

**REDESIGNING CIVIC MEMORY:
THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND IN LOWER MANHATTAN**

Sarah Rachel Katz

A THESIS

in

Historic Preservation

**Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2006

Advisor
Randall F. Mason,
Associate Professor of Architecture

Reader
John Dixon Hunt,
Professor of the History and Theory
of Landscape

Frank G. Matero,
Professor of Architecture
Program Chair

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisors, Randall F. Mason and John Dixon Hunt, for their guidance and feedback during the thesis process and throughout graduate school. Dennis Montagna at the Northeast Regional Office of the National Park Service provided invaluable information about plans for administration, interpretation, and memorialization at the African Burial Ground. A tremendous thanks to my parents, Edda and Michael Katz, for their support and advice not only this year, but throughout my master's studies—and all the years leading up them. And finally, to my classmates, thank you for your insight, wisdom, support, and friendship. It wouldn't have been the same without you.

....[T]he life of memory exists primarily in historical time: in the activity that brings monuments into being, and in the ongoing exchange between people and their historical markers, and finally, in the concrete actions we take in light of a memorialized past.

—James E. Young (1992)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: SLAVERY IN NEW YORK CITY, 1621-1848.....	3
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	3
1.2 SLAVERY IN NEW AMSTERDAM: 1621-1664.....	5
1.3 SLAVERY IN NEW YORK: 1664 TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION	9
1.4 SLAVERY AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: 1775-1783	16
1.5 SLAVERY AND FREEDOM AFTER THE REVOLUTION: 1783-1848	18
CHAPTER TWO: THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND, 1653-1987.....	21
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	21
2.2 THE COMMONS OF COLONIAL NEW YORK.....	22
2.3 LANDSCAPE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND, 1697-1796	25
2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOWER MANHATTAN, 1797-1987	31
CHAPTER THREE: FROM DISCOVERY TO DESIGNATION, 1987-1993	36
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	36
3.2 ACQUISITION AND POLICY FRAMEWORK, 1987-1990.....	36
3.3 EXCAVATION BEGINS, MAY-DECEMBER 1991.....	40
3.4 CONTROVERSY AND ACTIVISM, 1991-1992.....	44
3.5 FEDERAL POWER, JULY-OCTOBER 1992.....	52
3.6 DESIGNATION, DIRECTION, AND VALUE, SEPTEMBER 1992- OCTOBER 1993	55
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTESTED TERRAIN: VALUES & RESEARCH METHODS, 1991-2003	62
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	62
4.2 THE DEBATE BEGINS, OCTOBER 1991-SEPTEMBER 1992	63
4.3 THE QUESTION OF RACE: DEVELOPING A RESEARCH DESIGN, OCTOBER 1992	65
4.4 DEVELOPING AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN RESEARCH PRACTICE, FALL 1992-SPRING 1993.....	67
4.5 REWRITING HISTORY	69
4.6 COLLECTIVE POWER AND COMMUNITY CONTROL	71
4.7 IDENTITY AND CULTURE.....	72
4.8 SPIRITUALITY	73
4.9 RESEARCH PROCEEDS, 1993-1996	75
4.10 CONTROVERSY BEGINS, MAY 1998-DECEMBER 2000.....	77

4.11 INFORMATION AND RESPECT, JANUARY 1999-SEPTEMBER 2001	79
4.12 TOWARD A RESOLUTION, JANUARY 2002-AUGUST 2003	84
4.13 REINTERMENT, OCTOBER 2003	86
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDING A VISUAL VOCABULARY: DESIGN AND MEMORIALIZATION, 1993- 2005.....	88
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	88
5.2 MONUMENTS AND COUNTER-MONUMENTS: THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COALITION COMPETITION, 1993-1994	89
5.3 FEDERAL ART-IN-ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM, 1992-2003	92
5.4 LORENZO PACE, 1992-2000.....	95
5.5 DESIGN COMPETITIONS BEGIN, 1997	98
5.6 THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER, 1997-2000	99
5.7 THE MEMORIAL COMPETITION, 1998	102
5.8 PROJECT DELAYS, 1998-2003.....	103
5.8 MEMORIAL DESIGN PROPOSALS, 2002-2003	104
5.10 DESIGN DISPUTES, 2003-2004	108
5.11 MEMORIAL SELECTION AND COMMISSION, 2005	112
CONCLUSION: “LOOKING TO THE PAST TO GUIDE THE FUTURE,” 1991-2006.....	115
BIBLIOGRAPHY	121
APPENDIX A: FIGURES.....	135
INDEX	172

LIST OF FIGURES

FIG. 1:	THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND AT DUANE AND ELK STREETS IN LOWER MANHATTAN	136
FIG. 2:	LOOKING ACROSS DUANE STREET TO THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND	137
FIG. 3:	BUILDINGS SURROUNDING THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND	138
FIG. 4:	THE CURRENT 15,000 SQUARE FOOT SITE AS COMPARED TO THE ORIGINAL SEVEN-ACRE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND.....	139
FIG. 5:	PLAN OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK IN 1735-1737 BY MRS. BUCHNERD (ANNOTATED)	140
FIG. 6:	DETAIL FROM DAVID GRIM'S MAP OF NEW YORK CITY IN 1742-44 AS RECOLLECTED IN 1819	141
FIG. 7:	DETAIL FROM THE MAERSCHALK PLAN, 1754 (ANNOTATED)	142
FIG. 8:	DETAIL FROM A 1787 SURVEY MAP	143
FIG. 9:	DETAIL FROM THE RATZER MAP, 1767 (ANNOTATED)	144
FIG. 10:	DETAIL FROM A 1795 SURVEY MAP	145
FIG. 11:	DETAIL FROM THE TAYLOR-ROBERTS PLAN, 1797 (ANNOTATED).....	146
FIG. 12:	DETAIL FROM ROBINSON AND PIDGEON ATLAS, 1893 (ANNOTATED).....	147
FIG. 13:	SANBORN MAP (MANHATTAN LAND BOOK 1984-85).....	148
FIG. 14:	DETAIL OF SANBORN MAP (MANHATTAN LAND BOOK 1984-85) BLOCK 154	149
FIG. 15:	AN EXCAVATED BURIAL AND RECORDED DATA	150
FIG. 16:	THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND AND COMMONS HISTORIC DISTRICT (ANNOTATED)	151

FIG. 17:	THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK	152
FIG. 18:	THE WEST AKAN “SANKOFA” CHARACTER	153
FIG. 19:	HONORING THE BURIALS AT THE REINTERMENT CEREMONY IN OCTOBER 2003	154
FIG. 20:	HONORING THE BURIALS AT THE REINTERMENT CEREMONY IN OCTOBER 2003	155
FIG. 21:	LESTER YUEN AND NANA D. LAST, “A WALL OF PERSISTENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT,” 1993-94. PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COALITION COMPETITION	156
FIG. 22:	R.B.B.’S PARTNERSHIP, “UNTITLED,” 1993-94. PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COALITION COMPETITION	157
FIG. 23:	KAREN BERMAN AND JEANINE CENTUORI, “THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND/WALKING AMONG AFRICAN GRAVES/SPEAKING THROUGH THE GROUND,” 1993-94. PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COALITION COMPETITION	158
FIG. 24:	C. NEVILLE, “UNTITLED,” 1993-94. PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COALITION COMPETITION	159
FIG. 25:	CLYDE LYNDS, "AMERICA SONG," 1995. LOBBY OF THE TED WEISS FEDERAL BUILDING AT 290 BROADWAY	160
FIG. 26:	ROGER BROWN, “UNTITLED,” N.D. LOBBY OF THE TED WEISS FEDERAL BUILDING AT 290 BROADWAY	161
FIG. 27:	HOUSTON CONWILL, JOSEPH DePACE, AND ESTELLA MAJOZO CONWILL, "THE NEW RING SHOUT," 1995. LOBBY OF THE TED WEISS FEDERAL BUILDING AT 290 BROADWAY	162
FIG. 28:	BARBARA CHASE-RIBOUD, "AFRICA RISING," 1998. LOBBY OF THE TED WEISS FEDERAL BUILDING AT 290 BROADWAY	163
FIG. 29:	TOMEI ARAI, "RENEWAL," 1998. LOBBY OF THE TED WEISS FEDERAL BUILDING AT 290 BROADWAY	164
FIG. 30:	FRANK BENDER, "UNEARTHED" 2003. LOBBY OF THE TED WEISS FEDERAL BUILDING AT 290 BROADWAY	165

FIG. 31:	LORENZO PACE, “TRIUMPH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT,” 2000. FOLEY SQUARE.....	166
FIG. 32:	JOSEPH DEPACE, WILLY GONZALEZ, AND DESIGN TEAM, “THE RING OF REMEMBRANCE.” PROPOSAL SUBMITTED FOR THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND EXTERIOR MEMORIAL COMPETITION.....	167
FIG. 33:	RODNEY LEON, AARIS ARCHITECTS , “FOR ALL THOSE WHO WERE LOST.” PROPOSAL SUBMITTED FOR THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND EXTERIOR MEMORIAL COMPETITION.....	168
FIG. 34:	GROUNDWORKS DESIGN, “SACRED GROUND.” PROPOSAL SUBMITTED FOR THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND EXTERIOR MEMORIAL COMPETITION	169
FIG. 35:	EUSTACE PILGRIM AND CHRISTOPHER DAVIS, “AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MEMORIAL.” PROPOSAL SUBMITTED FOR THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND EXTERIOR MEMORIAL COMPETITION.....	170
FIG. 36:	MCKISSACK & MCKISSACK, “AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND MEMORIAL.” PROPOSAL SUBMITTED FOR THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND EXTERIOR MEMORIAL COMPETITION	171

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan from its discovery in 1991 to the present. Uncovered during excavations for a federal office building, today a small portion of the site serves as the symbolic marker for the larger burial ground beneath (Figs. 1-3). Following efforts to stabilize and preserve the site, the construction of a permanent monument is currently underway at the corner of Duane and Elk Streets. This thesis examines the process through which the Burial Ground has been created as a historic site and the implications of this process for its physical form and administration. Specifically, this thesis will seek to address: how receptions of a site—ideas about its value, meaning and significance—transform over time; how cultural and political forces, particularly the contemporary politics of identity, shape reception; how controversy emerges and affects a site; and how these factors combine to influence site planning, design, interpretation, and stewardship.

In the wake of September 11, monuments and memorials have moved to the forefront of public consciousness, and the expectation—and pressure—to memorialize places and events of diverse meaning has grown. In this rapidly emerging landscape of commemoration, issues of significance, particularly how significance is assigned and expressed both formally and interpretatively, are of central importance to the field of historic preservation as practitioners are charged with creating and caring for these new sites. Located in Lower Manhattan’s emerging “Memorial District,” the African Burial Ground offers an important opportunity to examine the process through which a commemorative site is created. As a site whose memorialization is still in process and

whose significance lies as much in the recent as the historical past, the Burial Ground presents a distinctive and timely case study of these critical issues. Additionally, as a significant archaeological discovery, as well as a powerful example of an underrepresented community's ability to shape public discourse, public history, and public space, the African Burial Ground offers a compelling story, whose recent chapters demand the same careful examination that its earlier ones have received.

To tell the tale of the Burial Ground, this thesis follows a loose and somewhat overlapping chronological order. To provide historical context, Chapter One offers a brief discussion of the history of slavery in New York City from 1621 to 1848. Chapter Two documents the site's physical history in the period before the burial ground's rediscovery in 1991, positioning the site as an important cultural landscape and charting its shifts from a natural, to a vernacular, and finally to a designed landscape. Chapter Three begins with the planning process for the federal building in the late 1980s and explores the ensuing struggle that followed the Burial Ground's discovery, as well as the legal, administrative, and political framework in which conflict occurred and the debate over value emerged through 1993. How these values were expressed in discussions surrounding the site's physical anthropology and archeology from 1991 to 2003 is the focus of Chapter Four. Finally, starting with a 1994 memorial competition and continuing through 2005, Chapter Five examines the use of public art and design competitions to express, mediate, and formalize the multiple meanings assigned to the site.

CHAPTER ONE:

SLAVERY IN NEW YORK CITY, 1621-1848

1.1 Introduction

In October 2005 an exhibition entitled “Slavery in New York” opened at the New York Historical Society. A comprehensive chronicle of the history of slavery in New York City, the exhibition featured numerous artifacts excavated from the African Burial Ground. As one reviewer noted:

New York's involvement with slavery has been well known by scholars, and recent histories of New York have been fully cognizant of the facts. But the popular imagination is something else, and the unearthing of part of the African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan in 1991 may have been a turning point, with the remains of more than 400 people from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries discovered at a construction site. Those remains made slavery all too vivid: with the bones came buttons and polished stones, evidence of malnutrition and signs of injuries....¹

Indeed, the discovery of the African Burial Ground marked not only an emergence of a broader public awareness of the history of slavery in New York, but also an increase in scholarly attention to the subject. To provide historical context for the African Burial Ground, this chapter offers a brief discussion of recent scholarship regarding the history of slavery in New York City. While a full review of the literature is outside the scope of this thesis, this discussion points to salient events within the city's

¹ Edward Rothstein, "The Peculiar Institution as Lived in New York," *The New York Times*, October 7, 2005.

history and highlights key issues that resonate not only through recent writings, but also in the discourse surrounding the Burial Ground today.

Since the 1990s, scholarship has focused on inserting Africans—both enslaved and free—into the narrative of New York’s development. In response to histories of the city that have neglected the role of the city’s African population both before and after emancipation, recent work has determined the critical role that peoples of African descent played in shaping the city, as well as their attempts to establish their own agency and identity within slavery’s brutal confines. This development reflected a broader historiographical shift initiated by historian Ira Berlin in 1980, which moved the focus “from the economic and institutional aspects of northern slavery and on to the ideological dimensions of white opposition to slavery” to “the world slaves and free blacks made themselves and the social and familial contexts of their lives.”²

Additionally, seeking to counter a widely held belief of the relatively “benign” nature of slavery in the North, scholarship has emphasized the brutality of the institution, as well as its deep entrenchment within the social, political, and economic structures of New York City from the seventeenth to the early-nineteenth century. Finally, work points to a central contradiction within American history, particularly surrounding the American Revolution—namely the conflict between the notions of liberty and slavery—and

² Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & East Jersey* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 282. Hodges provides a compelling overview of the region’s black history and the social, political, and religious structures established by early African Americans. Through the lens of religion, the author explores “slaves’ dynamic resistance to their plight” and their ongoing quest for freedom (pp. 1-5).

suggests that some of this country's most dearly held democratic ideas were forged in the context of human bondage.

1.2 Slavery in New Amsterdam: 1621-1664

Since the early seventeenth century, peoples of African descent have played a pivotal role in the development of New York. As early as the 1610s, Jan Rodrigues, a free man and a sailor of African descent, became the first non-Native American settler on Manhattan Island. Dumped overboard following a dispute, Rodrigues became fluent in Native American languages and went on to facilitate trade relations between European explorers as they arrived.³

In 1621, the Dutch West India Company had obtained exclusive rights to settle the area that came to be known as New Netherlands, including Manhattan Island. The Company experienced difficulty in attracting settlers to the colony, as many Dutch were loath to leave the security and prosperity of their home country. Ongoing attacks by both Native Americans and the British, as well as mismanagement, high tariffs, and limitations on exports imposed by the Company also discouraged settlement, and by 1630 only 300 colonists lived in New Netherlands.⁴

In response to labor shortages, the Dutch West India Company began importing slaves into the colony in 1626, when the first shipment of eleven Africans arrived (and

³ Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003) 12-13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

the same year the Dutch purchased Manhattan Island from Native Americans).⁵ Under the Dutch, most of the slaves came from West and Central Africa. Referred to as “Angolans” or “Congos,” they represented farmers from KiKongo-speaking Kingdom of Kongo and the Kimbundu-speaking Ndongo, many of whom had been captured during civil wars. Although the Dutch initially seized slaves from the Portuguese trading vessels they pirated, starting in 1638 the Dutch West India Company began buying slaves directly, and by mid-century had established trading forts in Africa for that purpose.⁶

This period marked the beginning of the formal incorporation of slavery into the social and economic structures of the new colony. Initially owned by the Company, rather than individuals, Africans provided essential labor for the development of the new colony’s infrastructure, helping to build and maintain fortifications (including Fort Amsterdam), roads, houses, and water pumps. Africans also cut timber, cleared land, and worked on farms land. By 1630 the Company’s slaves were firmly entrenched as the new colony’s “municipal workers.” Recognizing that slaves were indeed the foundation of the new colony’s labor force, the Company committed to building the population of enslaved Africans, while at the same time attracting new settlers. In 1629, the Dutch West India Company issued a policy offering vast estates and manors in the Hudson Valley to potential colonists. Each grantee was obligated to bring in fifty white settlers, and the

⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁶ Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 23.

Company directors pledged to “use their endeavors to supply the colonists with as many blacks as the conveniently can...”⁷

Although the number of slaves grew during the seventeenth century, by the mid-1600s constituting approximately twenty-five percent of the colony’s population, their legal status remained ambiguous as the Company failed to develop a statutory basis for slavery. A minority within the Company opposed slavery and refused to create a formal system of racially based subjugation. Capitalizing on the possibilities of the situation enslaved Africans sought to expand personal freedoms. For example, a group of black workers organized and successfully petitioned the Company for wages. By granting their request, the Company established the right of slaves to petition, as well as their legal standing the eyes of Dutch authority, and access to the courts became one of the defining aspects of slavery in New Netherlands.⁸

Additionally, under the Dutch, a community of free blacks was established. During the 1640s, amid growing struggles with Native Americans and the British, the Company turned to the colony’s black residents for defense, often rewarding them with grants of freedom and of land. Plots just to the north of New Amsterdam—outside the city’s fortified center—were granted to black soldiers and their widows to form a buffer zone between colonists and their attackers, and following their defense of the colony, eleven black men and women were granted freedom. It is important to note, however,

⁷ See Christopher Moore, "A World of Possibilities: Slavery and Freedom in Dutch Amsterdam," in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: The New Press in Conjunction with the New York Historical Society, 2005).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

that this freedom was deeply constrained: company service was still mandated and the slaves' children, both living and unborn, remained property of the Company. By the mid-seventeenth century, free black farmsteads spread over 130 acres or 100 square city blocks of Manhattan. During this period, free blacks adopted a variety of strategies to advocate for the freedom of others, including petitioning, albeit unsuccessfully, for the manumission of their children, and aiding runaways.⁹

Yet, in spite of the advances blacks had made in securing personal freedoms, slavery continued to expand during the 1640s, when Peter Stuyvesant assumed directorship of the colony. Under his rule in 1652—during the midst of the Anglo-Dutch war—the Company opened the slave market to private citizens, and colonial merchants entered the trade. The influx of slaves again provided an important labor source for both protecting and expanding the still-young colony. In 1653, Stuyvesant ordered the Company's slaves to build a barrier from river to river across Manhattan Island—the famed wall of Wall Street. The influx of slaves also enabled the company to establish Manhattan's second Dutch settlement, Harlem, as well as to develop the nine-mile road to the new settlement—which later became Route 1.¹⁰

During this period, enslaved and free Africans also developed a rich Afro-Dutch culture characterized by linguistic fusion, as well as the adoption and transformation of aspects of Dutch culture and religion, most notably the Protestant Dutch observance of Pentecost—known as Pinkster. Slaves also developed a rich social life centered around

⁹ Ibid., 41-46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 48-51

the city's taverns, where traditions melded to create early forms of African-American music and dance. New York's Africans also gathered for Sunday "frolicks," and, evidence suggests, for funerals. Indeed, the African Burial Ground may have been established during this period by free blacks.¹¹

1.3 Slavery in New York: 1664 to the American Revolution

On September 18, 1664, the Dutch surrendered New Netherlands to the English, and with the advent of British rule came an increase in the number of slaves imported into the colony, as well as a tightening of codes governing slave activity and a curtailing of freedoms struggled for under the Dutch. Formally recognizing the legal basis of slavery, the British restricted white servitude, and in 1670, prohibited the enslavement of Indians, both legitimizing and increasing colonists' reliance upon African labor. When the English first took possession of New Amsterdam about 1500 people lived in Manhattan, of whom about ten percent were of African origin. By 1737, the number had increased to 8,666, of whom 6,947 were whites and 1719, blacks; nearly one in five New Yorkers were black and nearly all of them enslaved. Indeed, for much of the eighteenth century, only Charleston, South Carolina, had a greater proportion of slaves in its urban population.¹²

¹¹Ibid., 52-53.

¹² Jill Lepore, "The Tightening Vice: Slavery and Freedom in British New York," in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: The New Press in Conjunction with the New York Historical Society, 2005), 60-61.

Importing an average of 150 slaves per year, the British brought slaves from the English sugar islands of Barbados, Antigua and Jamaica, the West Indies, as well as the Upper Guinea Coast, marking the introduction of Ghanan or Akan-speaking peoples to New York. Most slaves arrived on the return leg of trading journeys, during which they endured horrific conditions. If they survived the voyage, many were then subjected to a brutal three to four-year period of “seasoning” on the sugar plantations in the West Indies before arriving in New York. For every 100 slaves taken from Africa on average only 28 or 29 survived the journey to New York.¹³

Before 1711, newly arrived slaves were generally sold at the city’s wharves. After that date, slaves were sold or hired out at day rates at the “Meal Market” at the base of Wall Streets. Young women, especially seasoned adolescent girls, were highly sought after to meet the need for domestic labor. However, with the continued influx of slaves, there was little emphasis placed on slaves’ reproductive abilities; indeed, in a city with limited housing, sterility became an asset. Many black women were employed as nurses for their masters’ children. However despite their service, little special value seems to have been attached to nurses, and there exist accounts of abuse at the hands of the very children for whom they cared.¹⁴ Many male slaves were hired out as day laborers, and by the mid-eighteenth century, New York’s economy depended upon them.¹⁵

¹³ Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, 24.

¹⁴ Lepore, "The Tightening Vise: Slavery and Freedom in British New York," 63-66.

¹⁵ Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & East Jersey*, 107.

In contrast to domestic arrangements at Southern plantations, slaves slept in attics, cellars, or kitchens of their owners' houses. Although slaves worked alongside whites, blacks worked different hours, waking up earlier and staying up later than anyone in the household. Most enslaved New Yorkers lived in households with only one to two other slaves, making and sustaining family relationships was difficult. Slaves could not legally marry until 1809, and most of the city's churches would not recognize the unions.¹⁶

Moreover, as researchers working on the African Burial Ground would discover, contrary to conventional wisdom, slavery in the North was no less brutal than in the South. As anthropologists Michael Blakey and Sherrill Wilson write, "The physical effects of slavery resemble those of southern plantations and were not in any sense benign."¹⁷ Remains exhumed from the Burial Ground exhibited evidence of severe physical hardship. Skeletons showed traces of widespread disease and nutritional deficiencies, as well as patterns of spinal and limb joint deterioration and multiple fractures indicating ongoing and severe physical stress—most likely the lifting of heavy loads. Analyses of the skeletons of children suggested that slaves began heavy work at a young age, and also indicated high rates of infant mortality. Also visible was evidence of substantial corporal punishment.¹⁸

¹⁶ Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, 67, 71-75.

¹⁷ The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Michael L. and Leslie M. Rankin-Hill Blakey (U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2004), 506.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 541-556.

In addition to physical stress and harsh living conditions, slaves were subject to strict codes designed to limit their movements throughout the city. As historian Jill

Lepore has written:

The body of legislation that constituted New York's 'Negro's Law' is a brutal testament to the difficulty of enslaving human beings, especially in cities. New York's slave codes were almost entirely concerned with curtailing the ability of enslaved people to move at will, and to gather, for fear that they might decide, especially when drunk, that slavery was not to be borne, and one way to end it would be to burn the city down.¹⁹

Starting in 1702, colonial authorities passed multiple acts designed to maintain control over the slave population, and in 1730 Governor John Montgomerie consolidated legislation with a single code that forbade slaves to carry any kind of weapon or to assemble in groups greater than three unless under employment of their masters. New York City's Common Council also passed legislation forbidding the sale of alcohol to slaves, as well as prohibiting slaves from leaving their masters' homes on Sunday without a written pass, gambling, galloping through the streets on horses, buying or selling produce in the city streets, or walking after sunset without a lantern or lighted candle.²⁰ In the 1720s, most likely in response to the nighttime ceremonies at the African Burial Ground, the Common Council ruled that slave funerals had to occur before sunset and later restricted the number of mourners to twelve.²¹

¹⁹ Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57-58

²¹ Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*, 41.

However, as Lepore has argued, while these codes represented dramatic restrictions, they can also serve to illuminate patterns of movement and behavior in the city, suggesting how slaves negotiated their captivity. For example, the existence of codes prohibiting certain specific behaviors implies that slaves were indeed gathering in groups and moving through the city at night undetected—suggesting established tactics on the part of colonial Africans for subverting white authority.²²

Additionally, as Lepore and others have commented, the slave codes were also indicative of a deep-seated fear of slave rebellion on the part of white New Yorkers—a fear that was far from groundless. During the spring of 1712, a group of slaves had formed a plot to destroy the city and had set fire to buildings, as well as killing and injuring several whites. In an act of unusually harsh retribution that appalled even some colonial observers, some twenty-five slaves were convicted, of whom twenty were hanged and three burned at the stake on the city’s Commons. In the months that followed, the provincial assembly passed “An Act for preventing, Suppressing and punishing Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves” that allowed owners to punish slaves at their discretion and mandated death for any slave convicted of murder, arson, rape, or assault. The act also sought to restrict the city’s small free black population by prohibiting their ownership of buildings and land, as well as imposing stiff financial penalties on any owner who manumitted a slave.²³

²² Lepore, "The Tightening Vice: Slavery and Freedom in British New York," 78.

²³ Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*. 52-53, 58-59

Nearly thirty years later, ten fires burned throughout New York during March and April 1741, creating a panic about a slave insurrection. Following a lengthy investigation, New York's Supreme Court found that a group of slaves, free blacks, and whites guilty of hatching a citywide conspiracy to "burn the city, kill the white men, and take the white women for their wives." Thirteen black men were burned at the stake, seventeen were hanged, and eighty-four men and women were sold into slavery in the Caribbean. Although as Lepore suggests, the case for a vast conspiracy was far from sound, testimony during the trial did suggest the existence of an Akan-based political order developed by slaves which encouraged acts of petty vengeance that, given the economic, social, and political climate, were interpreted as conspiracy by colonial authorities.²⁴

The "Negro Plot" of 1741 had important consequences for both the shape of slavery in New York, as well as for contemporary understandings of slave movements and social networks throughout the city. Following the rebellion, the British began to import the majority of slaves directly from Africa, believing that they would be more bidable than slaves "seasoned" in the Caribbean.²⁵ Additional restrictions were passed, most notably an act mandating that slaves fetch water from no place "other than the Next

²⁴ Quoted in Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, 7. Lepore's book contains a detailed account of the alleged plot, the trial, and the context in which they occurred

²⁵ Lepore, "The Tightening Vise: Slavery and Freedom in British New York," 87.

well or pump: to the place of their Abode.”²⁶ Reacting to slave testimony during the trial, which had pointed the city’s outlying “Tea Water Pump” as a gathering place for conspirators, the law sought to curtail future rebellions by controlling slaves’ movement. Indeed, as Lepore demonstrates, slave testimony or “Negro evidence” throughout the trial suggests that as slaves traveled throughout the city to collect water and perform other errands, they were able to form complex and far-reaching social networks that extended throughout New York. For example, a slave named Pedro recounted a walk extending throughout the city during which he met many acquaintances and violated several slave codes, including the prohibition against the gathering of more than three slaves and the edict that slaves need carry a lantern or candle if walking in the dark. Other testimony told of slaves meeting one another at the market, as well as slave “Frolicks” where enslaved men and women gathered on Sundays in the fields beyond the town and other illicit holiday celebrations.²⁷ Far from passive, enslaved New Yorkers formed connections with one another and worked to subvert the conditions of their captivity.

Lepore’s account of the 1741 rebellion also points to another theme emergent in recent literature, namely the close connection between slavery and liberty, and the contradiction between emerging democratic political ideals and the economic and social realities of slavery. In *New York Burning*, Lepore argues that the construction of the 1741 “Negro Plot” served to deflect growing factionalism among New Yorkers, offering

²⁶ Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, 145.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 152-157.

a way to mediate and deflect anxiety about splits between emerging political parties. In essence, fears about slave rebellion were employed to make political pluralism—the hallmark of American democracy—acceptable.²⁸

1.4 Slavery and the American Revolution: 1775-1783

During the American Revolution, New York City became a haven for slaves seeking their freedom. Following a British proclamation in 1775 guaranteeing emancipation for any slave who would fight against the colonial rebels (an offer never matched by American Patriot forces), thousands of slaves made their way to British-held port cities. Although New York in the years before the Revolution had witnessed a tightening of slave codes in response to growing abolitionist sentiments and fears of slave insurrection, by 1776 slaves were streaming into the city, which was now under control of the British. There many African Americans began to build lives as independent paid laborers and established new familial networks and religious institutions. Following the British surrender in 1783, despite the objections of American Patriots, including George Washington, the British granted about 3,000 African Americans certificates guaranteeing passage out of New York to Nova Scotia and Jamaica. Among those who departed were slaves who had belonged to Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, Patrick Henry, and John Jay.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., 218-219.

²⁹ Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 47-47.

However, until 1961, historical literature neglected or, at best, minimized the experiences of black Americans during the Revolution. In response, recent literature has focused on this critical historical narrative. Two recent works, Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* and Cassandra Pybus's *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty*, document the journeys of Black refugees from Canada to Sierra Leone and beyond.³⁰ Additionally, new scholarship casts slaves as agents of their own liberation, rather than recipients of British freedoms, and critiques the very foundations of American liberties. In *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (2006), historian Gary B. Nash argues that slaves may have anticipated, and indeed promoted, British policy by seeking to join imperial forces before the 1775 proclamation. Despite the rhetoric of liberty, Nash points out that Revolutionary leaders failed to challenge the right of whites to hold slaves. Challenging the widely-held belief that abolishing slavery in the new republic was impossible due to fears of disrupting the fragile new union of states, the book argues that a confluence of political events and philosophical ideals actually created an opportunity to end the enslavement. Indeed, the failure of the founding fathers to take action turned the rising tide of late eighteenth-

³⁰ Jill Lepore, "Goodbye Columbus: When America Won Its Independence, What Became of the Slaves Who Fled to Theirs?," *The New Yorker*, May 8, 2006 (Web Edition; Posted May 1, 2006). Available at The New Yorker Magazine Web Site: www.newyorker.com.

century abolitionism and paved the way for the ideologies of white supremacy that would ultimately find expression in the Civil War.³¹

1.5 Slavery and Freedom After the Revolution: 1783-1848

Slavery in New York continued long after the American Revolution and indeed was not abolished until well into the nineteenth century. In fact, following the Revolution, New York became a sanctuary for slavery in the North; in the final decade of the 18th century, New York City's slave population actually increased by twenty percent.³² Contributing to the institution's slow death was a struggle between the concepts of "liberty" and "property." The same natural rights philosophy used to defend colonists' property against British taxation became linked with slavery. For example, as late as 1796, a state legislative committee considering an abolition bill found that it would be "unjust and unconstitutional" to deprive citizens of slave property without restitution. Additionally, widely held racial stereotypes suggested that African Americans were not equal to the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. As one anonymous editorial argued in New Jersey, slavery had instilled "a deep wrought disposition to indolence and laziness" that would make blacks dependent on public welfare. When

³¹ Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*. See Chapter 2: "Could Slavery Have Been Abolished?"

³² For an account of slavery during the post-Revolutionary period, see Patrick Rael, "The Long Death of Slavery," in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: The New Press in Conjunction with the New York Historical Society, 2005).

coupled with a “general looseness of passions,” it was clear that African Americans were unable to participate in then nation’s new experiment of self-government.³³

However, during the final years of the eighteenth century, actions of New York’s African American residents, with the support white abolitionists, began to turn the tide. During the British occupation of New York in 1776, the city had also become a haven for free blacks, who, together with slaves themselves worked to end servitude. Beginning in 1785, with the formation of the Manumission Society, white abolitionists began agitating for end to slavery, and after several unsuccessful attempts were able, in 1799, to convince the New York state legislature to pass the Gradual Emancipation Act.³⁴

The freedom offered by this act was highly limited: only slave children born after July 4, 1799 were freed and then were to be indentured until age 25 for women and age 28 for men. While the act did not explicitly provide compensation to slave owners, a provision enabling owners to “free” children and the elderly who would then be supported by the state offered a form of remuneration: many “freed” slaves were immediately bound back to their masters as servants, while still receiving state support.³⁵ Finally, in 1817, New York enacted a second piece of legislation that mandated that slaves born before July 4, 1799 would become free by July 4, 1827 and shortened the

³³ Ibid., 117-18, 124-25.

³⁴ For a discussion of how the Revolution expanded the freedom of black people, especially in British-occupied New York, see Graham Russell Gao Hodges, "Liberty and Constraint: The Limits of Revolution," in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: The New Press in Conjunction with the New York Historical Society, 2005).

³⁵ Rael, "The Long Death of Slavery," 125.

indenture period stipulated by the 1799 law. However, as children born to slave mothers before July 4, 1827 could still be apprenticed till age 21, African American New Yorkers would effectively remain in bondage until 1848.³⁶

Despite the persistence of slavery, New York in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries became a crucible for black political consciousness, as well as critical social, cultural, and religious institutions. Members of the city's free black community continued to argue for an end to slavery and challenged pervasive discriminatory practices. Free blacks also established schools, newspapers, clubs, aid societies, and churches.³⁷ The period witnessed what Nash has described as the emergence of the country's "black founding fathers" who for whom the American Revolution marked only the beginning of a "project to accomplish what is almost always part of modern revolutionary agendas—to recast the social system."³⁸ The controversy that followed the discovery of the African Burial Ground in 1991 suggested that for many black New Yorkers, this struggle was far from over. Drawing on the traditions of political activism and community organizing established nearly 200 years earlier, members of the city's African American population mobilized to protect the Burial Ground from destruction.

