# Advancing Racial Justice Research In Architecture, Urban Planning, and Allied Fields

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**Keywords:** anti-racist, racism, decolonial, abolitionist

**Architecture, urban studies, planning, and allied fields are rife with extractive, colonial, racist, and otherwise harmful research activities that are complicit in, or actively support, white supremacy. Identifying a positive vision of research that supports racially just outcomes and differentiating it from efforts that simply study racialized difference are important steps for institutions seeking to better support anti-racist research (which may be described using a range of descriptors including e.g., 'abolitionist,' 'emancipatory,' or 'decolonial'). Our research team conducted a mixed-methods study to identify: 1) characteristics and practices common across scholarly research that explicitly aims to advance racial justice, 2) institutional barriers to research that supports racially just outcomes, and 3) best practices to enable and support research practices and projects that advance racial justice. We identify foundational and supporting characteristics of anti-racist research as well as key challenges and supports for academics seeking to develop anti-racist research and pedagogy, resulting in preliminary guidelines for research.**

## ANTI-RACIST RESEARCH

In 2020, in the midst of the nationwide uprisings following the police killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) made a commitment to anti-racism, which includes ensuring that our research environment advances racial justice. In order to fulfill this commitment several faculty formed a group to research the theory, practice challenges, and support for and challenges of anti-racist research. In this paper, we report the results of a mixed methods research project that incorporated a rigorous field scan of existing research, semi-structured interviews with senior scholars identified in the field scan, and a survey of students, faculty, and staff in our department. We identify foundational and supporting themes that characterize anti-racist research and point towards guidelines for research.

## METHODS

We began with an extensive review of research and practice in urban studies and planning, architecture, and allied fields (e.g., human geography, social epidemiology) using the following search terms: anti-racist, anti-racism, critical race theory/critical anti-racist theory, methodology, research approaches, abolitionist, decolonizing, anticolonial, racial justice, and design justice. In addition to published research, we isolated 1) mission and vision statements from long-standing and credible labs, centers, and other institutions engaged in anti-racist and racially just research efforts; and 2) anti-racist or decolonial projects identified as models by these institutions, as well as those identified by members of our research collective. The field scan detailed above was used to identify key informants.

As of this writing, we have conducted fourteen semi-structured interviews with senior scholars and researchers in the field.[1]

- We asked interviewees to explain their methods and motivations for anti-racist research efforts;

- We asked interviewees to cross-check the themes we identified in the landscape scan of anti-racist and decolonial research projects;

- We asked about institutional as well as disciplinary challenges and enablers of research with anti-racist/decolonial/abolitionist/racially just commitments.

In this paper, we share the results of our field scan and the themes and concepts we isolated in this body of work and include material from interviews with architects, landscape architects, and environmental designers that align with these themes.

**FIELD SCAN THEMES**

Based on our field scan, survey results, and interviews, our research team identified two foundational themes and eight supporting themes. The two foundational themes were present to some extent across all of the projects and definitions reviewed, while the other eight supporting themes were present in some projects. These themes combine key tenets of and insights from a range of disciplines and theories that have long helped advance our understanding and practice of racial justice, including Black studies, ethnic studies, Indigenous studies, postcolonial theory, social epidemiology, critical race theory, Black geographies, public health critical race praxis, feminist theory, queer theory, Black feminist thought, postcolonial theory, and ecosocial theory, among others.

This transdisciplinary approach was supported by many of the academic researchers in the field of architecture and design. One academic researcher in the field of architecture described how their supplemental training and reading in fields outside of architecture enabled them to incorporate more critical approaches to architecture research, education, and practice:

> I then started to structure my practice to draw from other fields in order to look at specific issues that were not just about the formal parts of making buildings, it's beyond or further in depth than just that… reading outside of the discipline and interrogating it… just became a way of working for me.[2]

**FOUNDATIONAL THEMES**

The following two themes are seen across the literature we read on Critical Race Theory,[3] Black Feminist Theory,[4] Indigenous Studies,[5] Postcolonial Theory,[6] Ecosocial Theory,[7] and Social Epidemiology.[8]

**Articulate a theory of change explicitly identifying avenues by which the research advances racial justice.**

According to Tuck, a Indigenous studies scholar, "an explicit theory of change helps to operationalize the ethical stance of the project, what are considered data, what constitutes evidence, how a finding is identified, and what is made public and kept private or sacred."[9] Tuck encourages researchers to envision alternative theories of change that rely on desire and complexity rather than on simply articulating damage to communities.

One example of a group of designers operationalizing this theory of change is Design as Protest. The group, organized by BIPOC designers, describes themselves as "a collective of designers mobilizing a strategy to dismantle the privilege and power structures that use architecture and design as tools of oppression."[10] They go on to say that they "exist to hold our profession accountable in reversing the violence and injustice that architecture, design, and urban planning practices have inflicted upon Black people and communities. Design as Protest champions the radical vision of racial, social, and cultural reparation through the process and

outcomes of design."[11] Design as Protest's theory of change is to use design as a way to create new futures in an anit-racist world, a goal for which describing racist outcomes is inadequate.

Design as Protest has ten demands, reproduced below, which help them take action towards their theory of change.

