

**THE ARCHITECTURAL SEGREGATION OF CHICAGO
BLACK IDENTITY IN THE SOUTH SIDE**

by

Ra'anaa Brown

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of the requirements for the degree of
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APPROVED/APPROUVÉ

Thesis Examiners/Examineurs de thèse:

Dr. Tammy Gaber
(Thesis Advisor / *Directeur/trice de thèse*)

Dr. Kai Mah
(Thesis Second Reader / *Directeur (trice) de these deuxième*)

Carol Phillips, OAA
(External Examiner/Examineur externe)

Approved for the Faculty of Graduate Studies
Approuvé pour la Faculté des études supérieures
Dr. David Lesbarrères
Monsieur David Lesbarrères
Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Doyen, Faculté des études supérieures

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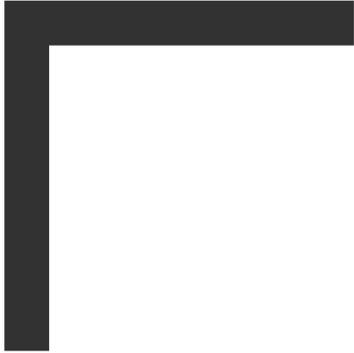
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"If we accept and acquiesce in the face of discrimination, we accept the responsibility ourselves and allow those responsible to salve their conscience by believing that they have our acceptance and concurrence. We should, therefore, protest openly everything that smacks of discrimination or slander."

- Mary McLeod Bethune
*Civil Rights Activist, Humanitarian, Stateswoman
& Philanthropist*



ABSTRACT

A well-known Latin proverb states, “knowledge is power”¹ and in light of this, theoretically those who possess the most knowledge inherently have the most power. Across the United States, historically, education has been denied to Black Americans as a means to keep them subservient to their White counterparts. Despite slavery being abolished in 1865, while the Black community was newly empowered, they were simultaneously further oppressed as their lack of access to education emphasized the stigma of them as second class citizens.² Of particular interest, Chicago, Illinois emerged as a city with a deep-rooted connection to America’s extensive Black community. Built upon the imbalanced scales of Black oppression and empowerment, Chicago is a clear precedent for the ramifications of slavery and subsequent human rights movements. Today in Chicago, the majority of all under- and low-performing high schools are on the city’s South Side.³ Through decades of redlining⁴ and presently maintained preference⁵, Chicago is one of the cities with the highest neighbourhood segregation indexes in the United States.⁶ Despite the change in housing legislation⁷, and while the majority of visible minorities have disseminated into White dominated

society, the Black community has remained, united in separation within the South Side of the city. Architecturally, Chicago is likewise considered home to modern American design. This city has an impressive historic architectural narrative, but what remains hidden beneath this proud history is the use of architecture as a means for implicit segregation by way of illegal (and at one time legal) housing discrimination⁸ and spatial access. Although one design implementation cannot solve years of historic oppression or the disenfranchisement that subsequently followed, this proposal is designed to expand on the conversation and make visible the historic segregation and the current state of events befalling Chicago’s South Side through a socio-architectural lens. The following thesis will question; how the South Side may retain the autonomy and empowerment that segregation has produced, while minimizing the inherent challenges caused by this lack of integration. Furthermore, it will consider the possibilities of how a platform may be programmed which allows for the amelioration of education, promotion of continued Black excellence, and advocacy of Black history.





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In loving memory of my grandmother, Icylin Elson. Thank you for your constant support of my education and making me aspire to reach great heights in my career and life. I can still hear you asking "have you finished school yet?"

And to all the Black revolutionaries, activists, and architects before me who paved the way. Thank you for your sacrifice and strength, this is for the 0.4%.



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I.

BLACK HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW

"When someone calls a person African-American, they assume that person has African lineage. Black, with a capital B, doesn't mean that those in the community wish to disconnect themselves from their past. They embrace it, but they want to be able to embrace the culture of their immediate ancestors."

- Moises Mendez
Contributing Writer, the Observer

§ 1.1 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN BLACK HISTORY

Black American history is extensive; through an analysis of said history, this section will focus on key moments as they coincide with the racial backing of the country. In looking at the selected moments, the need for epicenters of Black empowerment and education on Black history become evident. The findings of this section will be further investigated and applied in the forthcoming design proposal. While it is unclear as to the exact date which Black history began in the United States, the Black American narrative has been plentiful of injustice. Estimated to have begun around 1619, the origin of western Black history may be attributed to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.⁹ For nearly 350 years, between the United States (and other colonies), approximately 12 million slaves were transported.¹⁰ It will become evident that across American history, Black people continually had less rights than their White, colonist counterparts.

With the ratification of the 13th Amendment, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, [could] exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”¹¹ Although contested, many believe that slavery was either abolished as it no longer served economic purposes or as a means to dismantle certain colonies position of power at the height of the Civil War.¹² Regardless of the political motives, many hoped that this enactment would initiate equality amongst all Americans, however “(...) it seems in America that we [hadn’t] so much ended racial cast, but simply redesigned it.”¹³ Over the next 100 or so years, the United States government proceeded to develop amendment after amendment

stated to be in favour of Black Americans. However, the introduction of each law made way for new regulations for people of colour. The Black community continued to be oppressed through the inability to vote, racialized housing legislation, education, inferior financial opportunities, and even the ability to enter certain establishments.

In 1868, with the passing of the 14th Amendment, “equal protection of the laws” was granted for all Americans.¹⁴ Despite this, Black Americans still could not vote, and were still considered less than their fellow Americans of predominantly European descent. When a select few states permitted Black men the right to vote in 1870, a right which was given to most white European settlers with the adoption of the Constitution in 1788, over 100 years prior¹⁵, women were not afforded the same right. Some may claim the Woman’s Suffrage Movement corrected this in the 1920s, however it must be recognized that this movement is known to have “[acquiesced] to white supremacy – and [sold out] the interests of African-American women – when it became politically expedient to do so.”¹⁶ In instances of marches and protests, Black women were often not permitted to walk alongside their White counterparts, or not permitted to participate at all, despite fighting for the same rights.¹⁷ Simultaneous to this, Black Codes¹⁸ had taken affect and continued to limit opportunities for Black Americans across the country. These restrictive laws limited Black freedom through the implementation of yearly labour contracts for Black Americans, which if left unsigned could result in being arrested, fined or being forced into unpaid labour.¹⁹

With the turn of the century, discriminatory racial practices continued and intensified across the country. Just



fig. 1
“Liberation School” run by
the Black Panther Party in
San Francisco in 1969

after the turn of the 20th century, across the country it became legal for banks to deny people of colour fair loans and for housing authorities and landlords to refuse to admit prospective tenants based on their race. Subsequent maps were drawn to show desired and unfavourable neighbourhoods, the latter would be drawn in red, thus the name redlining was given.²⁰ Whereas, redlining allowed the government to both legally decrease loans given to Black families in pursuit of housing and limit which neighbourhoods they could live in²¹, Jim Crow Laws allowed establishment owners to dictate who and who could not enter and access part or all of their buildings²².

The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the late 1950s into the early 70s, marked an era of people of colour standing up for their constitutional rights and the equality historically denied. At the forefront of this period were Black activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, Assata Shakur, and Angela Davis to name a few. The rise of these figures in the Black community led to the unification of Black Americans and the inaction of more amendments to the constitution. As a direct result of these protests, Jim Crow Laws were abolished, calling for the mandatory desegregation of public spaces.²³ In the wake of the assassination of Dr. King, the Fair Housing Act which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, family status, and national origin, was passed.²⁴

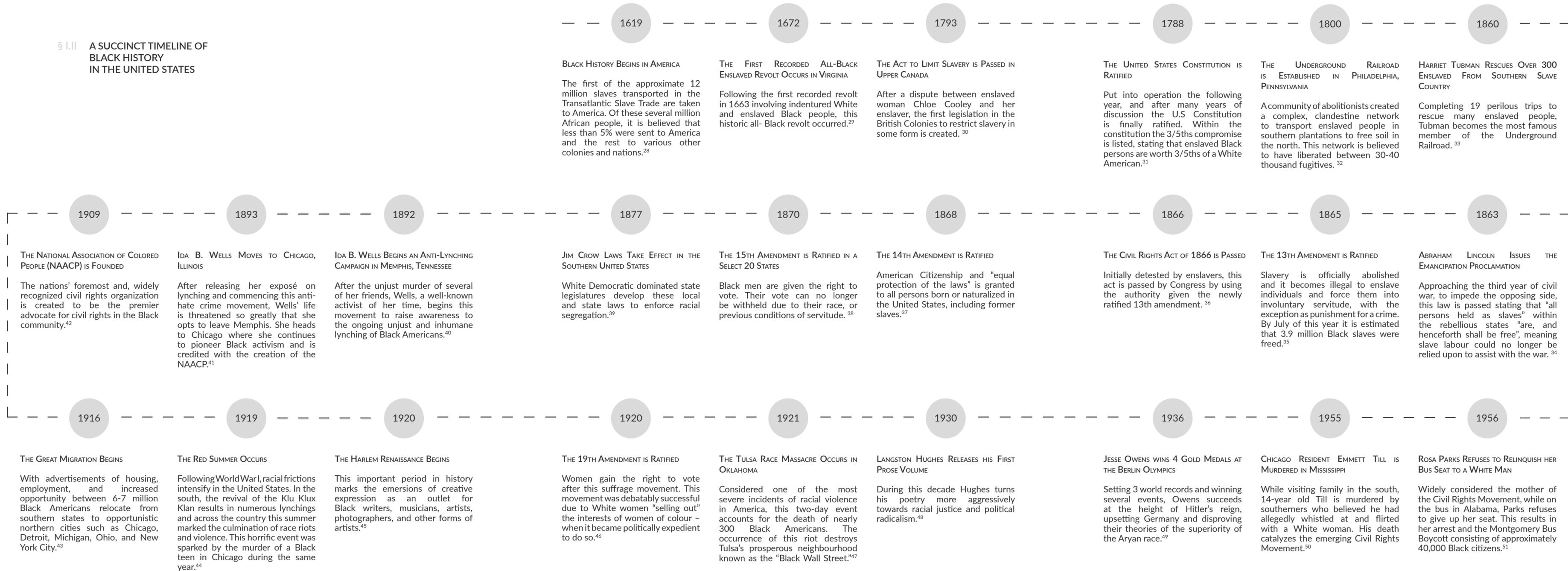
In 2005 Florida passed the “Stand Your Ground Law”, the first of its kind, a law which permits those who feel reasonable a threat of death or injury to “meet force with force” rather than retreat.²⁵ Since then

half of the states in the U.S. have passed a similar law. As a result of this often in cases of the shooting of unarmed Black youth offenders have stated the infamous line “I feared for my life.” In 2015 alone, young Black men killed by United States police amounted to a shocking 1,134 deaths, five times higher than white men of the same age group.²⁶ Due to the severity of ongoing racial tensions in the United States, a young group of female activists came together to create Black Lives Matter, “a chapter-based, member-led organization whose mission is to build local power and to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.”²⁷ Since its commencement in 2013 this organization has been routinely at the forefront of the media spearheading the ongoing fight for Black justice.



fig. 2
A London rally following
a police shooting
on July 10, 2016

§ I.II A SUCCINCT TIMELINE OF BLACK HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES



1860 — 1863 — 1864 — 1864 — 1865 — 1865 — 1865 — 1866 — 1866

1860
THE GREENSBORO SIT-IN TAKES PLACE IN NORTH CAROLINA
 Organized by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, 4 Black university students stage a non-violent sit-in to protest against a segregated lunch counter.⁵²

1863
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DELIVERS HIS "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH
 During the revolutionary March on Washington, King delivers his iconic speech calling for equality and freedom of the Black community.⁵³

1864
MALCOLM X DELIVERS HIS "BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY" SPEECH
 Shortly after leaving the Nation of Islam, X goes on a pilgrimage to Mecca and to Ghana. While on his visit he decides to create the Organization of Afro-American Unity and upon his return he delivers this renowned speech.⁵⁴

1864
THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1864 IS PASSED
 Jim Crow laws are abolished across the country and discrimination in any type of public accommodation becomes outlawed.⁵⁵

1865
THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT IS RATIFIED
 Discriminatory voting practices and special voting provisions are outlawed, and all people of colour, regardless of gender, and education are granted the right to vote.⁵⁶

1865
MALCOLM X IS ASSASINATED IN NEW YORK
 After numerous unsuccessful attempts on his life, activist and prominent figure Malcolm X is assassinated while delivering a lecture in Harlem.⁵⁷

1865
MULANA KARENGA FOUNDS THE ORGANIZATION US
 This cultural nationalist group is developed to promote self-determination, and self-reliance. It is this organization that is credited with the creation of the holiday Kwanzaa.⁵⁸

1866
HUEY P. NEWTON AND BOBBY SEALE CO-FOUND THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY FOR SELF-DEFENSE
 Dissatisfied with the failure of other pro-Black groups, Newton and Seale come together to create this revolutionary political organization in Oakland.⁵⁹

1866
KWAME TURE COINS THE PHRASE BLACK POWER
 While at a rally in Mississippi, Ture rallies demonstrators in founding the Black Power Movement which espoused self-defense tactics, self-determination, political and economic power, and racial pride.⁶⁰

1872 — 1870 — 1869 — 1868 — 1868 — 1868 — 1867 — 1866 — 1866

1872
SHIRLEY CHISHOLM BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK CANDIDATE FOR A MAJOR PARTY'S NOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT
 The first Black women elected for United States Congress, Chisholm begins to rise in the ranks and becomes a notable Black political figure.⁶⁹