³⁶ Ibid., 132.

³⁷ For a discussion of post-Revolutionary African American life in New York, see Craig Steven Wilder, "Black Life in Freedom: Creating a Civic Culture" in *Slavery in New York*, ed. Ira Berlin and Leslie Harris (New York: The New Press in Conjunction with the New York Historical Society, 2005).

³⁸ Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*, 50.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND, 1653-1987

2.1 Introduction

Located in one of the oldest sections of Manhattan, at the intersection of Duane and Elk Streets, New York’s African Burial Ground has emerged from obscurity to become one of the city’s most prominent historic sites. Although today only a small portion of the site is visible, the African Burial Ground has established itself as a public landscape of vast proportions, dramatically changing our understanding of life in colonial New York and providing a point of origin for members of New York’s diasporic African-American community.

This chapter explores the “pre-history” of the African Burial Ground—the site’s landscape history prior to its acquisition by the General Services Administration in 1989. While the site’s form and context have changed dramatically since its establishment in the eighteenth century, its historic, contemporary—and anticipated future—configurations are all products of interactions between the area’s original topography and the changes wrought by more than 300 years of continuous human use. Shaped by the interplay of natural features with political, social, economic forces, the African Burial Ground today stands as a prime example of a cultural landscape. The Burial Ground’s evolution from a “natural” landscape to a “vernacular” and ultimately a “designed” one,

typifies the dynamism associated with cultural landscapes, their identity as “product and process.”¹

2.2 The Commons of Colonial New York

Set beyond New York City’s early boundaries, the African Burial Ground began as part of New York’s Commons or publicly held land. The Commons were established in 1653, the same year that the Dutch government granted New Amsterdam municipal status. The city’s boundaries were set as extending from the Hudson to the East River and from the “Freshwater” or “Collect” Pond, a deep, spring-fed pond northeast of the Dutch settlement.² Initially, the Commons were relatively untouched and included all land south of the Collect and between the highway (the present-day track of Broadway) and the Dutch West Indies Company farm. In 1658, the Commons were extended to include all vacant and unpatented land south of the city’s palisade (Wall Street), and following the British conquest of New York in 1664, these rights were confirmed by the 1686 Dongan

¹Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, "Why Cultural Landscape Preservation?," in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in American*, ed. Arnold R. and Robert Z. Melnick Alanen (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000),16.

² Christopher P. Neville, "Overlooking the Collect: Between Topography and Memory in the Landscape of Lower Manhattan" (M.S. Historic Preservation Thesis, Columbia University, 1994), 13-14. Neville describes the Collect as consisting of two ponds: the Collect and the Little Collect, a smaller pond to the south of the Collect and separated from it by a small island. The ponds were surrounded by several hills, as well as wetlands. Two streams fed the pond and connected it to both the Hudson and East Rivers. Today, the site of the pond is below part of Foley Square and the courthouse district. Although the pond’s original outline has been obscured by development, it appears to have comprised the eight blocks on either side of Centre Street, between Duane and Canal Streets.

Charter, which extended the Commons to include all unappropriated land on Manhattan Island.³

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Commons evolved as a vernacular landscape—a landscape that generally develops without direct planning and design interventions and “unintentionally ...represent multiple layers of time and cultural activity.”⁴ The Commons’ northern and southern portions acquired distinctly different characters and uses. The Collect, its streams, and the surrounding hills formed a natural boundary between the northern portion, which included all unpatented land around and north of the Collect on Manhattan Island, while the southern portion extended approximately from Fulton Street to the Collect.⁵ The northern portion initially served as the city’s frontier and a buffer zone between Manhattan’s developing tip and the surrounding “wilderness,” thus developing an identity as a culturally marginal and, indeed, threatening space. For a brief time during the mid to late seventeenth century under Dutch rule, a portion of the northern commons was known as the “Negro Coast” when a number of slaves were granted limited freedoms and the right to farm lands in return for an annual rent paid to the government. Originally intended to provide a first

³ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," prepared by Gale Harris, Betsy Bradley, edited by Marjorie Pearson (New York: 1993), 5-6.

⁴ Alanen, "Why Cultural Landscape Preservation?," 5.

⁵ Michele H. Bogart, "Public Space and Public Memory in New York's City Hall Park," *Journal of Urban History* 25, no. 2 (1999), 229.

line of defense against Indian attack, most of the farms reacquired by white owners after this threat subsided and the first generation of black farmers died.⁶

During eighteenth-century British rule, the perception of the northern commons as a “negative” space continued as the area developed as a quasi-industrial sector. Industries with undesirable byproducts such as tanneries and slaughterhouses came to occupy the area, as did potteries and ropewalks, whose flammability constituted a major threat to public safety.

In contrast, the southern commons developed as a locus for imperial power. From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, the area constituted an architectural and spatial expression of social and political controls exercised first by the Dutch and then the by British. Before the American Revolution, the southern commons provided land for a parade ground, barracks, jail, debtors prison, and almshouse, as well a site for public executions. In 1745, with the construction of a powder magazine and palisade along what today is Chambers street, the site, according to historian Michele Bogart, “visibly linked defense, charity, and control of crime, the major state functions in the eighteenth century.”⁷ Following the American Revolution, the southern commons acquired new nationalistic and patriotic associations, becoming synonymous with revolutionary resistance and sacrifice. In the years leading up to the American Revolution, the area had

⁶ Neville, "Overlooking the Collect: Between Topography and Memory in the Landscape of Lower Manhattan," 24.

⁷ Bogart, "Public Space and Public Memory in New York's City Hall Park," 229-231.

been a site of resistance to British rule, and during the Revolution, the British military, imprisoned Americans there in a “bridewell” under desperate conditions.⁸

A key geographic feature of the southern commons was a triangular sod and scrub-covered plateau (originally used as pasture by Dutch Colonists) that ended in a ravine just above today’s Chambers Street and from there sloped east-northeast to the Collect Pond. North of Chambers Street—and thus eventually beyond the British palisade—the ravine served as point of transition between north and south and a threshold between civilization and the wilderness. A marginal space on the outskirts of white society—with topography that provided a measure of privacy—during the eighteenth century, the ravine acquired a unique identity: a burial ground for members of New York’s enslaved and free African population.⁹

2.3 Landscape History of the African Burial Ground, 1697-1796

In the fall of 1697, New York adopted a policy of “mortuary apartheid,” forbidding the interment of blacks in the city’s churchyards.¹⁰ Indeed, earlier that year, Trinity Church had acquired city’s public cemetery, and, after integrating it into its holdings, stipulated that “...no Negroes be buried within the bounds and Limits of the

⁸ Ibid., 231.

⁹ Neville, "Overlooking the Collect: Between Topography and Memory in the Landscape of Lower Manhattan," 23-25. The concept of the Commons as a topographically and culturally marginal space is borrowed from Neville. For a description of topography, see New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 17-18.

¹⁰ Spencer P.M. Harrington, "Bones & Bureaucrats," *Archaeology* (1993), 31.

church yard....”¹¹ After Trinity Church finally annexed the northernmost portion of the cemetery in 1703, the African population was forced to find a location to bury its dead. Looking beyond the city limits, the community eventually settled on an approximately six-acre lot on the Commons.¹² More than a century and a half later, clerk and historian David Valentine described the site as desolate, isolated, and, indeed, on the very fringes of civilization:

It was a desolate, unappropriated spot, descending with a gentle declivity towards a ravine which led to the Kalkhoek pond. The negroes in this city were, both in the Dutch and English colonial times, a proscribed and detested race, having nothing in common with the whites. Many of them were native Africans, imported hither in slave ships, and retaining their native superstitions and burial customs, among which was that of burying by night with various mummeries and outcries....So little seems to have been thought of that race that not even a dedication of their burial-place was made by church authorities, or any others who might reasonably be supposed to have an interest in such a matter. The lands were unappropriated, and though within convenient distance from the city, the locality was unattractive and desolate, so that by permission the slave population were allowed to inter their dead there.¹³

However, researchers have speculated that the site’s negative characteristics may have actually appealed to the Burial Ground’s founders, allowing slaves to forge a sense of community and to maintain African cultural traditions. Separated from the city by both distance and topography, the site most likely offered New York’s Africans a measure of privacy and autonomy. With a steep ravine shielding activities from the eyes of whites,

¹¹ Trinity Minutes. Missionary Society, Oct. 25, 1697. Cited in Andrea E. Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space" (Ph.D. Diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2002), 153.

¹² Andrea E. Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 31.

¹³ David T. Valentine, "History of Broadway," Manual of the Common Council of New York (New York: D.T. Valentine, 1865), 567. Cited in *Ibid.*, 153.

the few extant documentary sources, as well as the archaeological record, suggest that the location of the site enabled city's black population to carry out its own funerary practices based on the West African traditions that many slaves had carried with them into bondage.¹⁴ Before the 1722 ban, nighttime funerals also provided an opportunity for kin and friends to meet and socialize. Indeed, the Burial Ground represented the first institution established by blacks and for blacks in North America.¹⁵

Under seventeenth-century Dutch rule, the site of the Burial Ground was located between the town and the outlying African farms established in the 1640s, which formed a loose arc around the top of the Freshwater Pond that was bordered to the west by the "Cripplebush" or swamplands and to the east by the Hudson River. Overlapping the site were seventeenth-century land grants to Jan Jansen Damen (which eventually became to be part of the Rutgers Estate) to the north and Cornelius Van Borsum to the south.¹⁶ The Dutch colonial government, which had briefly returned to power, granted the patent to Van Borsum for his wife, Sara Roelofs, in 1673. Approximately 6.6 acres, the property extended roughly from today's Broadway to Centre Street and from Duane to Chambers Streets. Although the British government later confirmed the patent, and Roelofs, upon

¹⁴ The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco (U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2006), 69-70.

¹⁵ The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Michael L. Blakey and Leslie M. Rankin-Hill (U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2004), 5,8.

¹⁶ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 47-49.

her death, willed the land to her children, heirs and executors disputed the request, obscuring the patent's legal status for almost 100 years. From 1696 to 1796, by mandate from the city's Common Council, the lot effectively continued as part of the Commons.¹⁷

As part of the town commons, during the eighteenth century, the Van Borsum patent came to be conflated with the African Burial Ground in the popular imagination.¹⁸ Today's current 15,000 square foot site represents only a fraction of the original burial ground, which encompassed between six-and-a-half and seven acres (Fig. 4). Although a dearth of historical documentation combined with nearly two centuries of intensive development has made establishing the precise boundaries of site and its date of inception impossible, some researchers have speculated that blacks began interring their dead at site as early as the 1660s and estimate that 10,000 and 15,000 burials occurred between 1712 and 1796.¹⁹

The first documentary evidence of the site dates to 1712-13 when military chaplain John Sharpe recorded that "Africans were being buried on the Commons by those of their country."²⁰ Although Sharpe failed to indicate the exact whereabouts, the 1722 law prohibiting nighttime slave funerals in the area south of the Collect Pond hints at the burial ground's location. A hand-drawn plan of the city from 1732-1735 of the city

¹⁷ Anne-Marie and Diana diZerega Wall Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 278-279.

¹⁸ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87

²⁰ Cited in New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 21.

confirms that the “Negroes Burying Place” was situated north of the town and south of the Collect (Fig. 5). A map of the city in 1745 (drawn from memory in 1819 by David Grim) indicates that the town erected a cedar log palisade wall running through the Van Borsum patent (Fig. 6). Burials would most likely have been restricted to the area north of the palisade walls, and to reach the cemetery, mourners would have had to pass through the palisade gates. Emphasizing the southern commons as a place of social and political control, the Grim map also shows the punishments meted out to slaves following the 1741 revolt—one figure hangs from a gibbet while another is burned at the stake.²¹

In 1755, the Maerschallck Plan of New York depicts the “Negros Burial Ground” clearly as comprising the land east from the Broadway to the Little Collect with a northern boundary extending northeast from Broadway and corresponding with the edge of the Van Borsum patent (Fig. 7). The map also suggests that the Van Borsum heirs, who during the mid-eighteenth century were trying to assert their rights to the land, may have built a fence to delineate the property’s northern boundary. Also evident are potteries at the site’s presumed northeast and southeast corners.²²

Although no city maps after 1755 indicate the Burial Ground, the site does appear on a series of surveys relating to the division of farm patents in the 1780s and 1790s (Fig. 8).²³ Also bolstering conjecture of the continued use of the Burial Ground is a complaint

²¹ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 54.

²² *Ibid.*, 57.

²³ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 20.

filed by group of slaves and free blacks with the Common Council in the 1780s.

Plaintiffs stated that:

It has lately been the practice of a number of young gentlemen in the city who call themselves students of physick, to repair to the burial ground assigned for the use of your petitioners and under cover of night, and in most wanton sallies of excess, to dig up the bodies of deceased friends and relatives of your petitioners, carry them away, and without respect to age or sex, mangle their flesh out of wanton curiosity and then expose it to beasts and birds.²⁴

Although the practice of grave robbing eventually incited mass protests when it extended to white graveyards, the Common Council seems to have taken no action, reinforcing the Burial Ground position as a space on the margins of society.²⁵

By the end of eighteenth century, the Burial Ground had been annexed by the city, and intensive development of the site was underway. Encroachment on the Burial Ground began as early as the 1760s: the Rutzer map of 1767 shows numerous buildings, including a barracks, at the site's boundaries (Fig. 9). In 1775, the Bridewell or debtors prison, was built at the edge of the Burial Ground, near what today is the southeast corner of Chambers Street and Broadway.²⁶

Development continued in the mid-1780s when private houses were constructed along the Burial Ground's northern edge after the neighboring Rutgers/Barclay estate or Chalkhook Farm was surveyed and divided into lots for sale.²⁷ In the mid 1790s, legal

²⁴ Ibid., 21.

²⁵ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 60-61.

²⁶ Ibid., 57

²⁷ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 27-28.

claims on the Van Borsum Patent were resolved, and heirs divided the property into lots for sale, with construction beginning soon thereafter (Fig. 10). In response to a petition filed by a group of free blacks, in 1795 the City approved a parcel of land on Chrystie Street in the Seventh Ward for use as a new African cemetery and contributed 100 pounds toward its purchase.²⁸

Finally, in 1796 the Common Council acquired part of “Negros Burial Ground” to lay out Chambers Street east of Broadway. A small area of the Van Borsum patent also extended into the northwest corner of what today is City Hall Park, and in 1800 this parcel was conveyed to the city in exchange for city lots further east.²⁹ Subsequently, the city filled in the ravine and laid out Chambers Street, leveling the land occupied by the Burial Ground. Other portions of the patent were divided into lots and sold. Through this process of enclosure, privatization, and ensuing development, all traces of the African Burial Ground were wiped out (Fig. 11).³⁰ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, all that seemed to remain of the “Negroes Burial Ground” were a few notations on historic maps.

2.4 The Development of Lower Manhattan, 1797-1987

During the next 200 years, intensive development would fundamentally transform the African Burial Ground and the surrounding Commons. Although elements of the area

²⁸ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 65.

²⁹ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 20-21.

³⁰ Bogart, "Public Space and Public Memory in New York's City Hall Park," 233.

would develop as designed landscapes, namely City Hall Park in the early nineteenth century and Foley Square in the 1960s, the acreage containing the Burial Ground would largely retain its status as a vernacular landscape. While some portions of the site would maintain the industrial character that had begun to emerge in the mid-eighteenth century, the majority of the site shifted in nature to become first a residential, and then a commercial, and finally a government district. Until its discovery and subsequent preservation in 1991, the African Burial Ground reflected Lower Manhattan's burgeoning position as a center of commerce and power.

Ironically, it was the city's initial efforts to incorporate and regularize the Burial Ground site as part of efforts to expand that resulted in the preservation of burials beneath a portion of the area. After acquiring the Van Borsum patent in 1796, the city laid out Duane, Elk and Reade Streets, and Republican Alley (also known as Manhattan Alley) across the property. In the area that today is City Block 154 and the location of the federal building at 290 Broadway and the preserved site, small houses were constructed as rental properties on the newly subdivided lots. Home to skilled and unskilled laborers, the new houses had shallow basements that did not penetrate the burial level.³¹

In the late 1790s and early 1800s, the city started to fill in the marshy areas around Collect—and ultimately the Collect itself—and began the process of grading the fill and leveling the streets. Property owners were obliged to fill in their own lots and to build up the streets on which properties fronted to grade. Following this process, most

³¹ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 91.

houses were raised or rebuilt, with basements only extended to the fill level. For the next 200 years, this layer of fill preserved burials intact. Also critical to the site's protection was the establishment of Republican Alley through the middle of Block 154. Unlike tracts along Broadway, portions of the alley and the earth beneath remained relatively undisturbed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Fig. 12).³²

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the area to the south of the Burial Ground was the site of what historian Elizabeth Blackmar has called "the spatial reordering" of Lower Manhattan and relocation of the city's geographic center the north of the colonial city's boundaries.³³ Between 1803 and 1811, a new City Hall building was constructed in the southern Commons, which, following fencing and other improvements, had become known as "The Park" and the center of a fashionable residential neighborhood. Several other government institutions were built in the park in the early nineteenth century, firmly establishing the area as the center of public power and authority. Throughout the nineteenth century, the government center continued to expand, and in an echo of past uses, City Hall Park continued to serve as the city's primary gathering place of celebration and protest. With the opening of the Brooklyn

³² Ibid., 9-10. See also New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 37.

³³ Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 93-94.

Bridge in 1883 and the subway system in 1903, the area's public function continued to expand as it became a major transportation hub.³⁴

Meanwhile, the area to the north—the site of the African Burial Ground and the Van Borsum Patent—was gradually developing as a commercial and industrial area. In 1845, the A.T. Stewart Department Store (the country's first department store) was constructed on the east side of Broadway between Chambers and Reade Street, and subsequently expanded to occupy much of the block. By mid century, the area was established as part of the city's dry goods district.³⁵

Starting in 1852 five-story loft and store buildings replaced remaining small-scale dwellings, fundamentally transforming the area. As new commercial, manufacturing and industrial operations were established, larger, newer buildings were developed, and at the late nineteenth century, the area of African Burial Ground had become primarily a commercial center.³⁶

The twentieth century witnessed the development of both the southern Commons and the African Burial Ground as a government center. Following an outcry against plans for building a new court building in City Hall Park, the New York County Court House was built to the north of the park in the 1910s. The courthouse fronted a small open area that, in 1926, was named Foley Square. During the twentieth century, the square expanded as the New York's federal and municipal government center with the

³⁴ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

construction of additional office and court buildings. In the 1960s, a plan for an enlarged civic center located the northern portion of City Hall Park and the blocks to its north—site of the African Burial Ground—for expansion. In 1965, several buildings on the blocks between Chambers and Reade Street, including the A.T. Stewart Store, were purchased for use by government agencies³⁷ (Fig. 13).

In the late 1980s, the Federal government began negotiations to acquire most of Block 154 for one its Foley Square Project buildings.³⁸ However, as the following chapters discuss, the discovery of the African Burial Ground in 1991 provoked a major controversy that significantly altered the government's plans and initiated more than a decade of debate over the site's treatment and preservation. Ultimately, the transformation of the site into a designed landscape through the development of a permanent memorial emerged as a central solution to the conflict.

³⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

³⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: FROM DISCOVERY TO DESIGNATION, 1987-1993

3.1 Introduction

In 1991, archeologists working on a federal construction project in Lower Manhattan made an astonishing find: deep below the city streets, hidden by layers of fill, lay the remains of hundreds of colonial Africans. The site quickly captured public attention and almost immediately assumed a position of deep symbolic and spiritual importance for New York's African American community. Yet, members of that same community soon found themselves embroiled in conflict with the United States General Service Administration, the federal agency responsible for the project, over the treatment of the site. This chapter explores the struggle that ensued following the Burial Ground's discovery, as well as the legal, administrative, and political framework in which it occurred. Central to the debate was a deep divide over how the site's value would be created and defined. Drawing on both a long tradition of activism, as well as protections guaranteed under preservation law, black New Yorkers asserted their authority to control what many considered to be the remains of their ancestors.

3.2 Acquisition and Policy Framework, 1987-1990

In 1987, the General Services Administration, the Federal agency charged with carrying out government capital projects, began developing plans for a new Federal office building and courthouse in the Foley Square section of Lower Manhattan. In a project prospectus submitted to the House Committee on Public Works and

Transportation in March 1988, the agency proposed work at two sites owned by the city of New York: a new courthouse would be constructed on lot in Foley Square, while a 34-story office building with a four-story pavilion would be built at 290 Broadway.¹

Upon approval of the prospectus the following year, the GSA began soliciting proposals, and on March 15, 1989 entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), the federal body established by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 and charged with setting national preservation standards.² As a federal agency, GSA was required to comply with Sections 106 and 110 of the NHPA Act—the mandates that seek to insure that historic preservation concerns are incorporated into Federal operations. Section 106 stipulates that any project using Federal funds must “take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register.” Section 110 states that all Federal agencies are responsible for historic properties under their control and must develop preservation

¹ Andrea E. Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space" (Ph.D. Diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2002), 17-18; Anne-Marie and Diana diZerega Wall Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 278-279.

² Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 19; "Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the General Services Administration for the Proposed Foley Square U.S. Courthouse and Federal/Municipal Building," (1989).

programs to identify, protect, and nominate properties to the National Register—and manage these properties in compliance with Section 106.³

As stipulated under Title 11 of Section 106, GSA had agreed that the Foley Square projects would be “subject to environmental, landmark and other City review procedures” and that the agency would “avoid, reduce or mitigate” any adverse effects on historically or archeologically significant materials discovered at the site.⁴ Additionally, the MOA also required that, should archeological material be found, investigations would be conducted in accordance with a research design that would be prepared in consultation with the New York State Office of Historic Preservation, and if necessary with ACHP, and that would also establish categories of historic significance. GSA also pledged to evaluate and treat any archeological findings in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s guidelines and to handle all archeological materials according to practices established by the research design and in a manner compliant with Section 106. Finally, the MOA stated that all archeological materials were to considered eligible for Nomination to the National Register, and that the GSA would, with guidance from the ACHP, develop an appropriate course for mitigation at the site.⁵

³ *National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980*, P.L. 96-515, (December 1980).

⁴ "Memorialization of the African Burial Ground. Final Recommendations to the Administrator, General Services Administration and the United States Congress.," ed. Peggy King; Weil Jorde, Gotshal & Manges, Counsel; and members of the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground (1993), 5.

⁵ "Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the General Services Administration for the Proposed Foley Square U.S. Courthouse and Federal/Municipal Building." It is interesting that note that the New York State

In accordance with the NHPA and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA), in 1989 GSA commissioned a detailed environmental impact statement (EIS). To help determine the potential historic significance of the Foley Square sites and their eligibility for the National Register, the primary EIS contractor, Edwards and Kelcey Engineers, hired the consultant group Historical Conservation and Interpretation, Inc. (HCI) to complete a “Stage 1A” documentary study of potential archeological resources.⁶

HCI’s researchers soon discovered 290 Broadway’s history as part of the African Burial Ground and suggested that some remains could still be extant within the boundaries of office building’s proposed footprint. While the report noted that “the construction of deep sub-basements would have obliterated any remains within the lots that fall within the historic boundaries of the cemetery,” it also indicated three areas that had been undisturbed or minimally disturbed, including Republican Alley, and could contain extant remains. The report recommended that GSA conduct limited archeological testing in the three areas, arguing that although the preservation potential was minimal,

Historic Preservation Office refused to sign the MOA, believing GSA had not guaranteed sufficient protections. Thus ACHP became the primary body responsible for enforcing Federal archeological and preservation recommendations ("Memorialization of the African Burial Ground. Final Recommendations to the Administrator, General Services Administration and the United States Congress", 5).

⁶ Howard University The African Burial Ground Project, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco (The U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2006), 1, 3.

any extant remains would be highly significant and eligible for inclusion on the National Register.⁷

In July 1990, GSA published a draft of the EIS and distributed it to over two hundred federal, state, and city agencies, as well as various community organizations, and presented the statement at public hearings. Despite the report's findings, GSA failed to develop contingency plans to allow for any archeological findings. Instead, the agency proceeded with acquisition of the properties, and in December 1990 for a price of \$104 million, the city of New York conveyed the deeds of sale to GSA.⁸

3.3 Excavation Begins, May-December 1991

In May 1991, HCI began limited archeological testing at 290 Broadway and quickly discovered intact burials. Established protocol called for undertaking preliminary methodical archeological testing to determine the extent and integrity of archeological resources and only then developing treatment and mitigation strategies. However, concerned about containing construction costs and adhering to schedule, GSA almost immediately initiated full-scale archeological excavation as the primary mitigation strategy.⁹

As excavations proceeded during the spring and summer of 1991, it became clear that the scope of the find far outstripped any expectations. Although researchers had

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 20-21, 24.

⁹ The African Burial Ground Project, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," 3.

posited that only a small portion of the site would contain intact graves, they soon discovered that burials extended from the former north-south leg of Republican Alley to the site's eastern border.¹⁰ Documentary research, as well initial testing, had failed to determine the depth of fill at the site—which was up to twenty-five feet in some areas and protected some hundreds of graves. By September 1991, full-scale excavation—and building construction activities—were underway (Fig. 14).¹¹

On October 8, 1991, GSA held a press conference to announce the discovery of human remains at the site of 290 Broadway. The New York Times reported that the skeletons discovered had been tentatively identified as five adult men, two children, and one infant. According to the archeologist heading the dig, all had been buried with “a certain amount of care.” Remains had been wrapped in shrouds, placed in hexagonal coffins, and interred with their heads facing west (Fig. 15). GSA Regional Administrator William Diamond assured the public: “It is absolutely essential that the remains found on the site be treated with the utmost respect and dignity. We are committed to the reinterment of these remains to an appropriate site.” Diamond also noted in spite of construction delays, “the importance of the find comes first.”¹² Ultimately, excavators would uncover the remains of 419 individuals, including infants and young children. Accompanying the burials were coins, shells, glass, buttons, beads, clay pipes, pieces of coral, and quartz crystal that had been placed inside the coffins. One particularly

¹⁰ Ibid., 33-5.

¹¹ Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 287-88.

¹² David W. Dunlap, "Dig Unearths Early Black Burial Ground," *The New York Times*, October 9 1991, B1.

elaborate burial featured a woman who had been buried wearing a belt with over one hundred glass trade beads and cowry shells.¹³

Following Diamond's announcement, work at the site had begun to attract significant attention, and the ACHP and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLP), the city agency charged with regulating and protecting New York's historic resources, both recommended that excavations only continue with an approved research design and the input from members of the African American community.¹⁴ Although the GSA did not halt excavations, in December 1991 the agency finally agreed to sign an amended version of the original MOA, which stipulated the HCI would prepare a research design by January 10, 1992; that GSA would guarantee the respectful treatment and eventual reburial of excavated remains; and that the agency would develop a memorial and exhibition space on site and produce a video documentary about the project. Additionally, the new MOA provided opportunities for federal and local oversight, as well as public involvement: under the MOA, GSA promised to consult ACHP and the NYCLMC , as well as "Interested Parties" to develop plans for analysis and reburial of remains.¹⁵

¹³ New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," Prepared by Gale Harris and Jean Howson under the direction of Marjorie Pearson (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1992), 9-10.

¹⁴ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 28-29.

¹⁵ Ibid., 28; "Amendment to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the General Services Administration Executed

Despite these pledges, it soon became apparent that GSA was failing to honor the MOA. Although a revised research plan was not developed, excavations continued and were concurrent with construction activities.¹⁶ GSA also began pressuring archeologists to speed excavations by using the so-called “coroner’s method,” where archeologists use shovels and take only a single day to disinter each burial, losing valuable information.¹⁷ On December 5, 1991, the project construction manager, John Rossi, called for an accelerated pace, stating that spending the current three to five days per burial would delay the building by four months, while increasing the budget by \$6 million.¹⁸

Due to the increased pace of excavation, major errors began to occur at the site, including the destruction of several burials by a backhoe operator.¹⁹ Damage to burials continued following their excavation. To accommodate the project’s increased scope, HCI had subcontracted with the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team (MFAT) from Lehman College, which specialized in criminal investigations. However, it soon became all too evident that MFAT was unable to accommodate the quantity of excavated remains. Burials remained wrapped in newspapers and in cardboard boxes while awaiting cleaning, study, and interpretation. Many burials were stored without proper environmental controls and, as a result, several were irreparably damaged by mold.

March 15, 1989 Regarding the Proposed Foley Square U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building Projects," (December 1991).

¹⁶ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 30.

¹⁷ Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 284-85.

¹⁸ Spencer P.M. Harrington, "Bones & Bureaucrats," *Archaeology* (1993), 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

Archeological artifacts uncovered at the site were stored in the home of the laboratory's director.²⁰

GSA's lack of compliance with archeological and preservation standards did not go unnoticed, and in December 1991 upon learning of the switch to the coroner's method, New York State Senator David Paterson of Manhattan alerted the New York Times. In spite of assurances from GSA, Paterson also formed a task force, including concerned members of the public and preservationists, to oversee the excavations.²¹

3.4 Controversy and Activism, 1991-1992

Meanwhile, outrage among the African American community was growing. Although, as required by Section 106, GSA had started to hold public meetings to inform the "descendant community" about the project, community members were not included in the decision-making process. Lacking the protections granted to Indian tribes and other Native American Groups under the under the 1990 Native American Graves Protection

²⁰ Ibid., 35; Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 34-35.

²¹ Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 284-85. Also, in 1993, in a bid for election as Public Advocate/City Council President, Paterson would point to his role in preserving the Burial Ground (J. Zamgba Browne, "Paterson: 'I Will Seek Public Advocate Post'," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 15, 1993, 3.) Supporting his position as a leader of the movement to save the Burial Ground, Paterson wrote in letter to the editor published in *The New York Times* in August 1993 "In December 1991, when I learned that General Services [sic] planned to dig up the burial ground unscientifically, I asked the community to join me in what became the Task Force for the Oversight of the Burial Ground....My sincere appreciate to all who helped and continued to help. Together we will change history." (David Paterson, "It Took a Community to Save a Burial Ground (Letter to the Editor)," *The New York Times*, August 21 1993, 1:18).

and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), African-American New Yorkers grew deeply frustrated and began to protest their lack of involvement in determining how to handle what many considered to be the remains of their ancestors.²² As evidence of GSA's disregard, some pointed to the fact that at the outset of the project the agency had failed to alert the black community about the possibility of extant remains and, indeed, had not even distributed the environmental impact statement to groups in predominantly African-American neighborhoods.²³

Additionally, some community members wanted the federal government to stop the excavations completely, protesting that their ancestors' graves were being desecrated. As Gina Stahlnecker, an aide to State Senator David Paterson, remarked, "Religious, Afrocentric people believe that to disturb burials is the highest form of disrespect."²⁴

²² *Native American Graves and Repatriation Act*, P.L. 101-601, (November 16, 1992); Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 284-85. NAGPRA stipulates that the consultation and approval of descendant communities must be obtained before removing human remains or cultural artifacts from an archeological site. During the 1990s, calls to extend NAGPRA's protections to African Americans citing the African Burial Ground began to appear in the literature. See McCarthy, John P. "From African-American Cemeteries in New York and Philadelphia toward a Community-Based Paradigm for the Excavation and Analysis of Human Remains," in *Human Remains : Conservation, Retrieval and Analysis: Proceedings of a Conference Held in Williamsburg, VA, Nov. 7-11th 1999*, edited by Emily Williams, 11-15. Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999.

Gays McGowan and Sheryl J. Laroche, "The Ethical Dilemma Facing Conservation: Care and Treatment of Human Skeletal Remains and Mortuary Objects," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 35, no. 3 (1996).

²³ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 33.

²⁴ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 33; "African Burial Ground Project Moves Forward," *New Voice of New York, Inc.*, Mar 24, 1999, 13.

Further, many objected to the way archeologists were handling the excavations as well as to the make-up of the archeological team, which was primarily white.²⁵ Miriam Francis, a member of Paterson's advisory committee, described the importance of establishing African-American leadership for the project: "If it was an African find, we wanted it to make sure that it was interpreted from an African point of view."²⁶

Also of great concern was that the archeological team had not produced a new research design that reflected the expanded scope of the dig. Although critics had been decrying the lack of a research design since initial excavations in 1991, as excavations proceeded, the issue moved to the fore. Indeed, for members of the descendant community, the GSA's disregard for established archeological practice became emblematic of the persistence of very racism that those interred in the burial ground had experienced.²⁷ Likening GSA's handling of the site to the grave-robbing practices of 18th medical students, a letter to the editor published in *The New York Times* on December 26, 1991 remarked: "It appears that once again, blacks will have to fight to protect their burial places."²⁸

Community concerns came to a head at two public meetings held in New York in April 1992. At a public hearing at City Hall organized by Councilmember Wendall Foster on April 21, over two-dozen speakers urged the government to re-inter the excavated remains and to designate the site as a national monument or historic

²⁵ Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 284-85.

²⁶ Harrington, "Bones & Bureaucrats," 34.

²⁷ Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 284-85.

²⁸ David W. Dunlap, "Unfree, Unknown," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1991, B3.

landmark—sentiments echoed in a petition signed by over 100,000 supporters. Two days later, members of the NYLPC, City Council and the Mayor’s Advisory Committee and State Senator Paterson held a town meeting at Trinity Church. Councilperson Adam Clayton Powell exhorted, “You do not disturb the deceased. You leave our people alone. You should let them rest in peace. At the very least, we should do everything we can to stop the construction of the building.”²⁹

Later that month GSA finally submitted a research design to ACHP. However, in June, the council rejected the plan, which it described “as a hastily prepared and incomplete document” with inadequate provisions for the treatment of archeologically significant portions of the site. Additionally, the council called for information about how remains would be analyzed, interpreted, and ultimately handled, as well as for the creation of interdisciplinary taskforce including representatives from both GSA and the community. The taskforce would oversee all aspects of the project’s design and implementation; involve community members in the decision-making process regarding the treatment of the remains, and facilitate the involvement of professional archeologists.³⁰

Finally, in response to public and political pressure in July 1992, HCI conceded that it was too small for a project of this scale, and GSA hired the much larger and more experienced archeological firm, John Milner Associates (JMA) of West Chester,

²⁹ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 40.

