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Hello everyone! Welcome to the first series of The Bravely Curious Podcast, a six part series produced as a joint effort between Cal Poly Pomona's Department of Landscape Architecture, 'The Landscape Architecture Podcast' and 'The Landscape Nerd' Podcast which is hosted by me, Maci Nelson.

This inaugural series will be released in its entirety on larchitect.org, thelandscapenerd.com, and thebravelycuriouspodcast.com future podcasts produced by Cal Poly Pomona's Department of Landscape Architecture will be released exclusively on thebravelycuriouspodcast.com This series includes 6 episodes, that provide a comprehensive and look at the relationship between landscape and people in America. This series was inspired by a Fall 2020 studio from Cal Poly's Department of Landscape Architecture titled:

"Stealing, Reclaiming, Protecting, and the Redefining of Spaces"

The subtitles to this series are 001 Introduction, 002 Landscapes Original Sin, 003 Reclaiming and Redefining, 004 Protecting, 005 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals also known as (DACA), and 006 Protest Park.

The following episodes 002 Landscape Original Sin, 003 Reclaiming and Redefining, and 004 Protecting take on a unique aspect of landscape architectures history. Episode 005 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) shares an anonymous first person narrative of a landscape architecture student living under the DACA policy. Lastly, episode 006 Protest Park asks what a space might look like if designed with the anticipation that it will be utilized for demonstrations.

In an effort for these stories to reach as wide of an audience as possible, not only will every episode of this series be available on three different platforms, the episode will be available in English AND Spanish. We look forward to sharing what we have learned with you.

So let's begin.

This is a big topic. There is so much to uncover and decipher. That it's pretty much impossible for me to do it in one episode. So, the purpose of this episode is to present a collection of information and offer a foundation for us to start. Information for this topic is in no way complete, there is so much history to cover, it's nearly impossible, but you can think of this episode as preparation. We will first identify the issue and explore some of the sources for injustice that we see in the built environment. As we work through this, we're going to be paying attention to the language that is used. Now language can mean many different things, graphic language, geological language, verbal language, any form of communication, I can think of as language. But for this instant we will focus on verbal language or written language, particularly vocabulary, how we use that or omit that to describe these landscape stories that when told over time, become huge influences on how we design space.

So we are going to define the terms that are defining this design exploration. I want us to all understand what these terms mean. This class is titled, Stealing, reclaiming, protecting and redefining, public and private spaces.

Stealing- Theft, to take unlawfully or without permission.

Reclaiming and Protecting- I have grouped these two words together because they are often used together. And I'll be honest and say that I was surprised. I thought that I knew what these words meant, but I was just a little bit off. I had been using them incorrectly and if I had, maybe other had as well. And that's okay, we're learning. Reclaiming means to rescue from an undesirable state, or to restore to a previous natural state. I guess that I never understood the depth that the definition had. And I see that people that people see reclaiming as claiming something for ourselves, and in design that needs to be explicitly said, whether you are claiming something to turn it into something that you want, or you are reclaiming it in order to return it to a previous state.

To protect: means to keep someone or something safe from injury, damage, or loss. But I think that it is interesting that these definitions do not say at what cost. Right? Both definitions don't have a morality or ethics assigned to it. And it is our opportunity for us to say we are protecting something at a certain cost. For a certain purpose. Be clear, that will help us drive the narrative forward and it will also help others connect to the narrative you want to share.

Redefining is to change the perceptions of something which I think we can easily do with narrative. The terms private and public are interesting because we can probably all conjure up our own thoughts as to what they mean, we can probably even think about what a public and private landscape look like in our own minds.

A public space refers to an area or place that is open and accessible to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level. And how many places do you actually know that are like this?

Private space means a location in which a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, , so private is much more subjective than public, private has a whole range of what the owner's reasonable expectation could be.

OK, so now that we have them defined, we can use them as our literally foundation and we can find words and other ways of language of which to build upon these terms. And this way we will build a really incredible collaborative story that I can't wait for these students to tell. So now it is time for us to start this design investigation. I'm super excited for this. I think that the first step is to acknowledge the past in order to reframe something or rethink something, we need to understand what that something was.

What would it mean to have an open conversation and who is going to talk about what happened in the past. We have to talk about it, in order to reckon with it.
But I think that we have a general lack of vocabulary in the ways that we look to describe inequalities. Language is critical to communication- we can understand that. But often, when looking at language, it is just as important to observe what was said just as much as what wasn't said.