1870
ANGELA DAVIS IS ARRESTED
 Widely known as an activist and advocate for championing the cause for Black prisoners in the 60s, Davis is arrested on fabricated conspiracy charges.⁶⁸

1869
FRED HAMPTON IS ASSASSINATED IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
 Revolutionary activist and leader of the Chicago chapter of the Black Panthers, Hampton, is murdered by Chicago Police after being unwillingly drugged by a police informant.⁶⁷

1868
THE FAIR HOUSING ACT IS PASSED
 Passed by Congress in memory of the late Dr. King, who was at the forefront of fair housing in Chicago, this law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, family status, and national origin.⁶⁶

1868
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. IS ASSASINATED IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE
 While standing on a second floor motel balcony, Dr. King is fatally shot. His death led to more than 100 riots in inner cities across the country.⁶⁵

1868
MUHAMMAD ALI BEGINS HIS YEARS OF EXILE IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
 Shortly after losing his title, Ali spends nearly a decade in Chicago. It is said that his true transformation from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali took place in Chicago.⁶⁴

1867
MUHAMMAD ALI REFUSES INDUCTION INTO THE UNITED STATES ARMY
 Activist and then heavyweight champion of the world, Ali, is stripped of his title after refusing to be conscripted for the Vietnam war. He cites his beliefs stating "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong."⁶³

1866
MAYA ANGELOU WRITES "BLACK, BLUES, BLACK!" [LATER AIRED IN 1868]
 This 10-part series written by the poet, whose work discusses themes of economic, racial, and sexual oppression, discusses the role of African culture in American life.⁶²

1866
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HELPS THE BEGINNING OF THE CHICAGO FREEDOM MOVEMENT
 Dr. King attends a conference in the city in which he inspires this movement which challenges systematic racial segregation and discrimination.⁶¹

1873 — 1876 — 1879 — 1881 — 2005 — 2008 — 2012 — 2013 — 2014

1873
ASSATA SHAKUR IS ARRESTED BY POLICE IN NEW JERSEY
 After being pulled over and shot twice by police, Black Panther Shakur is charged with the murder of a police officer and is sentenced to prison at the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women.⁷⁰

1876
BLACK HISTORY MONTH IS CREATED IN THE UNITED STATES
 Building upon the countrywide celebration of "Negro Week", February is dedicated to celebrate the achievements of Black Americans.⁷¹

1879
ASSATA SHAKUR ESCAPES PRISON AND FLEES THE COUNTRY
 After spending six and a half years in the maximum security of prison in New Jersey, with the assistance of her friends, Shakur escapes prison and flees to Cuba where she remains to this day.⁷²

1881
THE FINAL DOCUMENTED LYNCHING IN UNITED STATES HISTORY OCCURS
 As a means to intimidate the Black community in Alabama, two members of the Klu Klux Klan kidnapped and lynched 19-year old Michael Donald. His murder marks the final known lynching in a series of nearly 5,000 in United States' history.⁷³

2005
THE STAND YOUR GROUND LAW IS PASSED IN FLORIDA
 This law allows those who feel a reasonable threat of death or bodily injury to "meet force with force" rather than retreat. This law accounts for a great deal of controversy particularly in the over exertion of force towards Black Americans.⁷⁴

2008
CHICAGO RESIDENT BARACK OBAMA IS ELECTED THE FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 Formerly a State Senator, Obama begins the first of his two-terms as the 44th President of the United States.⁷⁵

2012
TRAYVON MARTIN IS FATALLY SHOT
 While on his way home 17-year old Martin is unjustly shot by a Florida neighbourhood watch coordinator. A series of community protests prompts the eventual arrest of the offender, but after a brief trial they are acquitted of all charges.⁷⁶

2013
THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT BEGINS
 This international activist movement commences through the need to campaign against violence and systematic racism towards Black people.⁷⁷

2014
MICHAEL BROWN IS FATALLY SHOT
 18-year old Brown is shot and killed by a White Missouri police officer. Caught on video, Brown is seen unarmed, his death stands as a seismic moment in America race relations.⁷⁸

§ I.III A SUMMARY OF CHICAGO'S BLACK HISTORY

A great deal of the aforementioned key moments in Black history take place in Chicago, Illinois. A city plentiful of multiculturalism, Chicago is an ideal precedent to uncover the ramifications race has historically had upon architecture. There are many significant moments in Chicago's extensive Black history which pertain to its current relationship to segregation and design. This section will centralize around select moments of the eventual development of modern Chicago and the richness of Black identity in the South Side, Unbeknownst to most, the city of Chicago was founded by a Black trader and farmer in the 1770s.⁷⁹ Son of a Black Haitian mother and French father, Jean-Baptiste Point DuSable discovered Chicago as initially nothing more than a settlement on the "(...) shores of Lake Michigan at the mouth of the Chicago River."⁸⁰ Although DuSable was not present when the city truly began to take shape, it is his settlement from which it was built.

The increase in wealth encouraged by the implementation of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, as well as the thriving rail industry began to expand and transform Chicago into a predominant White European settlement in the mid-to late-1800s.⁸¹ At the turn of the century, with Jim Crow Laws disrupting southern Black life, and the need for labour for construction and further development, Chicago became one of the many northern cities to attract an influx of Black Americans. Deemed the Great Migration, nearly 7 million Black Americans moved north at the prospect of increased opportunity, of this it is estimated that 500,000 settled in Chicago.⁸²

The increase in Black residents posed a threat to Chicago's housing market, at which point the use of redlining was

implemented. As a means to separate racial groups and maintain White dominance in select, "desirable" neighbourhoods, banks were permitted to deny fair loans and housing legislation allowed landlords to discriminate who could inhabit their properties based on the colour of their skin.⁸³ Through this mentality Black centralized housing developments were created across the South Side of the city.⁸⁴ This concentration of Black residents may be considered the origin of the South Side of Chicago as the epicentre for Black identity.

As the Black population of the city continued to grow and White population diminished in the South Side (with the exception of Hyde Park)⁸⁵, the culture of the city began to diversify. The high density of Black Americans created the opportunity for outward Black expression, which was first expressed through the creation of the Chicago Defender. Initially nothing more than a four-page handbill, the Defender was the first public voice of Black Americans in Chicago.⁸⁶ The development of this paper led to contributed to the increasing racial frictions across the city, which eventually culminated with the murder of a young Black teen and sparking the Chicago Race Riot of 1919.⁸⁷ With the city nearly divided by Black versus White, the arrival of the Black Chicago Renaissance, while perturbing some, debatably unified others across Chicago.

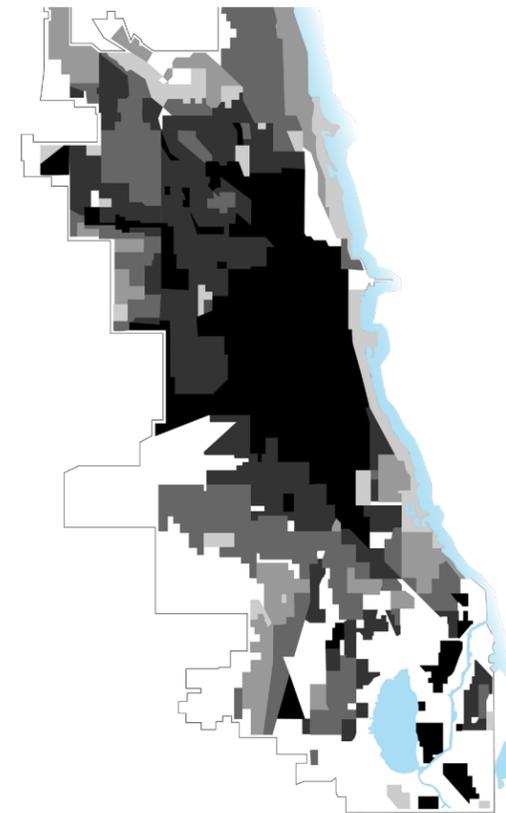
The emergence of a wave of Black talents such as artist and founder of the DuSable African American History Museum, Dr. Margaret Burroughs, musician Louis Armstrong, poet Gwendolyn Brooks and dancer Katherine Dunham, contributed to the development of urban Black Culture in the city.⁸⁸ This era led to the emergence



fig. 3
Portrait of a young African American boy selling the Chicago Defender on a street corner on Chicago's South Side, April 1942

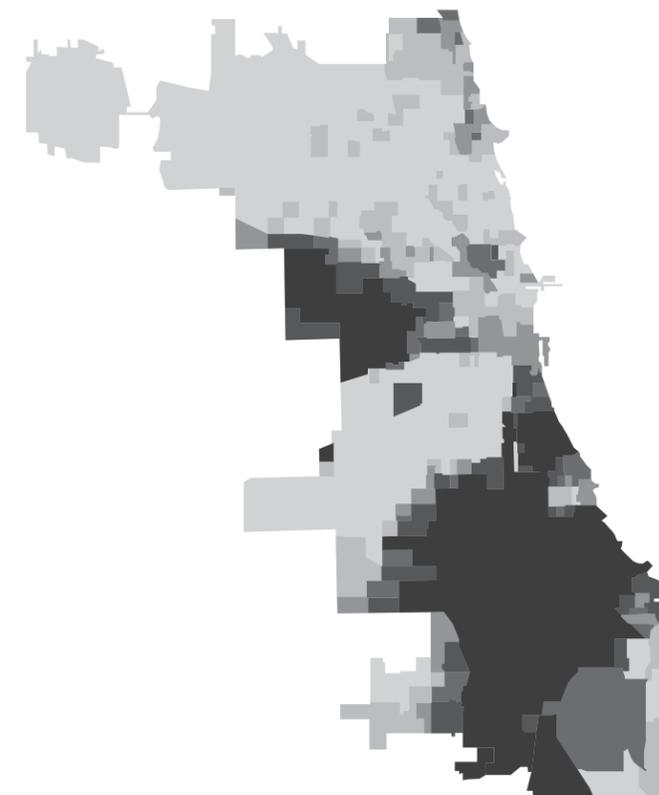
of Black specific arts centers, libraries, museums and more. By the 1960s artists and activists alike were appearing at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago. During his time in exile from the boxing scene, former heavyweight champion of the world, Muhammad Ali, continued to protest and advocate for the rights of people of colour in Chicago.⁸⁹ Only two years later, at the height of his fight for fair housing, Martin Luther King Jr. rallied in Chicago and after his assassination in 1968, it was due to these efforts that the Fair Housing Act was passed the following year.

As history progressed Black politicians rose from the ashes of the Civil Rights Movement. Harold Washington became the first Black mayor of Chicago in 1983⁹⁰, and in 2008 Chicago resident Barack Obama was elected the first Black President of the United States⁹¹, interestingly both these men lived in the South Side, particularly in Hyde Park. While a portion of Chicago's Black residents are disenfranchised, the Black community embodies an element of Black autonomy and excellence. The richness in Black culture and identity present in the South Side represents the center of the extensive and growing history of Black excellence, activism and injustice embedded within the foundation of Chicago.



**MORTGAGE RISK [REDLINING]
CLASSIFIED BY DISTRICT IN 1938**

- "A" Districts (Best)
- "B" Districts (Still Desirable)
- "C" Districts (Declining)
- "D" Districts (Hazardous)
- Not Classified (Or not built-up)
- Parks, Preserves, Cemeteries., Municipal Use, Etc.
- Body of Water

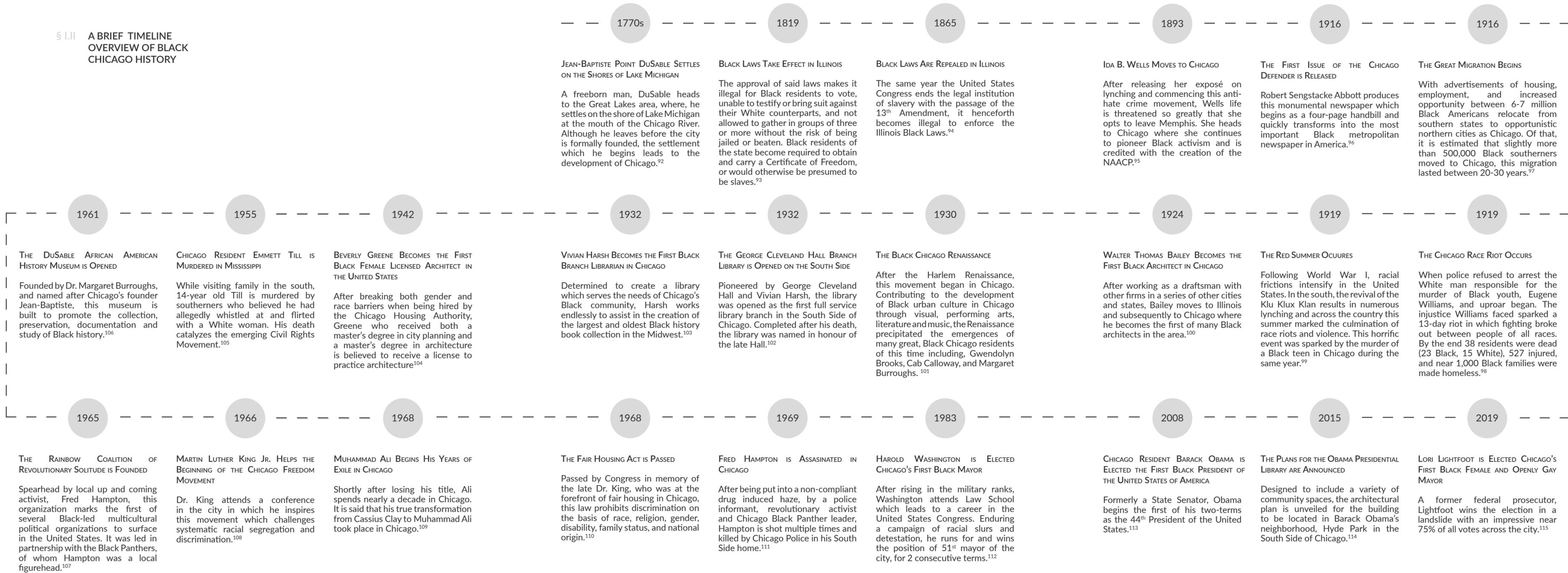


**2011 BLACK POPULATION IN
CHICAGO BY CENSUS TRACT
[PERCENTAGE OF BLACK
RESIDENTS]**

- 86%-100%
- 60%-85.9%
- 36%-59.9%
- 18%-35.9%
- 7-17.9%
- 0%-6.9%

*fig. 4 (above) Mortgage Risk (Redlining) classified by district in 1938
fig. 5 (below) Black population in Chicago in 2011
The two maps are juxtaposed against one another to highlight the effect historic redlining had on the present location of the residents of Black Chicagoans*