³⁰ Ibid., 43-44.

Pennsylvania, as a replacement.³¹ Although the majority of the more than 400 skeletons discovered had already been removed, JMA was oversee the final month of excavation and develop a new research design by October 1992.³² The firm had recently completed the excavation of an early nineteenth century cemetery associated with the First African Baptist Church in Philadelphia, and GSA representatives believed that JMA's experience with black burial grounds would help to alleviate tensions with the community.³³

However, for many, GSA's attempts to respond to public concern came too late. Reports filed with ACHP became increasingly critical of the excavation process, and in May then-Mayor David Dinkins even established a task force to monitor the project. During the spring and summer of 1992, members of New York's African American community held a series of public meetings and ceremonies, including a 26-hour vigil, to protest GSA's handling of the site.³⁴

The discovery of the Burial Ground occurred at a unique moment in New York's political history, where the city was for the first time under the leadership of an African-American mayor, and African Americans were represented on City Council and held key

³¹ Cantwell, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*, 284-85.

³² Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 43.

³³ McCarthy, "From African-American Cemeteries in New York and Philadelphia toward a Community-Based Paradigm for the Excavation and Analysis of Human Remains"; Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 44.

³⁴ "African Burial Ground Project Moves Forward"; Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 47 ; E.R. Shipp, "Black Cemetery Yields Wealth of History," *The New York Times*, August 9 1992, 1:41.

legislative positions.³⁵ For many black New Yorkers, Dinkins's victory was an opportunity to redress the balance of power in the city, or, in the words the Reverend Calvin Butts, pastor of Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church, "Those who have borne the cross now shall wear the crown." Expounding on this sentiment was the cover of the January issue of *Black Enterprise* magazine, which featured a full-page photo of Mr. Dinkins on the cover stamped with the word "POWER." As *The New York Times* remarked, Dinkins's election also marked "a sense of arrival" for African American New Yorkers, as well as a critical moment of public recognition.³⁶ Indeed, following the site's initial discovery, Dinkins pointed to the site as a symbol of both African American achievement, stating "Two centuries ago not only could African Americans not hope to govern New York City, they could not even hope to be buried within its boundaries."³⁷ Many supporters of the African Burial Ground explicitly acknowledged the connection between the city's first black-led administration and discoveries at the Burial Ground, stating that the "ancestors" had chosen this particular time to be discovered.³⁸

However, it soon became apparent that despite government pressure and vocal community outpourings, GSA would not respond. Although on July 13, ACHP stated that "all work should be suspended" until GSA addressed outstanding issues surrounding the

³⁵ Howard University The African Burial Ground Project, Washington, DC, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Michael L. Blakey and Leslie M. Rankin-Hill (The U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2004), 13,

³⁶ "A Proud Beginning to 1990 (Editorial)," *The New York Times* January 1, 1990, 1: 24.

³⁷ Dunlap, "Dig Unearths Early Black Burial Ground."

³⁸ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 43.

site's archeological program, excavations continued. Finally, in July 1992, Mayor Dinkins wrote to Diamond requesting that excavations and construction activities in the pavilion area cease.³⁹ Reiterating concerns that Dinkins had expressed in earlier correspondence with Diamond in September 1991, the letter asked GSA to develop alternate plans for completing the building and to abide by the amended MOA. The mayor called for the involvement of professionals with expertise in African history and culture, and threatened to engineer the transfer of the project to a Federal agency, such as the National Park Service or the Smithsonian, capable of recognizing the site's significance.⁴⁰

A few days later, Diamond rejected the mayor's request, stating that, as his agency was in compliance with Federal regulations, it was under no obligation to cease excavations. Diamond countered that there was "no basis for discontinuance of ongoing excavations" and that he "would not be put in a position of abrogating important government contracts because of political pressure." The letter also stated that in direct opposition to community concerns, GSA would excavate an additional 200 bodies to build the building's planned pavilion and would only respond to instructions from Congress.⁴¹

Less than a week after Diamond's reply, Illinois Congressman Gus Savage, chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation Sub-Committee for

³⁹ Harrington, "Bones & Bureaucrats," 37-38.

⁴⁰ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 47-48.

⁴¹ Ibid., 47-48.

Public Buildings and Grounds—the agency that had authorized funds for 290 Broadway-- called a congressional hearing in New York on July 27. Savage, who was African American, had been alerted to the situation by longtime black New York activist Alton Maddock, who had requested that he exercise his authority to investigate.⁴² In a fiery session that included testimony from Mayor Dinkins, NYCLPC chair Laurie Beckelman, and anthropologists Michael Blakey and Sherrill Wilson, Savage stated that “whatever Congress authorizes, it can de-authorize.” Finally, in response to Diamond’s testimony that he had refused to even propose the cessation of excavations to the central GSA administration, Savage cut the hearing short, stating that the session was “going to go no further because this regional director is opposed to responding to the wishes...that were expressed here today and has been in violation of Section 106 as well as the memorandum of agreement.” Savage ordered GSA to prepare an amended prospectus immediately, and noted that any pending requests from GSA to his subcommittee would not be approved until the office was in compliance with Section 106 and the hearing’s findings. Savage told Diamond, “And don’t waste your time asking this subcommittee for anything else as long as I’m chairman...I am not going to be part of your disrespect.”⁴³

⁴² *Foley Square African-American Graveyard Controversy* (House of Representatives), July 31 1992. Statement by Illinois Representative Gus Savage.

⁴³ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 48-51.

3.5 Federal Power, July-October 1992

Although the hearing marked a major victory for supporters of the African Burial Ground, several issues still remained unresolved, most notably the treatment, analysis and eventual reinterment of excavated remains and the development of a suitable memorial. While excavation had been halted, exactly how the burial ground and those exhumed were to be studied—and, most importantly, commemorated—remained open to question. During the week following the July 27 hearing, Savage, fellow Congressmen, and local and national officials lobbied hard for the GSA to address these concerns.⁴⁴

To justify exercising federal regulatory power over the project, Savage and his allies continued to point not only to the Burial Ground's historic significance and community support, but also to GSA's failure to comply with Section 106 of NHPA.

In the discussions that followed, Section 106 emerged as a powerful regulatory tool, and the struggle over Burial Ground itself became an important symbol of Congressional power—as well as an example of cooperation between political parties.

On July 29, Savage organized a meeting in Washington, D.C. with Austin, Diamond, the building developer, and several members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats. Savage insisted that GSA comply with NHPA not only by ceasing excavations, but also altering building plans to eliminate the proposed pavilion and thus leaving the estimated 200 burials on the site intact.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Foley Square African-American Graveyard Controversy* (House of Representatives).

⁴⁵ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 54.

The next day, Savage, Austin, ACHP director Dr. Robert Bush, met with Mayor Dinkins and several other civic leaders in New York. At the meeting GSA agreed to meet its legal obligations under Section 106 by guaranteeing that: excavations would remain halted; future research would include leading African American scientists; a memorial would be developed with community input; and the GSA would establish and fund a Federal Steering Committee to facilitate African American involvement and develop recommendations for the site. GSA also agreed that while construction would continue on the thirty-four-story office tower, the four-story pavilion proposed for the eastern portion of the site would not be built, and the graves in that area (an estimated 200) would remain undisturbed. Finally, Savage pledged to expedite the site's designation as a National Historic Landmark by contacting the Secretary of the Interior directly, which he did the following month.⁴⁶

Savage also testified before the House of Representatives on July 31, presenting a statement that summarized the history of the Burial Ground controversy and highlighted the important role that Congress played in its resolution. Indeed, Savage pointed to the July 27 hearing and subsequent actions as an important example of cooperation between political parties, noting that “both sides, Republican and Democrat were able to work to resolve a problem that was caused by errors on the executive side....” However, Savage’s testimony was also sharply critical of the press, noting the lack of coverage of the hearing and stating that “the press did not give proper credit to Congress.” As Savage noted, this important example of the exercise of Congressional power went unnoticed: Whenever

⁴⁶ Ibid., 54,

you want to criticize a body, if you are honest and if you have any integrity, you have the obligation to also praise that body when praise is due.”⁴⁷

Later that summer, Senator Alfonse D'Amato persuaded senate appropriations committee to set aside \$3 million "to modify the pavilion foundation, to prevent further deterioration to burial ground and to appropriately memorialize the site.”⁴⁸ Likely spurred by Savage’s testimony and subsequent Congressional hearing in New York on September 24, the House agreed to the allocation as \$3,000,00 part of the 1993 Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriations bill.⁴⁹ Consistent with Savage’s attempt to exercise Congressional control over the site, the final version of the bill stipulated that that the GSA Administrator was obligated to “submit the plan to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations within 60 days of the enactment of this Act.”

⁴⁷ *Foley Square African-American Graveyard Controversy* (House of Representatives).

⁴⁸ Shipp, "Black Cemetery Yields Wealth of History."

⁴⁹ *Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992*, P.L. 102-575, (October 30, 1992). Legislative History. Concurrent with Congressional discussions about the African Burial Ground was consideration of an amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act. During the summer and fall of 1992, Congress debated HR 429, a bill introduced in 1991 that called for, among other things, substantially strengthening Section 106 and the obligations of Federal agencies. Indeed, the bill’s amended version was finally approved on September 24, 1992—the same day as the second round of Congressional hearings on the African Burial Ground. Additionally, both the amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act and the statute allocating \$3,000,000 for the Burial Ground were signed into lay in October 1992. Although the Congressional record contains nothing linking the amendment with legislation regarding the African Burial Ground, the timing suggests possibility of a causal relationship between the two.

On October 30, 1992 former President Bush signed the bill into law as part of Public Law 102-575⁵⁰

3.6 Designation, Direction, and Value, September 1992-October 1993

In the period immediately following the exercise of federal power, several events brought the values and significance identified with the African Burial Ground to the forefront. In 1993, the site was designated a historic district by the New York Landmarks Commission, and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and received National Historic Landmark Status. A Federal Steering Committee was established to guide preservation efforts and a new research program for the remains was instituted under the supervision of Dr. Michael Blakey, an anthropologist at Howard University (See Chapter Four for a discussion of research). The discourse surrounding these events reveals the multiple layers of significance—historical, archeological, and communal—assigned to the site, and point to the central contest for the control of historical memory that informed many of decisions made regarding the preservation of the Burial Ground.

Local Designation, June 1993

In September 1992, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing proposing the creation of the African Burial Ground and Commons District. Fifty-three people, including Mayor Dinkins, Congressman Charles Rangel, State Senator David Paterson, members of New York's City Council, and representatives

⁵⁰ Harrington, "Bones & Bureaucrats," 37-38.

from community, preservation, and arts organizations, offered testimony in support of the designation. Following the unanimous approval NYCLPC commissioners in February 1993, New York City Council passed the resolution by unanimous vote in June 1993.⁵¹

The boundaries of the newly created historic district reflected those of the original African Ground and also encompassed areas of New York's civic center, including City Hall and City Hall Park (Fig. 16). While the designation emphasized the historic presence of the African Burial Ground and noted that the site is "historically significant because it serves as a memorial to the people who came from Africa by bondage rather than choice," it also argued for the district's uniqueness based on the area's long history of overlapping civic and public use. The Findings and Designation report noted that that from the establishment of the Commons in the mid-17th century to the present day, the area had played a key role in the city's public life:

[T]he long history of public and civic uses—reflected in the rediscovered African Burial Ground, which give concrete evidence of the importance of Africans in colonial history, the many governmental building in the historic district, and the City Hall Park, which still functions as an important gathering place of the city's population—defines the historic district and reveals its role as the nucleus of New York City's public life.⁵²

The value of the Burial Ground lay not only in its ability to serve as a memorial for the experiences of colonial Africans, but also as an important aspect of New York civic history. Through the designation, the Landmarks Commission acknowledged and

⁵¹ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 72.

⁵² New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report," Prepared by Jean Howson, Gale Harris, and Betsy Bradley, edited by Marjorie Pierson (New York: 2003), 3-4.

incorporated the narrative of slaves interred in the Burial Ground to create a broader, more inclusive history of public life in New York.

National Designations, April 1993

Soon after the Historic District designation, the Burial Ground was placed on the National Register and, in April 1993, received National Historic Landmark status.⁵³ With slightly different boundaries than the New York Historic District, the national designations focused solely on the original Burial Ground site, excluding nearby landmarks, such as City Hall or the Tweed Courthouse (Fig. 17).⁵⁴ The more clearly delimited geographic boundaries reflected the primary significance identified in the National Register and Landmark designations: the Burial Ground's archeological value as a potential source of historical information. The nomination for the National Register form reads:

The African Burying [sic] Ground is of national significance due to its unprecedented potential to yield information about the lives of Africans and African-Americans in an eighteenth-century urban context. A portion of the site has been excavated and yielded information of major scientific importance. The site held sacred meaning and profound social significance and cultural importance for this predominantly enslaved population, and the survival of the Burying Ground provides a unique opportunity to acknowledge and preserve their history. This site may well be only preserved urban eighteenth-century African burying

⁵³ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 73.

⁵⁴ New York City Landmarks Commission, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," 1,14. In contrast to the Nicoma's local designation, which established the significance of a range of architectural and landscape resources dating from diverse periods, the National Register/National Historic Landmark application cited the existence of only one contributing resource: the Burial Ground itself, and named the eighteenth century as the period of significance.

ground in the Americas. The more than 400 individuals who remains have been recovered from the African Burying Ground represent larger role whose role in the formation and development of American society is suitable.”⁵⁵

The Federal Steering Committee, September 1992-October 1993

Many of these values articulated in the local and national designations found expression in the recommendations of the Federal Steering Committee. Established by Congressional mandate in 1992, the Committee included historians, archeologists, politicians and members of the descendant community, many of whom had participated in the committees established by Mayor Dinkins and Senator Paterson. In meetings from October 1992 to July 1993, the committee worked to determine what steps should be taken to interpret and preserve the Burial Ground.⁵⁶ Charged with making recommendations to GSA and Congress, as well as serving as the primary liaison to New York’s African American community, the committee was also to act, in the words of its chair Howard Dodson, chief of The New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, as a “watchdog over GSA,” making sure the agency adhered to its obligations under Section 106.⁵⁷

The central question facing the committee was the small scale of the contemporary site as compared to the actual size of the historic Burial Ground. At hand

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁶ The African Burial Ground website includes a project chronology developed by the Federal Steering Committee. The committee’s final meeting, where they presented recommendations to the public, was July 23, 1993. African Burial Ground Website: www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ABG_FederalSteeringCommitteeChronology.htm.

⁵⁷ Debbie Officer, "Burial Grounds Meeting Ends in Uproar," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 4, 1993, 32, 34.

was the issue of how to develop a plan for preserving and memorializing the African Burial Ground that would transcend the site's limited physical confines to convey its assigned scope, meaning and significance. Also critical was developing a strategy that would balance the site's scientific, historical, and spiritual dimensions—one that would realize the site's archeological and anthropological potential, establish it as an important public historical resource, and express and protect the Burial Ground's sacrality.

In August 1993, after many rounds of public meetings, the Committee submitted its final report to Congress. The introduction laid out many of the issues at stake in the preservation of the site, as well as the goals that informed proposed interventions:

The African Burial Ground is of national significance because it may well be the only preserved 18th century African cemetery in the Americas. The more than 400 individuals whose remains have been recovered are a representative sample of the 18th century African population in colonial New York who played critical roles in the formation and development of American society. The site held sacred meaning and profound moral and cultural importance for the enslaved Africans. It holds equally profound meaning for their descendants. The survival of the African Burial Ground provides a unique opportunity to discover, acknowledge, preserve and interpret their history.⁵⁸

To account for the rich and layered meanings of the site, the committee suggested a multi-prong approach calling for several elements:

A world-class memorial museum and research center of African-American history and culture within the National Historic Landmark (NHL) boundaries.

⁵⁸ "Memorialization of the African Burial Ground. Final Recommendations to the Administrator, General Services Administration and the United States Congress.."8.

A memorial monument with NHL boundaries to commemorate the heritage of all Africans in America, particularly the estimated 20,000 Africans who were interred in the African Burial Ground.

A signage program to interpret the history and culture of the African people interred installed throughout the NHL area.

A Memorial Exhibition and Memorial Artwork within the lobby of the Federal Building at 290 Broadway.

The ceremonial reinterment of the 425 excavated human remains on the African Burial Ground site.

The \$3,000,000 allocated by Congress should be used to fund all memorial and archeological activities.⁵⁹

To provide information to the public during the Steering Committee's deliberations, in 1993 the GSA entered a contract with John Milner Associates to establish the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI). Anthropologist Sherrill Wilson was hired to head the office, which was intended to interpret the ongoing archeological work for the public, as well as to serve as the public relation arm of the project.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid. Summary of report findings.

⁶⁰ Dr. Sherrill Wilson, Executive Director of Office of Public Education, Personal Communication, December 7 2004. Although the GSA intended it as a "short-term fix," the office has continued to function. Today OPEI maintains an archive about the project, and is responsible for site interpretation, offering special events, tours, and in-school presentations.

The period following the discovery of the African Burial Ground was one of tremendous accomplishment for New York's African American community. Drawing on a rich tradition of activism and capitalizing on a unique moment in New York political history, community members were able to mobilize support that ultimately reached to the highest levels of government. Combining the framework of preservation policy with the power of public demonstration, supporters negotiated the complex issues surrounding the Burial Ground. Despite strong opposition from GSA, the descendant community successfully asserted the site's prime value as deriving from its identity as commemorative, historic, and ethnographic landscape, rather than its position as a valuable piece of commercial real estate. However, the battles of the early 1990s marked only the beginning. As discussions surrounding research, interpretation, and commemoration unfolded, community members and project advisors would again find themselves engaged in a struggle to preserve the values and meanings of the African Burial Ground.

CHAPTER FOUR:
CONTESTED TERRAIN: VALUES & RESEARCH METHODS,
1991-2003

The past is contested terrain over which archeologists among others struggle. How the past is conceptualized shapes our perceptions of the present and what is possible in the future.¹

—Thomas C. Patterson (1993)

4.1 Introduction

Almost exactly a decade after Federal legislation mandated the preservation of the African Burial Ground, the bones of the ancestors came home. At a moving ceremony in October 2003, hundreds gathered to celebrate the reburial of the excavated remains. For many, reinterment also marked an important resolution to the twelve-year struggle that had begun following discovery of the Burial Ground in 1991. Although the Federal and local designations of 1993 had marked a major victory, they had by no means ended controversy surrounding the Burial Ground's preservation and memorialization. As the GSA began carry out the recommendations of the Federal Steering Committee, debates over the creation and control of knowledge and value soon emerged.

This chapter explores how anthropological and archeological theory and practice emerged as central—and deeply contested—forums for establishing the site's scientific,

¹ Quoted in Warren R. Perry, *Archaeology as Community Service: The African Burial Ground Project in New York City* (n.d. [cited April 4, 2006]); available from <http://www.stpt.usf.edu/~jsokolov/burialgr.htm>.

historic, political, and spiritual dimensions. Fundamental to disputes were questions of race and power and their implications for how the Burial Ground would be first studied and the interpreted. Using debates over research practices as a springboard, this chapter examines the values assigned to the Burial Ground by both researchers and members of the descendant community in the years following its initial designations, as well as the implications of those values for research methodology. Discussions surrounding the development of a permanent memorial and interpretive center were occurring at the same time, and Chapter Five explores the implication of these values for design and management proposals for the African Burial Ground as a historic and commemorative site. Together, these two chapters also address the extent to which an ethnic group has the right to control the study and memorialization of its own past, particularly when the construction of cultural identity intersects with the design of public space and the formation of national history.

4.2 The Debate Begins, October 1991-September 1992

Almost immediately following the initial discovery of the African Burial Ground, members of the descendant community, many already outraged by what they perceived as the desecration of the graves of their ancestors, began calling for the research to be carried out under African-American leadership. In October 1991, a group of community members, concerned with the lack of African-American involvement and substandard storage conditions for the remains at the facilities of Lehman College's Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team (MFAT), contacted Dr. Michael Blakey, an African-

American anthropologist from Howard University, with their concerns. In March 1992, Blakey came to New York to inspect the site, and after learning that as a subcontractor for Historic Conservation and Interpretation, Inc. (HCI), MFAT had no formal contract with the government, Blakey began assembling a research team of African American scholars.²

As a physical anthropologist, Blakey's primary concern was the treatment and analysis of remains, and in April 1992, he began working on a research design for the scientific investigation of the burials. That summer, John Milner Associates (JMA), who had replaced HCI, entered into a three-month contact with Blakey, and, together, they continued to refine plans for analysis of the site's discoveries.³

However, following the cessation of excavations in July, MFAT had decided that since it lacked a valid contract from GSA, it could neither clean nor care for the bones already in its possession. Further, claiming that the remains were too fragile to move, MFAT also stated it could not arrange for their transport to another facility. Outraged, JMA, Blakey, and community members accused MFAT of "holding the bones hostage" while it negotiated with GSA for a contract. Activists visited the lab and photographed the remains, which were wrapped in newspaper—an acidic material that can cause significant damage to human bones—and sent the pictures to Blakey. Following discussions with the community and the Federal Steering Committee, GSA authorized teams from Howard and JMA to go to Lehman to rewrap the remains and later asked

² Karen Cook, "Bones of Contention," *The Village Voice*, May 4, 1993, 23-27.

³ *Ibid.*

MFAT to submit to an official inspection. Finally, after a year of community protest, Blakey was appointed as director of the entire African Burial Ground research project on September 18, 1992.⁴

4.3 The Question of Race: Developing a Research Design, October 1992

Between October and December 1992, the struggle between MFAT and Blakey continued, this time focusing on research methodology. Although negotiations for MFAT to clean and type the bones by age, sex, and stature had been ongoing, disagreement about whether remains should be typed for race soon emerged. MFAT insisted on completing measurements for race, while Blakey staunchly objected to the practice. Consequently, on October 15, Blakey submitted a new research design to GSA and the Steering Committee that greatly diminished MFAT's role in the project.⁵

Blakey's new design and his disagreements with MFAT highlighted a central split that had emerged in anthropological practice, particularly at African American archeological sites, during the late twentieth century. Reflecting a growing focus on understanding the biological and sociological factors that influenced the experience of Africans and their descendants in North America, Blakey's approach rejected the established techniques of forensic anthropology proposed by MFAT. Used widely by law enforcement to identify criminals and victims, as well as human remains at archeological

⁴ Andrea E. Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space" (Ph.D. Diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2002), 61-62.

⁵ Ibid.. 62-63; Cook, "Bones of Contention."

sites, forensic anthropology focuses on using physical evidence to assign descriptive characteristics including age, sex, and stature—and most notable, race.⁶ However, as Blakey noted, “These are communities, not crime scenes.”⁷

Following submission, the research design was sent out for review, and reviewers’ comments reflected the disciplinary schism. Noting that the Burial Ground might also contain the remains of whites (a potter’s field had been located nearby) several reviewers and members of MFAT’s staff maintained that omitting racial testing constituted a major oversight in the research design. In contrast, Blakey and his supporters rejected race as a valid measurement. Drawing on “vindicationist” or “corrective” political theory that emphasized race as a social and cultural construction—designed to facilitate the exercise of power of one group over another—rather than a biological one, Blakey argued that racial testing would only “reinforce the notion that races exist, for the purpose of maintaining the structures of a racist society.”⁸ Joining Blakey in condemning the forensic approach was Michigan State anthropologist and reviewer Norman Sauer, who argued that racial testing “has done much to reify that humans are separable into limited numbers on groups on biological traits alone.” Concurring with Blakey, Sauer stated that researchers should focus on determining

⁶ Michael L. Blakey, "Bioarcheology of the African Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001), , 409-410.

⁷ Blakey, "Bioarcheology of the African Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 415.

⁸ Cook, "Bones of Contention."

specific biological traits that would help establish the geographic origins of New York's early African population.⁹

4.4 Developing an African-American Research Practice, Fall 1992-Spring 1993

To emphasize the humanity, individuality, and diversity of the interred, Blakey's proposed approach focused on analyzing specific biological and genetic markers that would indicate places of origins, as well as illuminate the conditions of life and death for colonial Africans. Drawing on critical literature and theory from African Diasporic studies, itself an interdisciplinary field, research would address social, cultural and historic information, while also offering opportunities for public engagement. This "biocultural" or "bioarcheological" approach would not only maximize the site's research value, but also establish a new research paradigm for African-American historical sites—one that focused on questions of identity, rather than race, and sought to position the experiences of African Americans, both living and dead, within a larger context of the African Diaspora.¹⁰ In Blakey's words, the study would reveal "the diasporic experiences of the enslaved New York Africans, the history and identity of their descendants, and their descendants' empowerment in telling their own story and memorializing their own ancestors."¹¹

⁹ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 63-65.

¹⁰ This discussion represents a (generalized) summary of arguments presented in Blakey, "Bioarcheology of the African Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope."

¹¹ The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Michael L.

Also key to this practice was the involvement of professionals who were African American or those who were, at the very least, sensitive to issues surrounding Diasporic scholarship and possessed “an affinity for African-American culture, past and present.”¹² Such a strategy would not only result in more sensitive research, but also importantly, would support the desire of New York’s African Americans to seize control of their own heritage and to tell their own story.¹³ As Dr. Warren Perry, who would head the archeological portion of the research project, remarked “The African Burial Ground Project will for the first time represent a voice of African descendants analyzing and interpreting scientific materials.”¹⁴

Emblematic of this belief was Blakey’s desire to transfer the remains from Lehman College to Howard University, a traditionally Black university. Despite some objections that such a transfer would rob New York of an important archeological find, Blakey emphasized the importance of moving the remains, citing both the university’s academic resources and the presence of black scholars. Blakey argued, “For MFAT to have possession of and control the study of these remains resembles, to the African community, what it would be to have Nazis study victims of the holocaust—of their holocaust.” In spring 1993, GSA and Steering Committee capitulated and ordered that the

Blakey and Leslie M. Rankin-Hill (U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2004), 25.

¹² Cheryl J. La Roche and Michael L. Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," *Historical Archaeology* 31, no. 3 (1997), 93.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁴ Perry, *Archaeology as Community Service: The African Burial Ground Project in New York City*.

bones be packed and shipped to Howard.¹⁵ The event marked a major milestone for the archeology of African-American sites. Researcher Sherrill Wilson noted, “We’re changing the way African burial sites will be handled in the future...we’re saying respect our history, respect our past. Taking the remains from a white archeological firm and putting them in the hands of a black institution had never been done before.”¹⁶

4.5 Rewriting History

Resounding through all discussions was a belief that findings at the African Burial Ground would help to rewrite the historical narrative in New York City—and indeed the country as a whole. Since the site’s initial discovery, the site’s vindicationist potential had been widely touted, and researchers echoed the belief that studies at the Burial Ground would acknowledge and make known the extent and brutality of slavery in New York. Just as important, research would also bring to light the important role that slaves played in New York’s development.¹⁷ Emphasizing the power of the Burial Ground’s past, the West Akan “Sankofa” character found on the lid of one of the coffins was adopted as the project’s symbol. The character signifies the concept of learning from the past to prepare for the future (Fig. 18).¹⁸

¹⁵ Cook, "Bones of Contention."

¹⁶ Reginold A. Royston, "Transforming Sankofa: Black Anthropologists Interpret Life in 1700s New York through the African Burial Ground Project," *About ... Time* 24:2 (April 24, 1996), 19.

¹⁷ La Roche and Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," 90-91.

¹⁸ Find reference

Again, underlying these discussions were issues of race and power. A revised research design submitted by Blakey and JMA in April 1993 called for establishing the specific African geographic and cultural origins of the exhumed. Rather than relying upon cranial measurement techniques used to type race, Blakey's study would employ DNA testing and chemical analysis to develop a more nuanced understanding of the life and death experiences of slaves in New York.¹⁹ In conjunction with archeological and historical research, findings would challenge conventional understanding that "there had been few blacks and no slavery in the American North."²⁰ Research would also point to the centrality of Africans to the economy of colonial New York by uncovering information about their patterns of work. As researchers Cheryl La Roche and Michael Blakey noted in a 1997 article, "Indeed, New York's African Burial Ground was a vivid example of the omission of the colonial Africans' presence and contribution to building the city and the nation."²¹ The Burial Ground would for once and for all "confirm the African-American vindicationist critique of pervasive Eurocentric distortion [sic] of American and world history."²²

¹⁹ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 65.

²⁰ The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol.1," 29.

²¹ La Roche and Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," 90.

²² The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," 29.

4.6 Collective Power and Community Control

Discussions surrounding the research design also pointed to the Burial Ground as emblematic of the ability of African-Americans to determine their own history and identity, as well as to exercise a measure of power and control in the public realm. During the controversy surrounding the initial discovery of the Burial Ground and the eventual cessation over excavations, the site had become an important indicator of the community's collective political power.²³ Treatment of excavated remains and the disposition of the Burial Ground site reignited this discussion as members of the descendant community insisted on the "the right and ability of African-Americans to exercise control over the handling and disposition of the physical remains and artifacts of their ancestors," and insisted on the involvement of African American scientists in the project.²⁴ Indeed, following his appointment as research director, Blakey emphasized the importance of African American leadership and control of the research project, telling *The New York Times* that he and his team were "approaching their work not only as scientists, but also as black Americans."²⁵

²³ La Roche and Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," 85.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁵ Clifford J. Levy, "Study to Examine Bones from Black's Burial Site," *The New York Times*, August 13, 1993, B1.

4.7 Identity and Culture

In June 1993, the subcommittee on research design accepted Blakey's proposal, which was then approved by the Federal Steering Committee.²⁶ Despite initial misgivings about what some regarded as the ethnocentric nature of the research design, as well as its vindicationist rhetoric, the subcommittee issued a statement that recognized the role that historic knowledge could play in bringing discussions about slavery to forefront of public consciousness, as well as its ability to address issues surrounding African American identity and culture:

Due to the circumstances that have brought about their presence, these material remains of African ancestors present themselves during a time of social and emotional strife, when inspirational uplift is most needed in the African-American community; during a time when the significance of racism in America needs desperately to be brought to bear on the minds of Euro-Americans; and during a time when there is a thirst for knowledge about African heritage that has propelled heated debates about in adequacies [sic] of American education. These African ancestral remains have presented both a challenge and an opportunity to simultaneously address these issues.²⁷

Reflecting the claims of researchers and community members, the statement suggested that a primary value of the African Burial Ground was its ability to return identity to both the living and the dead. Together with historic research about black populations in North American and Africa, anthropology and archeology could reveal how slaves negotiated their captivity and developed strategies to preserve autonomy,

²⁶ Federal Steering Committee on the African Burial Ground Project, "Research Design Subcommittee Statement," June 2003 (Available as Appendix A of "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1 [December 2004])."

²⁷The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," 26-27; Federal Steering Committee on the African Burial Ground Project, "Research Design Subcommittee Statement."

agency, and humanity in the face of oppression. Additionally genetic analyses determining geographical origins would also to help establish the cultural identities of the interred and suggest how slaves transmitted and adapted African practices to the New World.²⁸

Concurrently, research would foster a sense of collective identity among the living by connecting them to their African heritage.²⁹ Indeed, for many the Burial Ground emerged acquired a deep symbolic significance, a point of origin for the country's diasporic community. As David Dinkins would write in 1994:

Millions of Americans celebrate Ellis Island as the symbol of their communal identity in this land. Others celebrate Plymouth Rock. Until a few years ago, African American New Yorkers had no site to call our own.... Now we—their descendants—have the symbol of our heritage embodied in lower Manhattan's African Burial Ground.³⁰

4.8 Spirituality

Finally, debate surrounding the research design emphasized the important spiritual dimensions that had come to be associated with the site. Throughout discussion of the site's scientific potential, researchers had articulated their goal to maintain, respect, and express the position as a sacred site that the Burial Ground had come to occupy for many black New Yorkers.³¹ During initial excavations, supporters had established a

²⁸ The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," 104-110.

²⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁰ La Roche and Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," 100.

³¹ Ibid., 99-100,

makeshift shrine where visitors could leave offering for the ancestors at Lehman College.

³² Accordingly, researchers sought to incorporate opportunities for commemorating and celebrating the lives of colonial Africans into scientific practice, as well as to involve members of the religious community in the project. As the subcommittee on research design remarked:

This Research Design also recognizes the necessity of ongoing consultation with religious leaders who will work with others who see to the sacred aspects of this important project. Periodic religious ceremonies are anticipated throughout the project. Ultimately a dignified reburial should take place at a site designated by the descendant community and the city of New York...The wealth of information that these [A]frican ancestors provide deserves nothing less as a platform from which through science they may speak to us about the place that they came from, the physical evidence of their struggles in this “New World,” and the culture they clung to and created here. It is fervently hoped that the implementation of this Research Design will bring this important spiritual, cultural and scientific resource into the prominence it deserves.³³

Celebrations in November 1993 surrounding the transfer of remains to Blakey’s laboratory at Howard University emphasized the link the scientific with the spiritual. In August 1993, GSA had entered into a contract with Blakey and Howard to analyze the remains and had begun transporting exhumed remains from MFAT’s New York facilities to the university’s W. Montague Cobb Anthropology Laboratory, itself named for the African American scientist who had been an early pioneer of the “bioarcheological” approach, as well one of first to use anthropology to support political activism.³⁴

³² Cook, "Bones of Contention,"

³³ Federal Steering Committee on the African Burial Ground Project, "Research Design Subcommittee Statement."

³⁴ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 74-75; The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," 60.

However, community members had expressed concern that scientific goals could overshadow the site's sacred nature. As one supporter commented at a public meeting New York in June 1993:

I think you can't minimize the spiritual dimension of this whole thing and you know, while the scientific analysis is clearly important, I think we would be remiss to let these remains without some type of spiritual ceremony...so I think you've got to balance the scientific act with the spiritual.