These are things we are familiar with, we tend to talk about issues in a covert way. Not because we are trying to hide something, not always. But we are trying to convey a sense of sensitivity and we are trying not to offend. But I think that when it comes to a topic that we are actually trying to solve, that can no longer be pushed aside, we have to stop that. We have to confront our past and our country's past with language.

I think of this one story often and it came up a lot when researching for this episode. One time Walter Hood came to our school for discussion and talk- he asked if we noticed segregation in our own town. What social network features did we notice? We mentioned the divide of the city, Eastside to the west side, then he asked the very obvious question (to outsiders) ' well who lives on the east side, who lives on the west side", I personally responded to the question because no one else was answering, I said 'the Eastside is definitely more diverse' and he called me out on that. He said so 'the black people live on the East side and the White people live on the west side'. Then he said how can we talk about race when we can't even talk about race?"

That moment struck me and has stayed with me. At first, I was deeply offended, I thought that I had done all the right things, I spoke up, I made an accurate statement, and I don't know why I was called out. But that was my ego talking, that was my moment of defensiveness, but then I recognized that real issue- I took it personally, not because he was taking it out on me, no not at all-but because I chose language as a shield because I was too scared of being wrong or portraying something in a wrong way. I was so scared of not sounding correct or not aligning with the narrative that I had heard while I was in design school, that I was afraid to use the language that I was comfortable with--and it removed me from the story.

And I am going to say something that will put this into context. I am black, and I am from the east side, and I couldn't even say," black people live on the east side" . I think that says a lot about the community and the language that we use in the design world around race. So we have to create a more hospitable environment for people to talk about their stories and their perspectives. And the more we know the faster we can move forward.

Now I want to set the scene, learn some new vocabulary, and nerd out about a heavy topic. Historically, Landscape Architects seem to be caught up in the system. Designers, in

general, are looked to for being in favor of progress and are looked to for inspiration and being

at the forefront of 'what is next?'. But that is done within a prescribed framework even if we

don't know it. The ideas put forward by designers of the built environment are subject to

regulations and constraints of other disciplines but especially culture. The built environment is

the first impression that we get from the outside world of who is in power aka who can afford to

make the rules and regulations and constraints that we work within.

Do they have any obligation to create landscapes of compassion to those who do not hold as

much power and does that mean that those people are relatively powerless when it comes to

changing their built environment?

As landscape architects and designers we think ' no of course not' - that's the whole

point, we want to show people how you can change your built environment but even then, we

might be saying that within a construct that we are not familiar with. So I want to introduce some

new terms or phrases that I have found very useful.

The Interdisciplinary Association for Population and Health Science published an article

titled 'American Landscapes of Racial Dispossession and Control They listed 4 frameworks for

us designers, and anyone, to be aware of the influences that have contributed to designing

inequality into our landscapes:

Structural Symbiosis. It is the idea that structures are composed of formal and informal

interrelated institutions. So when one holds an idea or stereotype, especially racist views, it is

going to be shared and when someone or something intervenes and tries to move toward equality

other institutions will try to restore their interpretation of power. They rely on each other heavily

and will do this to survive.

The Eraser. Structural racism includes erasing historical processes that would lay bare the link of decisions that were made to be racist and providing evidence of the injustices being linked to racist thoughts. So throughout history, policies and decisions that governed for example, land use zoning, has systematically broken black, and minority neighborhoods in the name of progress and I think that erasure is something that we see a lot. Lauret Savoy- details this experience in her book "Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape" When she toured a plantation she observed unmarked graves of the enslave\d and an overall lack of acknowledgment of the Full lives that people lived here in captivity. An entire population's story lost to a simplified definition of "resident labor'. By the way, that is still the definition of a plantation: an estate on which crops such as coffee, sugar, and tobacco are cultivated by resident labor. Which leads us to the next framework:

The Distortion Lens. Cultural racism serves as a distortion lens that renders racialized structures as neutral and rational. It may be tempting to think that inequities in hazardous exposures result from the policies that simply place needed jobs in economically distressed neighborhoods. However, it is the pollution, not the jobs that go to these neighborhoods. They are referring to Fenceline zones- or sacrifice zones, the neighborhoods by industrial lands that produce dangerous levels of toxins and pollutants that minority communities are exposed to first. Lastly, the most elusive and problematic framework.

The Shapeshifter. It's acknowledging that Institutional practices may fall out of sociopolitical favor, you know that the public has decided that it is wrong or no longer beneficial. But institutions adapt and conform to what is acceptable by the broader public. And that means that the violence of slavery has transformed into a sort of slow violence, like environmental injustice or incarcerated labor, it doesn't go away, it just shapeshifts in how it is presented.