§ I.II A BRIEF TIMELINE OVERVIEW OF BLACK CHICAGO HISTORY



1770s

JEAN-BAPTISTE POINT DUSABLE SETTLES ON THE SHORES OF LAKE MICHIGAN
A freeborn man, DuSable heads to the Great Lakes area, where, he settles on the shore of Lake Michigan at the mouth of the Chicago River. Although he leaves before the city is formally founded, the settlement which he begins leads to the development of Chicago.⁹²

1819

BLACK LAWS TAKE EFFECT IN ILLINOIS
The approval of said laws makes it illegal for Black residents to vote, unable to testify or bring suit against their White counterparts, and not allowed to gather in groups of three or more without the risk of being jailed or beaten. Black residents of the state become required to obtain and carry a Certificate of Freedom, or would otherwise be presumed to be slaves.⁹³

1865

BLACK LAWS ARE REPEALED IN ILLINOIS
The same year the United States Congress ends the legal institution of slavery with the passage of the 13th Amendment, it henceforth becomes illegal to enforce the Illinois Black Laws.⁹⁴

1893

IDA B. WELLS MOVES TO CHICAGO
After releasing her exposé on lynching and commencing this anti-hate crime movement, Wells life is threatened so greatly that she opts to leave Memphis. She heads to Chicago where she continues to pioneer Black activism and is credited with the creation of the NAACP.⁹⁵

1916

THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE CHICAGO DEFENDER IS RELEASED
Robert Sengstacke Abbott produces this monumental newspaper which begins as a four-page handbill and quickly transforms into the most important Black metropolitan newspaper in America.⁹⁶

1916

THE GREAT MIGRATION BEGINS
With advertisements of housing, employment, and increased opportunity between 6-7 million Black Americans relocate from southern states to opportunistic northern cities as Chicago. Of that, it is estimated that slightly more than 500,000 Black southerners moved to Chicago, this migration lasted between 20-30 years.⁹⁷

1961

THE DUSABLE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM IS OPENED
Founded by Dr. Margaret Burroughs, and named after Chicago's founder Jean-Baptiste, this museum is built to promote the collection, preservation, documentation and study of Black history.¹⁰⁶

1955

CHICAGO RESIDENT EMMETT TILL IS MURDERED IN MISSISSIPPI
While visiting family in the south, 14-year old Till is murdered by southerners who believed he had allegedly whistled at and flirted with a White woman. His death catalyzes the emerging Civil Rights Movement.¹⁰⁵

1942

BEVERLY GREENE BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK FEMALE LICENSED ARCHITECT IN THE UNITED STATES
After breaking both gender and race barriers when being hired by the Chicago Housing Authority, Greene who received both a master's degree in city planning and a master's degree in architecture is believed to receive a license to practice architecture.¹⁰⁴

1932

VIVIAN HARSH BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK BRANCH LIBRARIAN IN CHICAGO
Determined to create a library which serves the needs of Chicago's Black community, Harsh works endlessly to assist in the creation of the largest and oldest Black history book collection in the Midwest.¹⁰³

1932

THE GEORGE CLEVELAND HALL BRANCH LIBRARY IS OPENED ON THE SOUTH SIDE
Pioneered by George Cleveland Hall and Vivian Harsh, the library was opened as the first full service library branch in the South Side of Chicago. Completed after his death, the library was named in honour of the late Hall.¹⁰²

1930

THE BLACK CHICAGO RENAISSANCE
After the Harlem Renaissance, this movement began in Chicago. Contributing to the development of Black urban culture in Chicago through visual, performing arts, literature and music, the Renaissance precipitated the emergences of many great, Black Chicago residents of this time including, Gwendolyn Brooks, Cab Calloway, and Margaret Burroughs.¹⁰¹

1924

WALTER THOMAS BAILEY BECOMES THE FIRST BLACK ARCHITECT IN CHICAGO
After working as a draftsman with other firms in a series of other cities and states, Bailey moves to Illinois and subsequently to Chicago where he becomes the first of many Black architects in the area.¹⁰⁰

1919

THE RED SUMMER OCCURES
Following World War I, racial frictions intensify in the United States. In the south, the revival of the Klu Klux Klan results in numerous lynching and across the country this summer marked the culmination of race riots and violence. This horrific event was sparked by the murder of a Black teen in Chicago during the same year.⁹⁹

1919

THE CHICAGO RACE RIOT OCCURS
When police refused to arrest the White man responsible for the murder of Black youth, Eugene Williams, and uproar began. The injustice Williams faced sparked a 13-day riot in which fighting broke out between people of all races. By the end 38 residents were dead (23 Black, 15 White), 527 injured, and near 1,000 Black families were made homeless.⁹⁸

1965

THE RAINBOW COALITION OF REVOLUTIONARY SOLITUDE IS FOUNDED
Spearhead by local up and coming activist, Fred Hampton, this organization marks the first of several Black-led multicultural political organizations to surface in the United States. It was led in partnership with the Black Panthers, of whom Hampton was a local figurehead.¹⁰⁷

1966

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HELPS THE BEGINNING OF THE CHICAGO FREEDOM MOVEMENT
Dr. King attends a conference in the city in which he inspires this movement which challenges systematic racial segregation and discrimination.¹⁰⁸

1968

MUHAMMAD ALI BEGINS HIS YEARS OF EXILE IN CHICAGO
Shortly after losing his title, Ali spends nearly a decade in Chicago. It is said that his true transformation from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali took place in Chicago.¹⁰⁹

1968

THE FAIR HOUSING ACT IS PASSED
Passed by Congress in memory of the late Dr. King, who was at the forefront of fair housing in Chicago, this law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, disability, family status, and national origin.¹¹⁰

1969

FRED HAMPTON IS ASSASINATED IN CHICAGO
After being put into a non-compliant drug induced haze, by a police informant, revolutionary activist and Chicago Black Panther leader, Hampton is shot multiple times and killed by Chicago Police in his South Side home.¹¹¹

1983

HAROLD WASHINGTON IS ELECTED CHICAGO'S FIRST BLACK MAYOR
After rising in the military ranks, Washington attends Law School which leads to a career in the United States Congress. Enduring a campaign of racial slurs and detestation, he runs for and wins the position of 51st mayor of the city, for 2 consecutive terms.¹¹²

2008

CHICAGO RESIDENT BARACK OBAMA IS ELECTED THE FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Formerly a State Senator, Obama begins the first of his two-terms as the 44th President of the United States.¹¹³

2015

THE PLANS FOR THE OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY ARE ANNOUNCED
Designed to include a variety of community spaces, the architectural plan is unveiled for the building to be located in Barack Obama's neighborhood, Hyde Park in the South Side of Chicago.¹¹⁴

2019

LORI LIGHTFOOT IS ELECTED CHICAGO'S FIRST BLACK FEMALE AND OPENLY GAY MAYOR
A former federal prosecutor, Lightfoot wins the election in a landslide with an impressive near 75% of all votes across the city.¹¹⁵

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BLACK ART & ARCHITECTURE

“The Black artist is dangerous. Black art controls the ‘Negro’s’ reality, negates negative influences, and creates positive images.”

- Sonia Sanchez
*Poet, Writer, Professor, & Leading Figure in the
Black Arts Movement*

§ II.1 AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK ART & ARCHITECTURE IN THE WESTERN WORLD

This section will outline key moments in the development of Black (African-American) art and architecture in the western world. Art and architecture are two fundamental aspects used for the documentation of history and the empowerment (or impediment) of a community. From the first inhumane depiction of Black Africans prior to their embedding in United States history to the contemporary uplifting and activist artistic intentions, the importance of the ability for the Black community to self-depict in a positive light will be outlined.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BLACK ART

Nearly 80 years prior to the abolition of slavery in the late-18th century, Joshua Johnston became the first Black American to gain recognition as an artist.¹¹⁶ The bi-racial son of a White man and unknown Black slave, it is believed that Johnston was often mistaken for a White man. He conformed to the artistic norms and styles of the time, painting solely within the confines of European neoclassicism. While Johnston depicted White Americans in a favourable manner, across the country Black residents were being depicted antagonistically as people to be feared and as less than human, by a great deal of the White population. On the cusp of the 13th Amendment, the United States entered the Antebellum Period. Considered to be the period before the Civil War and after the War of 1812, artistically this time marked the first documented occurrences of Black Americans being showcased in a semi-positive light.¹¹⁷ During this time White artists like Eyre Crow began to change their depiction of Black slaves from inaccurate to photorealistic and sympathetic.¹¹⁸ While the majority of Americans were

uninterested and displeased with the change in style, the Antebellum period began to spiral into a movement which took form across the country. By 1851, on the 10-year brink prior to the Civil War, Harriet Beecher Stowe released *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the first abolitionist novel of its time.¹¹⁹ Despite being considered controversial, the depiction of Tom, a saintly Black slave, began to gain popularity and sympathy among predominantly White readers in the north by vividly dramatizing the experience of slavery.¹²⁰

THE BIRTH OF BLACK SELF-REPRESENTATION

Just prior to the turn of the 20th century there began to be an emergence of talented Black artists. Canadian born, Edward Mitchell Bannister's determination and passion for art was largely fueled by a 1867 article in the *New York Herald* which stated "(...) the Negro seems to have an appreciation for art while being manifestly unable to produce it."¹²¹ Despite racial prejudice, he moved to the United States where he pursued a successful career as an artist. Predominantly depicting landscape scenes, Bannister was often commissioned by notable Black Boston families.¹²² In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Black Philadelphia sculptor, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller began to gain prominence. At the beginning of her career, Fuller too conformed to the European artistic standards of society. A transformative art shift, provoked by the encouragement of a friend, later led her to create her signature piece, *Ethiopia Awakening*, in 1921.¹²³ Through this piece she revived the imagery of the Black Egyptian and became one of the first Black American artists to create empowering imagery of the Black community.¹²⁴



fig. 6
Ethiopia Awakening
Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, 1914

Some say that the production of the aforementioned sculpture, anticipated the forthcoming Harlem Renaissance.

With the Great Migration, many Black Americans travelled north for increased opportunity. A great deal settled in New York, particularly in the decidedly Black neighbourhood of Harlem.¹²⁵ The high influx of Black Americans created a culture which grew significantly into a proud era for Black poetry, visual arts, jazz and swing, dance and literature, aptly named the Harlem Renaissance. The father of the Renaissance, a Harvard-educator named Alain Locke, described this movement as a “spiritual coming of age” in which Black Americans transformed “social disillusionment to race pride.”¹²⁶ Following this period, the emergence of powerful Black art increased with the Civil Right Movement. Black art began to be pushed further as a tool of empowerment to promote the desegregation of America and awareness for Black rights. Deemed the Black Arts Movement, this period marked a time in the rise of politically motivated Black poets, dramatists, musicians, writers, and artists.¹²⁷ With the creation of the Black Panther Party in 1966, artist Emory Douglas began to gain recognition as their Minister of Culture.¹²⁸ Like many Black activist artists of this time, Douglas turned his artwork into a powerful visual megaphone for the empowerment of the Black community.¹²⁹ Simultaneously, mural and graffiti culture began to grow as an alternative art form. In 1967, a group of Black artists formed the Organization for Black American Culture and created the Wall of Respect.¹³⁰ Designed to draw attention to great Black figures, the wall was a contentious implementation that was later demolished by a suspicious fire in 1971.¹³¹

CONTEMPORARY BLACK ART

Despite the contention of graffiti art at this time, the culture continued to grow, particularly with the prominence of influential artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. His unique style captured the attention of the world, “his spray-painted crowns and scribbled words, referenced everything from his Haitian and Puerto Rican heritage, to political issues, pop-culture icons, and Biblical verses.”¹³² Later in his life Basquiat notably created *The Death of Michael Stewart*, a work which commemorates the death of a young Black artist at the hands of New York City Police, after he was caught allegedly tagging a wall.¹³³ Although Basquiat died young the legacy lives on with the vibrant and ever-growing Black urban arts community.