To achieve this balance, on November 4, 1993, a candle-lit ceremony was held at the Burial Ground site and followed next by a service at Mariner's Baptist Church to celebrate the final departure of the remains for study. The following day, to mark the arrival of the final shipment of bones at Howard, the university organized a symposium followed by a ceremony at Rankin Chapel. To pay homage to the dead and emphasize connections between the past and present, both ceremonies incorporated African religious and cultural traditions, including libations, drumming, and story telling.³⁵

4.9 Research Proceeds, 1993-1996

Following the transfer, work on the project progressed as Blakey and his team cleaned, recorded, and analyzed the human remains. As promised in the research design and reflecting the project's interdisciplinary "bioarcheological" approach, work proceeded along three tracks, anthropological, archeological and historical.³⁶ In 1996, the Howard team assumed responsibility for the site's archeological—or non-skeletal—

³⁵ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 75.

³⁶ The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," 30.

aspect and began processing the burial artifacts, which included remains of wooden coffins, hardware, and personal items, such as pins and coins. Research was carried out under the leadership of Dr. Warren R. Perry of the University of Connecticut at a laboratory in New York's World Trade Center.³⁷ The team also began work on a major report about the history, origins, and culture of New York's African population.³⁸

Research efforts also sought to incorporate opportunities for public engagement. Guiding the work was a fundamental assumption that community involvement enhances scientific investigation. Indeed, the project's four central research questions had been developed in response to concerns articulated by the community. Reflecting the site's perceived value as a point of origin for African-American New Yorkers, as well as its ability both to restore slaves' lost identity and correct history, researchers sought to address:

- The cultural background and origin of those interred the Burial Ground;
- The processes guiding the cultural and biological transformation from African to African-American identities;
- The quality of live for slaves; and

³⁷ The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1," ed. Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco (U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2006), 16-17.

³⁸ See The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground History Final Report," ed. Edna Greene Medford (U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2004).

The modes of resistance to slavery.³⁹

4.10 Controversy Begins, May 1998-December 2000

However, despite the hard-won victories of the early 1990s, controversy over the project's budget, schedule, and management re-emerged in 1998, and once again the African Burial Ground moved to the forefront of public consciousness. Recalling discussions around the research design, several important themes emerged from the rhetoric surrounding the controversy, including the Burial Ground's role as a symbol of African-American leadership and as an indicator of the government's (dis)respect of African Americans. The Burial Ground again became emblematic of expressions of ongoing struggles of African Americans to control their own history and heritage and to exert collective power in the public realm.

In May 1998, GSA requested a revised budget proposal from Blakey, expressing concern over the project's attenuated schedule and demanding that research portion of the project be completed. In response to GSA's request, Blakey and Howard University submitted a revised proposal requesting funds for DNA and chemical studies, as well as comparative analysis. However, in June, GSA rejected the new budget and stated that no

³⁹ The African Burial Ground Project, "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1," 104-105. Although these themes are specified in the final report, the literature indicates that these goals were established at the beginning of the project. The exception is the fourth theme, which was added in 1995 in response to community concerns (La Roche and Blakey, "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground," 87.)

further funding would be provided, citing the “experimental” nature of the DNA analysis as an inappropriate and unprecedented use of government funds.⁴⁰

Disputing GSA’s understanding of its financial responsibilities, Blakey stated that in the 1992 MOA the GSA had agreed to DNA analysis and had even supported a successful pilot project that tested thirty skeletons. According to Blakey, an additional \$3.6 million was necessary to complete the DNA portion of the project and to fulfill GSA’s financial obligations. However, GSA countered that it had fulfilled its obligations under the original MOA to expend \$15,000,000 on combined historical, memorial and scientific activities, and had allocated the \$5.2 million earmarked for scientific research.⁴¹ When the agency neither allocated money nor submitted a request to Congress for increased funding for the following year, Blakey once again accused GSA of deliberate obstruction and suggested that the agency’s behavior represented a more generalized disrespect for the Burial Ground project.⁴²

Blakey submitted another budget proposal in May 1999, and, GSA finally agreed to submit to request to Congress for additional funding. However, delays in receiving Congressional approval brought work at Howard and in New York to a halt, and in February 2000, GSA even sealed the archeology laboratory at the World Trade Center pending the receipt of funding. Finally, in September 2000, Congress authorized GSA to

⁴⁰ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 78-79.

⁴¹ Michele N-K Collison, "Disrespecting the Dead," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 16, no. 3 (April 1, 1996).

⁴² Charles Brooks, "African Burial Ground Project Denied Needed Funding," *New York Amsterdam News*, January 14, 1999, 3.

borrow up to \$4.5 million to complete the project, and on December 12, 2000, President Clinton signed the bill into law. However, tensions would continue into early 2001, as GSA commented that funds would be used to support the proposed memorial and reinterment.⁴³

4.11 Information and Respect, January 1999-September 2001

Meanwhile, as concerns over the project's budget were mounting, so were those about the lack of public information and project management. Despite GSA's responsibilities under Section 106, no public meetings had been held since the Federal Steering Committee had disbanded in 1994, and members of New York's African American community were growing impatient over delays surrounding the promised memorial and reinterment. On January 23, 1999, in an attempt to obtain information, a group of activists known as the Friends of the African Burial Ground, organized a community hearing at Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library. However, despite repeated requests, no one from GSA attended.⁴⁴

Discontent over project management also emerged as researchers, staff and members of the Descendant community accused GSA of wresting the project from African American control and seeking to minimize the burial ground's significance. Sherrill Wilson, director of the Office of Public Education and Information (OPEI), warned against the possibility of GSA reducing the interpretation of the Burial Ground to

⁴³ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 87-88.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 80-81

“an administrative function” and explicitly linked GSA’s refusal to allocate additional funding with an overall lack of care and respect: “The fact there isn't money, or so the GSA says, to fund administrative functions, is not about science or technology. It's about, to some extent, deriding the leadership of the African Burial Ground Project.”⁴⁵

In response, community members organized themselves to take action, and in March members of the Friends group contacted African-American Congressman Charles Rangel, who had testified at the 1992 hearings, to complain about GSA’s recent appointment of new executive director of the Burial Ground project, Lisa Wager. As community members pointed out at a meeting on April 8, Wager was neither African American nor possessed appropriate scientific and professional qualifications.⁴⁶ In contrast to Wager’s statement that GSA acknowledged that Blakey “had put the project on the map,” a letter submitted by Blakey and Wilson, neither of whom attended the meeting, accused the GSA of attempting “to tokenize competent African-American leadership while it places the project under a Euro-American executive director.... The African-American community is currently being duped by the GSA and we are committed to minimizing our presence as a smoke screen for the GSA.”⁴⁷ On May 12, following a third meeting, Wager resigned.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Brooks, "African Burial Ground Project Denied Needed Funding."

⁴⁶ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 80-82.

⁴⁷ Debbie Officer, "Uproar and Protest at African Burial Ground Meeting," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 15, 1999, 4.

⁴⁸ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 82.

Despite GSA's appointment of two African American staff members following Wager's resignation, new deputy regional administrator William Lawson and GSA Associate Regional Administrator Ronald Law, controversy surrounding the project continued. On October 2, 1999, at the first public meeting that GSA had organized since 1994, a new set of concerns emerged as a community group known as the Descendents of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground called for immediate reburial of exhumed remains, and accused Blakey of hoarding the remains and intentionally postponing reinterment.⁴⁹ In response, Blakey cited GSA's lack of funding and support as the reason for delay, while Peggy King Jorde, who had served as Mayor Dinkins' liaison to the project and had since executive director of the project's memorial arm, assured the group that the memorial would be constructed before reburial to avoid further displacements.⁵⁰

However, despite these assurances, the Descendents of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground continued to call for the return of the remains to New York. In January 2000, the group held a ceremony at the Burial Ground and demanded that the exhumed be returned by that February.⁵¹ When this deadline was not met, protests continued throughout 2000. Blaming GSA for the delay, community members pointed to the agency's refusal to provide adequate funding to complete scientific analysis, which, in turn, had brought the research to be completed before reinterment. Explicitly linking federal funding with a lack of respect for the exhumed, a protestor noted, "No one's

⁴⁹ Ibid., 85. GSA replaced Jorde with another contractor, Lana Turner, in 2001 (90).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 86.

⁵¹ Ali Rahman, "Lest We Forget! Our Ancestors' Bones Still Call to Us from the Empty Graves in Lower Manhattan," *New York Beacon*, January 12, 2000, 16.

working on the bones at this time.... And the more they're kept out, the more they're being desecrated and disrespected.”⁵² Indeed, for many, the project had become synonymous with the government’s ill treatment of Black Americans—and the power of the community to protest. As Blakey remarked, "There is a lot of symbolism about human rights in this project. How the government treated the burial ground says a lot about our government.”⁵³

Budget disputes and concerns over project delays came to head in February 2001, after the New York Daily News published an article about the project’s delay that detailed the budget dispute between Blakey and GSA. According to GSA officials, the disagreement stemmed from flaws in the original research design, which was developed under a “political firestorm” and thus lacked safeguards for oversight. GSA Associate Regional Administrator Ronald Law also cited the absence of project deliverables, including the final research reports stipulated by contracts, stating that the government’s “biggest problem” was determining how the initial \$5 million had been spent. An audit was underway. The article also suggested that Blakey was stonewalling the project by refusing to complete work on the remains and to meet with planners for the interpretive center until additional funding was received.⁵⁴

⁵² Karen Juanita Carrillo, "Committee Calls for African Burial Ground Remains to Be Reburied," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 2000, 5.

⁵³ Collison, "Disrespecting the Dead," *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 4.

⁵⁴ Robert Ingrassia, "\$21m Plan Mired in Woe: Researchers, Feds Wrangle over African Burial Ground," *New York Daily News*, February 5, 2001, 6.

Blakey angrily responded to article in an interview with the New Amsterdam News in March, accusing the New York Daily News of slander and “character assassination.” Noting that GSA had never made direct allegations of financial impropriety, Blakey cited his compliance with Federal regulations to document all expenditures and pointed to reports published throughout the project, as well as a comprehensive database of findings, as evidence of work completed. In response to GSA’s statement that it already granted over \$21 million to the project, Blakey suggested that the Burial Ground was underfunded from the start, and implied a connection between lack of funding and the site’s African American identity: The \$21 million, of which \$5 million or so has come to Howard University, is not a huge amount of money," he stated. "Consider that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani at about the same time supports providing about \$67 million of city funds for the expansion of the Guggenheim Museum. \$21 million? It should be at least \$31 million for this project.⁵⁵

The disagreement between GSA and Blakey continued through 2001, and work remained halted on the project’s physical anthropology. On September 11, 2001 near disaster struck, when the project’s archeological laboratory at the 6 World Trade Center was destroyed in the terrorist attacks. However, recovery workers were able to locate nearly 100 boxes of artifacts, along with files, photographs, and computers documenting analysis.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ L’Nzinga Strickland, "Burial Scientist Blasts Daily News Report," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 8, 2001, 35.

⁵⁶ Michael O. Allen, "African Burial Ground Project Is Casualty of Sept. 11 Attack," *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service (New York Daily News)*, November 18, 2001.

4.12 Toward a Resolution, January 2002-August 2003

Finally, in early 2002, GSA resolved to reopen communications with the project's stakeholders. On March 12, representatives from GSA, the Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation, (ACHP), the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLPC), the National Park Service (NPS), and Howard's research team met at Howard to voice their concerns regarding completion of the tasks outlined in the original Memorandum of Agreement. Following the meeting, GSA contracted with the Army Corps of Engineers to oversee completion of project, and between April and July the Corps team met with a range of participants to develop a course of action for completing the historical, archeological, and archeological reports. GSA, in turn, agreed to allocate an additional \$2 million for the project.⁵⁷

However, in September 2002, GSA received letters from Howard University stating that, due to concerns over the project's budget and administration, the university sought to actively withdraw from the contract to complete the physical anthropology, archeology, and history reports, and only complete the history section. Finally, following another round negotiations, in January 2003 Howard and GSA reached an agreement, and research recommenced on January 13.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (July 31, 2002 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20020731.htm.

⁵⁸ *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (October 31, 2002 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20021031.htm; *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (January

Recognizing the need for expertise in cultural resource management, GSA had also begun negotiations with the National Park Service to provide consultation for the project. Following a meeting on December 9, 2002, NPS agreed to administer the design and operations of the proposed interpretive center and to participate in the memorial selection committee.⁵⁹ On September 23, 2003, GSA entered into a formal interagency agreement with NPS.⁶⁰

During 2002 and 2003, GSA also began concerted efforts to re-engage government and community partners in the Burial Ground Project. In November 2002, GSA began lobbying Congressman Charles Rangel for support and during January and February met with key members of the New York Congressional Delegation to build support. GSA also re-opened dialog with the New York City Landmarks Commission and with the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, and met with the Manhattan Borough President.⁶¹ Finally, in an effort to reinitiate public dialog, on May 22, 2003, GSA organized the first of several leadership sessions to be held over the summer. The

31, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20030131.htm.

⁵⁹ *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (January 31, 2003).

⁶⁰ *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (October 31, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20031031.htm.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

meetings presented scientific research, as well as plans for the reinterment ceremony, and the proposed memorial, and solicited public comment.⁶²

4.13 Reinterment, October 2003

Finally, more than twelve years after excavations began, on September 30, 2003 the remains of New York's colonial Africans began their journey home. A ceremony at Howard University's Rankin Chapel marked the beginning of the five-day Rites of Ancestral Return. Between October 1 and 2, the remains of four individuals—intended to symbolize all the deceased—traveled to celebrations in Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia and Newark. On Friday, October 3, a flotilla carried the remains from Jersey City to Wall Street, where, following a brief ceremony, they joined a procession of five horse-drawn wagons carrying the remaining bones up Broadway to the memorial site at Duane Street. Escorting the wagons and acting as pallbearers were members of community organizations and politicians. The following day, in a ceremony at the Burial Ground attended by hundreds, the seven specially designed wooden coffins containing the human remains and associated artifacts of 419 individuals were carefully lowered into the ground (Figs. 19 & 20).⁶³ Speaking on behalf of the long dead African Ancestors,

⁶² *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (April 30, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]; available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20030430.htm).

⁶³ *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended Moa* ([October 1, 2003]).

poet Maya Angelo intoned, “ You may bury me in the bottom of Manhattan. I will rise. My people will get me. I will rise out of the huts of history’s shame.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *An African-American Homecoming* (n.d. [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/ABG_AnAfricanAmericanHomecoming.htm.

CHAPTER FIVE:
FINDING A VISUAL VOCABULARY:
DESIGN AND MEMORIALIZATION, 1993- 2005

5.1 Introduction

In summer 1993, four years before GSA would turn its attention toward developing a permanent exterior memorial for the African Burial Ground, a group of several New York organizations, known as the African Burial Ground Competition Coalition, invited entrants from across the United States and abroad to submit ideas for commemorating and celebrating the African Burial Ground. Encouraging cross-disciplinary submissions from artists, designers, writers, and scholars, the project's "Call for Ideas" reflected many values that had come to be associated with the burial ground site and explicitly pointed to the design competition as an important strategy for its preservation and memorialization. Entrants were encouraged to consider the site's sacred and cultural significance as a resting place for thousands of colonial Africans, its archeological, historical, and educational value, as well its political identity as both a "focal point of a popular preservation movement" and a "prominent African American landmark" in the core of New York's Civic Center. Noting that the "future of the site is still doubt," the prospectus suggested that "[a]n international competition provides an

optimal way to offer the government a range of proposals and concepts that may help safeguard the Burial Ground and proclaim its importance.”¹

The “Call for Ideas” and the ensuing competition marked the beginning of the process to memorialize the site that is still unfolding today. Informed by discussions surrounding the site’s scientific practice, starting in 1993 community members, project leaders, government officials, architects, and artists would search for design solutions that would both express and resolve competing receptions of the site’s importance. Once again, project planners would find themselves confronting issues of race and identity as they negotiated the complex terrain of the memorial process. Introducing many of the themes and conflicts that would permeate the discussion, this early competition pointed to the core issue surrounding the Burial Ground’s preservation: the mediation, representation, and protection of the multiplicity of values associated with the site, as well as their incorporation into the form, fabric, and memory of the city of New York.

5.2 Monuments and Counter-Monuments: The African Burial Ground Coalition Competition, 1993-1994

In early 1994, a panel of locally and nationally prominent scholars, designers, and educators reviewed the 165 entries submitted to African Burial Ground Coalition Competition.² Unable to select a single winner, jurors presented four “first awards” and

¹ Edward Kaufman, ed., *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition* (New York: African Burial Ground Competition Coalition, 1994), 78-79, 87.

² *Ibid.*, 86. **INSERT JUROR LIST**

four “second awards” to projects that they felt represented “a synthesis and coming together of ideas for this profoundly moving site which may bring to light its significance not only to Africans but to the whole American experience.”³ Guiding the jury process was a fundamental belief that “commemoration takes on all sides of an issue.”

Participation was not restricted to African Americans, nor were strictures placed on the form and function of proposed designs. According to coalition member William David Jr., then-president of the New York Coalition of Black Architects, the competition sought “to help us all understand the “mosaic’ that [Mayor David] Dinkins and others refer to.”⁴

The four first-prize winning proposals represented two contrasting approaches to memorialization—anticipating conflicting visions for the memorial that would later emerge.⁵ Lester Yuen and Nana D. Last’s “A Wall of Persistent Acknowledgement” and the R.B.B.’s Partnership’s untitled proposal both called for the creation of large-scale permanent monuments surrounded by hardscape, which, through a combination of physical presence and symbolic features, would allude to the 20,000 burials below ground-level and serve as unavoidable reminders of the past. Despite their abstracted forms, both projects adhered to a more traditional memorial program, seeking to embody and affix memory through the creation of dominating and unchanging physical forms.

Yuen and Last’s proposal called for the installation of a black granite plaza with a

³ Ibid., 25.

⁴ Kira Gould, "On Hallowed Ground: The African Burial Ground Competition," *Competitions* 4, no. 3 (1994), 30.

⁵ Project descriptions are based on entries from the project catalog. See Kaufman, ed., *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition*.

monumental freestanding glass wall on the pavilion site (Fig. 21). The wall would contain a vertical grid of 20,000 consecutively numbered brass pins (reproductions of those found fastening shrouds during excavations) oriented with their heads-facing west and engraved with the word “African American.” Focusing on the Elk Street site, R.B.B. Partnership also proposed a plaza featuring monumental forms, including a towering obelisk set in a pool of water (a gigantic sundial), a masonry wall flush with the wall of 290 Broadway inscribed with Paul Laurence Dunbar’s poem “Sympathy,” and a “waving field of copper tubes” alluding to African palisades (Fig. 22). Set apart from the surrounding urban fabric through form and materials, both designs emphasized the Burial Ground as a distinct and sacred precinct within New York.

In contrast, proposals by the Berman-Centuri team and Neville memorialized the Burial Ground’s identity as a hidden landscape—calling attention to both its original scope, as well as its temporal layers and lost history. Rejecting formal conventions for activating memory in favor of an approach that relied on personal interaction and interpretation, the projects constituted what James E. Young has identified as “counter-monuments,” projects whose “aim is not to console, but to provoke; not to remain fixed, but to change...not to be ignored by the its passerby...not to graciously accept the burden of memory but to throw it back on the town’s feet.”⁶ Berman and Centuri suggested replacing sidewalks throughout the original seven-acre site with panels designed by individuals and groups over time (Fig. 23). Specially designed manhole covers would

⁶ James E. Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992), 277.

read “The African Burial Ground/Walking Among African Graves/Speaking Through the Ground.” Neville called for each of the fifty-three elevators operating within the Burial Ground original seven-acre locale to be inscribed with “an easy-to-overlook fact: ‘You are now suspended above the African Burial Ground’” (Fig. 24). Rather than scripting public experience, both designs would offer opportunities for the transformation of contemporary personal experience and interweave, rather than separate, the Burial Ground from the life of the city.

Indeed a New York Times review of the exhibition of proposals that followed the competition articulated many of the issues that would continue to surround the Burial Ground’s memorialization in the coming years:

This is partly a show about language, about discovering a visual vocabulary to express the meaning of a place. If the language here occasionally verges on visual Babel, that is because this place holds multiple, at times contradictory meanings. The beliefs and customs of the dead. The injustice of their exclusion. The struggle, only partly victorious, of their descendents over racism. And on whose behalf are we supposed to speak? Who are the intended listeners? Does the word “our” in the show’s title refer exclusively to those of African ancestry? Or does it include others who have sought shelter within the city’s tradition of social tolerance?”⁷

5.3 Federal Art-in-Architecture Program, 1992-2003

Although the African Burial Ground Competition Coalition garnered considerable praise and attention, as a “competition of ideas,” unaffiliated with the Federal government, none of its proposals were actually carried out. Thus, in accordance with the Federal Steering Commission’s recommendations for memorializing the site, in the early

⁷Herbert Muschamp, "Claiming a Potent Piece of Urban Turf," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1994, 2:38.

1990s the General Services Administration (GSA) turned its attention to commissioning commemorative artwork for the lobby of 290 Broadway through the Federal-Art-in-Architecture Program.⁸ As specified by program guidelines, GSA formed a community panel that included five visual arts professionals and five community representatives, who reviewed portfolios and submitted a short-list of artists. The first round of commissions would eventually be awarded to Clyde Lynds; Roger Brown; and Houston Conwill, Joseph DePace, and Estella Majozo Conwill.⁹

These early artworks represented a variety of responses to the site's significance. Reacting to the discovery of the African Burial Ground and the ensuing discussion of liberty (or lack thereof), Lynds chose to focus on the theme of freedom for all Americans. His "America Song" (1995) is a sculptural relief panel with embedded fiber optics depicting a wing. Words of an African poet are inscribed below the work, which also features dramatic lighting for nighttime visibility (Fig. 25).¹⁰ Artist Roger Brown created an untitled mosaic (n.d.) depicting hexagonal skulls rising to meet gaunt male faces, both black and white, that hover just below the New York skyline (Fig. 26). While the image alludes to the Burial Ground, the artist intended it foremost as a testament to the toll of

⁸ This program mandates one-half of one percent of construction costs for Federal projects for the creation of artwork.

⁹ Andrea E. Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space" (Ph.D. Diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2002), 262.

¹⁰ U.S. General Services Administration Art-in-Architecture Program, "America Song": Clyde Lynds [sic] for the entrance of the Federal Office Building in New York City," (n.d.).

AIDS epidemic on all races.¹¹ Of the three artworks, only “The New Ring Shout “ (1995) by Houston Conwill, Joseph DePace, and Estella Majozo Conwill was developed solely as memorial to the African Burial Ground (Fig. 27). Located lobby’s central rotunda, the terrazzo floor piece is “circular multilayered and multicultural cosmogram superimposed onto a map of New York City.” African-based imagery denotes the international nature of black identity, while non-black symbols remind viewers that African diasporic identity is multi-cultural.¹² The artists write that the piece is a tribute to “the thousands of Africans, Indians and Europeans” buried at the site.¹³

At the suggestion of the Federal Steering Committee—and marking the emergence of the narrative that would come to dominate the site—a second round of commissions included increased community involvement and charged artists to create work that explicitly commemorated the African Burial Ground. Commissions were then awarded to Barbara Chase Riboud and Tomei Arai and, some years later, to Frank Bender.¹⁴ Riboud created a fifteen-foot bronze sculpture entitled “Africa Rising” (1998). The form, which suggests a woman standing on a ship, references African funerary practices and landscape, as well as the Middle Passage or the boat across the River Styx

¹¹ U.S. General Services Administration Art-in-Architecture Program, "The Roger Brown Mosaic at Foley Square, New York," (n.d.).

¹² Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619-Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 42.

¹³ U.S. General Services Administration Art-in-Architecture Program, "Houston Conwill, Joseph Depace, and Estella Conwill, 'The New Ring Shout,'" (n.d.).

¹⁴ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 277.

(Fig. 28).¹⁵ Arai's large silkscreen collage "Renewal" (1998) superimposes historical imagery associated with the Burial Ground, with that of colonial rule, slavery, revolution, New York abolitionism, and emancipation (Fig. 29). Suggesting archeological layers, the work seeks to reveal the hidden history of the site and of New York and suggests its complexity.¹⁶ Reflecting an increased emphasis on the ability of the site's physical anthropology to restore lost identities to the interred, for "Unearthed" (2003), Bender, a forensic sculptor, created a trio of bronze heads based on remains excavated from the Burial Ground (Fig. 30).¹⁷

5.4 Lorenzo Pace, 1992-2000

As the installation of artwork at 290 Broadway progressed, a clear emphasis emerged on projects that relied on distinctly African imagery to develop more literal interpretations of the site. Reminiscent of the project's scientific research, the creation of artworks also emerged as the province of African American artists. With the commission of artist Lorenzo Pace to create a sculpture for Foley Square, artworks also emerged as a forum for debates over the Burial Ground's meaning and control.

In 1992, the New York City Parks Department and the Federal Government began plans for a major project to redesign the civic center in Lower Manhattan. Six irregularly shaped lots, including Foley Square, would be joined to create a five-acre bi-level plaza

¹⁵ U.S. General Services Administration, "Barbara Chase Riboud, 'African Rising,'" (n.d).

¹⁶ U.S. General Services Administration, "Tomei Arai, 'Renewal,'" (n.d).

¹⁷ U.S. General Services Administration Art-in-Architecture Program, "'Unearthed' by Frank Bender," (n.d.).

with a fountain, benches, and lighting.¹⁸ Project architects R.G. Roesch called for the installation of large bronze medallions (by Rebecca Dar) throughout the park to commemorate the site's history, particularly as the former location of a Native American settlement. A globe surrounded by tents and marquees would occupy the new park's center.¹⁹

Displeased, some African-American New Yorkers began agitating for a design that signified the area's connection to African-American history—namely, its location only one block from African Burial Ground and the square's past as the site of slave executions following the alleged "Negro Plot" of 1741. In response, the City formed an external design committee and decided to commission an African-American artist. In 1992, the Parks Department and the Office of Cultural Affairs issued a call for proposals and awarded the project to sculptor Lorenzo Pace. However, Pace's original design, a horizontal line of workers in front of the Federal Courthouse symbolizing the building of New York, met with resistance. Finally, following four years of pressure and discussion from panelists and community members, the City accepted a new design from Pace and broke ground on October 16, 1997.²⁰

¹⁸ City of New York Parks and Recreation Press Release, "Mayor Guiliani, Senator Moynihan and Commissioner Stern Break Ground at \$18 Million Foley Square Reconstruction; Plan to Unify Five-Acre New York Municipal Center," (October 16, 1994 [cited June 7, 2006]); available from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/html/97/sp620-97.html>.

¹⁹ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 290-291.

²⁰ Ibid.

Installed in February 2000, Pace's monumental black granite sculpture, "Triumph of the Human Spirit," stands at fifty-feet-high and forty-eight-feet long and represents an abstraction of an antelope mask worn by tribesmen in Mali, Africa, mounted atop an Indian canoe, which is supported by block or "landing dock" (Fig. 31). Although alluding to all immigrants to New York, the work specifically memorializes the experience of colonial Africans and Native Americans. Located in the heart of New York's Civic Center, the work seeks to broaden and challenge understandings of history, as well as the legal and political frameworks of the United States.²¹

Although Pace's design had met with considerable critical acclaim, following its installation the sculpture remained shrouded in green canvas at the artist's request. The work soon became a point of contention as Pace became locked in a debate with officials over the date for the unveiling ceremony, October 12—the traditional date of Columbus Day (although the holiday is celebrated October 9). Pace argued against unveiling the work, which pays tribute to the wrongs that slaves, immigrants and Native Americans experienced in the nation's early years, during the week marking Columbus's arrival. However, government officials refused to reschedule the ceremony, and New York Parks Commissioner accused Pace of "political correctness run amok," and called his objection "an attempt to delegitimize traditional American institutions, similar to the war on Thanksgiving."²² In response, Pace and other community members boycotted the event

²¹ Ibid. ; Robin Finn, "Public Lives; with Memorial, a Monumental Predicament," *The New York Times*, September 27, 2000, B2.

²² "Foley Square Unveiling," *Downtown Express*, October 10, 2000.

and, with the support of the African Burial Ground Liaison Office, organized an alternative dedication ceremony on October 19.²³

5.5 Design Competitions Begin, 1997

In March 1997, GSA announced plans for national design competitions for an interpretive center and permanent memorial at the Burial Ground. In accordance with the recommendations of the Federal Steering Committee, the interpretive center would be located in the lobby of 290 Broadway overlooking the Burial Ground site and would seek to engage the public in an ongoing educational discussions about the site and lives of colonial Africans from historic, scientific, and spiritual perspectives. The memorial, to be located on the former pavilion site, would provide a permanent venue for honoring and remembering the dead, as well as a space for contemplation. Although the projects were to be developed along separate tracks, each was to consider its contextual relationship to the other, as well as to the broader historic landscape of Lower Manhattan. Both projects would be funded with the \$3 million allocated by Congress in 1993 and guided by an independent advisory panel of African American professionals.²⁴

Shaping overall design and criteria for both competitions was an acknowledgment of the values that supporters had assigned to the Burial Ground during the years

²³ Debbie A. Officer, "In Honor of the Ancestors: African Burial Ground Monument Unveiled," *New York Amsterdam News*, October 26, 2000, 3.

²⁴ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 298-299; U.S. General Services Administration, "The African Burial Ground Design Competitions, New York City, [1997]; Stephen D. Coleman, "African Burial Ground Commemoration: A Unique Opportunity for Artists and Community," *Black Masks* 13, no. 2.

following its discovery. GSA officials worked with consultant and project director Peggy King Jorde to develop a competition and selection process that simultaneously communicated the site's historical, scientific, and spiritual dimensions to designers and incorporated opportunities significant community involvement through public meetings and surveys. Reflecting the site's legacy of grass-roots activism, the competition would be geared to encourage the involvement of smaller firms and emerging designers, and would include significant outreach through African American professional organizations.²⁵ In essence, the design competitions would serve as the forum through which the Burial Ground's values would be expressed, mediated, and ultimately formalized as part of the urban fabric.

5.6 The Interpretive Center, 1997-2000

The following September, GSA distributed a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the interpretive center and in October organized a day of information and networking sessions to provide participants in both competitions with a grounding in the site's historic, scientific, and community dimensions. The center's RFP called for the design and construction of a 2,000 square foot space that would "inform, engage, and enlighten visitors" with exhibits focusing on four themes: history, rediscovery, scientific interpretation, and the lives of the interred. Exhibits were to have a memorial quality and,

²⁵ Coleman, "African Burial Ground Commemoration: A Unique Opportunity for Artists and Community."

through a combination of design and interpretive elements, to provide an experience that was simultaneously spiritual and hands-on.²⁶

The competition brochure emphasized the center's function to provide a physical environment that would balance and mediate the concerns surrounding the site. A statement of purpose explicitly acknowledged the role its design would play in expressing and communicating the history and significance of the Burial Ground, as well as in providing a foundation for continued dialog:

An interpretive environment will be key in facilitating for generations of African Americans and the broader community a basis for understanding and inquiry. The environment is intended to interpret the important historic and scientific findings, while recognizing the contemporary civic movement that shaped the preservation of the historic site. The Interpretive Center will be an opportunity to convey both the contextual and concurrent histories important to "telling the story" of the burial ground and the lives of New York's early African ancestors. The design challenge is to capture this mission dynamically, creatively, and with integrity within the confines of the assigned space.²⁷

In March 1998 GSA announced a short list of five teams. Each team included architects, historians, and other professionals, and, although not specified in the RFP, at least one prominent African American.²⁸ To create more developed versions of their designs, teams were awarded \$10,000, and in April 1999 presented revised designs for public comment at a series of community forums (However, rather than a dialog about the center, designers found themselves embroiled in the conflict surrounding the

²⁶ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 298-299; U.S. General Services Administration, "The African Burial Ground Design Competitions, New York City."

²⁷ U.S. General Services Administration, "The African Burial Ground Design Competitions, New York City, [1997]."

²⁸ Coleman, "African Burial Ground Commemoration: A Unique Opportunity for Artists and Community."

appointment of Lisa Wager and what many perceived as GSA's obstructionist tactics ([See Chapter 4]). Following additional public meetings, the distribution of surveys regarding the center's design and operation to community members, and continued panel deliberations, in April 2000 a contract was awarded to a team, headed by New York firm IDI Construction.²⁹

IDI's design responded to project specifications by proposing that the center's 2,000 square feet be divided thematically and spatially into four areas.³⁰ A winding path would lead visitors through a series of four spaces, orientation, studio, transformation, and reclamation, that corresponded to four themes: birth, maturity, death, and rebirth. The journey, intended to reflect tenets of African cosmology, as well as qualitative aspects of personal and collective experience, would culminate with "Rebirth," an area that would provide opportunities for release and personal commemorative expression. Featuring an altar overlooking the memorial area where visitors could leave offerings, this area suggested a nexus where the past and present, communal and individual, quotidian and the sacred would intersect. Six overarching themes—Genesis and Rediscovery, Politics of Space, Community; Culture and Society, Sacred and Secular, and Reclamation—would unify the exhibits, and, responding to the emphasis on "story-telling" in the RFP, create a narrative from a cacophony of meanings.

²⁹ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 299-303.

³⁰ The discussion of IDI's design is based on Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 306; and Andrew Blum, "Record News: African Burial Ground on Hold," *Architectural Record* 188, no. 9 (2000).