> Divest & reallocate police funding.
>
> Cease the implementation of hostile architecture & landscapes.
>
> Abolish carceral spaces.
>
> Restructure design's relationship to power, capital & our labor.
>
> Center community leadership in design & planning processes.
>
> Create, protect & reclaim public space through liberatory planning & policy.
>
> Cultivate anti-racist visions for affordable & just neighborhoods.
>
> Preserve and invest in Black, Brown, Indigenous & Asian cultural spaces.
>
> Create anti-racist models of design education, training & licensing.[12]

These demands point towards the importance of a clearly articulated theory of change, that centers Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Asian agency even as it works towards abolitionist goals.

Design as Protest has developed something called, The Index, which they describe as "a tool for architects, designers, planners, policy makers, and community activists committed to taking action towards identifying and dismantling systemic racism."[13] The stated goal of The Index is "to achieve justice and liberation within design institutions by holding them accountable to their anti-racist commitments. It provides a visual way to track accountability and resources for guiding concrete actions."[14]

Whether it is an index, manifesto, toolkit, guide, manual, these documents describing guiding principles are common to anti-racist design researchers because they help to articulate their theory of change. Using actionable examples from real world projects provides pathways for moving toward an anti-racist future. WAI Think Tank's A Manual of Anti-Racist Architecture Education, for example, is described as a work of "anti-capitalist realism that acknowledges the unsustainable character of a knowledge and material economy made possible via the inhumane occupation of Indigenous land and the brutal materialization of anti-Black racism and its aftermath."[15]
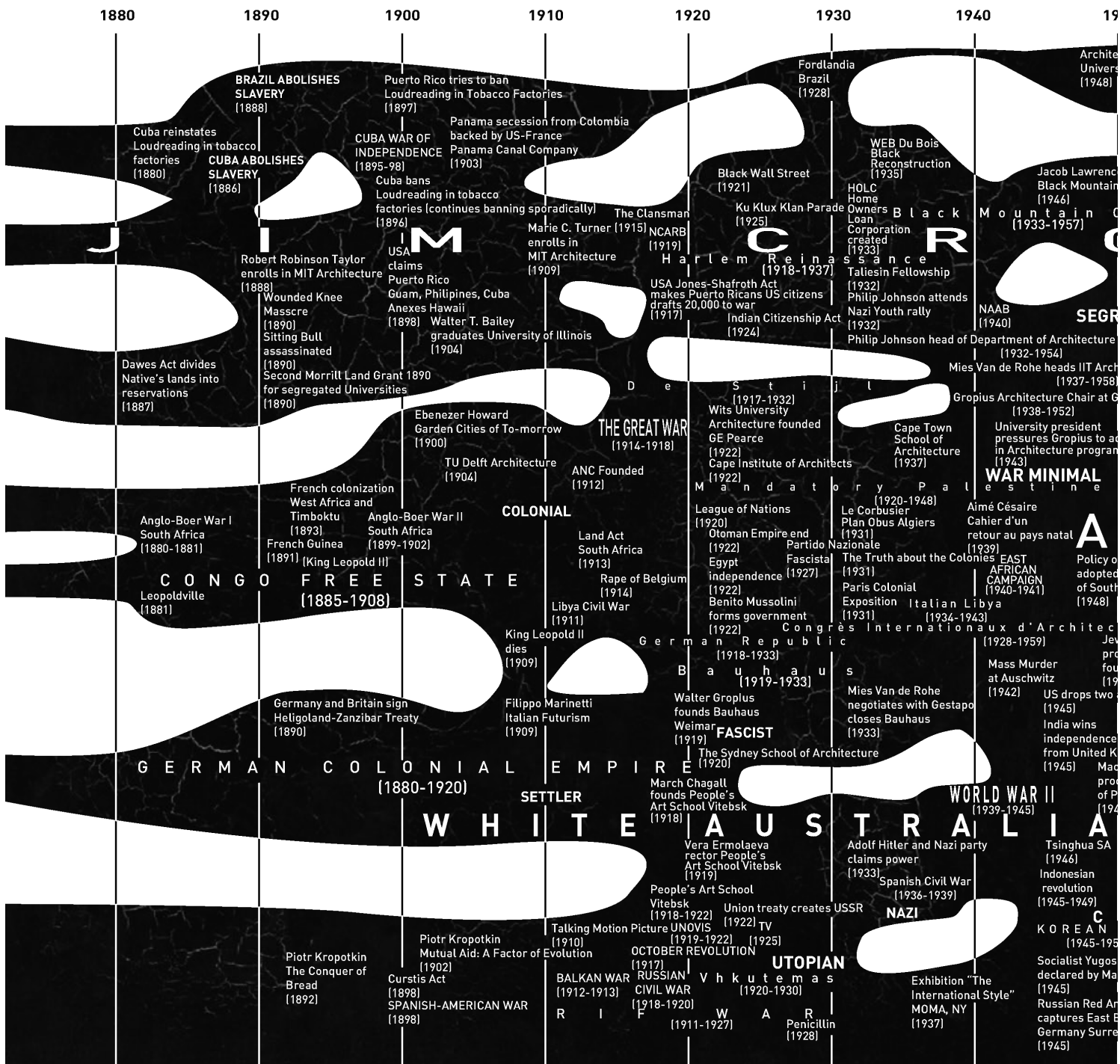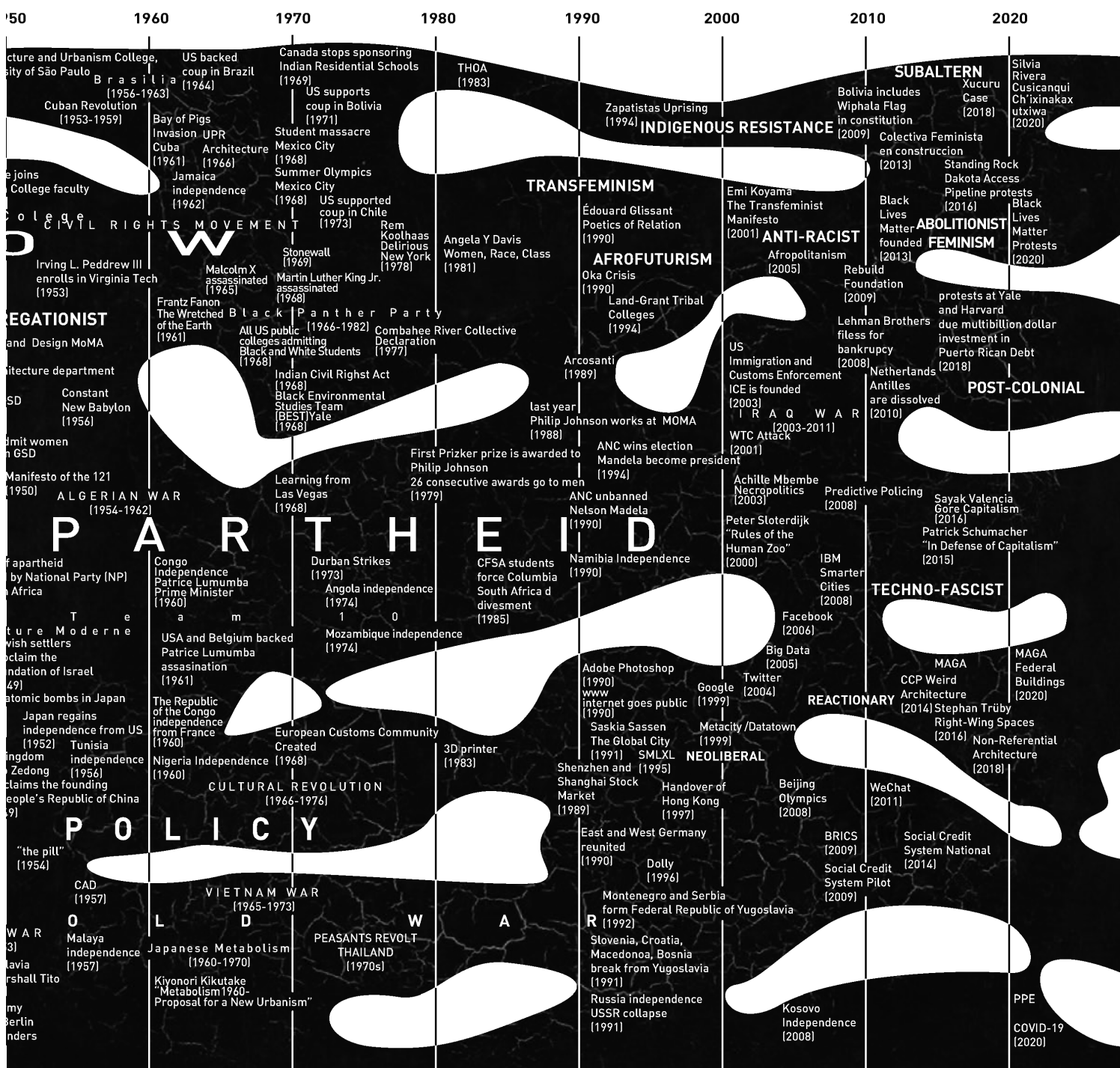
1880    1890    1900    1910    1920    1930    1940    19