As the 21st century approached, the amount of Black artists continued to grow in the United States. While many chose to take inspiration from political activities and social injustices many also drew upon influence from historic African heritage. In Chicago, sculptor Simone Leigh began to gain prominence through her unique installations, sculptures, and video art which employ forms and materials traditionally associated with African art.¹³⁴ Her pieces began to gain global prominence in the late 2010s through their intricate analysis of her ongoing exploration of Black female subjectivity and ethnography.¹³⁵



fig. 7
“Defacement”
(The Death of Michael Stewart)
Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1983

EARLY BLACK ARCHITECTURE

While American architecture predates the 13th Amendment, it was not until the late 19th century that Robert Robinson Taylor became considered the first academically trained and credentialed Black American architect.¹³⁶ In 1888 Taylor became the first Black student to enroll at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).¹³⁷ Upon his graduation he became the nation's first accredited Black architect and became a key figure of the Black architecture community. Within the next few years he became acquainted with notable educator and race leader Booker T. Washington and was recruited to help establish the architecture for the Tuskegee Institute, an important Black school in Alabama.¹³⁸ The school would later grow into a staple for the Black community, placing emphasis on the intellectual pursuits of contemporary Black leaders and improving conditions for Black people in the post emancipation period.¹³⁹

With the turn of the century several established Black architects began to emerge. Designers such as Moses McKissack III, the grandson of an African-born slave and Julian Abele, the architect of a large part of Duke University, came to the forefront of design. Although Abele was considered an architectural genius, it was not until decades after his death that his efforts were truly acknowledged.¹⁴⁰ At the same time across the country, another key figure of the Black architecture community was beginning to gain prominence. After experiencing years of adversity and dismissal, Paul Revere Williams opened his own practice in 1923 and became the first Black member of the American Institute of Architecture (AIA).¹⁴¹ Although much of Williams' work became unknown after the

loss of his original architectural drawings, many consider him the first Black American architect.¹⁴²

CONTEMPORARY BLACK ARCHITECTURE

The next few decades were difficult with WWII and the Great Depression. Ongoing architecture was put at a near standstill and new construction almost halted. At this time in the country race relations continued to escalate and worsen. At Harvard University, on the cusp of graduating his master's degree, J. Max Bond Jr., was persecuted as one of the few Black students of the time.¹⁴³ Students burned crosses on the lawn in front of his dorm and a professor encouraged him to drop out stating that there were no renowned Black architects.¹⁴⁴ However, unbeknownst to them, Bond had studied under Black architectural figurehead, Paul Revere Williams and would continue to pursue architecture into the 21st century.¹⁴⁵ In 1942 the architectural world continued to further change as Chicago resident Beverly Greene is believed to have received her license to practice architecture in the United States, making her the first licensed Black female American licensed architect.¹⁴⁶ Years later Georgia Louise Harris Brown is likewise believed to have become a licensed architect, but there is little information concerning both women causing a great deal of speculation.¹⁴⁷ Regardless, the gender barriers for Black female architects are confirmed to have changed in 1959 when Norma Merrick Sklarek became a member of the AIA.¹⁴⁸ She would later become the first Black woman elected to the College of Fellows of the AIA.¹⁴⁹ Her appointment to the College marked another key moment in the empowerment of Black architects in the United States.

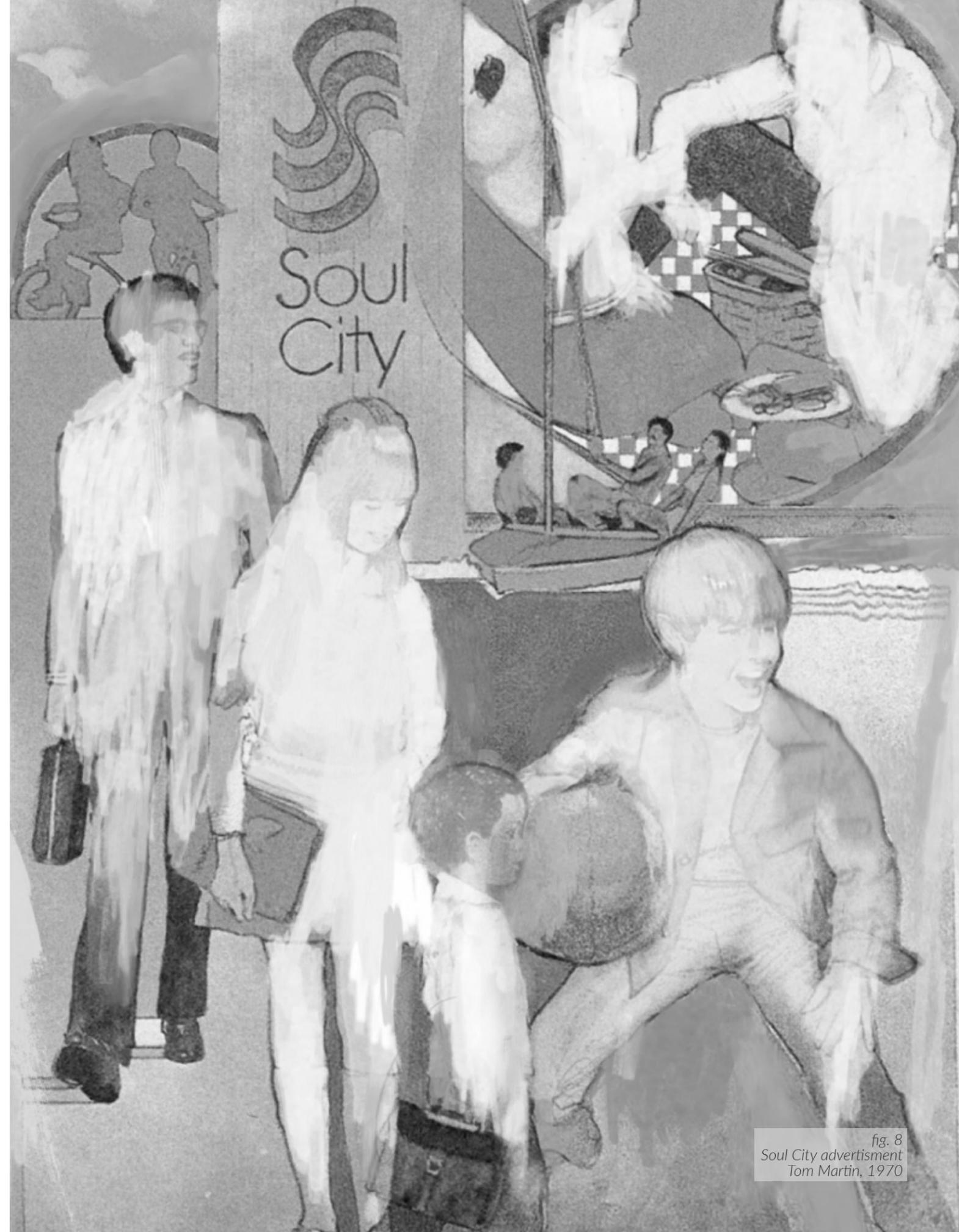


fig. 8
Soul City advertisement
Tom Martin, 1970

After the federal court sided with him, allowing him to integrate Clemson University, in 1965, as its first Black student, designer, and politician Harvey B. Gantt joined the architectural world.¹⁵⁰ He fused his love for urban planning with policy making and in the 1970s he assisted in the developed for the plans of “Soul City”, a multi-cultural mixed-use planning community in North Carolina.¹⁵¹ Based upon the ideas of Civil Rights leader, Floyd B. McKissick,¹⁵² “Soul City” was designed as a town for the Black community to move to from inner city ghettos in response to White flight.¹⁵³ Built upon the foundations of a former slave plantation, “Soul City” was one of many towns part of the Urban Growth and New Communities Development Act created to offer autonomy and a form of independent capitalism to low-income and majorly Black families.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately most of the communities failed, and what was once “Soul City” was mostly sold or demolished with the exception of one building which would become The Warren Country Correctional Facility (a high-security prison) in 1993.¹⁵⁵

CURRENT STATE OF BLACK ART & ARCHITECTURE

At the turn of the 21st century, Black architecture grew into its prime. In the early 2000s, renowned designer J. Max Jr. Bond joined forces with architects David Adjaye and Phil Freelon to form a firm of prestigious Black architects. Perhaps most notably, the trio worked together to create the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Designed to exude America’s deep and longstanding African heritage, the museum has become one of the United States most prestigious buildings and perhaps the most

prominent building dedicated in memory of the largely oppressed Black community.¹⁵⁶

Urban Black artists have since continued to utilize their art as a platform to draw upon the longstanding Black American lineage and the ongoing injustices throughout. In light of the emergence of social media, artists have had the growing opportunity to self promote in a society which may not frequently accept their style or support the exposure of their heritage or political message. Black art has continued to transform from initially non existent, to underrepresented to becoming a widespread platform of pride and expression. While Black architecture may not be as prominent in the media as art, the field itself is drastically changing each day. In spite of Black architects accounting for only 2.1%¹⁵⁷ of the registered American architecture population, those still practicing continue to pave the way for up and coming hopeful designers. Today, western Black art and architecture are on the rise and opportunities have begun to present themselves for forthcoming generations.



fig. 9
Smithsonian National
Museum of African
American History and
Culture
Freelon Adjaye Bond, 2016

§ II.II THE BIRTH OF BLACK CHICAGO

Drawing seminar exercise

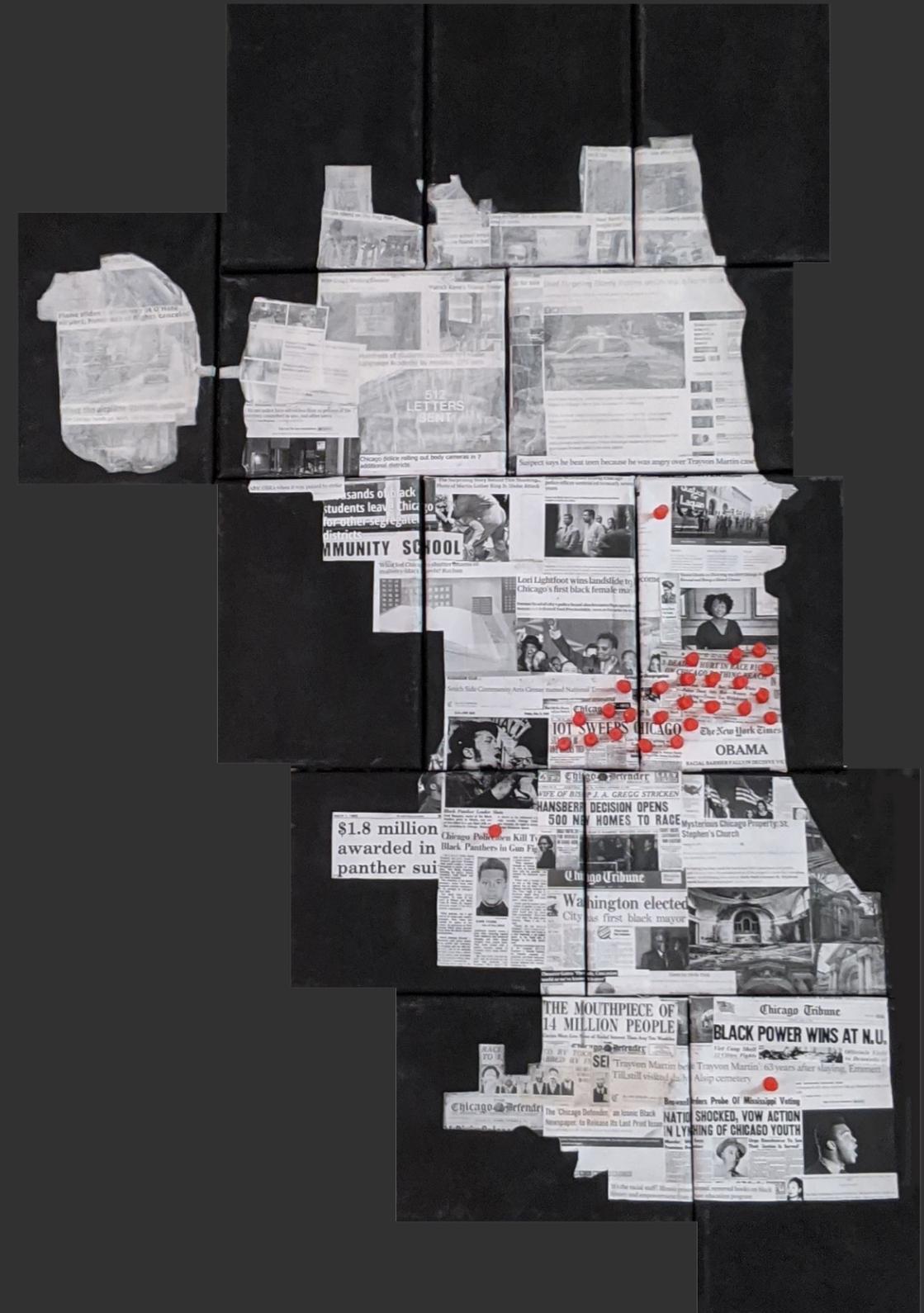
Designed as a commentary on the ongoing and historic happenings in Chicago, Illinois, this artistic piece was developed as an analytical tool to study the initial proposed site of St. Stephen's Church in Hyde Park. While the location for the proposed intervention has since changed, the additional aspects of the collage remain relevant to the thesis, showcasing the variety in severity of news in Chicago.

Commencing with the outline of Chicago today, this artwork utilizes legitimate newspaper articles to convey the message of ongoing segregation. Through the juxtaposition of the struggle that Black Americans continually face in the South Side against the lives of their North Side counterparts, the aforementioned racial divide is further made evident. Whereas the news in the South Side demonstrates the systematic oppression of the Black community and their fight for social justice, articles placed in the more Northern part of the city limit showcase the historically privileged lives of its residents.