5.7 The Memorial Competition, 1998

As plans for the Interpretive Center were unfolding, the competition for the permanent memorial was also moving ahead, and in February 1998, GSA issued an RFP for the design and construction of 10,000-square-foot “Exterior Memorial.” Project specifications noted that current site conditions included a depth of thirty feet of compacted soil above the burial layer and, that, although the site seemed to lend itself to “landscaping treatments,” the memorial was to incorporate spaces for cultural, ceremonial and contemplative activities, as well as an enclosure. The design also needed to allow for the eventual reinterment of the approximately 400 burials then under analysis at Howard University.³¹

Similar to those for the Interpretive Center, project specifications pointed to design as a vehicle for reconciling the site’s multiple values, as well as for safeguarding their representation, and for collapsing the distance between the past and the present. While, like the Interpretive Center, much of the memorial’s commemorative power would lie in its ability to offer a compelling narrative of the past, its tale would be cautionary, as well as celebratory:

Meaningful physical reminders are what we use to keep ourselves close to important events, people or places. The African Burial Ground is a permanent voice that summons vigilance in keeping significant the lives, culture, achievements, and contributions of African ancestry in America. Today, the African Burial Ground will endure as a living sentinel, steadfast in making forever intolerable the horror of human bondage and the misdeeds of cultural

³¹ U.S. General Services Administration, "The African Burial Ground Design Competitions, New York City, [1997]"; Daisy Hernandez, "Have Something to Say About African Burial Ground Memorial? Do It Now," *The New York Times*, July 27, 2003, 1:27.

hostility or indifference. The site is to be remembered as a “sacred place” that will acknowledge for all time those who are buried there. Their sacrifices are never to be forgotten, their unfrayed spiritual fiber to be cherished and their lives to be proudly celebrated.³²

5.8 Project Delays, 1998-2003

Despite their reconciliatory programs, both the Interpretative Center and Memorial became mired in the controversy surrounding the study and control of excavated remains (See Chapter Four). In September 2000, *Architectural Record* reported that work on the center was on hold pending the completion of the final scientific report on excavated burials.³³ Plans remained stalled, and in February 2001, the *Daily News* reported that Michael Blakey was refusing to meet with the IDI due to ongoing budget disputes with GSA.³⁴ Also complicating issues was GSA’s decision that January not to renew the contract of the project’s director, Peggy King Jorde.³⁵

Budget disputes between GSA and Blakey and the resulting delays in research also slowed work on the memorial. Although the competition was closed in 1998, the project’s five finalists were not selected until January 2002.³⁶ In February 2003, following the resolution of the conflict between Blakey and GSA (see Chapter Four) and an agreement on the part of the National Park Service (NPS) to provide assistance with

³² U.S. General Services Administration, "The African Burial Ground Design Competitions, New York City, [1997]."

³³ Blum, "Record News: African Burial Ground on Hold."

³⁴ Robert Ingrassia, "\$21M Plan Mired in Woe: Researchers, Feds Wrangle over African Burial Ground," *New York Daily News*, February 5, 2001, 6.

³⁵ Frohne, "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space," 90-91.

³⁶ Hernandez, "Have Something to Say About African Burial Ground Memorial? Do It Now."

interpretive activities, GSA finally released the names of finalists to the public, and between February and May, presented the designs through a series of exhibits and community meetings.³⁷

5.8 Memorial Design Proposals, 2002-2003

The five final proposals represented two basic design approaches to the site: (1) commemoration of the site's culture heritage through an architectural language based on African forms; and (2) preservation of the site's identity as a burial ground through interventions intended to evoke cemetery landscapes. In contrast to the 1994 competition—and in response to project specification—the final designs all positioned themselves as part of a more traditional memorial framework, relying far more on design features than personal experience and individual reception to shape and activate memory. Through several overarching formal elements, the proposals utilized design to direct both the process and content of memory. Recurrent elements included “memorial walls” that, recalling the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial, used text and/or imagery to allude to the scope of the site and its burials; water features intended to evoke the site’s sacred nature and encourage contemplation, as well to meet the need for ceremonial libations; pathways scripting movement through the site; elements recalling the concept of “the journey”; the use of forms to define the Burial Ground as a distinct place and sacred

³⁷ *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (April 30, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20030430.htm.

precinct within the urban environment; and lastly, and most controversially, sub-grade design features to allude to the human remains beneath the earth.³⁸

An Architectural Language Based on African Forms

Joseph DePace, Willy Gonzalez, and Design Team, “The Ring of Remembrance”

Noting that “[o]ur vision for the African Burial Ground Memorial recognizes and reclaims the site as a sacred place in the urban environment, “ this team proposed the construction of an eighteen-foot high pyramidal Spirit House at Duane and Elk Streets to mark the corner of the site, which would be surrounded on two sides by three-foot-high woven copper fence intended to evoke African craft techniques. Visitors would enter the paved Forecourt through a gateway and immediately encounter the Place of Reinterment, which would feature a copper basin for libations, a glass wall etched with the Sankofa symbol, and an altar. Herringbone pavers would enframe an area filled with crushed oyster shells marking where excavated remains had been reentered. Nearby a Ring of Remembrance with its four cardinal points marked by magnolia trees would recall the artwork “The New Ring Shout “in the lobby of the Federal Building and provide a place for gatherings. A pool inset into a descending wall would serve as Place of Contemplation. Visitors would follow a sloping path edged by a watercourse and West African plantings to arrive at the Well of Souls and glass mosaic mural depicting images

³⁸ Descriptions of the five finalists’ designs are based on proposal materials prepared by designers and posted on the African Burial Ground web site during the final round of competition. Materials, with the exception of the winning proposal, have since been taken down. (Cited November 7, 2004); available from <http://www.africanburialground.com>.

of historical and contemporary African life. Throughout the site, seasonal changes of plantings would allude to the passage of time (Fig. 32).

Rodney Leon, AARIS Architects , “For All Those Who were Lost”

Leon’s proposal called for seven interconnected elements whose “language, form, function, and ritual” were inspired by and derived from African precedents: A Wall of Remembrance inscribed with the history of the burial ground; Ancestral Pillars at the location of the reinterred remains; a Memorial Wall with a map of the boundaries of the original cemetery; an Ancestral Chamber rising to twenty-four-feet above street level; the Circle of the Diaspora with engraved signs, symbols, images. A Spiral Processional Ramp and an Ancestral Libation Court would be located six-feet below street level to create a physical connection between visitors and the interred, as well to create a sense of separation from the surrounding city. However, to emphasize memorial’s connection to other African American sites in Lower Manhattan, as well as its participatory nature, the site would not be enclosed (Fig. 33).

A Sacred Cemetery Landscape

Groundworks Design, “Sacred Ground”

This project proposed the development of a ceremonial lawn and memorial garden that would only be accessible to the public only during special events and services. Visitors would enter the site through the Spirit Catcher, a gate regulating access, pass by a ribbon of water for libations, and enter a circular ceremonial lawn area set below grade. The lawn’s edges would be built up at the perimeter to create a natural

amphitheater. Bronze panels inlaid in the sidewalk along the burial ground's perimeter would form an educational walkway, and the designers also proposed a program of intensive tree planting to mark the full vicinity of the African Burial Ground throughout the surrounding area. The design team noted that the project "respects the sanctity of the African Burial Ground as a cemetery by not building within its hallowed confines and by regulating public access to the site..." (Fig. 34).

Eustace Pilgrim and Christopher Davis, "African Burial Ground Memorial"

The central elements of this project were a raised grassy lawn to serve as a place for ceremonies and a pool/wall area to "sanctify" the site and educate visitors. A black granite pool with African symbols embossed on the bottom would define one of the site's edges. A sloping wall (directly reminiscent of the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial) would be set into the elevated lawn and would feature a relief of "ancestral faces" that would be illuminated at night. A copper perforated-metal sculpture evoking the sail of dhow was to stand in a circular area. The base of sculpture would be a boulder from Africa. High grass would mark the rectangular area to behind of the sail—where the remains were reinterred. A clear glass wall was planned to enclose most of the site (Fig. 35).

McKissack & McKissack, "African Burial Ground Memorial"

The imagery of this design sought to evoke a journey aboard ship "to give each visitor, young or old, a sense of the journey taken by the multitudes of enslaved African men, women and children." A series of curved, copperplate I-beams surrounding the site

referred to structural ribs of vessel and supported glass panels etched with historical information. At the northern end of the site, a curved copper-canopy evoking a ship's hull marked the entrance to the site. The canopy would also shelter a granite wall with information and images about the site. A water feature would block exterior sound to encourage a contemplative atmosphere. An undulating lawn suggested the waves of the ocean, as well as the traditional grassy landscape of cemetery. A series of wood staffs behind the serpentine limestone seating alluded to the ceremonial tradition of the Benin culture in West Africa and terminated at a beacon (to be illuminated at night), which could serve as a focal point for tours and ceremonial events (Fig. 36).

5.10 Design Disputes, 2003-2004

However, by the time were finalists were announced in 2003, the opinion of many community members had again turned against GSA, and federal officials were greeted with both criticism and skepticism. Members of the descendant community once again accused GSA of shutting them out of decision-making process and called for the project to be placed in the hands of the African American community, insisting, in the words of Ayo Harrington, chair of the Friends of the African Burial Ground, "The project belongs to the people and specifically to people of African descent." A group of Black New Yorkers also alleged that GSA had inadequately publicized presentations of the designs, as well as meetings regarding the reinterment ceremony planned for October.³⁹ Indeed,

³⁹ Hernandez, "Have Something to Say About African Burial Ground Memorial? Do It Now."

although both the reinterment and memorial processes were intended to heal divisions, by summer 2003 they had emerged as forums for the ongoing battle for control of the site.

While many members of New York's African-American population supported plans for reintering the remains, a contingent led by the Committee of Descendants of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground protested the federal government's involvement in the ceremony. The group accused GSA of violating a previous agreement that had granted New York's African American community the right to bury the remains and stated that the involvement of government agencies should have been limited to funding the event. Indicating a split within the sentiments of the city's Black population, members of the Committee of Descendants also critiqued Congressman Charles Rangel and Schomburg Center Executive Director Howard Dodson for working with GSA to coordinate the ceremony. Committee member Juanita Thomas exhorted, "We want people to know that if you work with Rangel and Dobson [sic] and GSA on this, you're not reburying them [the excavated remains]! You're just rubber stamping what they're doing." In direct contrast to GSA's description of the event as "nonpolitical, historical and cultural," for committee members the event had clear symbolic and political overtones. One committee member protested:

It should go down in history that we're objecting to that building [290 Broadway] forever. The CIA, the FBI and all the government agencies oppressing us are in that building. Why would they chose a building like that to lay us out in state?...That's like saying , okay, the city of New Amsterdam enslaved us and now the city of New York is going to rebury us. Why should we celebrate that?⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Karen Juanita Carrillo, "Committee of Descendants Still Protesting Govt's Plans for African Burial Ground," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 28, 2003, 5.

Despite these objections, reinterment occurred, and the memorial planning process continued. However, aggravated by existing tensions, a contingent of community members soon voiced concern over the construction of the very memorial itself. Members of the Committee of Descendants insisted that nothing be built on the “sanctified” site. Explicitly linking the politics of space, race, and commemoration, Committee member Ollie McLean suggested that the government appropriate additional land for the memorial through eminent domain: “If they can take people’s homes to create a ballpark...they can certainly take over some businesses near the burial ground to create a memorial.” McLean continued, “I want the Europeans out! ... I want it to be controlled by us. The land down there was not their land [when it was named the African Burial Ground]. They have no rights to it!”⁴¹

As the year wore on, GSA and NPS worked to stem the rising tide of controversy through a series of public engagement activities.⁴² In a major departure from earlier practice that suggested a new recognition of the importance of community engagement, GSA had entered into an interagency agreement with NPS in September 2003. The agreement formalized NPS’s role as a technical advisor for the Interpretive Center and a

⁴¹ Karen Juanita Carrillo, "Controversies Continue over African Burial Ground Memorial," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 10-June 16, 2004, 4.

⁴² *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (July 31, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20030731; *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (October 31, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20031031.htm; *Quarterly Activity Report, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA* (December 31, 2003 [cited May 5, 2006]); available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ACHP_20031231.htm.

member of the memorial selection committee, while expanding its responsibilities to include the design and implementation of a “public involvement process to assess public receptivity to management alternatives for the future development and operations of African Burial Ground Interpretive Activities. Under three subsequent support agreements, NPS also agreed to assist GSA in engaging key stakeholders and community members in a public dialog both to determine the final design of the memorial and to develop management alternatives, and to assist GSA in managing its contracts with IDI Construction and John Milner Associates. Specifically, NPS would continue working with the Office of Public Education and Interpretation on civic engagement activities, organize a charrette to “engage the public in reflections of the layers of meaning of the African Burial Ground,” and develop a series of public meetings and professional roundtables.⁴³

However, despite GSA and NPS’s efforts, concerns continued to mount over the memorial designs, all of which called for disturbing the site’s soil, as well as the selection

⁴³ *Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the National Park Service and the General Services Administration* (September 18, 2003 [cited November 7, 2004]); available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>; *Support Agreement (SA) No. 1 Performed under Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the General Services Administration, Northeast and Caribbean Region and National Park Service, Northeast Region* (n.d. [cited November 7, 2004]); available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>; *Support Agreement (SA) No. 2 Performed under Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the General Services Administration, Northeast and Caribbean Region and National Park Service, Northeast Region* (n.d. [cited November 7, 2004]); available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>; *Support Agreement (SA) No. 3 Performed under Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the General Services Administration, Northeast and Caribbean Region and National Park Service, Northeast Region* (n.d. [cited November 7, 2004]); available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.

process. At public meetings organized by NPS in summer 2004, the proposals became the focal point of a struggle over both how and by whom the burial ground would be interpreted. At a meeting in June, objections arose over the inclusion of white architects among the five finalists, as well as designs' formal elements, which, according to one attendee drew on "American-based architecture" and European precedents, rather than traditional African forms.⁴⁴ Throughout the summer and fall, community members continued to express dismay that construction of the memorial "would further disturb our ancestors" and that the GSA Source Selection Committee, the group charged with picking the final design, would not include members of the descendant community.⁴⁵

5.11 Memorial Selection and Commission, 2005

However, despite protests, NPS and GSA continued to gather community opinion for consideration by the Source Selection Committee, and, on April 29, 2005, officials finally announced the winning design by architect Rodney Leon of AARIS Architects (Fig. 34). Supporters and GSA officials praised the design's architectonic qualities, its size, permanence, and sheer physical presence. The memorial would stand as testament to the contributions of colonial Africans, as well as a cautionary reminder of the horrors of slavery, assuring that neither would ever be forgotten.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Karen Juanita Carrillo, "Burial Ground Upheaval," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 17-June 23, 2004, 1.

⁴⁵ Anonymous, "A Year after Reburial of Slaves, Debate over Memorial," *Black Issues in Higher Education* 21, no. 18.

⁴⁶ Karen Juanita Carrillo, "Architect for ABG Memorial Picked; Activists Prefer Somber Design," *New York Amsterdam News*, May 5-May 11, 2005, 4; U.S. Department of the

However, expressing a diametrically opposed viewpoint, the Committee of Descendants began to protest the decision almost immediately, criticizing the memorial's size and permanent nature. Hinting at protests still to come, Ollie McClean and a colleague heckled supporters of the design, including Congressman Charles Rangel and Howard Dodson and warned, "We have plans. This is not going to go down easily." City Councilman Charles Barron, a member of the group also stated his opposition and noted that the Committee preferred the design by McKissack and McKissack because "it left it as a sacred ground so it would like a grave site....[T]hey're disrespecting us by turning our gravesite into a museum" (Fig. 35).⁴⁷ Echoing the question asked by counter-monuments—"How better to remember forever a vanished people than by the perpetually unfinished ever-vanishing monument"—members of the Descendant community resisted the incorporation of the Burial Ground into the city's formal, political, and interpretive structure.⁴⁸

However, despite the Committee's protests, the tide of political power had turned, and the same day that the memorial design was announced, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, introduced legislation into the U.S. Senate to establish the African Burial Ground National Historic Site and the African Burial Ground Memorial Museum in

Interior U.S. General Services Administration and National Park Service Press Release, "Ceremonial Groundbreaking Held for African Burial Ground Memorial: National Park Service Releases Management Recommendations for Site," (October 3, 2005 [cited June 7 2006]); available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.

⁴⁷ Nick Confessore, "Design Is Picked for African Burial Ground, and the Heckling Begins," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2005, B1.

⁴⁸ Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," 277.

Lower Manhattan.⁴⁹ In September, ground was broken on the memorial, and in a letter to Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton dated October 4, President Bush requested that the agency to determine whether the site should be declared a national monument, “and whether it may warrant full federal protection.”⁵⁰ And, three days later, the exhibit “Slavery in New York” opened at the New York Historic Society, marking, at long last, the incorporation of colonial Africans into the history of the city.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Bill to Make Burial Ground Historic, Memorial Museum," *New York Beacon*, May 5-May 11, 2005, 4.

⁵⁰ Devlin Barrett, "Bush Moves to Make Grave Site a National Monument," *The Associated Press and Local Wire*, October 4, 2005.

⁵¹ Edward Rothstein, "The Peculiar Institution as Lived in New York," *The New York Times*, October 7, 2005, 43.

CONCLUSION:

“LOOKING TO THE PAST TO GUIDE THE FUTURE,” 1991-2006

Today the African Burial Ground stands as a testament to what historian Dolores Hayden has described as “the power of place—the power of ordinary urban landscapes to nurture citizen’s public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory.”¹ The site also offers an example of what critic Ned Kauffman has referred to as “celebratory power” of preservation “to reinsert a forgotten piece of history into the canon.”² Indeed, the history of the Burial Ground tells the amazing story of how, during a fifteen-year period, a forgotten piece of earth, hidden beneath a parking lot, was transformed into a site of nationally recognized historic and archeological significance. Declared a National Monument by President Bush on February 28, 2006, the Burial Ground now enjoys a level of protection and recognition on par with the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and the Grand Canyon.³

¹Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 9.

² Ned Kaufman, "Heritage and the Cultural Politics of Preservation," *Places* 11, no. 3 (1998), 61.

³ Proclamation by President George W. Bush, "Establishment of the African Burial Ground National Monument: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America," (February 27, 2006 [cited May 5 2006]); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060227-6.html>. For a discussion of National Monuments, see the National Park Service web site: <http://www.nps.gov>.

Today the site's history continues to unfold. Construction of the exterior memorial is currently underway and slated for completion later this year.⁴ In September 2005, the National Park Service (NPS) published draft management options for the site, which are currently under community review. Following the mutually-agreed upon termination of IDI's contract, the Park Service is also working with historians, scientists, and community members to develop plans for the interpretive center.⁵ What its shape will be—and how it will relate to the African American history museum proposed for the Washington's National Mall last year by President Bush—remains for debate.⁶

In 1993, less than a year after the discovery of the African Burial Ground, artists Melinda Hunt and Margaret Lovejoy proposed a temporary public art project for City Hall Park. Inspired by Burial Ground and its original location beyond the city limits, the artists sought to commemorate another historically marginalized group: those who, for the last three centuries, had been buried in New York City's potter's fields. To commemorate this anonymous and disposed community, a triangular arrangement of potted trees, an aqueduct, and tablets inscribed with text by inmates of Riker's Island—who today are charged with burying the indigent dead on Hart's Island in the Long Island Sound—would be located on the site occupied by the city's almshouse during the

⁴ Austin Fenner, "Work Begins on Memorial to Africans," *Daily News*, September 29, 2005, 40.

⁵ National Park Service, Northeast Region U.S. Department of the Interior, "Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground [2005]."

⁶ Jacqueline Trescott, "Bush Backs Mall Site for African American Museum," *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2005, C01.

eighteenth century (in what has since become City Hall Park). The artists hoped that the work, entitled “Just Outside the City,” would contribute to the dialog begun by the discovery of African Burial Ground by calling attention to the city’s nameless dead. However, following objections from the Burial Ground’s Federal Steering Committee, the New York City Parks Department tabled the permit application. As the New York noted, “the artists’ remembrance of the past . . . has encountered the politics of the present. The permit needed to erect the sculpture has become stalled in a sensitive debate over the proprietorship of a city’s rich history—over “how and where that history is portrayed by whom.”⁷ Ultimately, the project was never carried out.⁸

The proposal for City Hall Park offers a microcosm of many of the issues surrounding the discovery, investigation, and planned memorialization of the African Burial Ground. Responding to the site’s contentious history and tremendous symbolic importance to the city’s African-American community, the Steering Committee fought to maintain the Burial Ground’s integrity and to protect it from any threats, real or perceived. Caught in the midst of a debate over who would create, control, and interpret knowledge about the site, the Steering Committee asserted the right of African Americans to preserve their own heritage, and to defend the boundaries of that heritage from encroachment by outside forces. The committee also assumed the authority to act as both interpreter and custodian of what it assumed was the viewpoint of a unitary African-

⁷ Steven Lee Myers, "Politics of Present Snags Remembrance of Past; Plans for Potter's Field Memorial near African Burial Ground Stalls in Emotional Debate," *The New York Times*, July 20, 1993, B:1.

⁸ Marvine Howe, "Neighborhood Report: Madison Square Park; a Cornfield in Manhattan?," *The New York Times*, January 23, 1994, B8.

American community, as well as to chose among competing receptions of the site's value.

The incident also reflects the history of contestation over the form, function, and meaning of public spaces and public art in Lower Manhattan that provided a context for debates surrounding the Burial Ground. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, City Hall Park emerged as a site of struggle between politicians, developers, preservationists, and civic arts activists as groups competed to define the space's form and meaning in the face of rapid social and economic change, as well as competing political ideals. Architecture and urban design became flashpoints for competing visions of the city, as did debates over the role of the park in public memory and public life. In the 1980s, Foley Square became the site of one of the most infamous legal battles in the recent history of art and design as the General Services Administration (GSA) and sculptor Richard Serra locked horns over the removal of Serra's work, *Tilted Arc*. Ultimately, GSA, positioning itself as public advocate, succeeded in having the work removed, igniting discussions over the relationship between public space and democracy that continue today. Most recently, debates over the treatment of the World Trade Center site have illuminated the complexity that can result when public and personal memory collide with urban redevelopment.⁹

⁹ This represents a broad and much simplified discussion of the complex issues surrounding these sites. See the following for far more detailed and nuanced accounts: Michele H. Bogart, "Public Space and Public Memory in New York's City Hall Park," *Journal of Urban History* 25, no. 2 (1999); Harriet Senie, *The Tilted Arc Controversy : Dangerous Precedent?* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002); James E. Young, "The Memorial Process: A Juror's Report from Ground Zero," in *Contentious City: The*

Finally, the disagreement around the 1993 proposal for City Hall Park suggests a challenge that managers, designers, and supporters of the African Burial Ground must face in the coming years: how to balance the concerns and desires of New York's and indeed the country's African American population with the demands from competing publics that will be brought by the site's widespread recognition as a National Monument. Further, as Lower Manhattan continues to develop as the city's "memorial district," will the site be able to maintain its unique commemorative identity? How will the site maintain its value as a symbol of community activism as it is incorporated the broader spectrum of national history—and national bureaucracy? Will the site be able to maintain its dual identity as both a celebration of African-American culture and heritage and a memorial to the horrors of slavery, while also evolving to accommodate the emergence of new voices and new values—critical to maintaining its relevance for future generations?

In conclusion, what lessons can we draw from the story of the Burial Ground? What does it reveal about the processes through which historic sites are created? And what, in the spirit of Sankofa, what can the site's managers and the field of preservation learn from the past to guide the future? First and foremost, the Burial Ground exemplifies the power of collective community action and suggests that the values associated with historic sites are embedded as much in the present as in the past. It offers a cautionary

Politics of Recovery in New York, ed. John Mollenkopf (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005).

tale of the controversy that can result from management strategies that ignore or dismiss the concerns of constituents—and reminds us of the diversity of opinions that can exist within what appears to be a single community. The site also points to the power and complexity of the contemporary politics of race and identity. It suggests that the country's existing preservation policy framework offers tools that, if skillfully employed, can serve as important weapons in the fight to preserve (or assert) history and identity. It reflects the emergence of design competitions as a central strategy for mediating competing claims to a site. And, it illuminates the need for a flexible and responsive preservation practice that embraces anthropology, archeology, sociology, and ethnic studies, as well the traditional disciplines of history and materials conservation, a practice that looks beyond bricks and mortar to address concerns of spirituality, heritage, and identity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "African Burial Ground & Five Points Archeological Projects." *New York Beacon*, September 6, 1995, 25.
- "African Burial Ground Artifacts Recovered." *New York Beacon*, November 7, 2001, 3.
- "African Burial Ground Commemoration." *New York Voice, Inc. Harlem USA*, December 16, 1992, 14.
- "African Burial Ground Competition Coalition Chooses Winners of International Competition." *New York Voice, Inc. Harlem USA*, March 2, 1994, 20.
- "African Burial Ground Memorialization Moves Forward." *New York Beacon*, January 28, 1998, 5.
- "African Burial Ground Monument "Triumph of the Human Spirit"." *New York Beacon*, May 17, 2000, 34.
- "African Burial Ground Project Moves Forward." *New Voice of New York, Inc.*, March 24, 1999, 13.
- African Burial Ground Web Site: <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.
- An African-American Homecoming*, n.d. [cited May 5, 2006]. Available from http://www.africanburialground.gov/ABG_AnAfricanAmericanHomecoming.htm
- "After Years of Delay, Remains May Be Reburied at African Burial Ground." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 20, no. 12: 14.
- Alanen, Arnold R. and Robert Z. Melnick. *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- Allen, Michael O. "African Burial Ground Project Is Casualty of Sept. 11 Attack." *Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service (New York Daily News)*, November 18 2001.
- Allen, Peter S. "African Burial Ground Revisited." *Archeology* (1995): 87, 89.
- "Amendment to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the General Services Administration Executed March

15, 1989 Regarding the Proposed Foley Square U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building Projects." December 1991.

- Barrett, Devlin. "Bush Moves to Make Grave Site a National Monument." *The Associated Press and Local Wire*, October 4, 2005.
- Berlin, Ira and Leslie Harris. *Slavery in New York*. New York: The New Press in Conjunction with the New York Historical Society, 2005.
- Bernstein, Alice. "A Ceremony of Grief, Triumph: The African Burial Ground." *New York Beacon*, October 22, 2003, 7.
- "Bill to Make Burial Ground Historic, Memorial Museum." *New York Beacon*, May 5-May 11, 2005, 4.
- Blackmar, Elizabeth. *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Blakey, Michael L. "African Burial Ground in Jeopardy: Continue the Research and Preservation of "Business as Usual?"" *About ... Time XXVII*, no. 1: 38.
- . "Bioarcheology of the African Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 387-422.
- . "The New York African Burial Ground Project: An Examination of Enslaved Lives, a Construction of Ancestral Ties." *Transforming Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1998): 53-58.
- Blum, Andrew. "Record News: African Burial Ground on Hold." *Architectural Record* 188, no. 9 (2000): 38.
- Bogart, Michele H. "Public Space and Public Memory in New York's City Hall Park." *Journal of Urban History* 25, no. 2 (1999): 226-257.
- Boyd, Herb. "Black New Yorkers; a Strong Voice for Justice." *New York Amsterdam News*, June 10-June 16, 2004, 11.
- . "Lest We Forget." *New York Amsterdam News*, September 23-September 29, 2004, 3.
- . "'Our Own Historic Ground Zero'." *New York Amsterdam News*, September 25, 2003, 3.
- Brooks, Charles. "African Burial Ground Project Denied Needed Funding." *New York Amsterdam News*, January 14, 1999, 3.

- Browne, J. Zamgba. "Giuliani and Pals Give Their Tribute to Enslaved Africans." *New York Amsterdam News*, October 19, 2000, 5.
- Browne, J. Zamgba. "Paterson: 'I Will Seek Public Advocate Post'." *New York Amsterdam News*, May 15, 1993, 3.
- Brunius, Harold. "African Burial Ground under New York Streets." *Christian Science Monitor*, July 17, 1999, 16.
- "Burial Ground of Unkept Promises." *The New York Times*, October 6, 2002, 4:12.
- "Bush Declares African Burial Ground a National Monument." *New York Beacon*, March 2-March 8, 2006, 3.
- Cantwell, Anne-Marie and Diana diZerega Wall. *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Carrillo, Karen Juanita. "Architect for Abg Memorial Picked; Activists Prefer Somber Design." *New York Amsterdam News*, May 5-May 11, 2005, 4.
- . "Burial Ground Upheaval." *New York Amsterdam News*, June 17-June 23, 2004, 1.
- . "Celebrations Planned for Anniversary of African Burial Ground Re-Interments." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 12-August 18, 2004, 3.
- . "Coffins for Burial Ground Already Prepared: Made to Order from Ghana." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 30, 2001, 4.
- . "Committee Calls for African Burial Ground Remains to Be Reburied." *New York Amsterdam News*, October 5, 2000, 5.
- . "Committee of Descendants Protest Abg Construction." *New York Amsterdam News*, December 1-December 7, 2005, 15.
- . "Committee of Descendants Still Protesting Govt's Plans for African Burial Ground." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 28, 2003, 5.
- . "Controversies Continue over African Burial Ground Memorial." *New York Amsterdam News*, June 10-June 16, 2004, 4.
- . "Feds Stopped Reburial of African Burial Ground Remains." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 23, 2001, 6.
- . "Not Even in Death: Burial Ground Bones Remain Unburied." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 9, 2001, 1.

- . "Presents, Prayers for Burial Ground's Remains." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 16, 2001, 4.
- Coleman, Stephen D. "African Burial Ground Commemoration: A Unique Opportunity for Artists and Community." *Black Masks* 13, no. 2: 9.
- Collison, Michele N-K. "Disrespecting the Dead." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 16, no. 3 (1996): 16.
- Confessore, Nick. "Design Is Picked for African Burial Ground, and the Heckling Begins." *The New York Times*, April 30, 2005, B1.
- Cook, Karen. "Bones of Contention." *The Village Voice*, May 4, 1993, 23-27.
- Cox, Matthews & Associates. "After Years of Delay, Remains May Be Reburied at African Burial Ground." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 20, no. 12 (2003): 14.
- Cronin, Anne. "The Struggle for Freedom and a Proper Burial." *The New York Times*, February 28, 1993, 4:5.
- "Designer Tapped for African Burial Ground." *New York Beacon*, May 5-May 11, 2005, 4.
- Dobrzynski, Judith H. "Contest for Memorial at Black Burial Ground." *The New York Times*, March 15 1999, E3.
- Dunlap, David W. "African Burial Ground Made Historic Site." *The New York Times*, February 26, 1993, B3.
- . "A Black Cemetery Takes Its Place in History." *The New York Times*, February 28, 1993, 4:5.
- . "Dig Unearths Early Black Burial Ground." *The New York Times*, October 9, 1991, B1.
- . "Excavation Stirs Debate on Cemetery." *The New York Times*, December 6, 1991, B4.
- . "Unfree, Unknown." *The New York Times*, December 26, 1991, B3.
- Epperson, Terrence W. "The Politics of 'Race' and Cultural Identity at the African Burial Ground Excavations, New York City." *World Archaeological Bulletin* 7 (1996): 108-117.
- "Establishment of the African Burial Ground National Monument: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America," February 27, 2006 [cited May 5,

2006]. Available from
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060227-6.html>.

Federal Steering Committee on the African Burial Ground Project. "Chronology-African Burial Ground Project," n.d. [cited May 5, 2006]. Available from
http://www.africanburialground.gov/Documents/ABG_FederalSteeringCommitteeChronology.htm.

Fenner, Austin. "Work Begins on Memorial to Africans." *Daily News*, September 29, 2005, 40.

Fenner, Austin and Corky Siemasko with James Gordon Meek. "Make African Burial Ground Monument: W." *Daily News*, October 5, 2005, 16.

Ferris, Marc. "8 Years after the Bones, More Battles." *The New York Times*, March 21, 1999, 6.

Finn, Robin. "Public Lives; with Memorial, a Monumental Predicament." *The New York Times*, September 27, 2000, B2.

Foley Square African-American Graveyard Controversy (House of Representatives), July 31 1992.

"Foley Square Unveiling." *Downtown Express*, October 10 2000.

Frohne, Andrea E. "The African Burial Ground in New York City: Manifesting and Representing Spirituality of Space." Ph.D. Diss., Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2002.

Goodnight, G. Thomas. "Mssrs. Dinkins, Rangel, and Savage in Colloquy on the African Burial Ground: A Companion Reading." *Western Journal of Communication* 63, no. 4 (1999): 511-512.

Gould, Kira. "On Hallowed Ground: The African Burial Ground Competition." *Competitions* 4, no. 3 (1994): 28-34.

Gregerson, John. "From Red Tape to Blue Ribbons." *Building Design and Construction* 36, no. 8 (1995): 32,35.

"GSA Announces Significant Progress with NY African Burial Ground Project." *New Voice of New York, Inc.*, March 5, 2003, 11.

Harrington, Spencer P.M. "Bones & Bureaucrats." *Archaeology* (1993): 29-38.

———. "Stories the Bones Will Tell." *Archaeology* (1993): 36-37.

- Harris, Leslie. *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Hawkins, B. Denise. "Howard Scientists 'Listen' to Bones: 1991 Manhattan Dig Still Yielding Priceless Data on Colonial-Era Africans." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 12, no. 17: 8.
- Hayden, Dolores. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscape as Public History*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997.
- Hernandez, Daisy. "Have Something to Say About African Burial Ground Memorial? Do It Now." *The New York Times*, July 27, 2003, 1:27.
- Hodges, Graham Russell. *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & East Jersey*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- "Honoring the Slaves of New York." *The New York Times*, October 4, 2003, A12.
- Howe, Marvine. "Neighborhood Report: Lower Manhattan: Four Visions to Honor Burial Ground." *The New York Times*, February 27, 1994, 6.
- . "Neighborhood Report: Madison Square Park; a Cornfield in Manhattan?" *The New York Times*, January 23, 1994, B8.
- Howson, Jean. "Slavery in New York: Let's Look at the Record." *The New York Times*, December 19, 2005, 32.
- Ingrassia, Robert. "\$21M Plan Mired in Woe: Researchers, Feds Wrangle over African Burial Ground." *New York Daily News*, February 5, 2001, 6.
- "Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the National Park Service and the General Services Administration," September 18, 2003 [cited November 7, 2004]. Available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.
- Iovine, Julie. "Memorials Proliferate in Crowded Downtown." *The New York Times*, March 13, 2003, E1.
- Jackson, Harriet. "Learning from Ancestral Bones: New York's Exhumed African Past." *American Visions* 9, no. 1 (1994): 18(14).
- Katz, Celeste. "Architect Picked for Burial Ground." *Daily News*, April 30 2005, 23.
- Kaufman, Edward, ed. *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition*. New York: African Burial Ground Competition Coalition, 1994.