Architec
Univers
(1948)

**BRAZIL ABOLISHES SLAVERY** (1888)

Puerto Rico tries to ban Loudreading in Tobacco Factories (1897)

Fordlandia Brazil (1928)

Cuba reinstates Loudreading in tobacco factories (1880)

**CUBA ABOLISHES SLAVERY** (1886)

**CUBA WAR OF INDEPENDENCE** (1895-98)

Panama secession from Colombia backed by US-France Panama Canal Company (1903)

WEB Du Bois Black Reconstruction (1935)

Jacob Lawrence Black Mountain (1946)

Cuba bans Loudreading in tobacco factories (continues banning sporadically) (1896)

Black Wall Street (1921)

HOLC Home Owners Loan Corporation created (1933)

The Clansman

Ku Klux Klan Parade (1925)

B l a c k    M o u n t a i n   C (1933-1957)

Marie C. Turner (1915) NCARB enrolls in (1919) MIT Architecture (1909)

USA claims Puerto Rico Guam, Philipines, Cuba Anexes Hawaii (1898)

Robert Robinson Taylor enrolls in MIT Architecture (1888)

H a r l e m   R e i n a s s a n c e (1918-1937) Taliesin Fellowship (1932)

USA Jones-Shafroth Act makes Puerto Ricans US citizens drafts 20,000 to war (1917)

Philip Johnson attends Nazi Youth rally (1932)

NAAB (1940)

SEGR

Wounded Knee Masscre (1890)
Sitting Bull assassinated (1890)

Walter T. Bailey graduates University of Illinois (1904)

Indian Citizenship Act (1924)

Philip Johnson head of Department of Architecture (1932-1954)
Mies Van de Rohe heads IIT Arch (1937-1958)

Dawes Act divides Native's lands into reservations (1887)

Second Morrill Land Grant 1890 for segregated Universities (1890)

D e   S t i j l (1917-1932)
Wits University Architecture founded GE Pearce (1922)

Gropius Architecture Chair at G (1938-1952)

Ebenezer Howard Garden Cities of To-morrow (1900)

**THE GREAT WAR** (1914-1918)

Cape Town School of Architecture (1937)

University president pressures Gropius to a in Architecture program (1943)

TU Delft Architecture (1904)

ANC Founded (1912)

Cape Institute of Architects (1922)

M a n d a t o r y   P a l e s t i n e (1920-1948)

**WAR MINIMAL**

French colonization West Africa and Timboktu (1893)

**COLONIAL**

League of Nations (1920)

Le Corbusier Plan Obus Algiers (1931)

Aimé Césaire Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (1939)

Anglo-Boer War I South Africa (1880-1881)

Anglo-Boer War II South Africa (1899-1902)

Land Act South Africa (1913)

Otoman Empire end (1922)
Egypt independence (1922)

Partido Nazionale Fascista (1927)

The Truth about the Colonies (1931)

EAST AFRICAN CAMPAIGN (1940-1941)

Policy o adopted of South (1948)

A

French Guinea (1891) (King Leopold II)

Rape of Belgium (1914)

Paris Colonial Exposition (1931)

Italian Libya (1934-1943)

**C O N G O   F R E E   S T A T E** (1885-1908)

Libya Civil War (1911)

Benito Mussolini forms government (1922)

C o n g r è s   I n t e r n a t i o n a u x   d ' A r c h i t e c (1928-1959)

Leopoldville (1881)

King Leopold II dies (1909)

G e r m a n   R e p u b l i c (1918-1933)

Mass Murder at Auschwitz (1942)

Jev pro fou (19

Germany and Britain sign Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty (1890)

Filippo Marinetti Italian Futurism (1909)

B a u h a u s (1919-1933)

Walter Groplus founds Bauhaus Weimar (1919)

Mies Van de Rohe negotiates with Gestapo closes Bauhaus (1933)

US drops two (1945)

**FASCIST**

India wins independence from United K (1945)

**G E R M A N   C O L O N I A L   E M P I R E** (1880-1920)

The Sydney School of Architecture

March Chagall founds People's Art School Vitebsk (1918)

Mac proc of P (194

**SETTLER**

**W H I T E    A U S T R A L I A**

**WORLD WAR II** (1939-1945)

Vera Ermolaeva rector People's Art School Vitebsk (1919)

Adolf Hitler and Nazi party claims power (1933)

Tsinghua SA (1946)

People's Art School Vitebsk (1918-1922)

Union treaty creates USSR (1922)

Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

Indonesian revolution (1945-1949)

Talking Motion Picture (1910)

UNOVIS (1919-1922)

TV (1925)

**NAZI**

C

K O R E A N (1945-195

Piotr Kropotkin Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (1902)

OCTOBER REVOLUTION (1917)

**UTOPIAN**

Socialist Yugos declared by Ma (1945)

Piotr Kropotkin The Conquer of Bread (1892)

Curstis Act (1898)
SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR (1898)

BALKAN WAR (1912-1913)

RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR (1918-1920)

V h k u t e m a s (1920-1930)

Exhibition "The International Style" MOMA, NY (1937)

Russian Red Ar captures East German Surre (1945)

R I F (1911-1927)

W A R

Penicillin (1928)

Figure 1. Excerpt from WAI Architecture Think Tank's *Manual of Anti-Racist Architectural Education*, p. 6-7.

'50          1960          1970          1980          1990          2000          2010          2020

