

BELONGING IN PHILADELPHIA

Opening Reflection

Where do you feel like you belong?

(Map of Penn)

- Performing belonging or performing to belong
- What does it mean to belong? What if we don't want to belong?
- Disrupting spaces where we feel we don't belong with allies/community
- Howard Stevenson talk about belonging at Penn - everyone here belongs here, but disparity in feeling of belonging
- Credibility - denial of personhood and politics in order to have credibility in university spaces. Who do I want to be credible to?
- Lynching GroupMe at Penn shortly after 2016 Election
- At an institution like Penn, what does it mean to feel like you belong? Is there an alignment with power structures? If we imagine or say a different narrative of belonging at a space like Penn, it suggests something about the people who already feel they belong.
- Affinities can be unstable.

Land Acknowledgement

Belonging & Politics of Belonging

- Belonging is emotional.
- Who are we displacing by being on this campus? How do we make sense of our role?
 - We've been taught that there are no indigenous people left.
 - Penntification - physical and cultural displacement
 - Residential and economic segregation of Philadelphia
 - Learning the language to articulate tensions and conflicts
 - Political economy of erasure
 - Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor" - genocidal processes of erasure.
 - Extractive economies
 - Logics of belonging in indigenous are opposite of blackness: one drop rule for blackness designed to be additive and to increase enslaved labor; blood quantum designed to be subtractive and to eliminate indigenous peoples.
 - Identifying people as others - we accept certain violences against the "Other"
 - Seventh Ward in Philadelphia - you see relics of black life, but no black people in that area today.

- How do these mechanisms ensure that black and indigenous people are kept in subservient positions?
- False white supremacist narrative of meritocracy at Penn - on the other side, there must be a narrative of not belonging. Invitation to belong at Penn for people of color can feel limited or liminal.
- Belonging is not decided in a purely top-down way

Sites of Erasure

- **Charnae Wise Mural**

- Mural memorializing deceased girl was covered up by Philadelphia Mural Arts Project
- Framed as community decision, but community there has changed a lot via gentrification
- Narratives of black criminality in news stories describing the story of the mural
- Sanitization and abstraction of spaces and conflict with “peacemaking” murals
- Whose work is consider art? Whose work is considered worthy of preserving?
Relationships to social capital

- **Royal Theater**

- First black-owned theater in Philadelphia
- Closed in 1970
- Has been vacant for decades
- New development has kept the facade of the theater. Is this historical preservation? Is there a way to integrate the aesthetics of the building without coopting/appropriating?
- Mosque on 43rd street had previously been a theater
- Hard to locate information, remembrances in writing
- One interpretation: development wants the facade of blackness, but not the substance
- There had been efforts to save the theater - historical landmark recognition would have protected theater from developers, but not granted by the city. Developer gets to scoop up property once it has been devalued and to raise the prices of property around it.

- **MOVE Bombing**

- City of Philadelphia coordinated bombing of two square blocks where black commune was located
- Narratives constructed around MOVE frame them as uncompliant, violent
- 1978 Shootout - lived in Powelton Village. 9 members arrested and imprisoned for 40 years.
- 1985 Bombing - MOVE moved to Osage Ave in West Philadelphia. Dropped a bomb, and purposefully did not put out the fire to kill the adults, children, and animals in the houses.

- MOVE still exists, still fighting
 - Environmentalists
 - 2 of 9 arrested in shootout have been released. 5 have died in prison.
- Homes in that area are still boarded up. Now being developed into luxury apartments.
- State sanctions who gets to belong and who gets to be a citizen. Bombing is a demonstration of the denial of belonging and citizenship.
- **The Walking Purchase - 1737**
 - Indigenous/Lenape conceptions of land ownership were different from Western conceptions of land ownership.
 - Delaware Tribe in Oklahoma has federal recognition - governmental signal is that people must have experienced removal to receive federal protections. Those who were left behind are not viewed as legitimate
 - Violence of nation and state as framework and logic
 - How do we think about reparative justice? How do we not recirculate concept of land ownership in rematriation of the land?
 - How do we think about scholarship, when erasure has been so violent and