Let's look at these frameworks in a built environment context. I know that we have referenced a little bit here and there but let's look at physical examples that we can all recognize in our cities. Attn published an article 'How Discrimination Shapes What Your City Looks Like' by, Lucy Tiven. In addition to pollutants concentrated near low-income neighborhoods. The author highlights 5 other exclusionary examples: 5 others examples that show that there is a divide and a systematic issue that shows our relationship to people and land and how we show people that we don't think that they deserve land or deserve to be there.

The first example is the construction of Chinatowns and other ethnic enclaves. Often, these enclaves are physical representations of structural racism, because it is showing that immigrants were welcomed as labor but then considered nuisances once the job is done. I think that this story is often told as people choosing to live together based on cultural similarities. and I remember retelling this same story in grad school. I remember thinking that we were studying these areas because ' that's where the Germans were, that's where the Italians were, But that's definitely NOT the whole story. The impression that immigrants choose to live in enclaves now, omits the fact that they were widely rejected or prohibited from living anywhere else, it was segregation. Now we can see them as tourist attractions, the place to travel to in order to get ethnic food or a moment of 'other' culture for a moment without the commitment. I guess it is not all bad. It is great to have a place to exercise the aesthetic within your built environment but it is also indicative that it is not welcomed anywhere else. So you won't see it anywhere else.

Hostile Architecture. The author writes "At its most vicious, hostile architecture can turn up in spikes that prevent homeless people from sleeping on city streets and in public parks. 'But we can recognize the more subtle design gestures that tell others that they are not welcomed- It is hard to pick out because they are easy to disguise and to rationalize. Something like spikes is

obvious, intending to cause physical harm, it meant to deter you using physical threat. But the more subtle gesture is meant to induce discomfort, such as dividers in benches, or leaning benches that don't really have a seat at all. It's just a bar with posts. Curved benches so you can't sleep on them, and putting netting over planting beds, so that homeless people cannot seek shelter there. People have mortared upright stones mortared on top of seat walls. If you look up these examples, you may see a lot of commentary of preventing homeless people from being there, but (what is not being said) I also want to point out that the elderly, people with limited mobility, or even small children are also being told to stay away. So only able-bodied adults, who are about to notice these gestures and are welcomed here.

The last two examples are related to transportation. So there is a lack of transportation in and out of minority communities. And also highways being used to split up cities and segregate further minority and low income neighborhoods.

Transportation has been a long standing factor in the fight for racial equality and extends far beyond seating on public buses.A March 2016 study conducted by the think tank Center for an Urban Future found that residents of Queens — which has large Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations — had the longest commutes in the city. Also, in Atlanta, "The lack of public-transit connections to areas north of the city makes it difficult for those who rely on transit—primarily the poor and people of color—to access job opportunities located in those suburbs." Other metropolitan areas face this issue, even in Ohio. In January 2014, a Dayton, Ohio bus line saw major online backlash for linking predominantly Black neighborhoods to predominantly white suburbs. "They resented—sometimes in purely racist terms—that this new public transportation line would be bringing outsiders, largely blacks, to Beavercreek, a suburb that is about 89 percent white," reporter Corinne Ramey wrote on Slate. I've even seen this in my small town of

Shaker Hts, Ohio, although the political borders never changed, the ethnic and racial ones did, and many people took notice. Comments made were microaggressions, subtle transgressions, small enough that I didn't make much of it at the time, and find it difficult to recall, but it happened. And people noted when more black people were coming into the neighborhood, I remember thinking that it was weird but I also remember thinking that it was normal, when it shouldn't have been normal.

Highways as Dividers is another subject to look at as a way to create borders that are disguised as progress.

"In many southern cities, local city planners took advantage of federal money to target black communities point-blank; in other parts of the nation, highway planners found the paths of least resistance, wiping out black commercial districts. Chinatowns and desecrating land sacred to indigenous peoples were subject to this type of destruction and this usually coordinated well with private redevelopment.

In terms of public transportation, as much as that seems like a planning issue, there is a huge landscape component. The land itself. Landscape architects and designers can understand the morphology of that land and the other systems that would overlay the transportation system. Optimizing placement and connections. An example that I like to use is the transportation system in Medellin, Colombia. According to an article by ThinkProgress, About 10 years ago The metro cable system has revolutionized mobility and accessibility for residents of Colombia's second-largest city, particularly the poorest — and often most violent — communities that line the valley of Medellin's mountainous region. Prior to the development of the metro cable system, residents of the "favelas" (squatter communities along the mountainside) had to brave a treacherous journey down the mountainside, which could take hours on foot or infrequent and

unreliable buses. Getting basic access to commerce, education, healthcare, and other necessities could take all day — making it impossible for people of these communities. So when they established this cable car system, they literally linked the stations into the mountainside to allow people to come into the city.