...cture and Urbanism College,          US backed          Canada stops sponsoring
...sity of São Paulo          coup in Brazil          Indian Residential Schools          THOA          SUBALTERN          Silvia
          B r a s i l i a          (1964)          (1969)          (1983)          Rivera
          (1956-1963)                    US supports                    Bolivia includes          Xucuru          Cusicanqui
     Cuban Revolution          Bay of Pigs          coup in Bolivia                    Wiphala Flag          Case          Ch'ixinakax
     (1953-1959)          Invasion          (1971)          Zapatistas Uprising          in constitution          (2018)          utxiwa
               Cuba     UPR          Student massacre          (1994) INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE          (2009)          Colectiva Feminista          (2020)
...e joins          (1961)     Architecture     Mexico City                              en construccion
... College faculty               (1966)     (1968)                                   (2013)          Standing Rock
               Jamaica          Summer Olympics               TRANSFEMINISM          Emi Koyama          Dakota Access          Black
...  l l e g e          independence     Mexico City               Édouard Glissant          The Transfeminist          Black          Pipeline protests          Lives
     C I V I L   R I G H T S   M O V E M E N T          (1962)     (1968)     US supported          Poetics of Relation          Manifesto          Lives          ABOLITIONIST          Matter
                    W          coup in Chile          (1990)          (2001) ANTI-RACIST          Matter          FEMINISM          Protests
                                   (1973)     Rem                              Afropolitanism          founded          (2020)
     Irving L. Peddrew III          Malcolm X          Stonewall     Koolhaas          Angela Y Davis     AFROFUTURISM          (2005)          (2013)
     enrolls in Virginia Tech          assassinated     (1969)     Delirious          Women, Race, Class          Oka Crisis                    Rebuild          protests at Yale
     (1953)          (1965)          New York          (1981)          (1990)                    Foundation          and Harvard
          Frantz Fanon          Martin Luther King Jr.     (1978)               Land-Grant Tribal          (2009)          due multibillion dollar
...REGATIONIST          The Wretched     B l a c k     P a n t h e r     P a r t y          assassinated               Colleges                    investment in
          of the Earth          (1966-1982)          (1968)               (1994)          Lehman Brothers          Puerto Rican Debt
...and Design MoMA          (1961)     All US public     Combahee River Collective                              files for          (2018)
...itecture department               colleges admitting     Declaration                    US          bankrupcy          POST-COLONIAL
               Black and White Students     (1977)          Arcosanti          Immigration and          (2008)          Netherlands
...SD     Constant          (1968)               (1989)          Customs Enforcement               Antilles
          New Babylon          Indian Civil Rights Act                              ICE is founded          I R A Q   W A R     are dissolved
          (1956)          (1968)                                   (2003)          (2003-2011)     (2010)
...dmit women          Black Environmental               last year               WTC Attack
... GSD          Studies Team          Philip Johnson works at MOMA               (2001)
          [BEST]Yale          (1988)
...Manifesto of the 121          (1968)               ANC wins election          Achille Mbembe          Predictive Policing
...(1950)     A L G E R I A N   W A R          First Prizker prize is awarded to          Mandela become president          Necropolitics          (2008)          Sayak Valencia
          (1954-1962)          Philip Johnson          (1994)          (2003)                    Gore Capitalism
P  A  R  T  H  E  I  D          26 consecutive awards go to men                    Peter Sloterdijk                    (2016)
               (1979)          ANC unbanned          "Rules of the                    Patrick Schumacher
...f apartheid     Congo               Nelson Madela          Human Zoo"          IBM          "In Defense of Capitalism"
... by National Party (NP)     Independence          CFSA students     (1990)          (2000)          Smarter          (2015)
... Africa     Patrice Lumumba     Durban Strikes     force Columbia     Namibia Independence               Cities
          Prime Minister     (1973)     South Africa d     (1990)                    (2008)          TECHNO-FASCIST
          (1960)          Angola independence     divesment
          T     e     a     m          (1974)     (1985)                    Facebook
...ture  M o d e r n e               1     0                    (2006)
...vish settlers     USA and Belgium backed          Mozambique independence                    Big Data          MAGA          MAGA
...oclaim the     Patrice Lumumba          (1974)                    (2005)          CCP Weird          Federal
...ndation of Israel     assasination          Adobe Photoshop          Twitter          Architecture          Buildings
...49)     (1961)          European Customs Community          (1990)     Google     (2004)     REACTIONARY     (2014)Stephan Trüby     (2020)
...atomic bombs in Japan     The Republic          Created          www          (1999)                    Right-Wing Spaces
     Japan regains     of the Congo     Nigeria Independence     (1968)          internet goes public               Metacity /Datatown          (2016)     Non-Referential
     independence from US     independence     (1960)          (1990)               (1999)          Beijing          Architecture
... (1952)     Tunisia     from France          3D printer          Saskia Sassen          NEOLIBERAL          Olympics          WeChat          (2018)
...ngdom     independence     (1960)          (1983)          The Global City     SMLXL          (2008)          (2011)
... Zedong     (1956)     CULTURAL REVOLUTION          (1991)     (1995)
...claims the founding          (1966-1976)          Shenzhen and
...eople's Republic of China                         Shanghai Stock     Handover of          BRICS          Social Credit
...9)                              Market     Hong Kong          (2009)          System National
P     O     L     I     C     Y               (1989)     (1997)                    (2014)
     "the pill"                              East and West Germany               Social Credit
     (1954)               VIETNAM WAR          reunited               System Pilot
                    (1965-1973)          (1990)     Dolly          (2009)
     CAD          O     L     D          W     A     R     (1996)
     (1957)                              Montenegro and Serbia
...W A R          Malaya          PEASANTS REVOLT          form Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
...3]          independence     Japanese Metabolism     THAILAND          (1992)
...lavia          (1957)     (1960-1970)     (1970s)          Slovenia, Croatia,
...rshall Tito               Kiyonori Kikutake          Macedonoa, Bosnia
               "Metabolism1960-          break from Yugoslavia
...my          Proposal for a New Urbanism"          (1991)          Kosovo          PPE
...erlin                              Russia independence          Independence
...nders                              USSR collapse          (2008)          COVID-19
                              (1991)          (2020)