- Kaufman, Ned. "Heritage and the Cultural Politics of Preservation." *Places* 11, no. 3 (1998): 58-65.
- Kennedy, Randy. "Gray Skies Match the Mood at Reburial." *The New York Times*, October 5, 2003, 1:35.
- Killgannon, Corey. "Public Lives; Unearthing the Past, Then Burying It with Respect." *The New York Times*, October 2, 2003, B2.
- Krog, Steven R. "Exhibits: Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: Selected Entries from New York's African Burial Ground Memorial Competition, Municipal Arts Society, the Urban Center, February 18-April 20, 1994." *Landscape Journal* (1994): 181-184.
- La Roche, Cheryl J., and Michael L. Blakey. "Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground." *Historical Archaeology* 31, no. 3 (1997): 84-106.
- Lamb, Donna. "City Council Passes Resolution Urging Progress on African Burial Ground." *New York Beacon*, June 11, 2003, 4.
- . "Important Issues Kept Alive at the African Burial Ground." *New York Beacon*, February 25, 2004, 25.
- Lepore, Jill. "Goodbye Columbus: When America Won Its Independence, What Became of the Slaves Who Fled to Theirs?" *The New Yorker*, May 8, 2006 (Web Edition). Posted May 1, 2006 [cited May 31, 2006].
- . *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.
- . "New York's Buried History." *The New York Times*, October 9, 2005, 11.
- "Lessons from the African Burial Ground." *New York Amsterdam News*, October 6-October 12, 2005, 1.
- Levy, Clifford J. "Study to Examine Bones from Black's Burial Site." *The New York Times*, August 13, 1993, B1.
- Lewis, Monica. "Enslaved in Life, Ancestors Honored in Death." *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 3, 2003, 1A.
- Linenthal, Edward Tabor. *The Unfinished Bombing : Oklahoma City in American Memory*. Oxford: New York, 2001.

- Luo, Michael. "City's Role in Slavery Is Recalled at Rites." *The New York Times*, October 4, 2003, B3.
- . "In Manhattan, Another Burial For 400 Colonial-Era Blacks." *The New York Times*, October 2, 2003, A1.
- Macdonald, Robert R. "Bad Blood at the Burial Ground." *The New York Times*, September 12, 1992, 1:21.
- Mack, Mark E., and Michael L. Blakey. "The New York African Burial Ground Project: Past Biases, Current Dilemmas, and Future Research Opportunities." *Transcending Boundaries, Transforming the Discipline: African Diaspora Archaeologies in the New Millennium* 38, no. 1 (2004): 10-17.
- McCarthy, John P. "From African-American Cemeteries in New York and Philadelphia toward a Community-Based Paradigm for the Excavation and Analysis of Human Remains." In *Human Remains : Conservation, Retrieval and Analysis: Proceedings of a Conference Held in Williamsburg, VA, Nov. 7-11th 1999*, edited by Emily Williams, 11-15. Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999.
- McGowan, Gays and Sheryl J. Laroche. "The Ethical Dilemma Facing Conservation: Care and Treatment of Human Skeletal Remains and Mortuary Objects." *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 35, no. 3 (1996): 109-121.
- Meeks, Kenneth. "Paterson Happy with Citation Received in Connection with Burial Ground." *New York Amsterdam News*, February 15, 1997, 2.
- "Memorandum of Agreement between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the General Services Administration Regarding the Proposed Foley Square U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building Projects." March 15, 1989.
- "Memorialization of the African Burial Ground. Final Recommendations to the Administrator, General Services Administration and the United States Congress." Prepared by Peggy King; Weil Jorde, Gotshal & Mange Counsel; and the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground, 1993.
- Mfuni, Tanangachi. "Architect Pays Homage to the Ancestors." *New York Amsterdam News*, October 6-October 12, 2005, 5.
- . "Emotional Burial Ground Memorial Groundbreaking." *New York Amsterdam News*, September 29-October 5, 2005, 5.
- Miscione, Renee. "Contractor Selected to Design African Burial Ground Center." *New York Beacon*, March 22, 2000, 6.

- Montanga, Dennis (Director of Monuments and Memorials, Northeast Regional Office, National Park Service), in discussion with the author, December 2, 2004.
- Moorer, Talise D. "African Burial Ground Becomes National Landmark." *New York Amsterdam News*, March 2-March 8, 2006, 4.
- . "St. James Presbyterian Church - Bringing Ministry to the People for over a Century." *New York Amsterdam News*, June 16-June 22, 2005, 39.
- Muschamp, Herbert. "Claiming a Potent Piece of Urban Turf." *The New York Times*, March 13, 1994, 2:38.
- Myers, Steven Lee. "Politics of Present Snags Remembrance of Past; Plans for Potter's Field Memorial near African Burial Ground Stalls in Emotional Debate." *The New York Times*, July 20, 1993, B:1.
- Nash, Gary B. *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980*. P.L. 96-515. December 1980.
- National Park Service, Northeast Region, U.S. Department of the Interior. "Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground [2005]."
- Native American Graves and Repatriation Act*. P.L. 101-601. November 16, 1992.
- Neville, Christopher P. "Overlooking the Collect: Between Topography and Memory in the Landscape of Lower Manhattan." M.S. Thesis (Historic Preservation), Columbia University, 1994.
- "New Art Installation Graces Downtown Federal Building." *New York Voice, Inc. Harlem USA*, April 29, 1998, 12.
- "New Chief of African Burial Ground Project." *New York Beacon*, June 16, 1999, 12.
- "New York City: Competition Winners' Designs Honor African Ancestors." *Architectural Record* (1994): 12.
- New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. "African Burial Ground and the Commons Historic District Designation Report." Prepared by Gale Harris and Betsy Bradley, edited by Marjorie Pierson, 1993.
- Officer, Debbie. "African Burial Ground Now Designated a City Landmark." *New York Amsterdam News*, March 6, 1993, 1.

- . "African Burial Ground Opens Official Liaison Office in Wtc." *New York Amsterdam News*, May 29, 1993, 10.
- . "Burial Grounds Meeting Ends in Uproar." *New York Amsterdam News*, April 4 1993, 32,34.
- . "Con Ed Digs into African Burial Ground with New York City 'Emergency' Permits." *New York Amsterdam News*, February 19, 1994, 2.
- . "Outrage over Desecration of Ancestral Burial Ground." *New York Amsterdam News*, February 20, 1993, 1.
- . "Part II: Artifacts Tell Stories of the Dead in Slave Burials." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 28, 1993, 3.
- . "Part III. New Technology Puts 'Life' to Old Bones." *New York Amsterdam News*, September 4, 1993, 2.
- . "Uproar and Protest at African Burial Ground Meeting." *New York Amsterdam News*, April 15, 1999, 4.
- . "In Honor of the Ancestors: African Burial Ground Monument Unveiled." *New York Amsterdam News*, October 26, 2000, 3.
- Ono, Kent A. and John M.. Sloop. "Critical Rhetorics of Controversy." *Western Journal of Communication* 63, no. 4 (1999): 511-512.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619-Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Paterson, David. "It Took a Community to Save a Burial Ground." *The New York Times*, August 21, 1993, 1:18.
- Perry, Warren R. *Archaeology as Community Service: The African Burial Ground Project in New York City* Spring 2001, n.d. [cited April 4, 2006]. Available from www.stpt.usf.edu/~jsokolov/burialgr.htm.
- Phillips, Kendall R. "A Rhetoric of Controversy." *Western Journal of Communication* 63, no. 4 (1999): 488-510.
- "A Place of Remembrance." *About ... Time* 33, no. 2 (2005): 12.
- "Plans for African Burial Ground Memorialization Move Forward." *New York Voice, Inc. Harlem USA*, January 28, 1998, 9.
- Popson, Colleen W. "The House That Tweed Built." *Archaeology* (2002): 22-29.

- "A Proud Beginning to 1990." *The New York Times*, January 1, 1990, 24.
- Quarterly Activity Reports, African Burial Ground Project, Pursuant to the Amended MOA. July 31, 2002-December 31, 2005 [cited May 5, 2006]. Available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.
- Rahman, Ali. "Community Leaders Call for Return of African Remains." *New York Amsterdam News*, January 6, 2000, 5.
- . "Lest We Forget! Our Ancestors' Bones Still Call to Us from the Empty Graves in Lower Manhattan." *New York Beacon*, January 12, 2000, 16.
- "Reburial Plans Long Overdue, Says Fields." *New York Beacon*, October 1, 2003, 17.
- Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992*. P.L. 102-575. October 30, 1992.
- "Record News: Design Competitions to Commemorate African Burial Site in Manhattan." *Architectural Record* (1997): 57.
- "Research Design Subcommittee Statement." Federal Steering Committee. June 1993. (Available as Appendix A of The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC. "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1 [December 2004])."
- "Rodney Leon's Statement on the Design's Symbolism and Meaning." *About ... Time* 33, no. 2 (2005): 13.
- "Ronald Law Named to Lead African Burial Ground Project." *New Voice of New York, Inc.*, June 16, 1999, 10.
- Rothstein, Edward. "The Peculiar Institution as Lived in New York." *The New York Times*, October 7, 2005, 43.
- Rouse, Deborah. "Arts Scene: Lorenzo Pace Sculpture to Commemorate Those Buried in New York City's African Burial Ground." *American Visions* 15, no. 2 (2000): 10.
- Royston, Reginold A. "Transforming Sankofa: Black Anthropologists Interpret Life in 1700s New York through the African Burial Ground Project." *About ... Time* XXIV, no. 2: 19.
- Salaam, Yusef. "Anthropologists Exhume Evidence of Atrocities at Burial Ground." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 14, 1997, 10.
- "Schomburg Center Sets Schedule for Rites of Ancestral Return." *New York Beacon*, October 1, 2003, 17.

"Scientists Probe African Burial Ground for Answers to Puzzles." *New York Amsterdam News*, August 21, 1993, 2.

"Senator Paterson Announces Museum Plan for African Burial Ground." *New York Voice, Inc. Harlem USA*, January 6, 1993, 12.

Senie, Harriet. *The Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Shipp, E.R. "Black Cemetery Yields Wealth of History." *The New York Times*, August 9, 1992, 1:41.

Staples, Brent. "Manhattan's African Dead." *The New York Times*, May 22, 1995, A:14.

Stern, Seth. "Digging into the Lives of Slaves." *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 26, 2002, 22.

Strickland, L'Nzinga. "Burial Scientist Blasts Daily News Report." *New York Amsterdam News*, March 8, 2001, 35.

Strickland, L. N'Zinga. "African Burial Ground Office Recovers after 9/11." *New York Amsterdam News*, October 10, 2002, 4.

———. "Team Works on African Burial Ground Center." *New York Amsterdam News*, April 20, 2000, 6.

"Support Agreement (SA) No. 1 Performed under Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the General Services Administration, Northeast and Caribbean Region and National Park Service, Northeast Region," n.d. [cited November 7, 2004]. Available from www.africanburialground.gov.

"Support Agreement (SA) No. 2 Performed under Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the General Services Administration, Northeast and Caribbean Region and National Park Service, Northeast Region," n.d. [cited November 7, 2004]. Available from www.africanburialground.gov.

"Support Agreement (SA) No. 3 Performed under Interagency Agreement for African Burial Ground Technical Assistance between the General Services Administration, Northeast and Caribbean Region and National Park Service, Northeast Region," n.d. [cited November 7, 2004]. Available from www.africanburialground.gov.

- The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC. "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1." edited by Warren R. Perry, Jean Howson, and Barbara A. Bianco: U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2006 [cited May 27, 2005]. Available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.
- . "New York African Burial Ground History Final Report." edited by Edna Greene Medford: U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, 2004 [cited November 10, 2005]. Available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.
- . "The New York African Burial Ground Skeletal Biology Final Report, Vol. 1." edited by Michael L. Blakey and Leslie M. Rankin-Hill: U.S. General Services Administration Northeastern and Caribbean Region, [cited November 10, 2005]. Available from <http://www.africanburialground.gov>.
- Trescott, Jacqueline. "Bush Backs Mall Site for African American Museum." *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2005, C01.
- "Two-Day Celebration Pays Homage to African Burial Ground." *New York Beacon*, October 28-November 3, 2004, 14.
- U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. African Burial Ground Historic Landmark Registration Form. Prepared by New York City Landmarks Preservation (Gale Harris and Jean Howson), 1992.
- U.S. General Services Administration. "The African Burial Ground Design Competitions, New York City, [1997]."
- U.S. General Services Administration, Art-in-Architecture Program. "America Song: Clyde Lynds' [sic] Sculpture for the Entrance of the Federal Office Building in New York City," n.d.
- . "Barbara Chase Riboud, 'African Rising,'" n.d.
- . "Houston Conwill, Joseph Depace, and Estella Conwill, The 'New Ring Shout,'" n.d.
- . "The Roger Brown Mosaic at Foley Square, New York," n.d.
- . "Tomei Arai, 'Renewal,'" n.d.
- . "'Unearthed' by Frank Bender," n.d.
- U.S. General Services Administration and National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. "Ceremonial Groundbreaking Held for African Burial Ground Memorial:

National Park Service Releases Management Recommendations for Site (Press Release)," October 3, 2005 [cited June 7, 2006]. Available from www.africanburialground.gov.

Warren, Charmaine Patricia. "Memorial Day Weekend Ushers in Variety of Dancing." *New York Amsterdam News*, May 25, 1996, 23.

"What Makes Burial Ground Project a Milestone." *The New York Times*, May 30, 1995, A16.

Wilf, Steven. "Don't Rush Excavation of Black Burial Ground." *The New York Times*, December 26, 1991, A24.

Williams, Monte. "Forgotten Cemetery Becomes Two Historians' Battleground." *The New York Times*, April 8, 1996, B7.

Wilson, Sherrill (Executive Director of Office of Public Education and Interpretation), in discussion with the author, December 7, 2004.

"A Year after Reburial of Slaves, Debate over Memorial." *Black Issues in Higher Education* 21, no. 18: 14.

Young, James E. "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today." *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267-296.

———. "The Memorial Process: A Juror's Report from Ground Zero." In *Contentious City: The Politics of Recovery in New York*, edited by John Mollenkopf. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005.

Young, Wayne. "African Burial Ground Stamp Urged." *New York Beacon*, July 19, 1995, 12.

APPENDIX A:

FIGURES



Fig. 1: The African Burial Ground at Duane and Elk Streets in Lower Manhattan. Photo: Sarah R. Katz, November 2004.



Fig. 2: Looking across Duane Street to the African Burial Ground. Photo: Sarah R. Katz, November 2004.



Fig. 3: Buildings surrounding the African Burial Ground. Photo: Sarah R. Katz, November 2004.

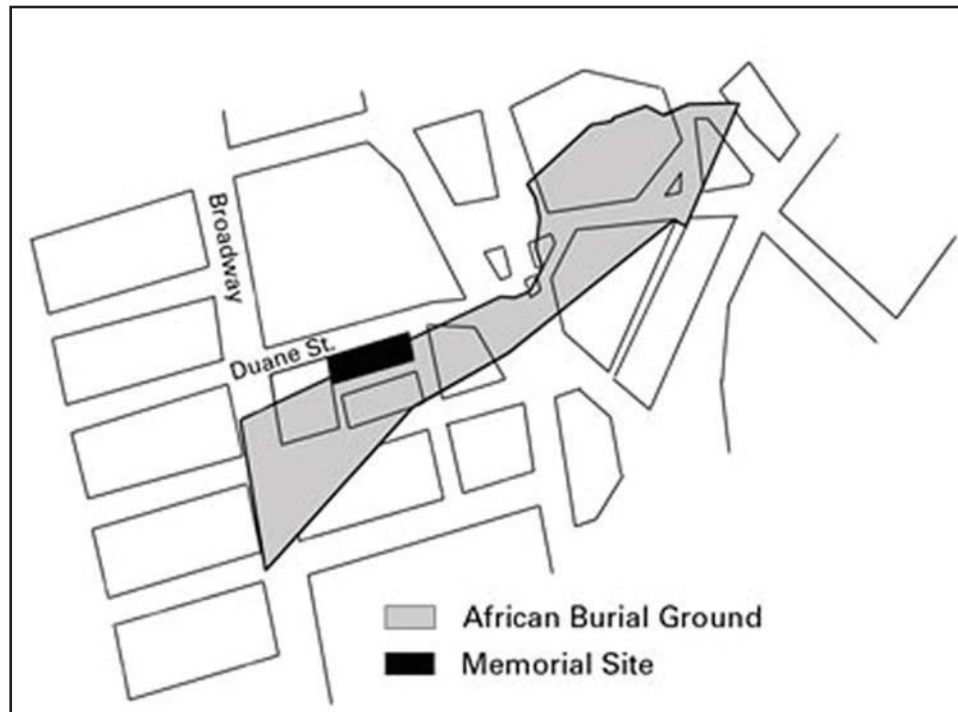


Fig. 4: The current 15,000 square foot site as compared to the original seven-acre African Burial Ground. Source: National Park Service.



Fig. 5: Plan of the City of New York in 1735-1737 by Mrs. Buchnerd (annotated). The words “Negro Burying Ground” appear (circled here), marking the first time the site was indicated on a map. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, “New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1” (2006), 55.

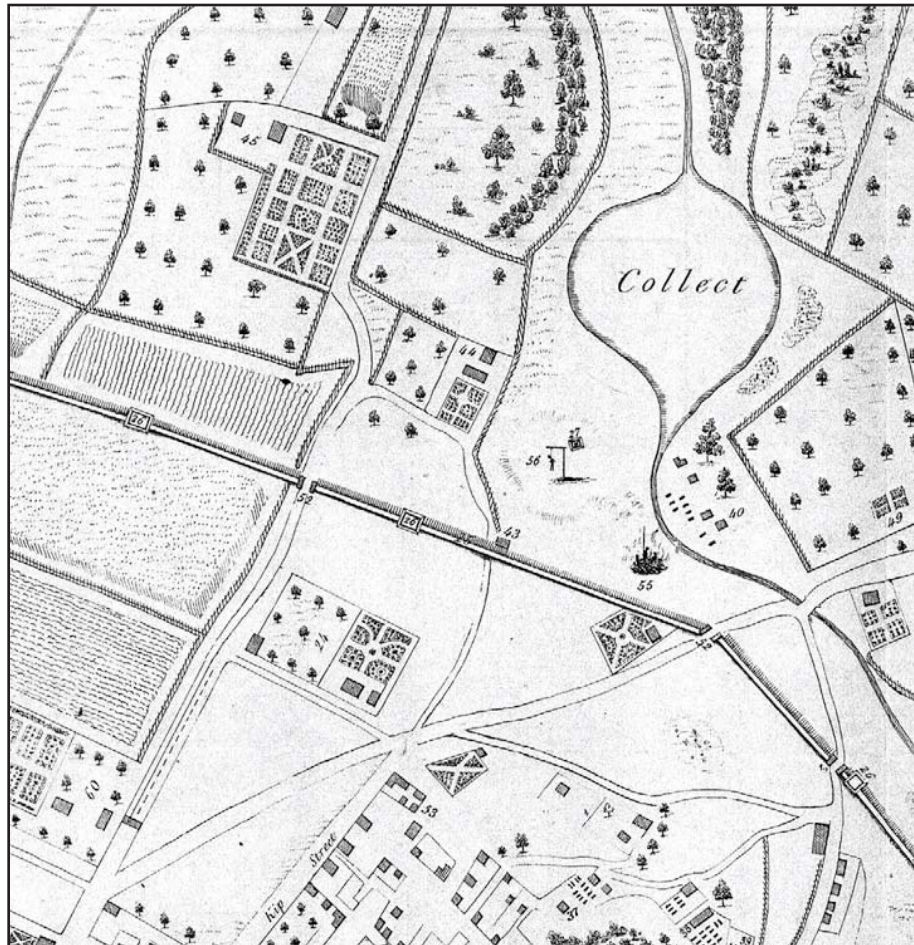


Fig. 6: Detail from David Grim's Map of New York City in 1742-44 as recollected in 1819. The map shows the punishments meted out to Africans following the 1741 Slave Rebellion. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1 (2006), 56.

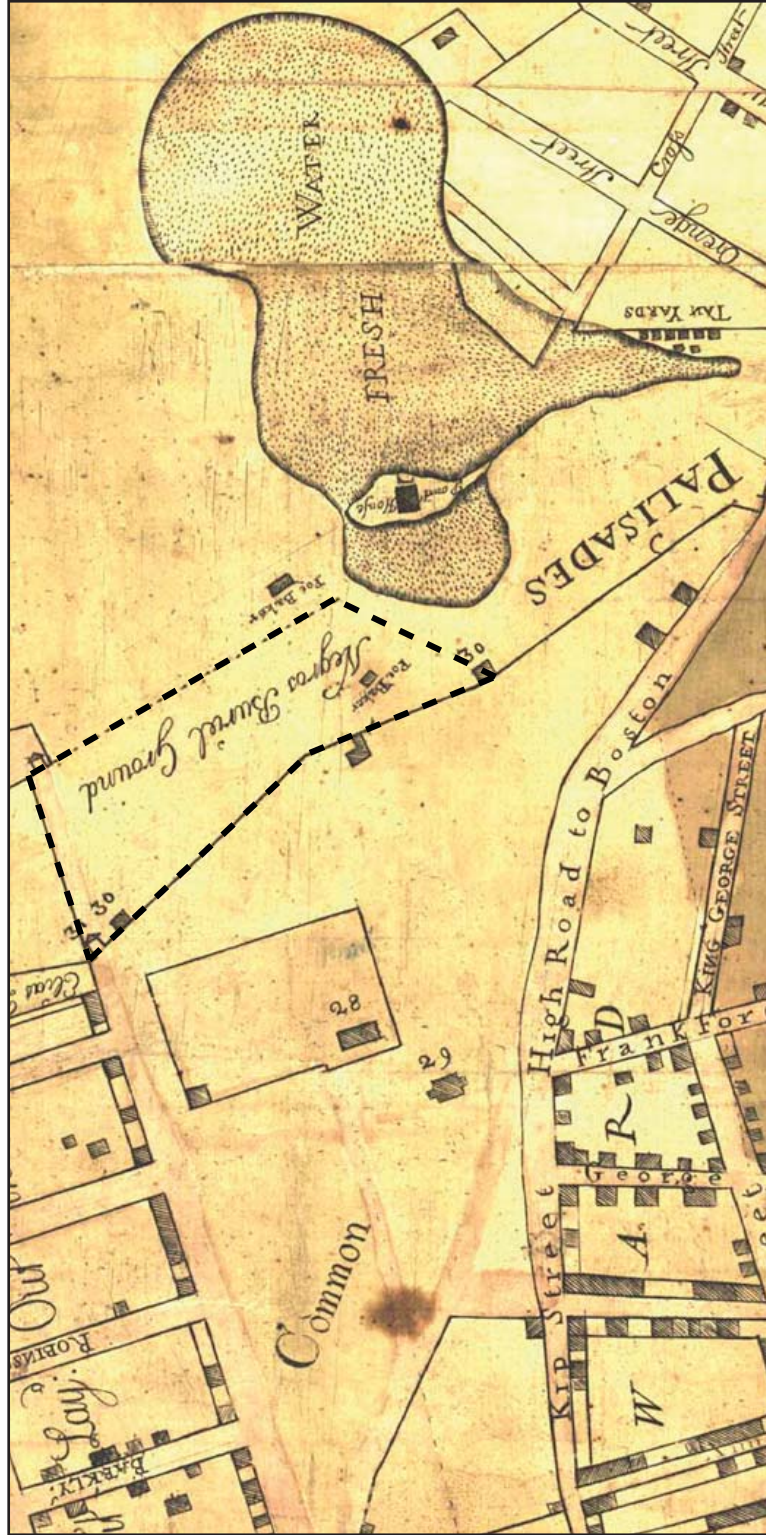


Fig. 7: Detail from the Maerschalk Plan, 1754 (annotated). The “Negros Burial Ground” is clearly indicated just to the north of the city palisade (outlined here). Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, “New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1” (2006), 58.

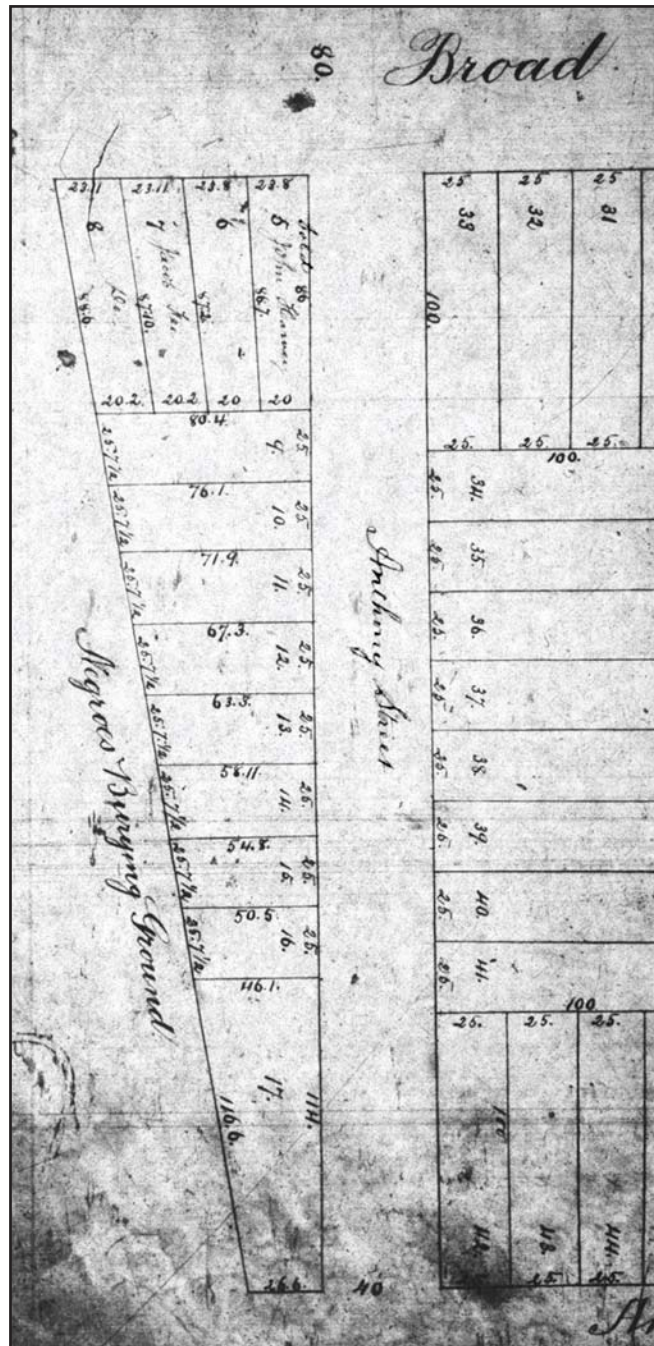


Fig. 8: Detail from a 1787 Survey Map. Calk Hook Farm has been divided into lots. Properties to the south of Anthony Street (today's Duane Street) overlap the "Negroes Burying Ground." Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1" (2006), 63.

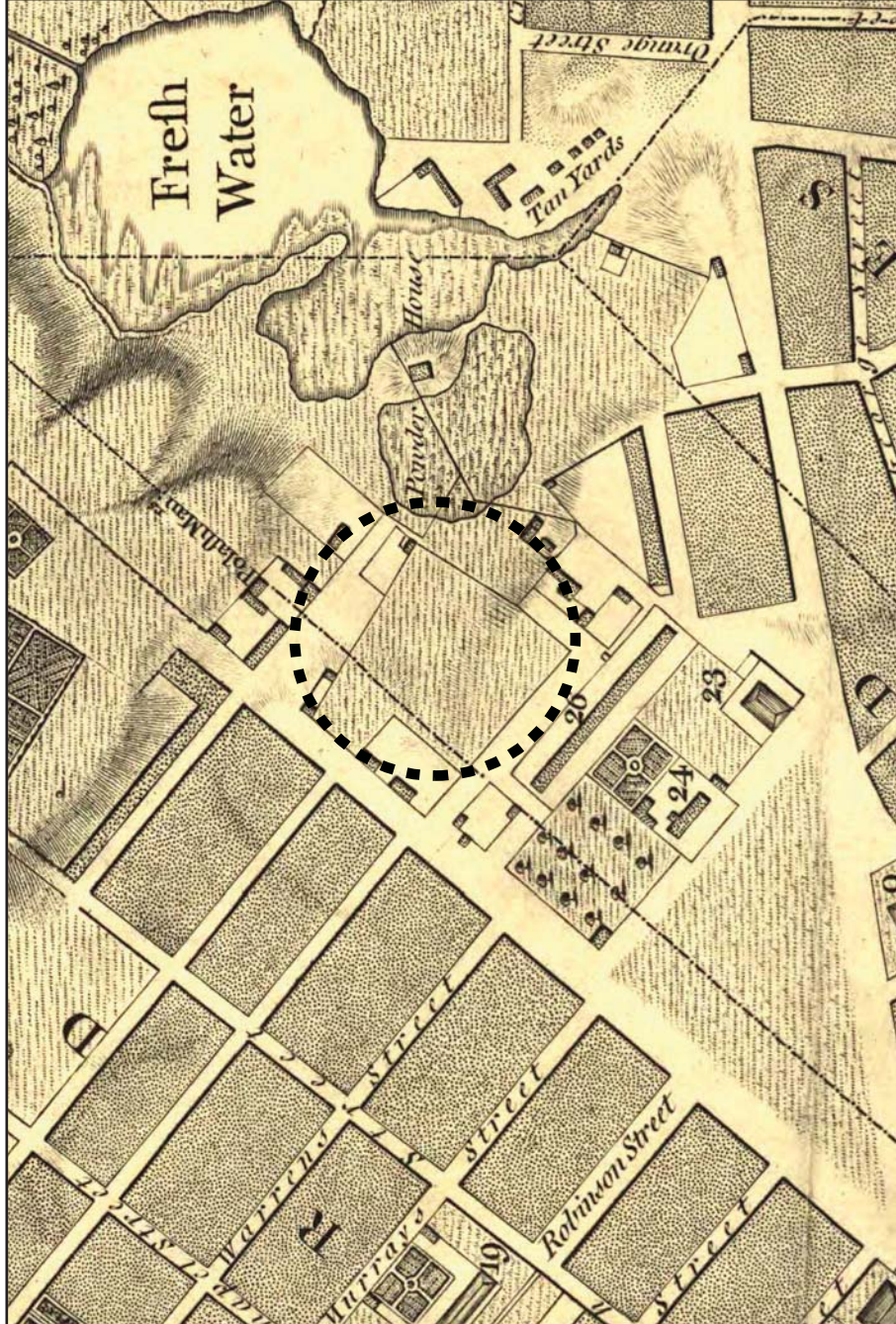


Fig. 9: Detail from the Ratzel Map, 1767 (annotated). The approximate location of the African Burial Ground is circled. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1" (2006), 60.

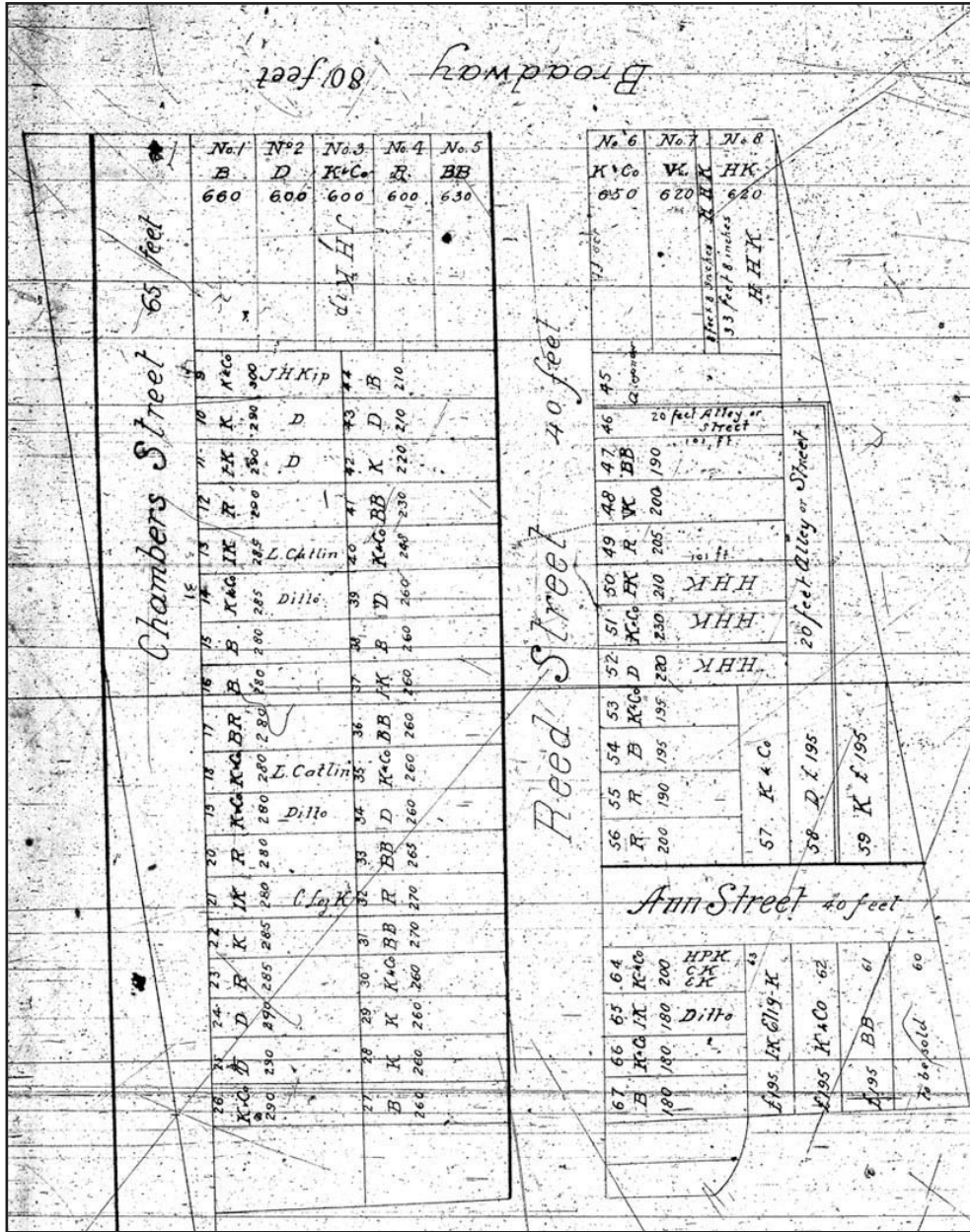


Fig. 10: Detail from a 1795 Survey Map. This map shows the partition of the Van Borsum patent following the resolution of ownership disputes. Chambers, Reed, and Ann (today's Elk) Streets have been laid out on top of the Burial Ground. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1" (2006), 66.