The lesson of Medellin is an important one for all communities to consider. Well-designed public transportation systems can be more than about just getting people around, it can also be a positive driver for social and economic change. So I'm not saying that designers are responsible for all of these things, but we can see now how these design elements can lead to dispossession and stealing. How do we fit into it? How do we start to heal or regard this long lived trauma? Meghan O'Neil wrote an article for Architectural Digest titled: Why Justice in Design Is Critical to Repairing America and it summed up the role that designers have now. The article states that

Design professionals alone, of course, are not to blame. But as a group of people who generally view themselves as progressive problem solvers, they have some power—and responsibility—to help un-build inequity. No one yet knows exactly how to build a just city. But with throngs of people pouring into the streets in support of Black Lives Matter—that is, into the very spaces where black Americans like George Floyd, Eric Garner, Ahmaud Arbery, and too many others, are being unlawfully killed by police—right now is the time to have some hard conversations and to reframe how we build and unbuild communities and spaces.

So at this point, I hope that you understand that there is a problem and that there is work to be done. But how do we do it? Following episodes from the students will propose more conscious thoughts expand upon this, but for right now, I want us to focus on narrative and storytelling as our first steps to designing justly- and that included language.

I had mentioned before that Language- its equal parts what is being said and what is not being said. Most of us understand the history through what was recorded, by someone, through a perspective, and that is all that we get. So we need more stories, we need to find them, and we need to know where to look. I would like to look at the rural landscape for stories. I think that there is a lot of history there that we may not talk about as much. And if we don't talk about the history there socially speaking, we do not know what is going on socially currently.To put this into context, the USA is only 2% urban, but is 17% agriculture and 81% everything else. Open lands, preserves, wetlands, you name it, everything else. There is so much of it and I don't know if we have enough discussion about that in the LA community about what is going on socially in these areas. I will admit that I was not familiar with this topic and I learned a lot. I will give a little bit of basic information and take it from there.

According to the Professional Agriculture Worker's Journal, there are measurable disadvantages that minority farmers face. Black farmers lose about 30,000 acres per year. At first, I wasn't quite sure what that meant. But it goes on to explain that in the decades after the Civil War, freed slaves and their descendants accumulated 15 million acres of land. In 1910, 14 percent of all farm owner-operators were Black but by 2012, they comprised only 1.5 percent. It seems that Agricultural and rural lands are just as segregated as they were 100 years ago. This is important to note because it is a big part of the holistic modern American landscape story that is going untold.

Maybe we tend to view the rural areas as uninhabited or maybe it's out of sight and out of mind.
There was an article on this topic written by Megan Horst for the Eater.com and they note: that farmers of color (Black, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander, and those reporting more than

one race) comprised less than 3 percent of non-farming landowners and they were more likely to

be tenants than owners; they also owned less land and smaller farms, and generated less wealth

from farming than their white counterparts.

This is especially true for Latinx farmers, comprising about 2 percent of non-farming

landowners and about 6 percent of owner-operators but that is well below their 17 percent

representation in the U.S. population. That number is particularly startling because over 80

percent of farm laborers are of Latin descent. So it is obvious that there is social injustice and

obstacles in these areas- where someone who is a laborer faces great difficulty in trying to

progress economically to become a farmer- owner and operator. As I mentioned earlier, I was

not familiar with this topic and thought that I did not know where to look for more stories. But I

thought about it and the stories are much more abundant that they appear, or maybe they are

stories that we already know, or rather, they are embedded in the stories that we think we already

know.

For example, we will look at the history of the National parks. The preservation of our

most meaningful places for the purpose of public appreciation and recreation is a uniquely

American idea. The Yosemite Grant was signed by President Abraham Lincoln and with it the

first time the US government set aside parkland for preservation land public use. This protected

landscape includes iconic American features such as the bridal veil falls, half dome rock and

some of the oldest trees on earth, the giant sequoias. It also includes other tales such as, toward

the end of the 19th century, there was growing awareness that the nation's unrelenting rush to

conquer and tame the land had come at a terrible cost forests have been devastated and entire

species of animals have been ravaged in the name of progress.

The naturalist John Muir, eloquently expressed his concern when he spoke that "the great wilds of our country once held to be boundless and inexhaustible, are being rapidly invaded and overrun…and everything destructible in them is being destroyed."