Figure 2. "Weaving Themes"and an image of the 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Exhibition at MIT that opened a conversation about our departmental culture. Both featured in Delia Wendel, Dayna Cunningham, Dasjon Jordan, Géraud Bablon, Catherine D'Ignazio, Kevin Lee, and Taina McField, eds. 2021. *A Teach-In for Racial Justice at DUSP*. MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

BlackSpace Urbanist Collective, a group of Black urbanists, created a manifesto that outlines their theory of change for protecting and creating Black spaces, which includes principles such as: "move at the speed of trust"; "center lived experience"; "celebrate, catalyze, and amplify Black joy"and "plan with, design with."[16] According to BlackSpace Urbanist Collective, this manifesto is intended to guide their approach to a range of planning and engagement activities in Black communities. These principles can and should also inform approaches for conducting anti-racist research in planning and design.

**Adopt an explanatory theory or framework that understands racialized difference as the product of social, rather than biological or otherwise "natural," causes.**
This is seen, for example, in ecosocial theory which calls attention to how social and environmental factors that are shaped by planners and designers, such as inequitable living and working conditions, construct race through the production of disparities. The Design Justice + Designing Spaces (DJDS) toolkit is an example. According to their website "the toolkit was inspired by questions related to whether and how the architecture and design of justice spaces, such as courthouses and correctional facilities, perpetuated the punitive orientation of the current justice system."[17] They ask us all to think "What would justice buildings look like if accountability, healing, and transformation were the goal?"[18] DJDS focuses on the criminal justice system as producing racialized outcomes.

Many of these themes also featured prominently in a 'teach-in' organized by DUSP faculty over the first five weeks of the Fall 2020 semester, including several of the authors of this paper (see Figure 2). This moment of deep pedagogical commitment on the part of students and faculty identified how racial justice must inform planning, "as much action as idea."[19]

### SUPPORTING THEMES

**Work towards reconciliation and reparation.**
Develop research products that support those injured by racial injustice in obtaining what they need to heal from and redress the injury (i.e., reparations).

For example, critical race theorists recognize that the law has simultaneously oppressive and reparative potential.[20] An academic researcher in the field of landscape architecture described racial justice on a "recognition, reconciliation, reparation spectrum," and described how research projects can help advance these goals:

> Reconciliation is a power thing, to use the process as a way of empowering the community either with tools or connections or networks or information that they can use to gain resources to have more power and more voice in changes that are happening in their community. Reparations, we have not gotten to.[21]

**Take seriously racist structures of power.**
Structural racism in the world drives racialized difference—anti-racist research should use reparative practices in order to shift power structures that maintain racialized difference.

Black feminist theory not only emphasizes the social construction of race, class, and gender, but offers an analyses of these as the product of interlocking systems of oppression—challenging additive models of oppression and fostering inclusive thinking about other oppressions. A basic tenet of Black feminist theory is Collins's theorization of the "matrix of domination," which refers to "how... intersecting oppressions, for example issues of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation... are actually organized" and the ways in which "structural, disciplinary, hegemonic and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression."[22]

**Be transparent in disclosing how the project's methodological traditions informs the work.**
In many cases, this means adopting research or methodological traditions that center lived experience, use decolonial methods and data sources, and use heterodox types of data and ways of knowing.

An academic researcher in the field of architecture emphasized the importance of acknowledging different forms of data and ways of knowing in doing racially just research:

> The idea that knowledge is produced in a particular institution or the academy and it's in a book or it's in some paper is really in a sense very biased. It is a biased way of looking at the world. And that's another problem with doing this work, is often the research sources are discounted because they are oral or they are documented in music rather than in something else. It doesn't come in a form in which they consider legitimized and that in and of itself excludes certain perspectives and ways of knowing and seeing the world.[23]

Tuhiwai Smith writes about how the term 'research' itself is strongly associated with colonial knowledge traditions, particularly from the perspective of people who experienced colonization. Reclaiming control over Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing is necessary for decolonized knowledge production; this implies methodologies that "approach cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology.[24]

**Take context and history seriously.**
Context and history are core to understandings of differential racialization, a key tenet of CRT. Critical race theorists are anti-essentialist, drawing attention to race as historical, produced in relationship to law and political economy.[25] This includes describing the limits of researchers' understanding of topic, place, and population as well as understanding context and history as filtered through the positionality of the research team.

**Identify agency.**

Research centered on marginalized communities uplifts desire, assets, and agency, instead of taking a "damage-based" approach that reduces communities to their problems.[26] Indeed, research centered on dominant groups clarifies their agency as well, e.g. in the creation or continuation of racialized difference.[27] It is for these reasons as well that postcolonial theorists emphasize the "subaltern" and acts of resistance by those at the margins.[28]

Protect human subjects of research by enacting the Belmont Report's ethical principles through an equity lens.

In many cases, this may involve introducing additional principles. Developed in 1978, the Belmont report provides ethical standards for human subject research. The standard has three main components:

- Respect for the person, which involves being truthful about the intentions of the work.

