “opening possibilities for alternative systems of living [and knowing]” (Powell, 2024, p. 9).

4.4. Guerrilla Place-Making

Finally, the Slavers of New York collective inspires scholars and activists to recognize the importance of reclaiming and rewriting everyday spaces through bold, unexpected acts of resistance. Insurgent memory-work, counter-mapping, and grassroots education derive their political force from being spatially grounded. The Stealth Slavery Sticker Campaign’s power lies not only in what it says about a racially fraught past but also in its support of a broader tradition of “guerrilla place-making,” low-cost, community-driven disruptions of sanctioned uses of public space that amplify the voices, needs, and histories of marginalized groups (Hou, 2010). These interventions vary in form and style, reflecting the diverse identities and interests of those engaged in place-making. This variability is not a weakness but a strength. If we are to challenge the state’s tightening grip on what can be seen, said, and remembered, this requires turning a variety of ordinary places and infrastructures into sites of reckoning and guerrilla education, from parks and bus stops to crosswalks and sidewalks. Brooklyn’s stickers represent more than a message; they constitute a method for remapping public spaces, reshaping the public’s connection to those spaces, and resisting the memorial silences that sustain white innocence.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the journal’s editorial team and the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and for generously sharing their insights.

Funding

Publication of this article in open access was made possible through support provided by the University of Tennessee-Knoxville.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Data Availability

No new datasets were generated in this study. All findings are based on publicly available news reports and online sources, which are cited in the article and can be consulted to verify the analysis.

LLMs Disclosure

The authors used Grammarly and ChatGPT for proofreading and grammar suggestions only. This included limited use of AI for the structuring of sentences and word choice.

References

Alderman, D. H., & Inwood, J. F. (2023). On the Living Black Atlas: Learning geospatial ethics from the African American Freedom Struggle. *The Cartographic Journal*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/00087041.2023.2256131

Alderman, D. H., Inwood, J. F., & Bottone, E. (2021). The mapping behind the movement: On recovering the critical cartographies of the African American Freedom Struggle. *Geoforum*, *120*, 67–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.01.022

Alderman, D. H., Inwood, J., & Stack, K. (2024). Taking a longer historical view of America's renaming moment: The role of Black onomastic activism within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03182-3

Alderman, D. H., Román-Rivera, M., Camponovo, M., & Kesler, R. (2025). Mapping as Black memory-work: Toward a restorative cartography of urban renewal/removal in Knoxville, Tennessee. *Geographical Review*, *115*(4), 529–551. https://doi.org/10.1080/00167428.2024.2376147

Allen, D. L. (2020). Black geographies of respite: Relief, recuperation, and resonance at Florida A&M University. *Antipode*, *52*(6), 1563–1582. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12658

Binoy, P. (2022). Remembering Rondo: Black counter-memory and collective practices of place-making in Saint Paul's historic Black neighborhood. *Geoforum*, *133*, 32–42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.04.014

Bledsoe, A., & Wright, W. J. (2019). The pluralities of black geographies. *Antipode*, *51*(2), 419–437. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12467

Bliss, L. (2024, February 28). MapLab: The Living Black Atlas. *Bloomberg News*. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2024-02-28/living-black-atlas-project-documents-african-american-cartography

Bottone, E. (2020). "Please mention the Green Book:" The *Negro Motorist Green Book* as critical GIS. In C. Travis, F. Ludlow, & F. Gyuris (Eds.), *Historical geography, GIScience and textual analysis: Landscapes of time and place* (pp. 51–64). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37569-0_4

Brasher, J., Alderman, D. H., & Rhodes, M. (2025). Memory and reckoning. In I. Ashutosh & J. Winders (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to cultural and social geography* (pp. 309–321). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119634294.ch25

Carter, P. L. (2024). Art works: Rendering the absence present by bearing witness at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *114*(3), 555–573. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2023.2284285

Chappell, B. (2025, May 21). These 7 executive actions show how Trump wants to reshape American history. *NPR Morning Edition*. https://www.npr.org/2025/05/21/nx-s1-5389638/trump-executive-actions-american-history-culture

Cook, M., & Van Riemsdijk, M. (2014). Agents of memorialization: Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine and the individual (re-)creation of a Holocaust landscape in Berlin. *Journal of Historical Geography*, *43*, 138–147. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2013.09.001

Corner, J. (1999). The agency of mapping: Speculation, critique, and invention. In D. Cosgrove (Ed.), *Mappings* (pp. 213–252). Reaktion Books.