In placing a sheet of trace paper atop the Northern news and then proceeding to fade it to some degree with whitewash, the aim was to allow for the Southern news to gain prominence while minimising the debatably less imperative lighter North Side news. Articles in the North Side discuss items such as elevators breaking down and the development of O'Hare airport while South Side articles discuss historic events such as the Civil Rights & Black Power Movements, the election of Chicago's first Black mayor (Harold Washington), and the election of the first Black President of the United States of America (Barack Obama). In addition to this, across the map numerous pushpins were painted red to represent the murder of Black Chicago residents

by either Chicago Police or over-zealous White Americans. The mentioned deaths lie within the Chicago Race Riot of 1919, the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955, the 1969 assassination of Fred Hampton and most recently the shooting of 17-year old Laquan McDonald in 2014.

This artwork is a reminder that while Chicago may be one city there are numerous varying histories across its many neighbourhoods. That despite the city being somewhat unified today there are many underlying and yet obvious differences between the segregated North and South Sides of the city.



§ II.III FACES OF A MOVEMENT

McEwen Nuit Blanche Installation

As a means to bring to light the United States' contentious Black history, this second-stage installation was developed. While the primary iteration featured local faces, this implementation centralized around key historic Black activists pertinent to the Civil rights and Black Power Movements. Utilizing a process which simplifies distinguishing facial features, the selected figures faces were divided, scaled to a third of the height and laser cut. Through the use of under lighting, a series of shadows are created to make apparent each face within the shadows.

The persons selected for this installation were five of the foremost activists of their time. Assassinated while advocating for the rights of Black Americans, both Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X are featured as two of the forefathers of Black Civil Rights. The recently deceased (2016) Muhammad Ali, and presently living Angela Davis and Assata Shakur, who have continued to instigate the discussion on the treatment of people of colour well into their 70s, are likewise featured in this installation. The decision to centralize the selected faces around the conversation of Black rights and issues was designed as a commentary on the ongoing challenges people of colour have and are continually facing, particularly in the United States of America.

The prominence of the faces was developed as a method to draw attention to the fact that while the United States Constitution has been wildly amended to undo historic injustices, each amendment has been met with a new stipulation of freedom and equality for Black Americans. The abolition of slavery was met with Jim Crow Laws, the outlaw of the latter created the need for the Civil Right Movement,

and the ongoing mistreatment of Black Americans has led to the creation of numerous imperative Black-led activist organizations including, but not limited to, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1909), the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (1966), and Black Lives Matter (2013). In this modern context, Black identity and overall oppression are a widely contested subject matter. Conversations on the issue of racism are often disregarded and avoided altogether, some even claim its non existence. As such, this project was designed to bring to light this history through seamless representation.



fig. 11 (above left) Assata Shakur
fig. 12 (above right) Muhammad Ali
fig. 13 (below) Faces of a Movement
From left to right: Martin Luther King Jr.,
Assata Shakur, Muhammad Ali, Angela
Davis, and Malcolm X
Faces of a Movement,
Author & Britney Ottley-Perrotte, 2020

§ II.IV OUR HISTORY OUT OF HANDS

Fabrication II Series

Developed as a series of artifacts, this project was designed to analyze and promote Chicago's rich Black history. The initial intentions were that upon arriving at the proposed thesis building, community members would have the opportunity to contribute to their own local history book. However, throughout the design process, while the relevance of the need for the collective history book remained evident, the significance of the variety of iterations as a potential exhibit emerged. This series of handcrafted novels represent the unavailability of Black history.

Throughout time, equality in education of and for the Black community has been sparse and frequently underfunded in the United States. To parallel the proposed design, these collective history books are to be handcrafted by community members and used as a platform to record their own perception of Chicago's Black history. Through the documentation of their own narrative, the books offer Black South Side residents a voice in the testament of their often neglected history in a manner which may be later passed down to forthcoming generations.

When the first Black slaves were brought from Africa to the new world it was forcefully upon long range ships. Historically, ship sails have been made up of a series of materials, including canvas. While Black American history has since become quite extensive, it was conceivably all built upon the foundations of the Transatlantic Slave Trade transporting the first Africans to America. The intention is that while canvas has loosely led to the creation of western Black history, it may now be repurposed into a symbol of pride and documentation through the use on the book covers. The canvas then becomes a method for the

retention of Black identity as opposed to its initial use as a tool for the erasure of this. Across numerous iterations both black and white canvas have been tested. While the final iteration is an all-black novel, the concept for each design remains that as no two persons' past, nor present nor future is identical, no Black histories are the same, therefore each community member would ideally be afforded the opportunity to represent oneself through a uniquely customized book.

An intended exhibit, the books were to be scattered and suspended, most just out of reach. The few iterations within the average grasp were intended to symbolize the low hanging fruit of Black history. For instance, the invention of Black History Month which typically educates young Americans on the same historical figures annually in lieu of formal education within the school system. The remainder of out of reach books would represent Black history as almost a third party viewer to modern American society. Only select Americans have been informed they should "look up", and become aware of the history hanging before them. The artifact is a tool to guide the creation of a proposed design which can house and highlight the under featured Black history of Chicago, primarily in the South Side.

The books and proposed architectural intervention reflect the synthesis of normality and contentious behaviour in design. The building is a macrocosm of this book, both a testament to the importance and prominence of Black culture, identity and history in Chicago's South Side. Both book and building are carefully designed to illustrate their own narrative within the framework of the series of literature and architecture.



fig. 14-16
Our History out of
Hands: Final,
Author, 2020

§ II.V CRITICAL REFLECTION

Black art and architecture has a contentious history in the United States. Across time the historically enslaved and contemporarily oppressed have fought for the ability to self-represent and create in their own image an artistic depiction of Black Americans. The ongoing self representation of the Black community assists in the reduction of harmful stigmas and the misperception by other ethnicities. In spite of these ongoing changes, there is still a disconnect in the depiction of the modern Black American. Architecturally, the implementation of epicenters for the promotion of Black history, identity and excellence has begun to be widespread and accepted in the United States. While the emergence of Black architects and subsequent designs are far and few between, the importance of this is the fuel that has fired this thesis.

In response to this, the three art pieces were undertaken in relation to the thesis proposal, each of which had the goal of tackling misrepresentation or stigma in different ways. The Birth of Black Chicago was created in response to the state of documented news and the prevalence of violence perpetrated against Black Chicago residents. In analyzing so, it became evident that there was a longstanding need for a center and safe space for the Black community where they could begin to ameliorate the state of education of youth. This concept led well into the creation of Our History out of Hands, the series of handcrafted books. The book series, created as a means to offer Black Chicago residents an opportunity to for once self-document their own history is in parallel with the newly awarded ability to self-depict. Although not directly applied to fine arts, the ability to record Black history through the eyes

of Black Americans creates a unique opportunity in the world of literature, particularly when the idea is for the books to be developed by the community, for the community rather than by professionals who conform to an approval process. Although created prior to the latter piece, Faces of a Movement, unlike the other two, is a piece created not particularly for Chicago but in the context of overarching Black American history. This piece depicts key Black figures as a means to draw attention to the ongoing racial tensions in America.

All three pieces were designed as a commentary on the lack of availability to education of Black history and Black power, identity and excellence that has grown from the foundations of oppression and injustice. They were inspired predominantly by the shift in Black art to be contentious, and representative of ones' own history through a unique (Black) lens. These artistic analyses have been designed to inform the thesis design by inspiring the creation of a proposal which is contentious and is aptly able to continue the conversation of American race relations.



From left to right and top to bottom, fig. 17-34
Our History out of Hands: Iterative Exhibit, Book 1-6 cover, end pages, and text block
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III.
CASE STUDIES

“Free and open to everyone, they are distinctly noncommercial and operate on a uniquely communitarian character and business model. Well-run and well-designed libraries serve, in effect, as a form of academic community center.”

- Sam Demas
Carleton College Librarian and Senior Lecturer

§ III.I INTRODUCTION OF SELECTED PRECEDENTS

Three case studies have been selected for further analysis and as a means to uncover thematic approaches for architectural programming. Chosen for their relevance in relation to the proposed thesis design, this study was done with a certain methodology in mind, wherein each project was researched to best understand the relevance in its specific community, as well as what each project achieved in its community, in a local, and historically significant manner. The impacts of the implementation of each project, or of a programmatic element present in any given project, was also studied so as to best understand them, and apply them to the current thesis proposal.

These case studies were of paramount importance, as they enabled a quicker, and smoother flow of development for the forthcoming design. These projects were selected for their significance historically, and locally. They brought about great change in each of their communities through different means. The Idea Stock Exchange, the newest of these projects, is a place to enable community and individual development through resources. They offer a wide range of services that would otherwise be typically out of reach for individuals with fewer opportunities. It is a place that fills a cultural resource gap in its community and can likewise resonate in importance for the selected South Side site in Chicago.

The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture, is a building built by and for the Black community, inundated in Black arts and culture. Clad in historically significant African symbolisms, it is a beacon of identity that provides an important reference for this community. Finally, since its opening in the early 20th

century, the George Cleveland Hall Public Branch Library has been a staple of the Black South Side Chicago community. A pioneer in Black community building, the library is a source of pride for many Black residents of the area, as it provides resources that are wholly tailored to the Black Community and is receptive to their needs.

Each of these projects were chosen for their relevance to their individual sites, as they provide vital services or resources to each that would be remiss to not include in the proposed design. In the following section, each of these case studies will be analyzed and outlined in greater detail, so as to best parse their individual idiosyncrasies, to best understand their value in their particular setting, and to uncover how they relate to the forthcoming proposed thesis design.



fig. 35 (above left)
Idea Stock Exchange Old Post Office Library, RDHA Architects, 2018
fig. 36 (above right)
Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture, Freelon Group Architects, 2009
fig. 37 (below)
George Cleveland Hall Branch Library, Charles Hodgdon, 1932



§ III.II IDEA EXCHANGE OLD POST OFFICE LIBRARY

RDHA Architects - 2018

BACKGROUND & SITE

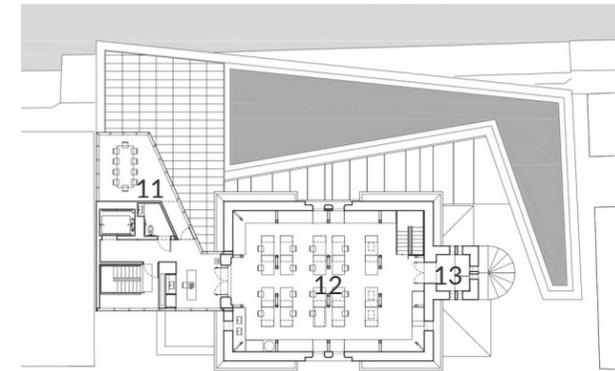
Located in Cambridge, Ontario, the Idea Exchange Old Post Office is a unique precedent for its emphasis on being a bookless library. This case study was selected as a local and contemporary example of a resource center for the middle and lower-class residents of the area. Initially designed by Thomas Fuller as a post office in the late 19th century¹⁵⁸, the building was modernized and retrofit as a resource library by RDHA Architects in 2018.¹⁵⁹

MATERIALITY

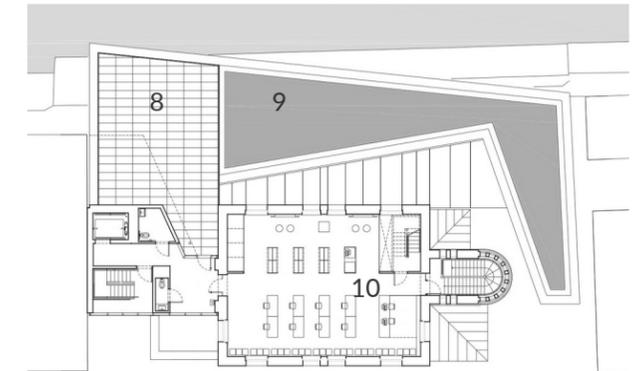
The main entrance is encased in glass, which contrasts the predominant masonry façade. In doing so the entrances and exits are visually distinct and easy to identify for visitors, which will inspire the means of egress in the forthcoming proposal. Upon entering through the main level doors visitors are welcomed into a glass façade adjacent to the historic post office. This area, in addition to the uppermost boardroom area, allows for natural light to permeate across the water during the day and creates a visible and seemingly glowing feature during the evening. The exterior façade, while well lit, poorly integrates the existing architecture with the newly constructed additions. The inclusion of the large curtain walls puts an emphasis on the library and contrasts it heavily from the remainder of the street, particularly from the view across the Grand River. The use of brick in hallways, and the views through windows, across exterior portions of the building to parts of the façade. The interior creates a unique opportunity for brick to be accentuated as a warm interior material. The use of brick is of particular importance to the thesis design as much

- 1 Staff Lounge
- 2 Recording Rooms
- 3 Staff Work Area
- 4 Performance Space
- 5 Restaurant Kitchen/Bar
- 6 Restaurant Seating
- 7 Library Reading Area
- 8 Exterior Terrace
- 9 Green Roof
- 10 Children's Discovery Area
- 11 Studio Teaching Space
- 12 Makerspace (Attic Studio)
- 13 Laser Cutting Room