As America moved into a new century, a new word – "conservation" – had crept into the nation's vocabulary. A new president, Theodore Roosevelt, would become conservation's greatest advocate and would turn the word into a movement. In 1903, he once again boarded a train headed west, arriving just outside of Yellowstone National Park. He was no longer a scrawny and inexperienced Easterner, but a national hero, and the youngest president in United States history. His visit was a break from an eight-week national tour in which he delivered over 200 speeches. Yearning to be alone in nature, he immediately set off on horseback with the Army's acting park superintendent, leaving the rest of the presidential entourage behind. President Theodore Roosevelt saw in conservation the means of keeping the natural wealth of the United States for the public and not leaving it as it had been for the economic benefit of entrepreneurs. In a move to preserve the prehistoric Indian ruins and artifacts on public lands he signed the antiquities act of 1906- using it to create 18 national monuments, and then President Roosevelt established 150 national parks, 51 bird preserves, 4 game preserves, Roosevelt increased the forest lands from 43 million to 194 million acres.

And that is a story that I think a lot of people like- it's a story that people can get on board with. As good natured as this story may seem, there is a lot missing!

And this is when we get to investigate a little bit more and this is when being a landscape nerd really comes in handy. So this perspective shows us a lot of good things, pretty much only good things. but we do not hear from other perspectives within the story. The only other mention

of people in general is when the story mentions that the land was protecting native ruins and artifacts. But this should be our first clue. Native people weren't gone- they didn't go anywhere. The national park system was a part of a larger system removing native people from their ancestral lands. It was a well-known fact that native people had deep ties to this land- the greatest parks that we have ever known. and used it to continue practicing rituals and to hunt. They were deeply connected to the landscape. But from the story that I just read to you, from the writings of pbs, the national park service website, the library of congress, how would we have known any of that? And how would we know where to look?

We really need to emphasize having a dialogue. When it comes to social issues, our best solution is going to be socializing. People have an incredible ability to tell you about experience better than any report ever could. Knowing how something makes you feel is something that someone can tell you directly. Stories come from people, and that is who you design for. The Narratives that we share are going to put through many different lens after all this class is titled

"Stealing, Reclaiming, Protecting, and Redefining Public and Private Spaces"

But if those same words were spoken 100 years ago- what would they mean? If those words are spoken in 100 years from now, what will they mean?

Designing with earth, people, and our environment, is designing with entire systems. Ecological, cultural, economic, hydrologic, and so on, we are looking to create civility and balance between them. But that is not always the case, we harm systems unintentionally when we design from one frame of mind. So I encourage us all to keep people in our designs and the design process promotes dialogue. This is a great first step. Let's use dialogue and keep using language, and language can be defined in so many ways. Nonverbal language, graphic language, language of reading the earth- that has a dialogue in itself. Dialogue is an exchange, it is an

exchange of stories. Dialogue, not monologue. So often in design, especially in outdoor design, one perspective will not do. You do not want to unintentionally push other people away. So let's keep dialogue in design.

In my mind, that means that the design process should look like a conversation- a real conversation, not a scripted one. That means to leave room for awkward pauses, and run ons, leave room for stutters, and incomplete thoughts, leave room for yourself and others to make mistakes.

This will be the way to design in these times of civil unrest and civil movements. If these words and sentiments of dialogue and monologue sound familiar, they should. This emphasis on dialogue was inspired by the great Dr. King at the end of his 'Do the Right Thing' speech. He was discussing the violence in obvious physical ways, I have chosen to look at the words from a design perspective and how that would apply. What does violence in a designed world mean? I will read the quote now, "Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by destroying itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers."--Martin Luther King, Jr.

And that is why we cannot have one sided design. I people that monologue in design is a form of violence. When we move forward we need more stories and we need more people.

In conclusion, look for the stories untold, do not perpetuate violence in the design, dialogue is the way to more forward and I look forward to having it with you. Ask each other questions, ask me questions. Build a story that is collaborative and then you will be able to design collaborative. Fortunately there is so much information on this topic and there is a very live conversation happening now about it. Now more than ever, people are more willing than ever to discuss how they feel about the environment that they are living in. And I encourage us all, while we put these audio episodes forward into the world, and as we have listeners from all around the world, tell us what you think, share your stories, and know that we are listening.

Whew that was a lot of information to take in and I hope that you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed researching it and sharing it with you. But that is what you get when you are a landscape nerd and that I am! Stay tuned for the episodes that will be coming from these incredible students' stories.

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