Crampton, J. W. (2009). Cartography: performative, participatory, political. *Progress in Human Geography*, *33*(6), 840–848. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132508105000

Crampton, J. W., & Krygier, J. (2005). An introduction to critical cartography. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, *4*(1), 11–33. https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.v4i1.723

Cunningham, S. L. (2022). *Sermon geographies: Black people as spiritual cartographers in South Carolina* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Tennessee.

D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2023). *Data feminism*. MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/11805.001.0001

D'Ignazio, C., So, W., & Ntim-Addae, N. (2022). The audit: Perils and possibilities for contesting oppression in the heritage landscape. In N. Bobic & F. Haghighi (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of architecture, urban space and politics* (Vol. 1, pp. 250–266). Routledge.

Dalton, C. M., & Stallmann, T. (2018). Counter-mapping data science. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, *62*(1), 93–101. https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12398

Dando, C. E. (2017). *Women and cartography in the progressive era*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315546957

Del Casino, V. J., & Hanna, S. P. (2005). Beyond the "binaries": A methodological intervention for interrogating maps as representational practices, *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, *4*(1), 34–56. https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.v4i1.727

Dwyer, O. J. (2004). Symbolic accretion and commemoration. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *5*(3), 419–435. https://doi.org/10.1080/1464936042000252804

Eaves, L. E. (2020). Interanimating Black sexualities and the geography classroom. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, *44*(2), 217–229. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2020.1753029

El-Amin, E. (2019). *Chocolate City way up South in Appalachia: Black Knoxville at the intersection of race, place, and region* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Tennessee.

Emba, C. (2020, June 17). A monumental shift: Memorials to white supremacy are falling. What will replace them? *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/opinions/confederate-statues-monuments

Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Frohne, A. E. (2015). *The African burial ground in New York City: Memory, spirituality, and space*. Syracuse University Press.

Gensburger, S., & Wüstenberg, J. (Eds.). (2023). *De-commemoration: Removing statues and renaming places*. Berghahn Books. https://doi.org/10.3167/9781805391074

Getachew, A., & Kebede, N. (2022). Monument gallery. *The American Historical Review*, *127*(2), 831–846. https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhac162

Hale, J. (2024). A pathway to liberation: A history of the Freedom Schools and the long struggle for justice since 1865. *Urban Education*, *59*(10), 2981–2998. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859231175672

Halegoua, G., & Polson, E. (2021). Exploring 'digital placemaking.' *Convergence*, *27*(3), 573–578. https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211014828

Hanna, S. P. (2024). Black cartography as memory-work. In T. Rossetto & L. Presti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of cartographic humanities* (pp. 261–269). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003327578-34

Harris, L. M. (2023). *In the shadow of slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626–1863*. University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226317755.001.0001

Hawthorne, C. (2019). Black matters are spatial matters: Black geographies for the twenty-first century. *Geography Compass*, *13*(11), Article 12468. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12468

Hawthorne, C. (2025). Mapping black geographies. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *50*(1), Article 12700. https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12700

hooks, b. (2014). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking Black* (2nd ed.). South End Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315743134

Hou, J. (Ed.). (2010). *Insurgent public space: Guerrilla urbanism and the remaking of contemporary cities*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203093009

Hunter, M. A., & Robinson, Z. F. (2018). *Chocolate cities: The Black map of American life*. University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520292826.001.0001

Hyman, C. (2025). *The cultural heritage resilience of the Great Dismal Swamp*. Hamilton Books.