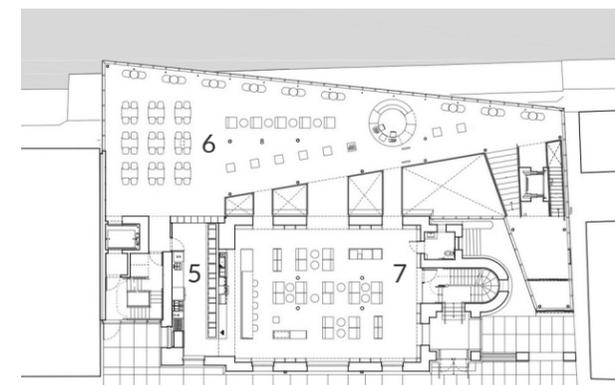
300 LEVEL



200 LEVEL



100 LEVEL



000 LEVEL

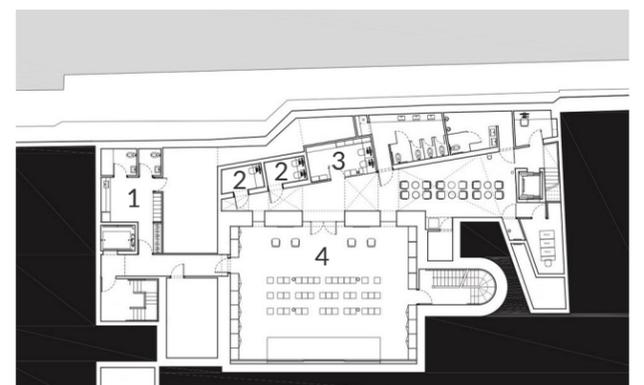


fig. 38-41 (above to below)
Idea Exchange Old Post
Office Library Floor Plans,
RDHA Architects, 2018

of the surrounding context is fabricated of masonry.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

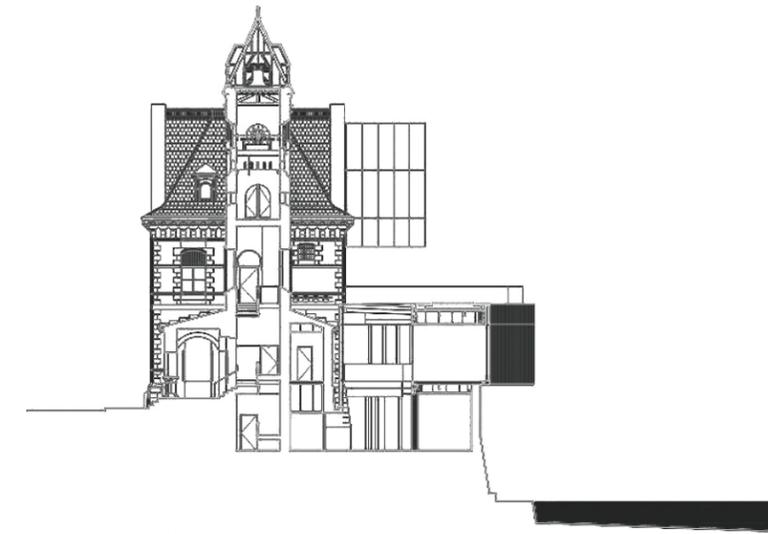
The sublevel of the library consists of a performance space, photography area and administrative offices. Continuing upwards, the main level houses a reading room and café, the second level includes the children's area and on the uppermost level is a makerspace. The second level consists of numerous haptic resources for children as well as access to a western facing terrace. The top level as aforementioned is the makerspace. This area is open to the community and is visibly accessible and welcoming through the unique cross beams and columns at the center of the room. The laser cutting room opens upwards into the old clock tower while the exterior views gives an idiosyncratic look onto the Cambridge landscape.

In terms of circulation, that of the library is unintuitive from the entrance, as moving from floor to floor is done through a series of staircases set at opposing ends of the building, in such a way that feels labyrinthine at best. The most effective path of travel between floors is tucked away far from the main entrance, and is quite obscure. However, the more obvious path cuts through the children's area, cutting the play area in half and creating a problematic situation in regards to the safety of the children.

ANALYSIS OF PROJECT

One of the first bookless libraries of its time, through the inclusion of workshops, access to musical instruments, 3D printers, embroidery machines, laser cutters, and more equipment, the Idea Exchange building is an untraditional yet wildly celebrated resource for Cambridge residents. Based upon a spatial analysis, it was determined that the proposal will include a series of recording studios and workshops in the sublevel. Done fairly successfully in the Idea Exchange building, while still remaining central to the main circulation space, the studios were designed to be somewhat secluded for the minimization of sound transfer and subsequent noise pollution from the studio into the reading area. The placement of the café nearest to the entrance as well as above the recording studios are logical, in that cafes are traditionally places of a great deal of commotion and often passersby will pop in quickly off the street and do not desire to differ too far from their intended path. While not designed predominantly for the Black community, the Idea Exchange Resource Library houses many paralleled programmatic principals to that of the proposed thesis building, thus making it an ideal case study.

SECTIONS



TRANSVERSE



LONGITUDINAL



§ III.III HARVEY B. GANTT CENTER FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN ARTS & CULTURE

Freelon Group Architects - 2009

BACKGROUND & SITE

Designed by a predominantly Black firm, for the majority use of the Black community, the Harvey B. Gantt Center was named after the urban planner and first Black mayor of Charlotte of the same name. The project was selected as an apt case study, for its use of African symbolism and unique façades. Opened in 2009, the Center was created to preserve and recognize much of the culture, history, and art of Black Americans and those of African descent.¹⁶⁰ The space serves as an epicenter for dance, visual art, music, film, theater, literature, community outreach and arts education programs within the community.¹⁶¹ Since its opening, this four-story building has begun to transform into a staple of the Black community in Charlotte, North Carolina.

MATERIALITY

The articulation of the central atrium is said to have been done to pay homage to "Jacob's Ladder."¹⁶² Similarly, the building exterior "utilizes patterns reminiscent of quilt designs from the Underground Railroad era and woven textile patterns from West Africa."¹⁶³ The many windows provide immense access to natural lighting, however on the north façade the textile pattern continues (an area where future development is probable) and in place of windows, this side is accented with strip lighting.¹⁶⁴

The vibrant exterior utilizes steel framework amidst metal paneling to create a fragmented yet synchronous view which floats just above the public realm. The

- 1 Gift Shop
- 2 Parking Entrance
- 3 Multipurpose Space
- 4 Main Lobby
- 5 Gallery
- 6 Classroom
- 7 Gallery Support
- 8 Exterior Terrace
- 9 Reception/Multipurpose Space
- 10 Administrative Offices

400 LEVEL



300 LEVEL



200 LEVEL



100 LEVEL

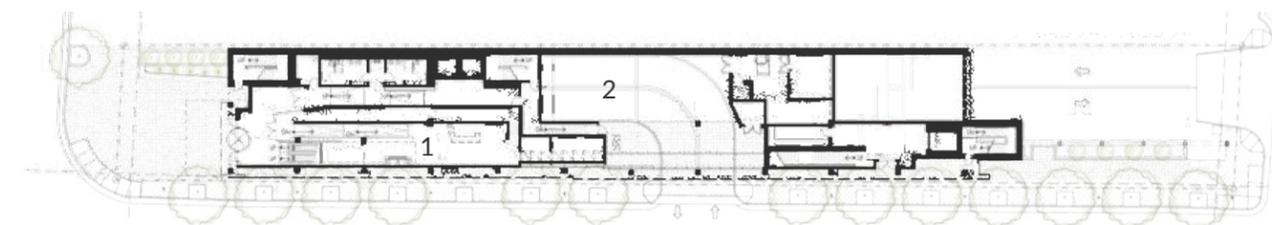


fig. 44-47 (above to below)
Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture Floor Plans, Freelon Group Architects, 2009

building is successful within its interaction of surrounding context, appearing as a powerful Black ship among the predominate colonial outlook of the neighborhood. However, the plain “mostly white” drywall interior leaves something to be desired.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

The facility features flexible exhibition spaces, presentation areas, space for receptions/events as well as retail.¹⁶⁵ Starting on the ground level, the Center houses a series of entrances leading towards the central parking entrance and the gift shop. The second level houses a main lobby adjacent to a multi-purpose room to the left and a gallery and classroom to the left. With the exception of the inclusion of a gallery support area, the third floor offers quite similar programming as that of the second. The top floor is home to a great deal of multi-purpose spaces in tandem with an outdoor terrace and a series of administrative offices. The building further utilizes a contemporary take on Black architecture. The narrow floor plan may be debated to parallel that of a colonial ship, in this context the slender tight spaces being opened up to offer endless Afro-centric programming and a safe welcoming environment.

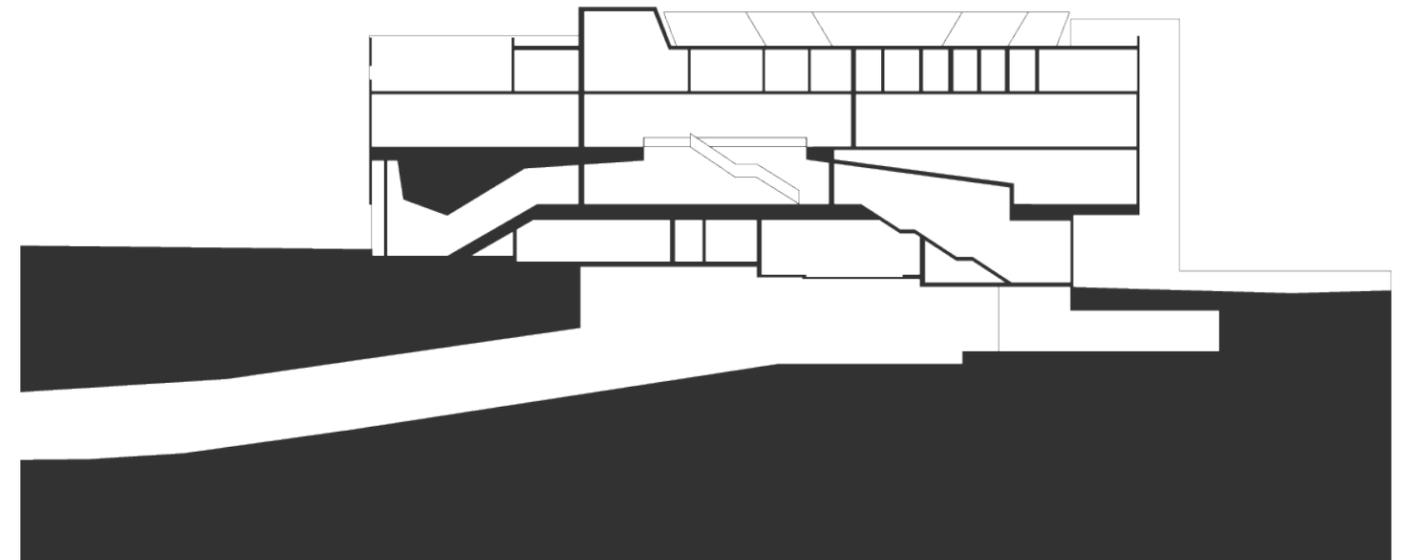
ANALYSIS OF PROJECT

Similar to the intentions of the Center, the proposed design is developed as a means to promote the engagement and dialogue for Black persons that will inspire, empower and enlighten the community.¹⁶⁶ In the context of the proposed thesis design, a great deal of influence was taken from the aforementioned meaningful façade, as it seamlessly integrates with the structure and provides a uniform language across the site. Through the architectural and cultural emphasis, the designers placed on the Harvey B. Gantt Center, it is henceforth a fitting case study for the proposed thesis design.

SECTION



LONGITUDINAL



§ III.IV GEORGE CLEVELAND HALL BRANCH LIBRARY

Charles Hodgdon - 1932

BACKGROUND & SITE

As the first, and longest standing library built in the South Side of Chicago, the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library is a unique case study. Designed to service the then growing South Side Black community, the library is an important precedent to analyze, as similar to the proposed design it is being created by a non-South Side resident to service the Black community, but moreover since its opening in 1932, it has been a success.¹⁶⁷ Named after Black Chicago physician and humanitarian Dr. George Cleveland Hall, prior to the opening of this branch there were no libraries near the South Side which served the needs of the ever growing Black community. In the mid-1920s, Hall was appointed to the Board of Directors for the Chicago Public Library, at the time of this appointment he was the second Black person ever to fill the position.¹⁶⁸

Shortly after this, alongside librarian, historian and administrator Vivian Gordon Harsh, Hall convinced philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to donate the land that would later become the library.¹⁶⁹ The pair pressed "for a full service branch in Chicago's rapidly expanding South Side Black community."¹⁷⁰ A year prior to the opening of the library, Hall passed away and it was decided that the Branch would be named in his honour. Designed by White architect Charles Hodgdon¹⁷¹, the Cleveland Hall Branch Library is one of Chicago's first glimpses at Italian Renaissance architecture. Its pristine walls stand tall amidst the castle like form. This style of architecture is often used to represent the rebirth of Classical culture, a time of rampant slavery and racial oppression. The use of this architectural style may be perhaps attributed to the re-

appropriation of this design type for a more liberal and less oppressive symbolism. The library is unlike any other in Chicago, not only is it a unique architectural feat, but it is a designated Chicago Landmark, since 2010.¹⁷²

MATERIALITY

While no resources could be found to assist in the comprehension of the floor plan layout, through an analysis of historic photos it is clear that the building conformed to a uniform neighborhood aesthetic. The use of beige and grey bricks allow for the structure to blend in and simultaneously stand out in the predominantly masonry area. What may be presumed to be an iodized copper roof caps the building, giving it a unique sensation within the site and surrounding context.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

After the building's completion, Harsh was named the lead librarian, making her the first Black female head librarian.¹⁷³ She proceeded to begin the first "Negro Collection" which would later become one of the largest and most celebrated Black library collections in the world.¹⁷⁴ Vivian Harsh has also been credited with immense Black positive programming at the Hall Branch Library. She is noted to have started the Book Review and Lecture Forum, "a semimonthly event designed to bring library patrons together with speakers on the topic of Black history, literature, and current events."¹⁷⁵