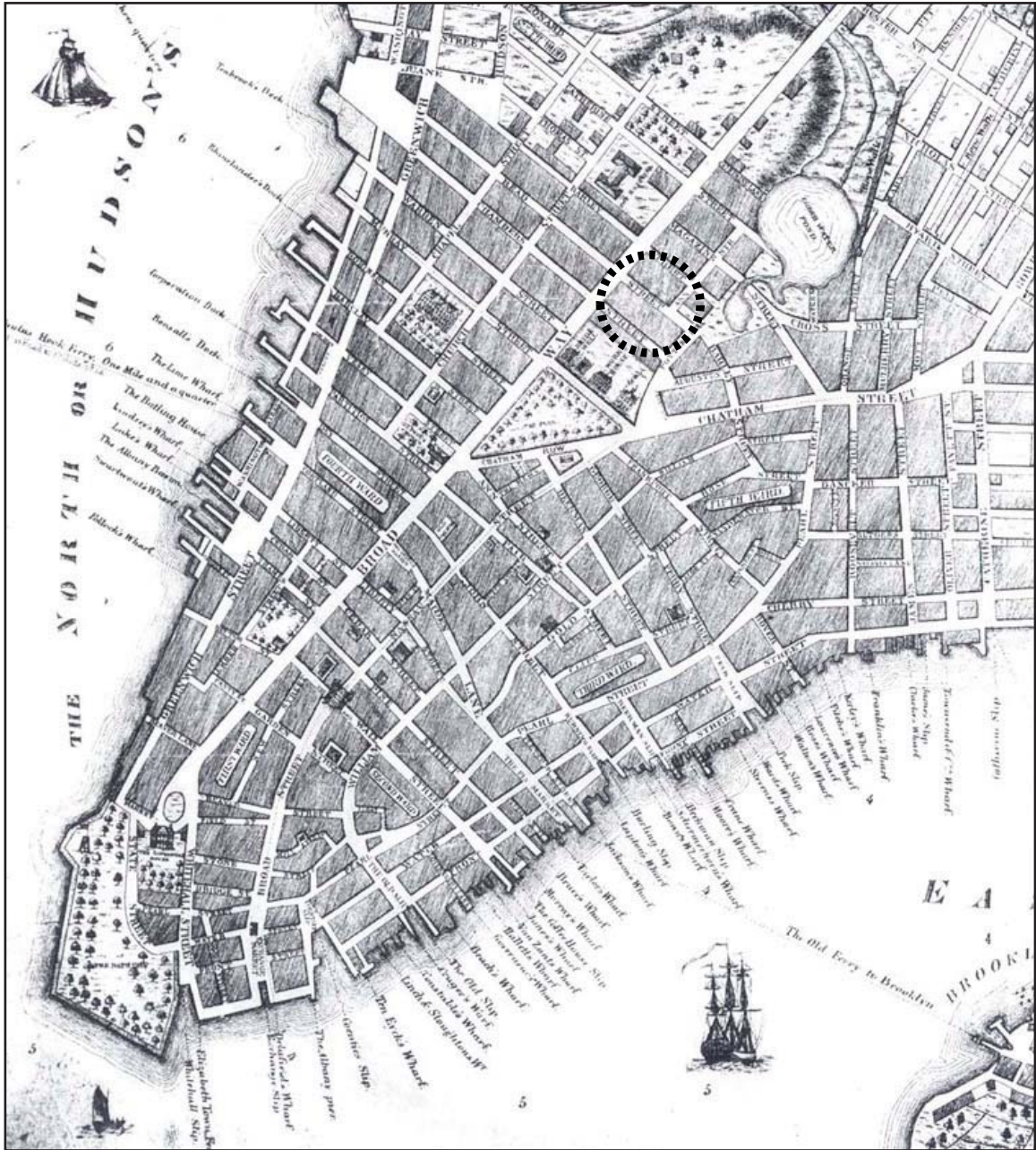


Fig. 11: Detail from the Taylor-Roberts Plan, 1797 (annotated). The newly laid-out street grid has obscured the African Burial Ground (the site's approximate location is circled). Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, "New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1" (2006), 58.

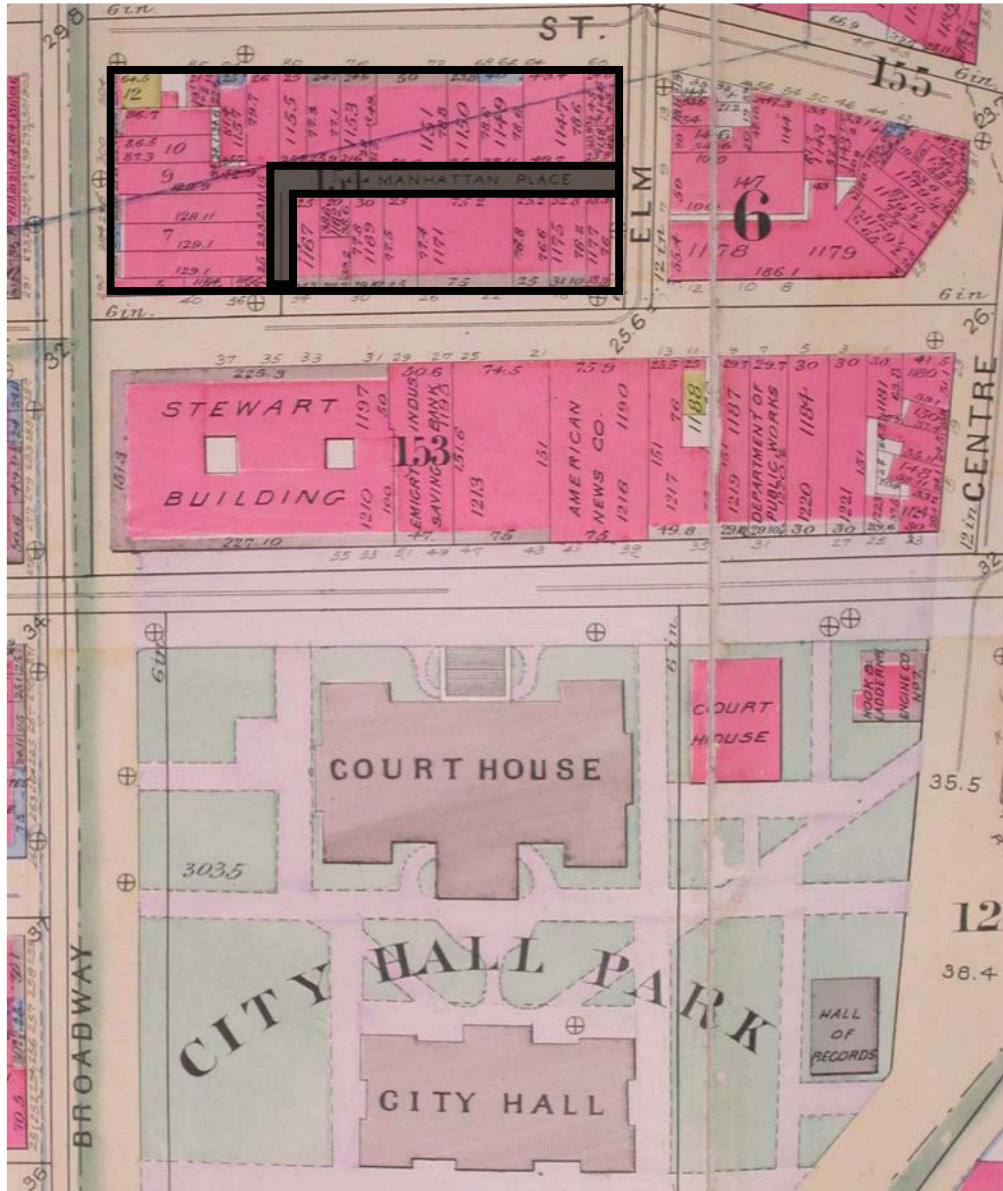


Fig. 12: Detail from Robinson and Pidgeon Atlas, 1893 (annotated). By the late-nineteenth century the area once occupied by the African Burial Ground and the Commons had been heavily developed. Block 154, where the Burial Ground would be discovered, is outlined. Republican or Manhattan Alley (shaded in gray) was never built over and thus protected intact burials. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, “New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1” (2006), 93.

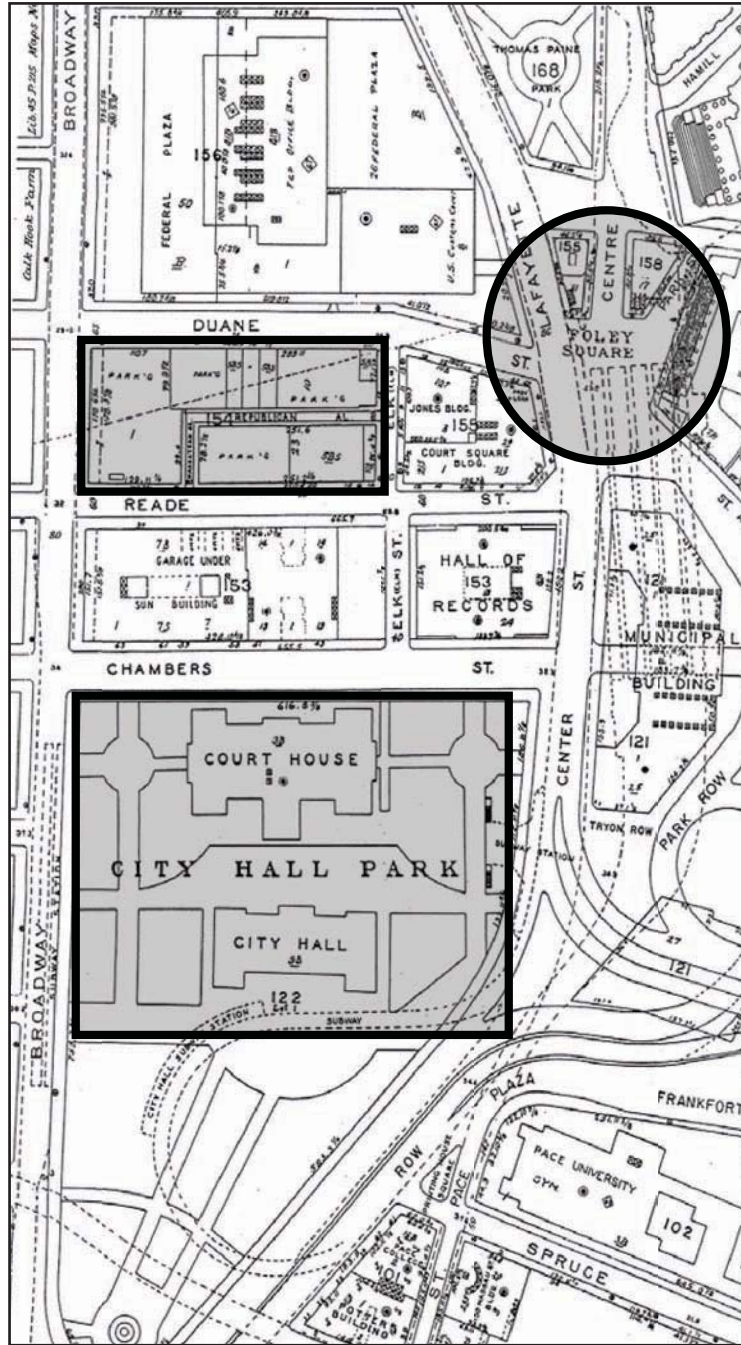


Fig. 13: Sanborn Map (Manhattan Land Book 1984-85). Lower Manhattan in the 1980s. Block 154, City Hall Park, and Foley Square are highlighted. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, “New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1” (2006), 81.

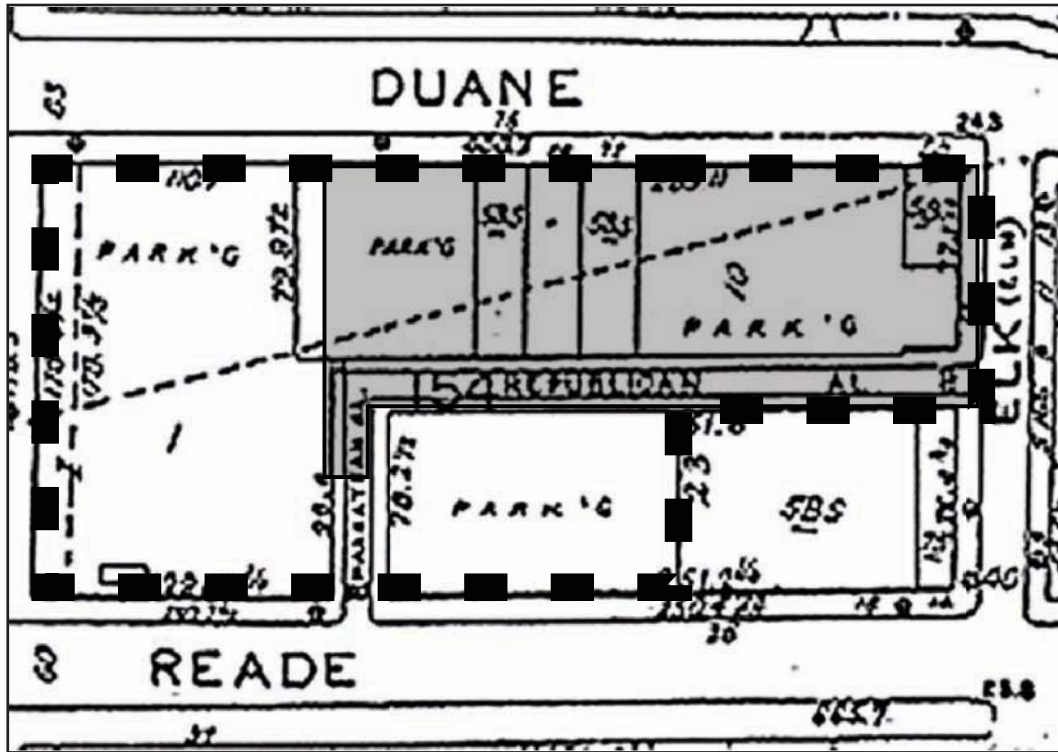


Fig. 14: Detail of Sanborn Map (Manhattan Land Book 1984-85). Block 154. The original footprint of the Federal Office Building is outlined and the area of excavations is shaded in gray. Source: The African Burial Ground Project, Howard University, Washington, DC, “New York African Burial Ground Archaeology Final Report, Vol. 1 (2006),” 81.

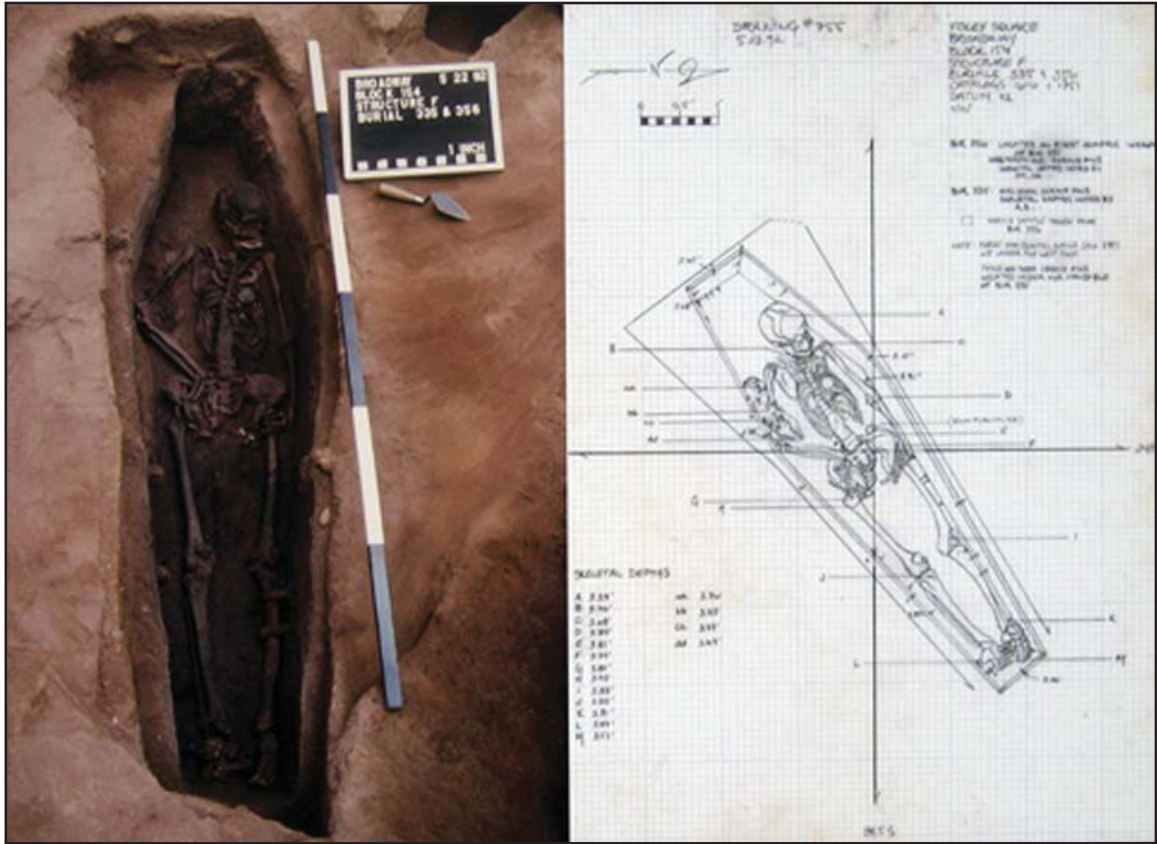


Fig. 15: An excavated burial and recorded data. Source: Office of Public Education and Information.

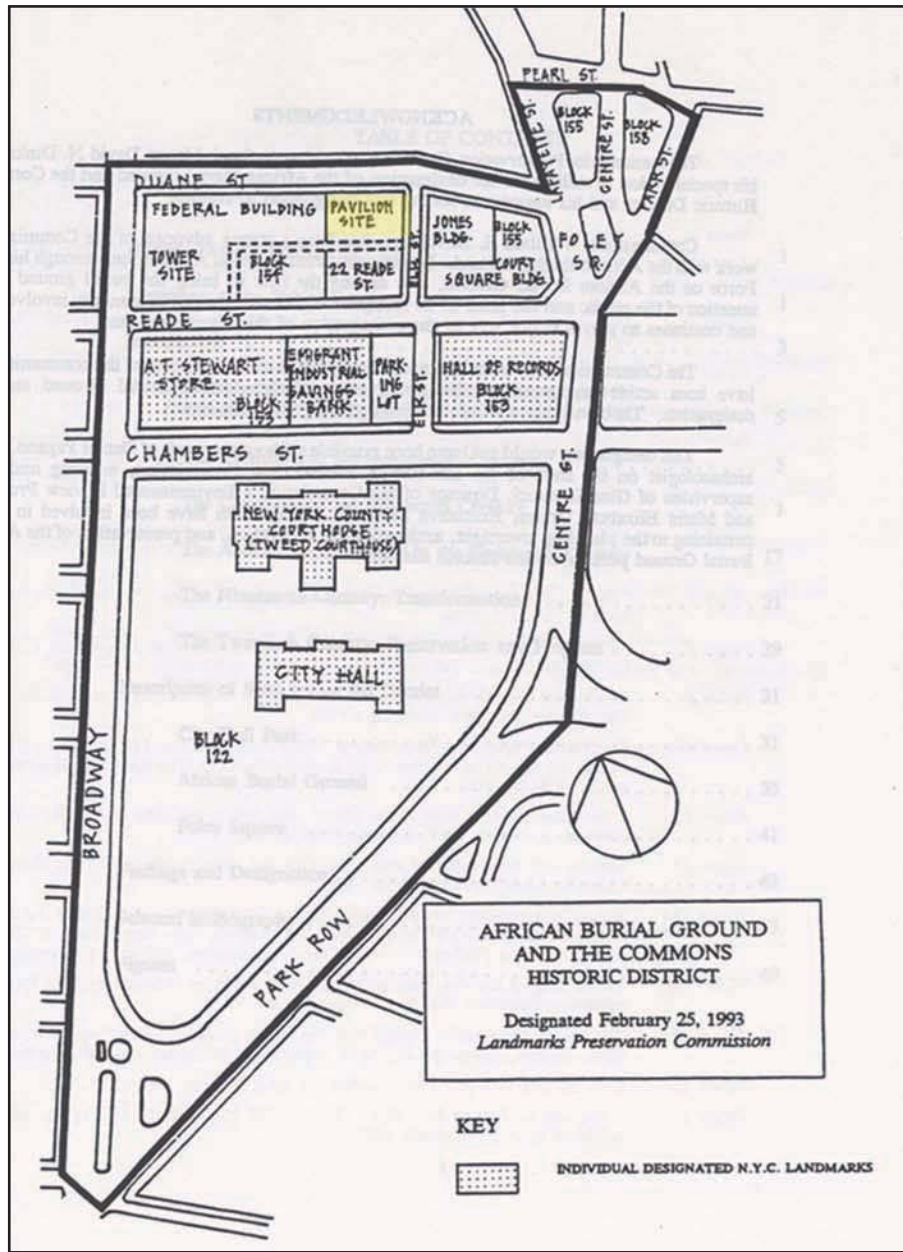


Fig. 16: The African Burial Ground and Commons Historic District (annotated). Designated by the New York Landmarks Commission in 1993. The highlighted portion marks the current Burial Ground site. Source: New York City Landmarks Commission.

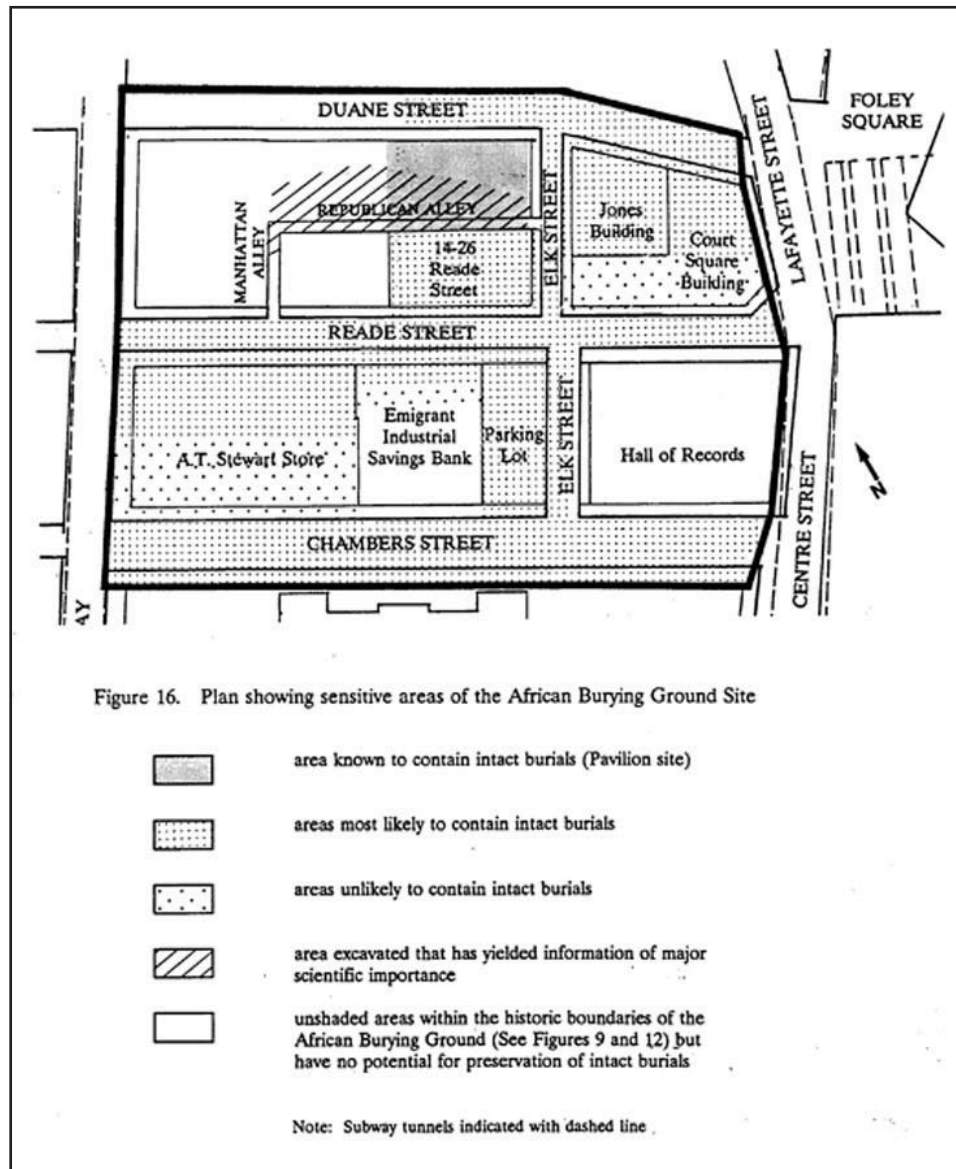


Fig. 17: The African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark. Designated in 1993. Source: National Parks Service.

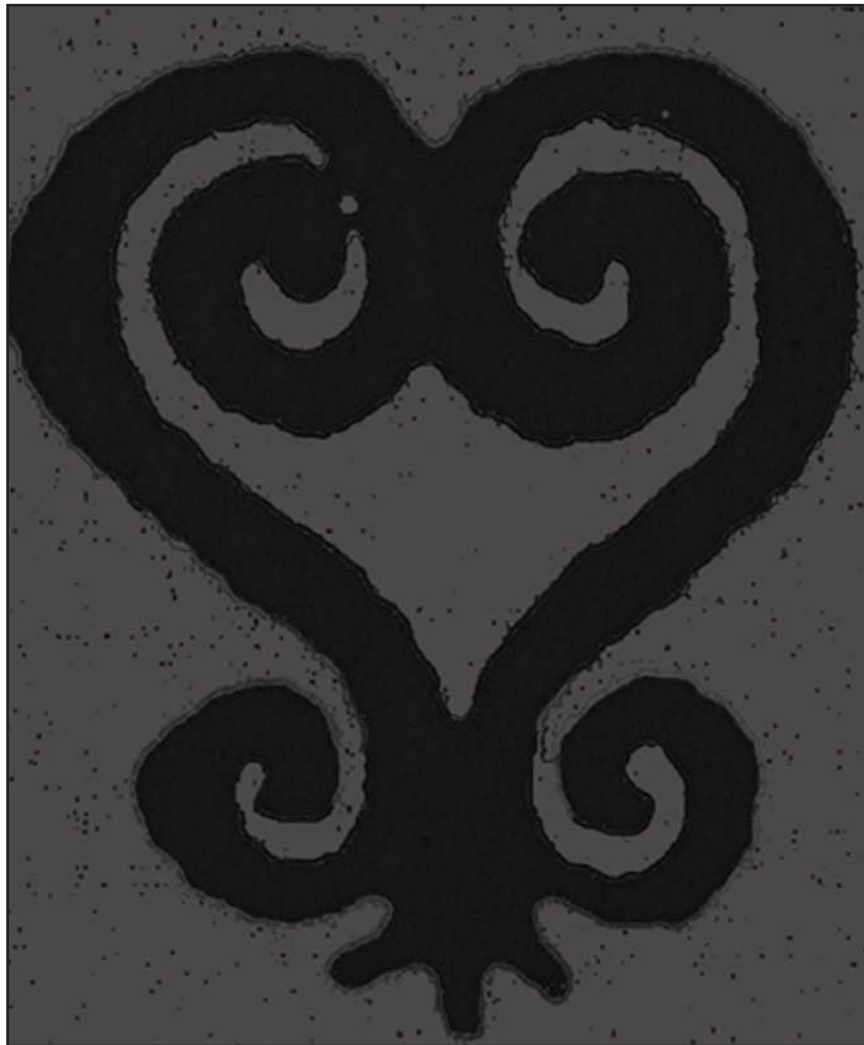


Fig. 18: The West Akan “Sankofa” character signifying the concept of “learning from the past to prepare for the future” has been adopted as a symbol for the African Burial Ground project. The character was found on the lid of one of the excavated coffins. Source: Office of Public Education and Interpretation.



Fig. 19: The ceremonial procession at the reinterment ceremony in October 2003. Source: National Parks Service.



Fig. 20: Honoring the burials at the reinterment ceremony in October 2003. Source: Office of Public Education and Interpretation.

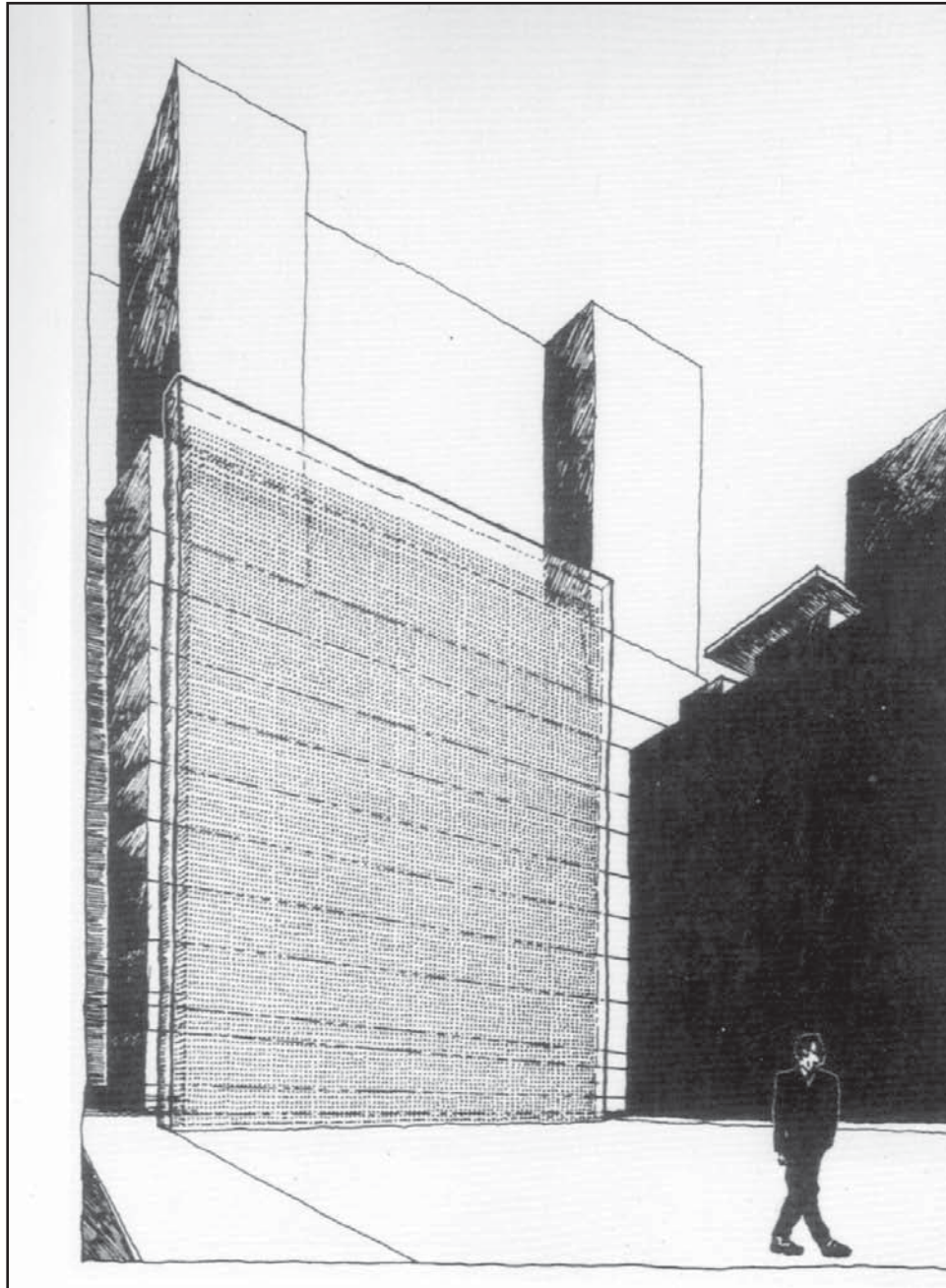


Fig. 21: Lester Yuen and Nana D. Last, "A Wall of Persistent Acknowledgement," 1993-94. Proposal submitted to the African Burial Ground Coalition Competition. Source: *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition* (1994), 28.