Inwood, J. F. (2018). "It is the innocence which constitutes the crime": Political geographies of white supremacy, the construction of white innocence, and the Flint water crisis. *Geography Compass*, *12*(3), Article 12361. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12361

Inwood, J. F. (2023). The modern infrastructure landscape and the legacy of slavery. *The Professional Geographer*, *75*(1), 44–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2022.2085120

Inwood, J. F., & Alderman, D. H. (2020). "The care and feeding of power structures": Reconceptualizing geospatial intelligence through the countermapping efforts of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *110*(3), 705–723. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2019.1631747

Inwood, J. F., & Alderman, D. H. (2021). Performing the spadework of civil rights: SNCC's free southern theater as radical place-making and epistemic justice. *GeoJournal*, *87*, 3719–3734. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-021-10459-6

Jansson, A. (2019). The mutual shaping of geomedia and gentrification: The case of alternative tourism apps. *Communication and the Public*, *4*(2), 166–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/2057047319850197

Jia, I., Sansone, M., Chen, N., & Yamanaka, S. (2021, June 1). Stuyvesant's response to Slavers of NY campaign. *The Spectator*. https://pdf.stuyspec.com/111/16.pdf

Kelley, E. (2021). "Follow the tree flowers": Fugitive mapping in Beloved. *Antipode*, *53*(1), 181–199. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12679

Kitchin, R., & Dodge, M. (2007). Rethinking maps. *Progress in Human Geography*, *31*(3), 331–344. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132507077082

Lane, N. (2020, September 15). The Folded Map Project shows a segregated city. *Chicago Reader*. https://chicagoreader.com/arts-culture/the-folded-map-project-shows-a-segregated-city

Lanier, M., & Hamilton, A. J. (2020). Rooted: Black women, southern memory, and womanist cartographies. *Southern Cultures*, *26*(2), 12–31. https://doi.org/10.1353/scu.2020.0026

Madrigal, I. (2022, March 10). How Slavers of New York uses stickers to unveil NYC's Hidden History of Slavery. *Untapped New York*. https://www.untappedcities.com/slavers-of-new-york

Marighella, C. (1971). Appendix—Minimanual of the urban guerrilla. *The Adelphi Papers*, *11*(79), 20–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/05679327108448206

McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic grounds: Black women and the cartographies of struggle*. University of Minnesota Press.

McKittrick, K. (2011). On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *12*(8), 947–963. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2011.624280

McKittrick, K. (2013). Plantation futures. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 17(3), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2378892

McKittrick, K. (2021). *Dear science and other stories*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478012573

McQuire, S. (2016). *Geomedia: Networked cities and the future of public space*. Polity Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2017-0044

McShane, J. (2021, May 7). The Stealth Sticker Campaign to expose New York's history of slavery. *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/07/nyregion/slavery-nyc.html

Miles, T. (2024). *Night Flyer: Harriet Tubman and the faith dreams of a free people*. Penguin Group.

Morley, D. (2009). For a materialist, non-media-centric media studies. *Television & New Media*, *10*(1), 114–116. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476408327173

Morrison, T. (1970). *The bluest eye*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Nimoh, S. (2025). Airing the ungeographic: Anacostia unmapped and Black geographies of gentrification in Washington, DC. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, *24*(3). https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.aa3oem-2360

NorthStar of GIS. (n.d.). *NorthStar of GIS: Join the movement today*. https://www.northstarofgis.org

Novoa, M. (2022). Insurgent heritage: Mobilizing memory, place-based care, and cultural citizenships. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *46*(6), 1016–1034. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13143

O'Neill, C. T. (2021). *Down along with that devil's bones: A reckoning with monuments, memory, and the legacy of white supremacy*. Algonquin Books.

Potter, A. E., Cook, M. R., Eaves, L. E., Carter, P., & Bright, C. F. (2024). Placing African American museums in the American tourism landscape. *Tourism Geographies*, *26*(1), 97–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2023.2259351

Potter, A. E., Hanna, S. P., Alderman, D. H., Carter, P. L., Bright, C. F., & Butler, D. L. (2022). *Remembering enslavement: Reassembling the Southern plantation museum*. University of Georgia Press. https://doi.org/10.1353/book100085

Powell, K. (2024). Walking the map. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *26*(1), 8–30. https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v26i1.3991

Price, P. L. (2004). *Dry place: Landscapes of belonging and exclusion*. University of Minnesota Press.

