CITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD:
QUESTIONS OF CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DESIGN

• Paper / Proposal Title:
RACE, URBAN-RENEWAL, AND ENVIRONMENT IN NEW ORLEANS: FROM PLESSY THROUGH KATRINA

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• Abstract (300 words):

This talk will focus on why interpreting the concept of “space” is important when examining race, and how does southern spatial-geography over various periods impact identity-formation and the Black body? In urban planning, the idea in which “space” impacts everything is foundational to the field: the architecture; the landscape; the people living within those structures, and structural boundaries put in place that affects society as a whole, whether directly or indirectly. Especially, in the context of legalized-racial and spatial segregation which affected Blacks of Creole and African-American ancestry for nearly a century. Understanding the historical-context, will connect to discourse regarding Hurricane Katrina and the primary victims affected in the 21st century.

20 years into the twenty-first century, Post-Obama post-racism has transformed like a spinning-wheel to overt-racism within the Trump era. Racially-segregated de facto neighborhoods, residential areas established during the race-regime periods, remain in place. Perpetual hardship contributes to continuous socio-political consciousness among people that are affected, particularly people of color. In the Lower Ninth, Ninth, Eighth, Tremé, and Seventh Wards located closest to where the levees broke and where the hurricane ravaged those areas, predominantly affected African-Americans, including
people of Creole heritage. In the post-hurricane Katrina New Orleans, governmental distribution of wealth and resource hoarding from private-sector markets continue to support goods and amenities overwhelmingly provided for in suburban and predominantly White neighborhoods. Further, governmental cutbacks affecting schools, lack of investment in Black-owned businesses and resources, crime-ridden neighborhoods, and economically devastated and blighted areas exacerbate existing problems in predominantly African-American neighborhoods in the New Orleans region.

With two nationwide pandemics affecting the African-American community simultaneously, the coronavirus (COVID-19) and institutionalized-racism, the objectives of this talk are not only to discuss how Blackness, legalized-racial segregation and space shapes identity formation, but also to explain why and for what purpose.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Blair M. Proctor, PhD, Assistant Professor of African History in the Department of Black Studies, SUNY New Paltz, Michigan State University (MSU) graduate in African-American and African Studies (AAAS)/Historical Sociology specialization, National Council of Black Studies (NCBS) Ankh Maat Wedjau Honor Society member, and former TIAA Ruth Simms Hamilton Fellow.


Additionally, Proctor worked for the City of Phoenix, Arizona as an urban planner from January 2006 to July 2012, prior to transition into the MSU AAAS doctoral program. Proctor received both his Bachelor’s of Science in urban planning and Masters of Geographical Sciences and Environmental Planning with a focus in community development, Arizona State University (ASU).