- Beneficence ("Do no Harm"), minimizing risk while maximizing benefits of the research.

- Justice, which implies the fair distribution of costs and benefits to subjects. [29]

However, many contemporary researchers emphasize that the Belmont principles are a bare minimum, rather than an adequate standard, as they don't grant human subjects any agency in shaping research questions or allocating resources.

**Take the positionality of marginalized communities seriously.**

Where possible, research should center marginalized communities as decision-makers in research and meaning-making processes. This theme of delegating or sharing decision-making with research partners was emphasized by an academic researcher in the field of environmental design:

> We had this cooperative model of a research team, with 'one person one vote' and trying to remove hierarchy in all our research processes from research design to communication to data collection, analysis, and publication. I see that cooperative model of research as partly being [racially just] and the members are all BIPOC and oftentimes first-gen student researchers.[30]

Tuhiwai Smith outlines a standard for emancipatory research such that "when Indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed."[31] Many Indigenous scholars suggest that settler scholars involve themselves in participatory or collaborative research projects in which Indigenous people define research goals and objectives.

**Seek critical feedback and reflect.**

Reflexivity should be central throughout the research process, including through community participation and oversight, transparent reporting, and reflective practice, to ensure features that make the project anti-racist are maximally integrated. Postcolonial methods apply and modify existing methods of the social sciences in order to remember who has been silenced, erased, and oppressed within colonial/postcolonial contexts and to rethink the predominant stories in order to promote multiplicity and reflectivity.[32]

**BARRIERS**

Here we summarize the opportunities and challenges identified through the interviews.

**The Service Burden**

In our interviews, we found that the biggest barrier to anti-racist research was the burden on BIPOC faculty, students, and staff to fill the gap in knowledge, expertise, and lived experience. Because the demands of these research practices are different from traditional efforts, they often require taking on additional leadership roles as well as doing more logistical, relational, and emotional labor to shift and adapt departmental processes (contracts, budgets, IRB review, and oversight).

**Underrepresentation**

The institutional failures leading to underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minorities in student, faculty, staff, and departmental leadership positions mean that anti-racist research is either conducted by minoritized scholars in the absence of a supportive community or by who lack lived experience. For example, an academic researcher in the field of landscape architecture described the importance of recruiting diverse faculty and students as follows:

> I think we have to work on attracting diverse faculty and students because you can have this monolith of people that are doing this kind of research, or you can have a diversity of people doing this kind of research. If this research is about equity and inclusion and racial justice, the institution or people that are doing this should practice that. You can be researching it and not practicing it in your own life.[33]

**Tension Comes with Anti-Racist Work**

Many scholars find a departmental culture that can't hold or manage the tension, conflict, and discomfort that come along with having the difficult conversations and navigating power dynamics needed to address racism.

**Lack of Training and Mentorship**

The scholars we spoke with mentioned that many staff and faculty do not have the technical knowledge and skill to conduct or teach anti-racist research. The unfunded work of teaching those who lack this capability is often shouldered by faculty/researchers who do, who are often folks of color. They also highlighted

a shortage of humility and cultural competency, both of which are necessary to support Black and Brown students and faculty.

### What is the "Field" of Field Research?

The scholars we spoke with mentioned that many staff and faculty do not have the technical knowledge and skill to conduct or teach anti-racist research. The unfunded work of teaching those who lack this capability is often shouldered by faculty/researchers who do, who are often folks of color. They also highlighted a shortage of humility and cultural competency, both of which are necessary to support Black and Brown students and faculty.

### SUPPORTS

### Meaningful (and Resourced) Commitment

The scholars we spoke with mentioned that many staff and faculty do not have the technical knowledge and skill to conduct or teach anti-racist research. The unfunded work of teaching those who lack this capability is often shouldered by faculty/researchers who do, who are often folks of color. They also highlighted a shortage of humility and cultural competency, both of which are necessary to support Black and Brown students and faculty.

### Promoting The Research

Departments, schools, and colleges/universities should highlight projects that advance racial justice in departmental or school seminars, and promote their leadership. This makes clear that fields of academic knowledge that seek to transform unequal power relations (see above) are valued. Many interviewees expressed that they did not feel supported by their departments or schools to pursue racially just research. An academic researcher in the field of architecture emphasized that:

> There needs to be an atmosphere of this being something that is embraced, that folks feel like they can do this and still be recognized for their work and be rewarded for their work, i.e. tenure and promotion and all the other sorts of things. That this is something that won't be, when it gets to the provost or the board and they're considering tenure, that they won't look at this and say 'Oh this is ghettoized work. This is not something we want to tenure.[34]

### Identify Funding that Supports Novel Partnerships

Partnering with community groups, as well as other departments, centers, or programs that ground their research in critical race theory and focus on advancing racially just outcomes is essential. Institutions should identify alternate sources of long-term funding, including support for unconventional project overhead that racially-just projects often induce. This can include charging funders for rent, allocating percentages of headquarters staff, and itemizing other expenses usually covered by indirect costs. More flexible funding would permit the proper compensation of long-term community partners and support costly

relationship-building. Some interviewees emphasized that they often had to go outside of their department or school to receive support for conducting racially just research. An academic researcher in the field of architecture stated that:

> I have always gotten more support for my work outside of any institution that I've worked at, than from the institution itself... From like-minded colleagues, but also from publishers, various conferences, various awarding institutions or agencies, from those places rather than the folks that I worked with on a daily basis.[35]

### Include Racially Marginalized People in Leadership

Ensuring that staff, faculty, and departmental leadership includes people from marginalized groups in formal leadership positions creates a sense of institutional support and increases the likelihood that commitments will be meaningfully resourced. An academic researcher in the field of architecture described the expressed lack of support for racially just research from leadership in their department, and expressed skepticism in occasional demonstrations of interest by leadership based on "fads" or events that heighten awareness:

> What makes [racially just research] possible is your desire to do it. Until the last year and a half, with the Black Lives Matter movement and other similar events, now Black is the new Black. Prior to that, you just had to do it. There was no institutional support. There were very little avenues for financial support. It just didn't exist. You just had to sort of stay the course and do it. I was told early in my career that you'll never gain tenure doing this, and this was from a dean who told me this.[36]

### Departmental Norms and Positionality

Foster departmental culture and norms that supports communication, hold tension and conflict, and support collaborative contribution, relational resilience, openness, and transparency. This also requires that institutions confront their roles in and contributions to racial inequities and that they work with communities of color to correct them (e.g., recruit students, staff, and faculty from those communities or conduct research that advances their planning and development priorities).

### CONCLUSION

Our research team identified pathways for developing and supporting anti-racist research agendas for architects, planners, and designers through our fields scan and interviews. Above, we outlined opportunities for and challenges to anti-racist research developed and believe that these should guide institutions in supporting this work. Research must clearly establish a theory of change and articulate a framework through which it will be advancing racial justice in your context. Such a theory is change is supported by the eight additional pillars identified above. Many

existing anti-racist research projects create a guiding principles document or manifesto which often align, broadly, with the supporting themes we identified, suggesting means of acting ethically and challenging power in the world.

Our review of the institutional challenges to and supports for anti-racist research showed that the biggest challenge is the institutional labor---unpaid, emotional, and otherwise---that frequently falls on BIPOC faculty, staff and students. BIPOC faculty, often junior faculty, are frequently responsible for training other community members to conduct anti-racist research ethically, even while defending its necessity and value. They also often become responsible for starting and facilitating dialogue around racism. This additional responsibility and labor should be compensated or recognized as a service to the institution. Fieldwork spaces were identified as a significant challenge because they currently focus on white spaces and, therefore, reinforce a dominant, colonizer narrative of architectural space. We must balance the spaces of practice and study with non-normative geographies to help to counter that narrative. However, this brings us back to the first challenge: BIPOC faculty often have the burden of opening these spaces for investigation or helping their colleagues work in them.

On the other hand, supports involve materially supporting and valuing anti-racist work, including placing importance on of partnerships and positionality. Communication elevates the work, counters dominant narratives, shows it is valuable to the organization and guides others interested in performing anti-racist research. University overhead is a problem for researchers who often do this work on a shoestring budget and for partners who lose already-scarce funds to large overhead fees. We must identify novel ways to support to creatively offset the overhead costs associated with long-term partnership.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Our interview protocol was subject to, and approved by, the MIT Institutional Review Board (protocol 2104000349). In selecting key informants, we limited our pool of potential subjects to senior scholars and practitioners. We understood this to be a trade-off; on the one hand, we potentially missed cutting-edge approaches and frameworks, and barriers that are unique to junior scholars and practitioners. However, we also wanted to eliminate any tacit pressure that junior scholars might feel to participate; we also recognized that junior scholars might face higher risks of reprisal.

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4. Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139–68; Chandra L. Ford and Collins O. Airhihenbuwa, "Critical Race Theory, Race Equity, and Public Health: Toward Antiracism Praxis," *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. S1 (April 1, 2010): S30–35, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2009.171058.

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9. Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 413, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15.

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12. "Design As Protest."

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16. BlackSpace Urbanist Collective, "BlackSpace Manifesto," 2020, https://www.blackspace.org/_files/ugd/b00ca4_1e87c73787ba449490294a9af3af04ec.pdf; The collective points to adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017) as inspiration for the principle "move at the speed of trust."

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19. Delia Wendel et al., eds., *A Teach-In for Racial Justice at DUSP* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning, 2021), 17.

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23. Academic researcher in the field of architecture, interview by Anne Whiston Spirn, Zoom recording, June 1, 2021.

24. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 15.

25. Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*; Delgado, Stefancic, and Harris, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*.

26. Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities."

27. Chelsea Barabas et al., "Studying Up: Reorienting the Study of Algorithmic Fairness around Issues of Power," in *ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency*, January 27–30, 2020, Barcelona, Spain (New York, NY: ACM, 2020), https://doi.org/10.1145/3351095.3372859; Laura Nader, "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up," in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1972), 284–311.

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31. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 196.

32. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

33. Academic researcher in the field of landscape architecture, interview by Anne Whiston Spirn, Zoom recording, May 12, 2021.

34. Academic researcher in the field of architecture, interview, June 1, 2021.

35. Academic researcher in the field of architecture.

36. Academic researcher in the field of architecture.