Pulido, L. (2023). Cultural memory, white innocence, and United States territory: The 2022 urban geography plenary lecture. *Urban Geography*, *44*(6), 1059–1083. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2023.2203585

Pulido, L. (2025). Paving over the past: Oregon historical markers, white innocence, and Manifest Destiny. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *115*(8), 1907–1925. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2025.2511943

Purifoy, D. (2023). Black towns and (legal) marronage. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *113*(7), 1599–1614. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2022.2158062

Raskin, S. (2021, July 7). New campaign targets NYC's 'shocking' legacy of slavery. *New York Post*. https://nypost.com/2021/07/07/new-campaign-targets-nycs-shocking-legacy-of-slavery

Richards, M. P., Gensterblum, A., Bartlett, C., Thrash, C. R., & Phillips, C. (2025). The persistence of Confederate, enslaver, and segregationist namesakes in US public schools: A critical quantitative toponymic analysis. *AERA Open*, *11*, Article 23328584241309313. https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584241309313

Roane, J. T., & Hosbey, J. (2019). Mapping black ecologies. *Current Research in Digital History*, *2*. https://doi.org/10.31835/crdh.2019.05

Rose-Redwood, R. (2016). Reclaim, rename, reoccupy: Decolonizing place and the reclaiming of PKOLS. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, *15*(1), 187–206. https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.v15i1.1215

Rose-Redwood, R., Blu Barnd, N., Lucchesi, A. H. E., Dias, S., & Patrick, W. (2020). Decolonizing the map:

Recentering Indigenous mappings. *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, *55*(3), 151–162. https://doi.org/10.3138/cart.53.3.intro

Sarai, T. (2021, August 18). Reclaiming history, renaming the world. *Prism*. https://prismreports.org/2021/08/18/reclaiming-history-renaming-the-world

Swindall, A. (2021, May 30). 'Slavers of New York' guerilla stickers call out NYC's celebration of human traffickers and slave owners. *Inside Edition*. https://www.insideedition.com/slavers-of-new-york-guerilla-stickers-call-out-nycs-celebration-of-human-traffickers-and-slave

Sysling, A. (2024, May 29). Waves of change: Meet activist and We the People of Detroit president Monica Lewis-Patrick. *Great Lakes Now*. https://www.greatlakesnow.org/2024/05/waves-of-change-meet-activist-and-we-the-people-of-detroit-president-monica-lewis-patrick

Tedford, C. (2022, April 27). Featured artists/activists: Slavers of New York. *Stickerkitty*. https://stickerkitty.org/2022/04/featured-artists-slavers-of-new-york

Till, K. E. (2012). Wounded cities: Memory-work and a place-based ethics of care. *Political Geography*, *31*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.10.008

Tyner, J. A., Alvarez, G. B., & Colucci, A. R. (2012). Memory and the everyday landscape of violence in post-genocide Cambodia. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *13*(8), 853–871. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2012.734847

Tyner, J. A., & Tyner, J. A. (2025). Women, military mapping, and American cartography during the second World War. *GeoHumanities*, *11*(1), 17–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566x.2024.2440314

Waithe, E. E., Robles, M., & Reso, A. (2021, April 7). Memory loss: The Bergen Family owned 46 people. *Urban Omnibus*. https://urbanomnibus.net/2021/04/the-bergen-family-owned-46-people

Walker, R. H., & Derickson, K. D. (2023). Mapping prejudice: The limits and opportunities of data for anti-racist planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *89*(4), 459–471. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2022.2112743

Winston, C. (2021). Maroon geographies. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *111*(7), 2185–2199. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2021.1894087

Wright, W. J. (2019). The public is intellectual. *The Professional Geographer*, *71*(1), 172–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2018.1453186

Yessler, R., & Alderman, D. (2021). Art as "talking back": Louise Jefferson's life and legacy of counter-mapping. *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, *56*(2), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.3138/cart-2020-0011

About the Authors

Derek H. Alderman is a Chancellor's Professor at the University of Tennessee and past president of the American Association of Geographers. He is a cultural geographer examining counter and restorative cartographies of the African American Freedom Struggle, emphasizing commemorative justice and grassroots mapping to contest racism and imagine just futures.

Joshua Inwood is a professor of geography and senior research associate in the Rock Ethics Institute at Pennsylvania State University. His research examines racial capitalism, white supremacy, and political geographies of democracy and inequality. He writes widely on neoliberalism, truth commissions, and the ethical challenges shaping contemporary human geographies.