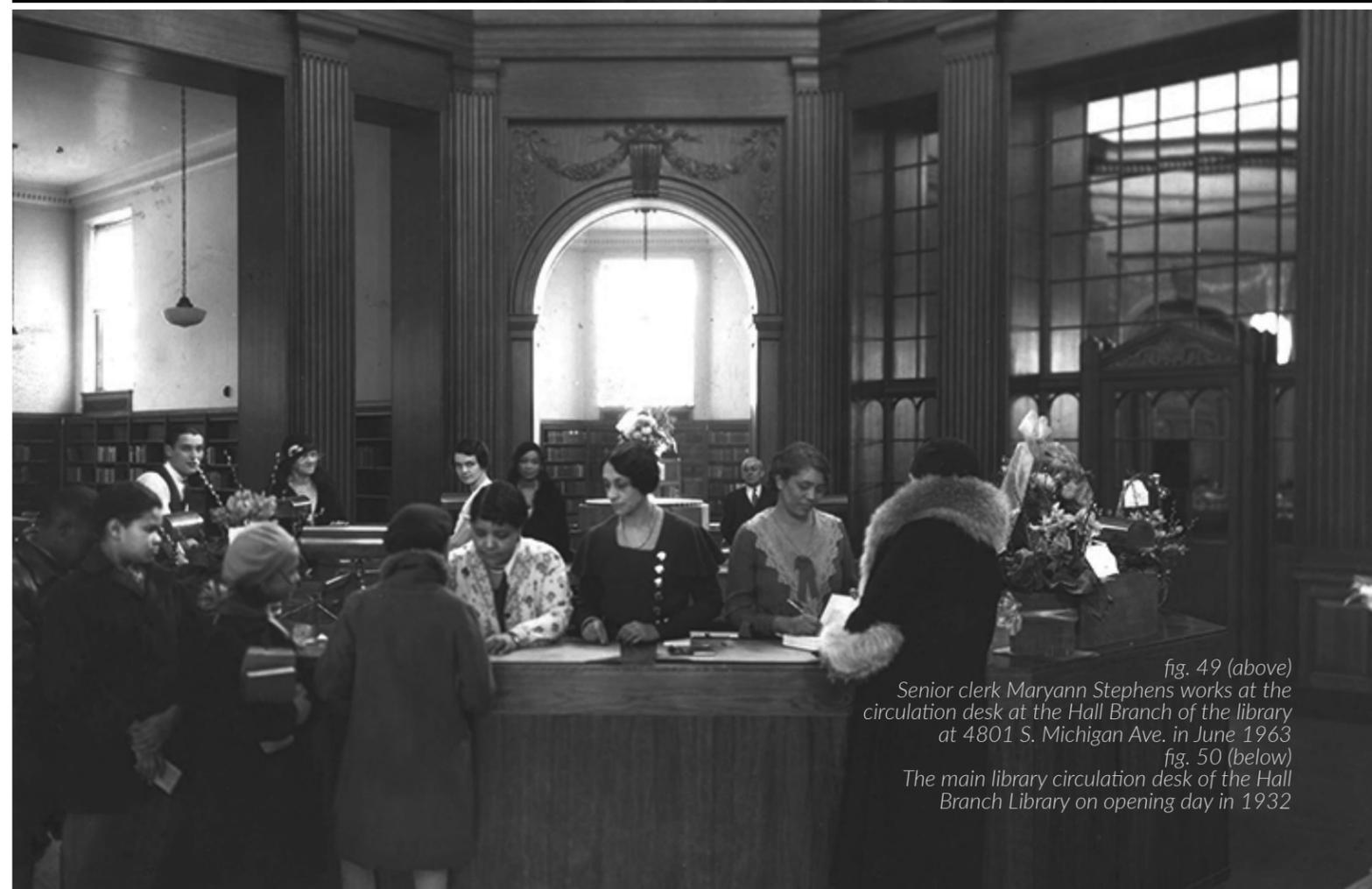


fig. 49 (above)
Senior clerk Maryann Stephens works at the circulation desk at the Hall Branch of the library at 4801 S. Michigan Ave. in June 1963
fig. 50 (below)
The main library circulation desk of the Hall Branch Library on opening day in 1932

ANALYSIS OF PROJECT

Despite the influence for its overall architecture, the site placement was key to the success of the library. Located in the southern reaches of Grand Boulevard, in Chicago's South Side, the library is quite central to the residents of the majority of the Black community. As the longest running, and continually successful case study selected, the Cleveland Hall Library is imperative to the analysis for the proposed design as it highlights the importance of location of site through its attraction to the Black community for over the last 80 years.



fig. 51
Langston Hughes and
Gwendolyn Brooks at Hall
Branch celebrating publication
of *The Poetry of the Negro*
anthology in 1949

§ III.V PRECEDENT FINDINGS

Concluding case study analysis

Materiality, in regards to the proposed building, was meant as a literal canvas on which to leave a mark, and as such, it was necessary to find a material palette that would reflect the physical qualities of the surrounding context. The Idea Exchange Old Post Office and George Cleveland Hall Library provide the most significant inspiration in terms of material palette. Both implement materials typical of their surroundings, and are successful in doing so, as such, this is to be done in the proposal. The Idea Exchange Old Post Office also implements a different material usage for the entrances, namely, it utilises glass as a means to encourage entry, the transparency of the entrance makes the procession into the building evident, which is paralleled in the proposed building, as having a degree of transparency in a public center is intended to imbue the building with a comforting feeling. Of note as well is the patterning on the Harvey B. Gantt Center façade, which calls back to quilt designs from the Underground Railroad era and woven textiles from West Africa. In this way, the patterning serves as a way to 'drape' the building in a sense of Black identity, by completely covering it in a symbolic design, a certain pride exudes from the Center, making itself seen beneath the covers of oppression. In this same way, graffiti, which acts as a means of self-expression under oppression, also coats the building proposal, in a way not dissimilar from that of the Harvey B. Gantt Center.

The contemporary concept of a bookless resource library is an idea which resonated in importance when looking at the context of Black history. Although the Idea Exchange building is not predominantly programmed for the Black community, the ideas and notions behind its implementation

and programming inspire programmatic choices in the thesis proposal. The inclusion of recording studios and other workshop spaces in the Idea Exchange building were directly translated into the proposal, as they offered a number of opportunities and resources for those without the means to access these resources. The George Cleveland Hall Branch Library was primarily selected because of its importance to the surrounding Black community, as it was chiefly designed to cater to this demographic and as such was programmed in such a way as to be most welcoming and comfortable to a Black, typically disenfranchised community.

Overall, the case studies have provided an apt example and precedent for successful and unsuccessful design choices that may be made in regards to the proposal. These choices informed the necessary choices for an apt selection and use of materiality for a particular context. Each case study brought about its own set of questions to ask about the proposed site and as such were useful in forming concise design decisions. Black identity was brought to the fore and questioned intently through the use of these case studies so as to best form an idea for what should be used and included in the proposed building and its urban context. It was necessary to utilise the ideas presented by the studied projects as a means to expressed key factors in Black identity and pride. These projects were not only chosen for their architectural merits, but also for the intent behind their actions, and the impact they had on the neighborhoods in which they were placed. In a way, each of these projects have community in mind, and as such, the proposed building intends to be foremost a place to foster community.



fig. 52 (above)
Idea Exchange Old Post Office Library main reading area and circulation desk, 2018
fig. 53 (center)
Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts Culture interior gallery entrance, 2009
fig. 54 (bottom)
Arna Bontemps with summer reading group at Chicago Public Library, 1941

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IV.

SITE SELECTION & ANALYSIS

“Still, the South Side is a magical place. It’s the heart of Black America, with its miles upon miles of Black middle-class neighbourhoods and strong political and business legacies.”

- Natalie Y. Moore
WBEZ Bureau Reporter & Author

§ IV.I THE SOUTH SIDE

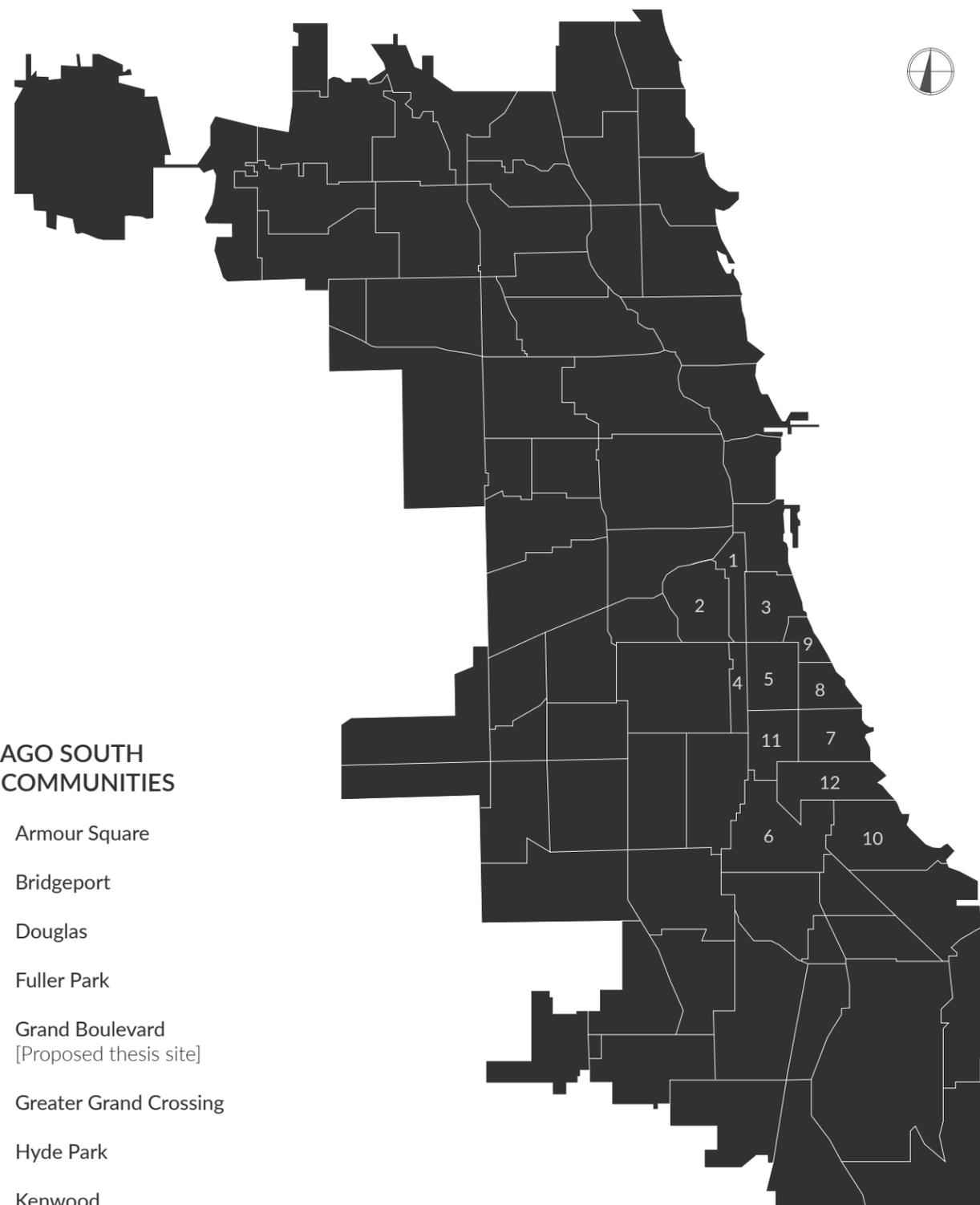
Chicago's rich Black history in the South Side will be outlined and analyzed as it pertains to the proposed thesis site selection. As one of the United States cities with the most diverse ethnic background, it is interesting that many of Chicago's varying geographical communities still remain exceptionally segregated. Like many American cities, Chicago was affected by years of redlining. As a result, the majority of the Black Chicago population resides in the South Side, making the city the third in the United States with the lowest diversity index.¹⁷⁶

Chicago's South Side consists of 12 communities; Armour Square, Bridgeport, Douglas, Fuller Park, Grand Boulevard, Greater Grand Crossing, Hyde Park, Kenwood, Oakland, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn.¹⁷⁷ While each of these communities consist of residents with a variety of ethnic backgrounds, the majority of those inhabiting the South Side are Black. While there are vibrant thriving areas in the South Side, many others remain disenfranchised and have fallen to disrepair. Architecturally, there are numerous dilapidated buildings and struggling communities, this in tandem with statistics on crime in the United States equates to popular media outlets and the average American considering the South Side of Chicago, one of the most dangerous and undesirable areas to live in, in the United States.¹⁷⁸

Today, Black residents make up just over 30% of the approximate 2.7 million population of Chicago¹⁷⁹, of the 750,000 residents who live in the South Side over 93% are Black.¹⁸⁰ The concentration of Black residents in this area and the misconception of the South Side as wholly dangerous perhaps further contributes to the stigma

of the frightening and intimidating Black American. According to scholar and expert on racial residential segregation and racial attitudes, Professor Maria Krysan, in a 2012 study conducted by the University of Illinois produced by WBEZ radio, "Whites prefer no more than about 20 percent African Americans in their neighbourhood while Blacks prefer closer to a 50 percent split."¹⁸¹

Historically, with the Great Migration, the South Sides development was directly connected to the expansion of the railroad and the predominant Black labor behind it.¹⁸² While part of these historic Black Americans fell into disenfranchisement, another portion found success and independence through entrepreneurship and Black autonomy. This corresponds to the idea of the South Side as the "heart of Black America."¹⁸³ An analysis of the city revealed two potential sites, after further research the focus of the proposal will be on a site in Bronzeville, a subsection of the Grand Boulevard neighbourhood.