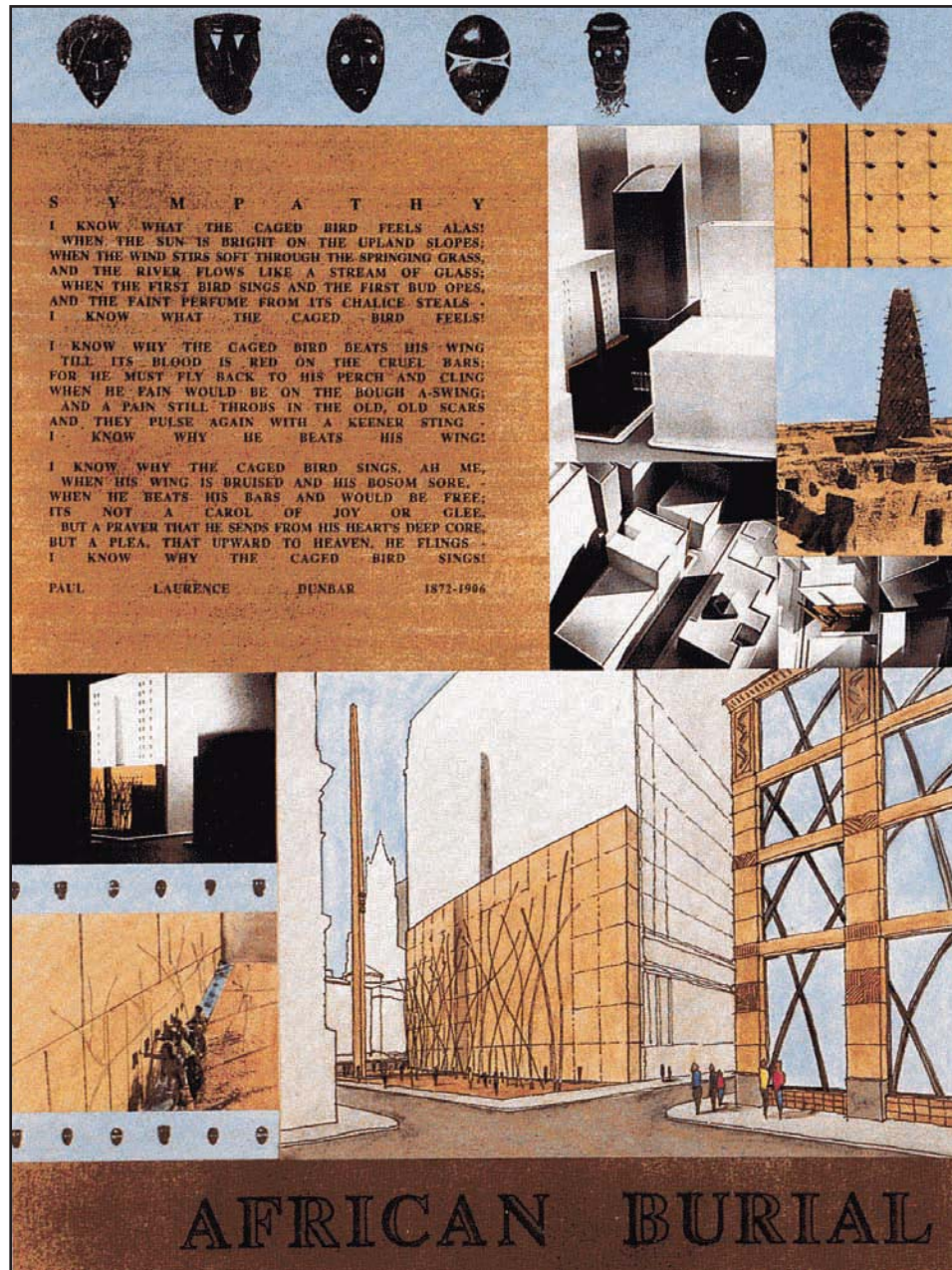


Fig. 22: R.B.B.'s Partnership, "Untitled," 1993-94. Proposal submitted to the African Burial Ground Coalition Competition. Source: *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition* (1994), 34.



Fig. 23: Karen Bermann and Jeanine Centuori, “The African Burial Ground/Walking Among Africa Graves/Speaking Through the Ground,” 1993-94. Proposal submitted to the African Burial Ground Coalition Competition. Source: *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York’s 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition* (1994), 31.

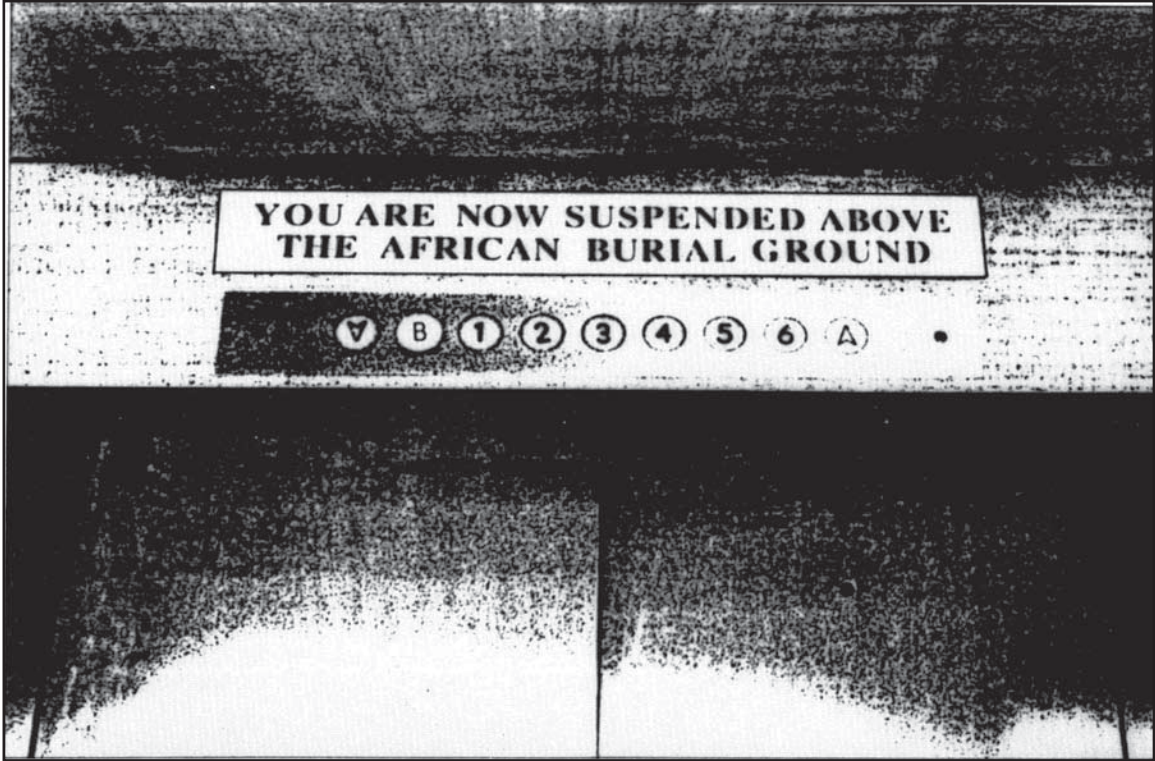


Fig. 24: C. Neville, "Untitled," 1993-94. Proposal submitted to the African Burial Ground Coalition Competition. Source: *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th Century African Burial Ground & Memorial Competition* (1994), 32.



Fig. 25: Clyde Lynds, “America Song,” 1995. Lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Source: United States General Services Administration (Brochure).

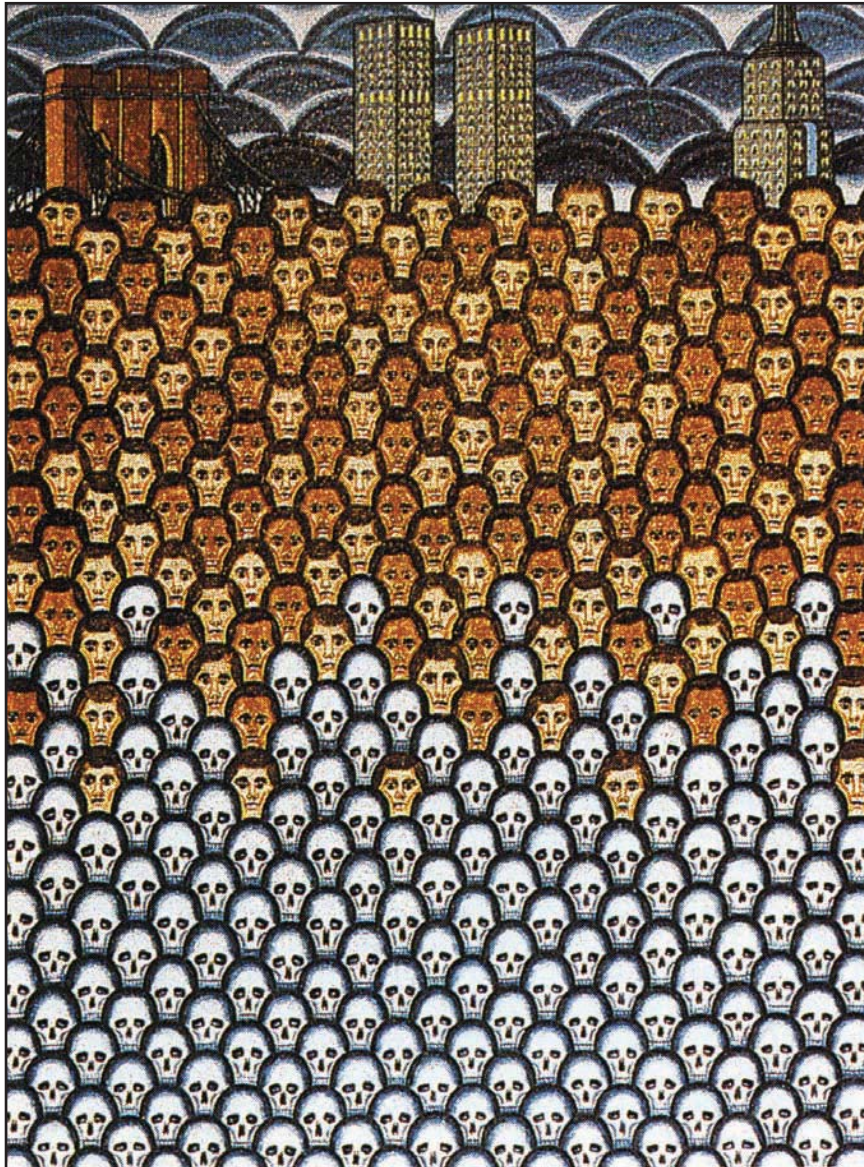


Fig. 26: Roger Brown, "Untitled," n.d. Lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Source: United States General Services Administration (Brochure).

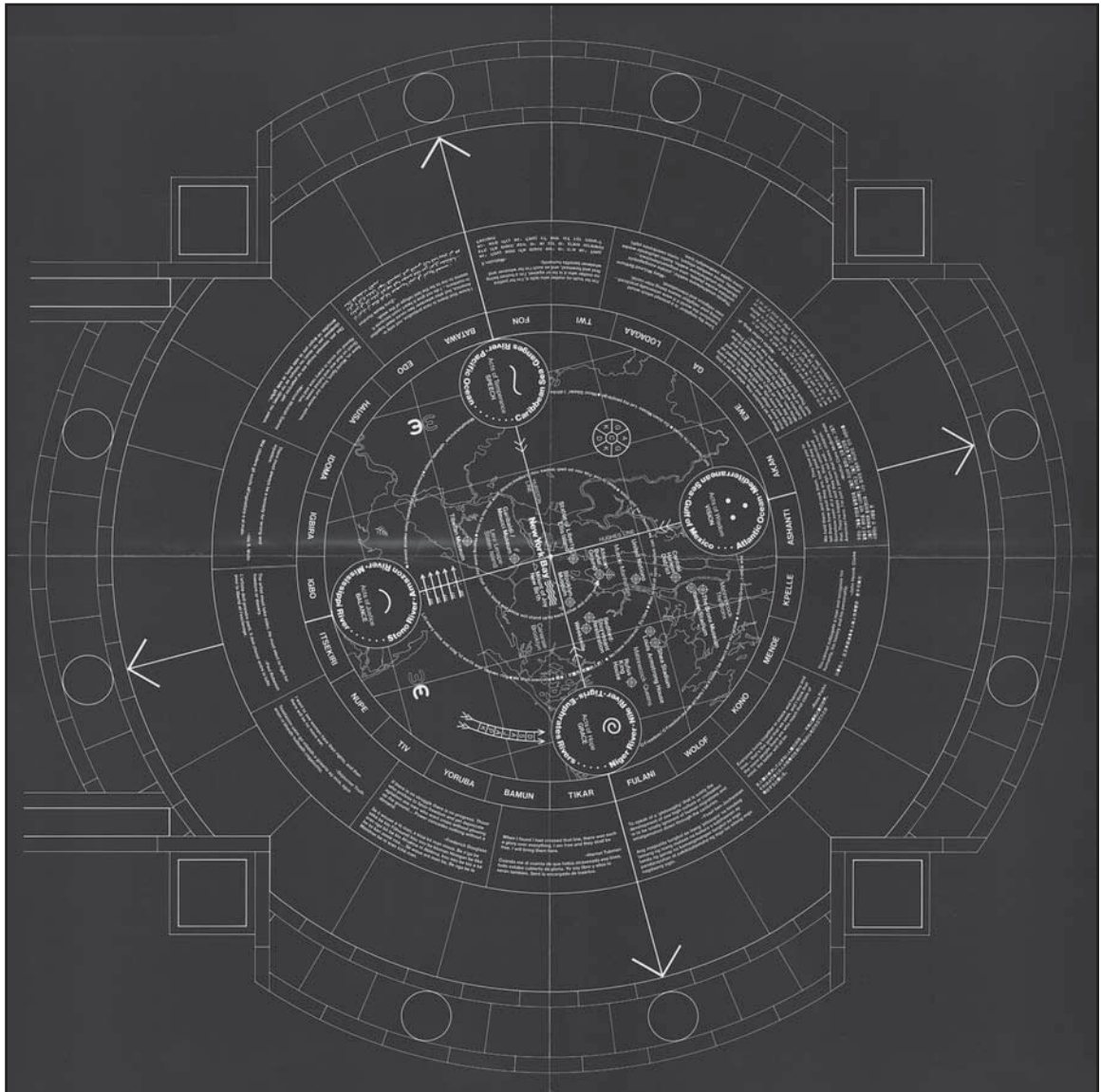


Fig. 27: Houston Conwill, Joseph DePace, and Estella Majozo Conwill, "The New Ring Shout (schematic)," 1995. Lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Source: United States General Services Administration (Brochure).



Fig. 28: Barbara Chase-Riboud, "Africa Rising," 1998. Lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Source: United States General Services Administration (Brochure).

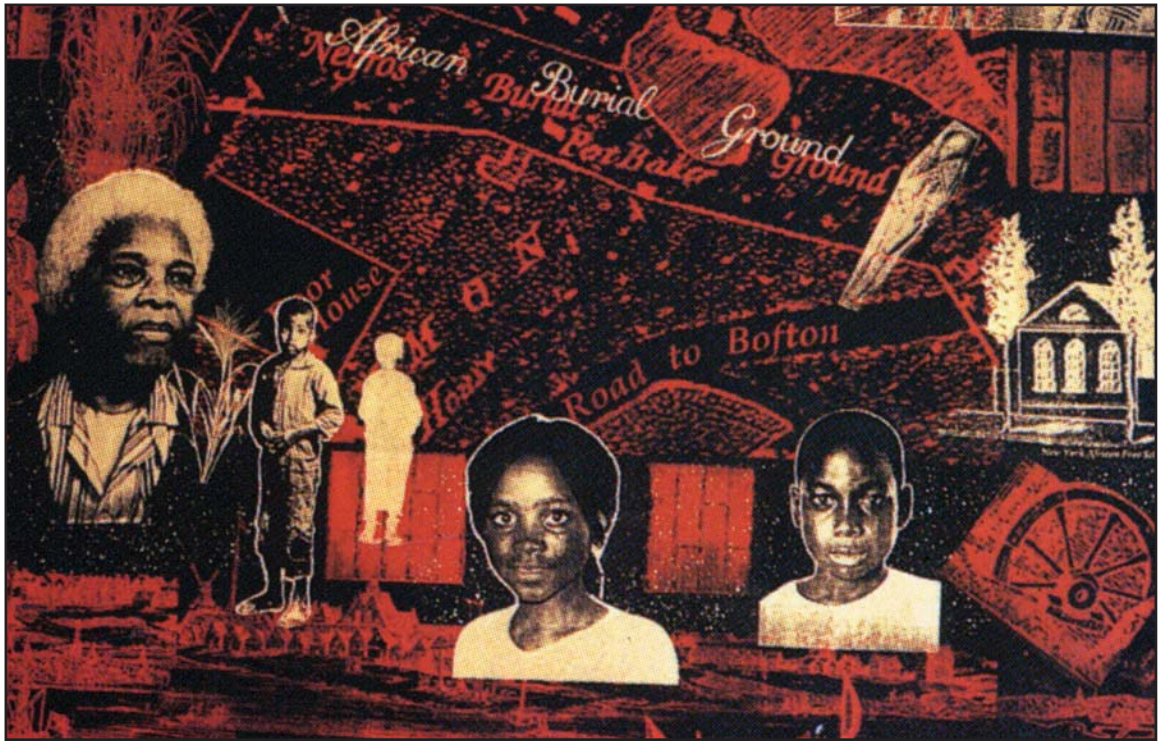


Fig. 29: Tomei Arai, "Renewal (detail)," 1998. SLObby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Source: United States General Services Administration (Brochure).



Fig. 30: Frank Bender, "Unearthed" 2003. Lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Source: United States General Services Administration (Brochure).



Fig. 31: Lorenzo Pace, "Triumph of the Human Spirit," 2000. Foley Square. Photo: Sarah R. Katz, November 2005.

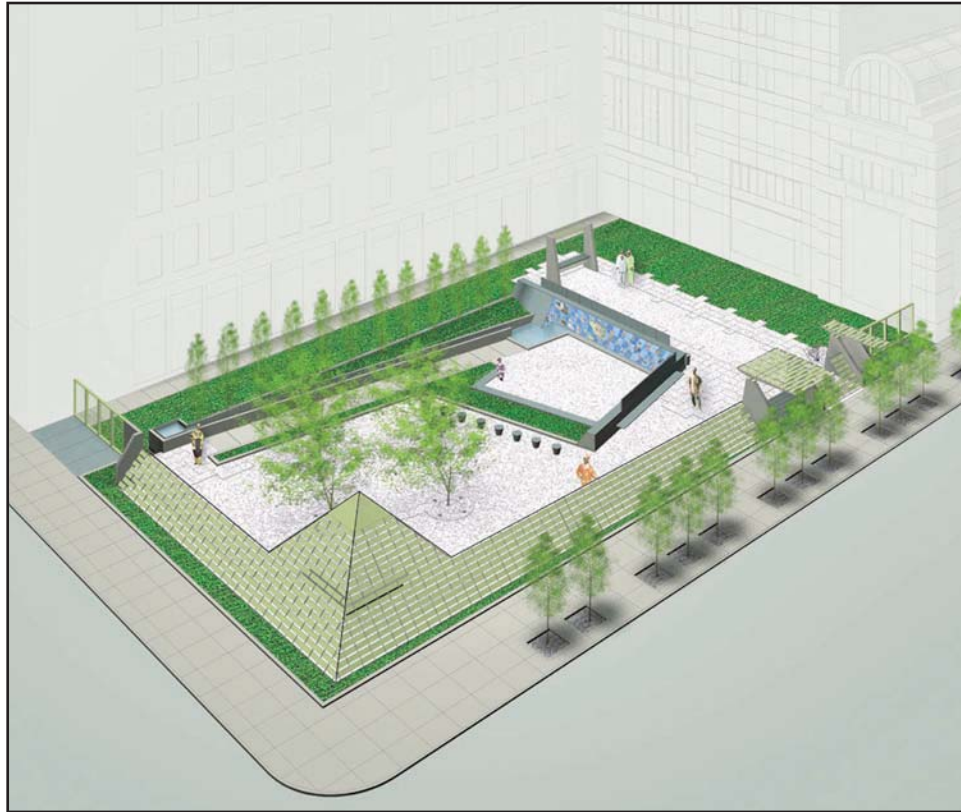


Fig. 32: Joseph DePace, Willy Gonzalez, and Design Team, “The Ring of Remembrance.” Proposal submitted for the African Burial Ground Exterior Memorial Competition. Source: www.AfricanBurialGround.gov.



Fig. 33: Rodney Leon, AARIS Architects , “For All Those Who were Lost.” Proposal submitted for the African Burial Ground Exterior Memorial Competition. Source: Source: www.AfricanBurialGround.gov.



Fig. 34: Groundworks Design, “Sacred Ground.” Proposal submitted for the African Burial Ground Exterior Memorial Competition. Source: www.AfricanBurialGround.gov.

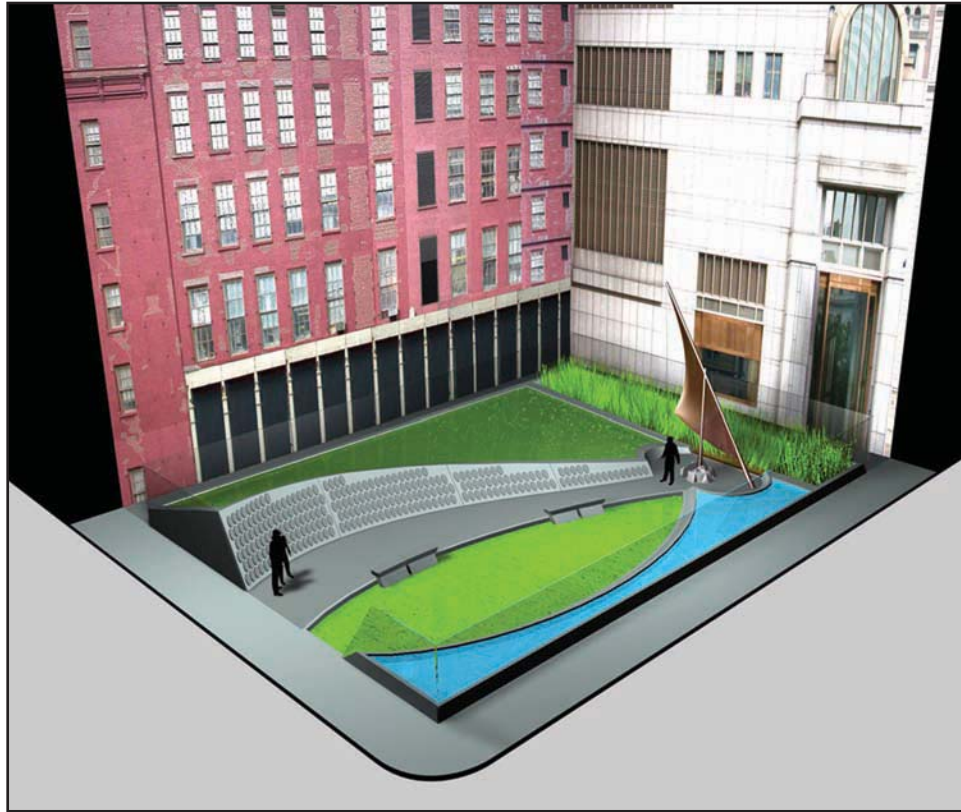


Fig. 35: Eustace Pilgrim and Christopher Davis, "African Burial Ground Memorial." Proposal submitted for the African Burial Ground Exterior Memorial Competition. Source: www.AfricanBurialGround.gov.



Fig. 36: McKissack & McKissack, “African Burial Ground Memorial.” Proposal submitted for the African Burial Ground Exterior Memorial Competition. Source: www.AfricanBurialGround.gov.

INDEX

A

- abolitionism · 21, 120
- Activism · 24, 44, 78, 96, 125, 148.
- activists · *See* Activism.
- Advisory Council for Historic
Preservation (AHP) · 4545, 47, 52,
59, 60, 62, 67, 107, 108, 109, 110,
130, 138
- Africa · 8, 7, 12, 17, 72, 93, 120, 122,
134, 135
- African American community · 75, 135
- African Burial Ground · iv, v, vi, 7, 8, 1,
2, 4, 11, 13, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30,
31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40,
41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53,
54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 67,
69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78,
80, 81, 82, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91,
92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100,
101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 108,
109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116,
117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124,
125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131,
132, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139,
141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147,
150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156,
157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163,
164, 165
- African Burial Ground Memorial
Competition Coalition · 112, 113, 114,
- African-American · v, 11, 56, 57, 60, 61,
64, 66, 68, 76, 82, 86, 87, 88, 90, 93,
99, 102, 111, 119, 121, 136, 146, 148,
150, 154, 158, 160
- Africans · 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 31, 32, 34,
44, 72, 73, 76, 77, 85, 86, 90, 95, 110,
112, 114, 119, 122, 124, 141, 142,
144, 152, 154, 155

American Revolution · iv, 6, 11, 19, 20,
21, 23, 29
ancestors · 44, 56, 57, 62, 80, 82, 87, 91,
93, 94, 95, 126, 140
anthropology · 3, 85, 93, 96, 106, 108,
120, 149
archeological resources · 48, 50
archeologists · 44, 53, 57, 59, 74, 80
archeology · 3, 88, 93, 100, 108, 149
Army Corps of Engineers · 107
artifacts · 4, 54, 56, 91, 97, 107, 110
artists · 112, 113, 118, 119, 121, 144
artworks · 118, 121

B

bioarcheological · 86, 95, 97
Blakey, Michael · 13, 64, 70, 82, 83, 84,
86., 88 90 92, 95, 96, 130
Block 154 · vi, 39, 40, 42
boundaries · 26, 34, 36, 40, 48, 62, 71,
73, 76, 77, 133, 146

British · 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20,
21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 33
Broadway · 7, 8, 27, 31, 33, 35, 36, 37,
39, 40, 41, 45, 48, 49, 51, 64, 77, 110,
115, 117, 120, 124, 137
Broadway (290; Federal Building) · 7, 8,
39, 45, 48, 49, 51, 64, 77, 115, 117, 120,
121, 124, 137
Burial Ground · 8, 1, 2, 4, 14, 24, 25, 26,
30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39,
40, 42, 44, 47, 48, 50, 51, 55, 57, 58,
61, 62, 65, 66, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74,
75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 85, 87, 89, 90, 91,
92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 102,
103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110,
112, 113, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121,
124, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 133,
134, 136, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143,
144, 146, 148, 151, 152, 153, 154,
156, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164
burials · 7, 34, 39, 40, 49, 50, 51, 54, 57,
67, 83, 115, 128, 129, 131

C

cemetery · 30, 34, 37, 48, 60, 76, 131,
133, 134, 135

Centre Street · 27, 33

ceremony · 7, 80, 96, 104, 109, 110, 123,
136

Chambers Street · 29, 33, 36, 37, 41, 42

City Council · See . See . See . See . See

City Hall Park · 28, 29, 37, 38, 41, 42,
71, 72, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151
117, 150, 156

coffins · 51, 89, 97, 110

Collect · 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, 39,
159

commemoration · See . See . See . See .
See
Committee of the Descendants of
the Afrikan Burial Ground · 103, 104, 13

Common Council · 15, 31, 33, 36, 37

Commons · iv, 7, 6, 16, 26, 27, 28, 30,
31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 71,
72, 159

community · 2, 9, 23, 25, 31, 44, 49, 52,
55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66, 67, 71,
74, 78, 81, 82, 83, 88, 91, 93, 94, 95,
96, 98, 101, 102, 103, 104, 109, 110,
113, 118, 119, 122, 123, 125, 126,
127, 130, 135, 136, 137, 138, 140,
141, 144, 145, 146, 148

construction · 1, 4, 18, 29, 37, 42, 44, 48,
50, 51, 53, 59, 62, 67, 81, 85, 118,
125, 128, 132, 137, 140

counter-monuments · 116, 141

D

debate · 2, 43, 44, 94, 123, 144, 145, 146

delays · 51, 100, 101, 105, 130

democracy · 19, 147

design competition · 112

designers · 112, 114, 125, 127, 131, 134,
147

Development · iv, 5, 6, 8, 27, 34, 36, 37,
38, 42, 43, 65, 74, 76, 81, 89, 133, 138

discovery · 4

DNA · 90, 99, 100

Duane Street · vi, 1, 25, 27, 33, 39, 110,
132

Dutch West India Company · 7, 8

E

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS_ ·
48, 49

Elk Street · vi, 1, 25, 39, 115, 132

Emancipation · 22

enclosure · 38, 128

English · 11, 12, 31

excavation · 50, 54, 60, 65

excavations · 1, 50, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58,
62, 63, 64, 66, 67, 83, 91, 94, 110, 115

F

Federal Art-in-Architecture Program · v,
117

fill · 39, 44, 50. *See* Fill Layer

fill level · 40

Foley Square · 8, 27, 38, 42, 45, 46, 47,
48, 53, 64, 66, 68, 119, 121, 123, 146,
151, 154, 155, 158, 164

forensic · 85, 86, 120

free black · 10, 16, 23

freedom · 5, 9, 19, 22, 118

funding · 99, 100, 102, 104, 106, 136

funerals · 11, 15, 32, 34

G

General Services Administration · 14,
25, 32, 45, 46, 47, 48, 53, 61, 76, 87,
97, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 126, 128,
129, 139, 141, 147, 151, 156, 158,
162, 163, 164

government · 22, 26, 28, 33, 39, 40, 42,
45, 57, 58, 62, 63, 78, 82, 99, 105,
109, 113, 117, 123, 136, 137

grave robbing · 36

graves · 50, 57, 67, 82

graveyards · 36

GSA · 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53,
54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 66, 67,
69, 75, 77, 78, 81, 83, 84, 88, 95, 99,
100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106,
107, 108, 109, 112, 117, 123, 124,
125, 126, 128, 130, 135, 136, 138,
139, 140, 147, 155

H

heritage · 77, 87, 93, 94, 99, 131, 146,
148, 149

House Committee on Public Works and
Transportation · 45

J

Jorde, Peggy King · 47, 104, 124, 130,
158

L

landscape · 1, 2, 25, 27, 38, 43, 73, 78,
116, 120, 124, 135

Lepore, Jill · 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17,
18, 20, 157

M

Manhattan · iv, vi, 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11,
12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30,
38, 39, 40, 44, 45, 55, 94, 104, 109,
111, 121, 124, 133, 142, 145, 146,
147, 151, 155, 156, 157, 159, 161, 162

map · 34, 35, 36, 38 103, 119, 133

McLean, Ollie · 137

memorial · 1, 3, 43, 52, 65, 67, 72, 76,
77, 81, 100, 101, 104, 109, 110, 112,
113, 115, 119, 124, 125, 128, 129,
130, 131, 133, 136, 137, 138, 139,
141, 142, 144, 147

mitigation · 47, 50

N

National Environmental Policy Act · 48

National Historic Preservation Act
(NHPA) · 45, 48, 56, 46, 69, 159

national monument · 58, 142, 143, 147,
151, 152, 154
National Register · 46, 47, 48, 49, 52,
70, 73
National Park Service (NPS)·
108, 130, 138, 139, 140, 144
Native American · 6
Negroes Burial Ground · 38
Negros Burial Ground · 35, 37
New Amsterdam · iv, 6, 9, 11, 26, 106,
137
New York · iv, vi, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12,
13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23,
25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34,
35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45,
46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55,
56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65,
67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78, 80,
82, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93,
94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 103,
104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 112,
113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119,

120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127,
128, 129, 130, 136, 137, 138, 140,
141, 142, 145, 147, 150, 151, 152,
153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159,
160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165

New York City · 4, 5, 21, 45, 60, 62, 71,
109, 119, 124, 126, 145

O

origin · 11, 25, 86, 90, 93, 94, 97 98

P

Pace, Lorenzo 120, 121, 122, 123, 162

palisade · 27, 29, 30, 34

See . See . See

pavilion · 45, 62, 63, 67, 69, 115, 124

potter's field · 85

power · 28, 33, 39, 40, 61, 66, 68, 70, 78,
81, 85, 89, 91, 99, 105, 129, 142, 143,
148

pre-history · 25

preservation · 2, 39, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49,
54, 70, 71, 76, 78, 80, 112, 113, 126,
131, 143, 148
proposals · 45, 81, 113, 114, 116, 117,
122, 131, 140
public space · See . See . See

R

race · 31, 81, 84, 85, 87, 89, 113, 137,
148
racism · See . See . See
Rangel · See . See . See . See . See . See .
See
Rankin Chapel · 96
remains · 4, 44, 48, 51, 52, 54, 56, 58,
59, 65, 70, 74, 76, 77, 80, 82, 83, 84,
85, 88, 91, 93, 95, 96, 97, 103, 104,
105, 110, 120, 129, 131, 132, 133,
134, 136, 144.
Republican Alley · 39, 40, 49, 50

S

Sankofa · 7, 89, 132, 148, 162
Sauer · 86
Savage · See . See . See . See . See . See
. See . See . See . See . See . See . See
. See . See . See . See . See . See . See
scientists · See . See . See . See
sculpture · 120, 121, 122, 123, 134, 145
Section 106 · 46, 55, 64, 66, 67, 69, 75,
101
Section 110 · 46
significance · 1, 47, 48, 63, 66, 70, 73,
75, 76, 93, 94, 102, 112, 114, 118,
126, 143
skeletons · 14, 51, 60, 100
slave codes · 14, 16, 18, 19
slave insurrection · 16, 19
Slavery · iv, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,
17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 142, 151, 155, 156,
157

slaves · 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15,
16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 28, 31, 35, 72,
89, 90, 93, 98, 123

T

topography · 25, 30, 31
traditions · 11, 24, 31, 96

V

value · 1, 3, 13, 44, 72, 73, 78, 81, 86,
93, 98, 112, 13, 124, 129, 146, 148

Van Borsum Patent · 33, 34, 35, 37, 39,
41

vindicationist · 85, 89, 91, 92

W

Wager, Lisa · 102, 103, 127

Wilson, Sherill · 13, 64, 77, 78, 88, 102,
103, 164

World Trade Center · 97, 101, 107, 147