CHICAGO SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITIES

- 1 Armour Square
- 2 Bridgeport
- 3 Douglas
- 4 Fuller Park
- 5 Grand Boulevard
[Proposed thesis site]
- 6 Greater Grand Crossing
- 7 Hyde Park
- 8 Kenwood
- 9 Oakland
- 10 South Shore
- 11 Washington Park
- 12 Woodlawn

fig. 55
Chicago, Illinois, South Side
Neighbourhoods, 2019

§ IV.II SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY CENTERS

The analysis of Black Chicago history as well as the case studies determined that the proposed design should house services for the betterment (health, wellness, social, etc.) and education of the Black community. As such, two of the major programs of the thesis building will be an afro-centric library and a variety of community services (law clinics, counselling services, etc.). The adjacent map outlines part of the process of site selection. This mapping exercise shows a deficiency in current community centers and libraries in several South Side neighbourhoods. Grand Boulevard, particularly the Bronzeville area was selected as it is one of the most central neighbourhoods and was uncovered to have a substantial and rich Black history.

SOUTH SIDE CULTURAL CENTRES

-  Proposed Site
-  Existing Libraries
-  Existing Community Centres
-  Neighbourhood Boundaries

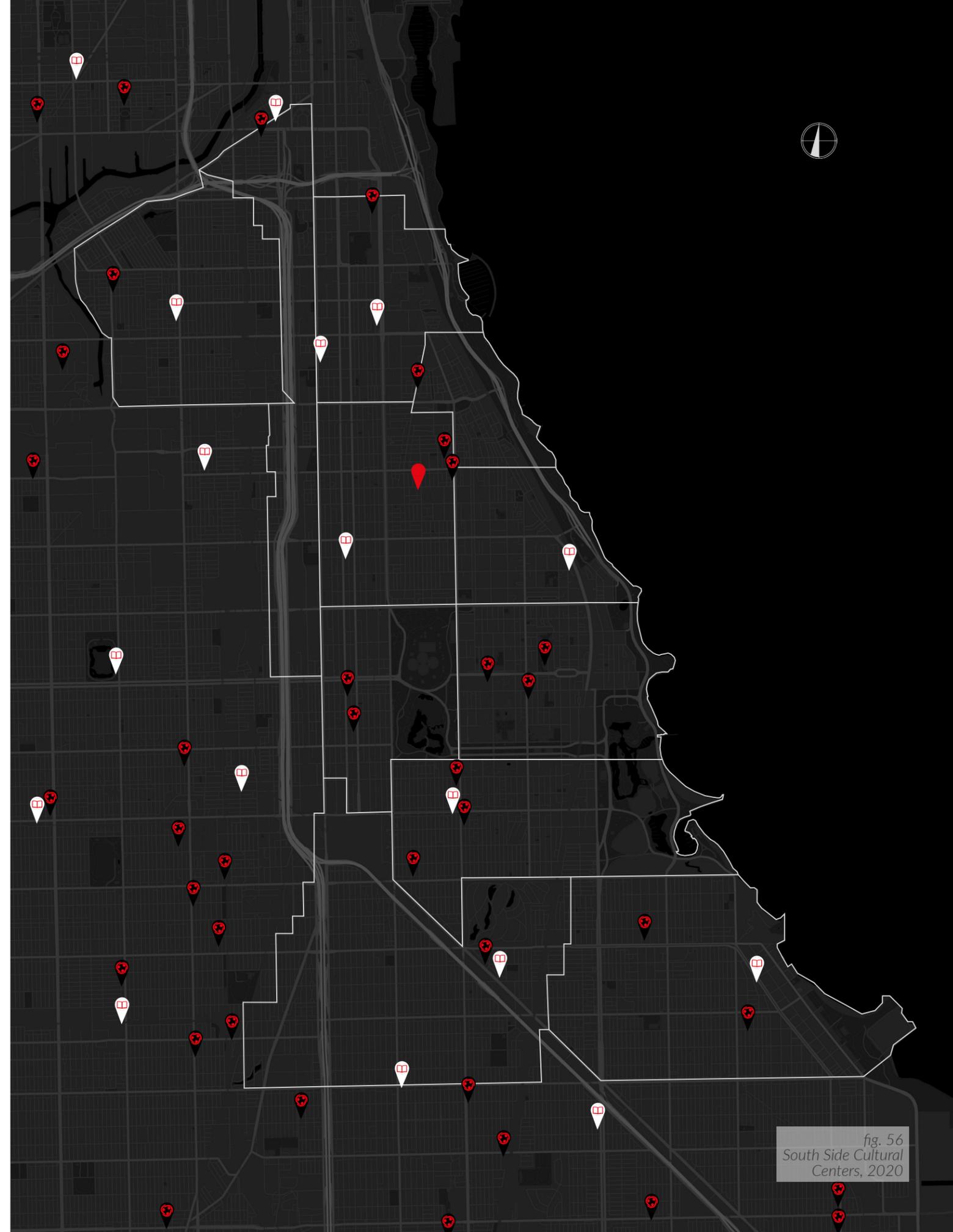


fig. 56
South Side Cultural
Centers, 2020

§ IV.III BLACK SOUTH SIDE PROGRAMMING



PROPOSED SITE



BRONZEVILLE WALK OF FAME

Opened in the early 2000s, the Walk of Fame is designed to honour over 100 Bronzeville residents who have made exceptional contributions to Black Chicago culture. Consisting of a series of plaques spread across parts of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, the Walk of Fame celebrates predominantly Black South Side residents.¹⁸⁴



DUSABLE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM

Named after the Black founder of Chicago, this museum was founded by art historian and teacher Dr. Margaret Burroughs in 1961. Dedicated to the documentation, preservation, collection and study of items pertaining to Black history and culture, the museum remains an important institution dedicated to serving the educational and cultural needs of their community.¹⁸⁵



ETA CREATIVE ARTS FOUNDATION

Started in 1917 as a non-profit organization designed to provide training and performance opportunities for local youth and adults, the ETA has since gained national and international recognition. They strive to act as a major cultural resource institution for the promulgation, preservation, and perpetuation of Chicago's Black aesthetic as well as across the State of Illinois and the Nation.¹⁸⁶



GALLERY GUICHARD

Opened in 2005, this gallery features a rotating collection of works curated by husband and wife Andre and Frances Guichard whose mission is to expose patrons to multicultural artists specializing in the African Diaspora.¹⁸⁷



GEORGE CLEVELAND HALL BRANCH LIBRARY

Named after the late Dr. Hall, the first president of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, this library was opened in 1932, when Hall was appointed to the board of directors for the Chicago Public Library and pressed the organization for a full service branch in the South Side. Vivian Gordon Harsh was not only the library's first librarian, but the first Black branch librarian for the Chicago Public Library.¹⁸⁸



HAROLD WASHINGTON CULTURAL CENTER

Named after Chicago's first Black mayor, the Center was built in 2004 to assist with the preservation and protection of the rich, diverse culture, and history of Black Americans. This non-profit organization does so through education and professional development of Chicago's youth.¹⁸⁹



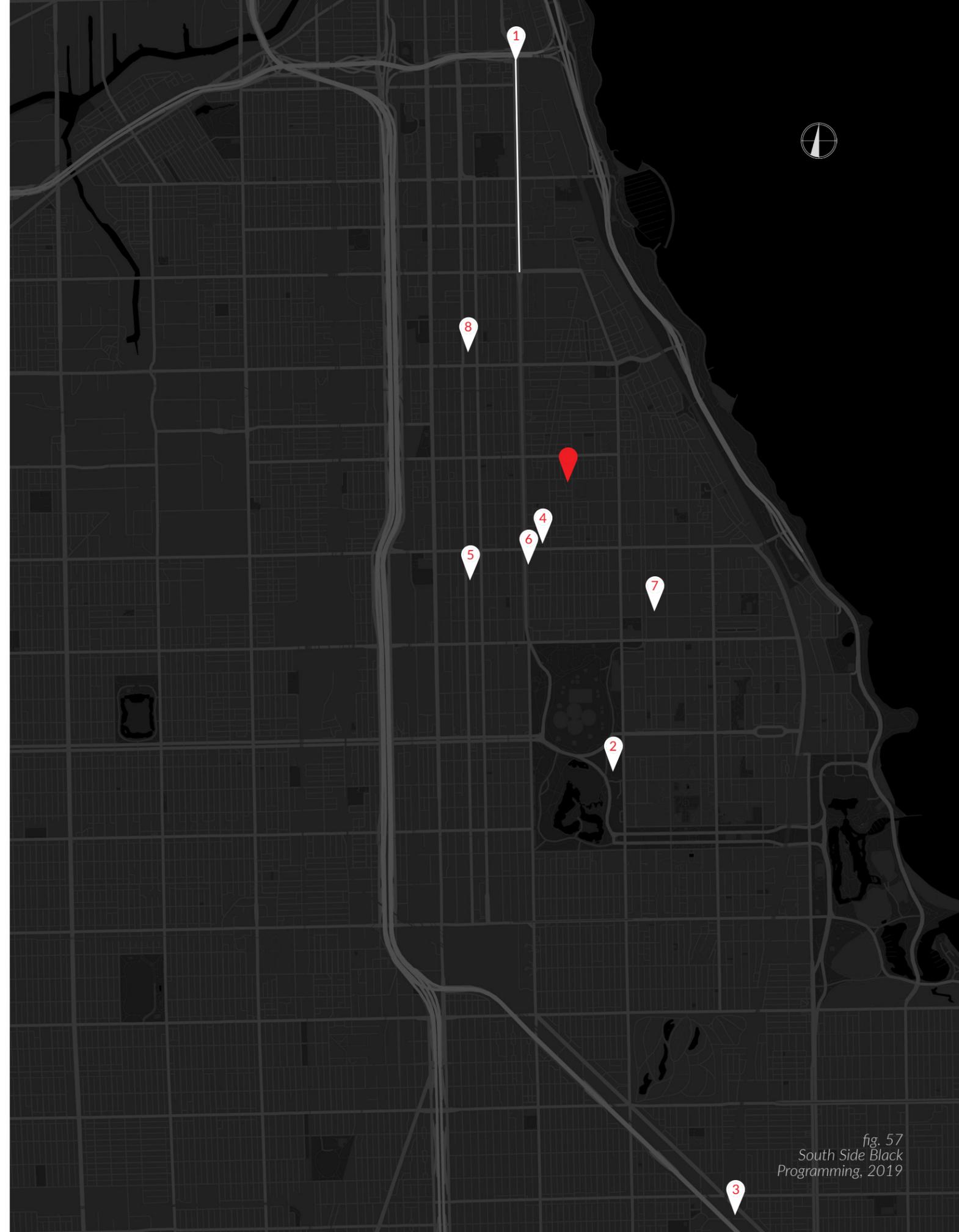
RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

Founded amidst the Civil Rights Movement in 1971 by Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, the Coalition was designed to combine theology and social justice in order to effect progressive economic, educational, and social policy in the United States. Since its start PUSH has dedicated itself to the promotion of the development of Black youth through reading and job assistance programs.¹⁹⁰



SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ART CENTER

Founded by Dr. Margaret Burroughs in 1941, the SSCAC was opened to preserve, conserve and promote the legacy of Black artists and art. Consisting of galleries and regularly hosting workshops, the Center simultaneously educates the community on the value of art and culture.¹⁹¹



§ IV.IV BRONZEVILLE: A BRIEF HISTORY

As one of the South Side communities with the most substantial Black history, the neighbourhood of Bronzeville was selected for the proposed thesis site. This section will outline a brief history of the area as it pertains to the context of the final proposal. A vibrant neighbourhood from the 1920s well into the 50s, Bronzeville has been considered the city's center for Black culture and business.¹⁹² The influx of Black residents during the Great Migration led to the development of this lively culture in the South Side. Clad in Black shops, restaurants, dance clubs, along 22nd to 63rd streets between State and Cottage Grove, became known as Chicago's "Black Belt" community.¹⁹³

Hailing from this area, successful Black entrepreneurs and entertainers of the Black Chicago Renaissance gained prominence starting in Bronzeville. Performers such as Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Quincy Jones, Sam Cook, Mahalia Jackson, and Dinah Washington, to name a few, are products of this time and the Black autonomy cultivating in this neighbourhood.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the neighbourhood is a Black architectural epicenter for successful design implementations and landmarks. Home to the original site of the Chicago Defender, as well as popular Black venues such as the Wabash Avenue YMCA and the Savoy Ballroom-Regal Theatre, Bronzeville is the location of much of Chicago's premiere Black architecture.¹⁹⁵

Today, Bronzeville's Black culture and identity remains quite apparent. As the birthplace of the United States' largest Black parade, the Bud Bilken Parade and Picnic and home to the Bronzeville Walk of Fame, the neighbourhood's pride and rich Black history are obvious. Through

this intrinsic history and current culture, Bronzeville is considered Chicago's Black Metropolis. Despite this rich history and prominent Black autonomy and culture, Bronzeville is not without its socio-economic challenges. Since the 1950s, the population has nearly halved and of those remaining, approximately 43% live in low-income households.¹⁹⁶ "Crime also remains an issue, challenging retail development efforts and negatively impacting quality of life for residents."¹⁹⁷ An under resourced urban commercial district, Bronzeville is the ideal site for the proposed community center and library.



fig. 58
Negro boys on Easter morning, Across from the Regal Theatre in Bronzeville, Illinois, 1941

§ IV.V THE SITE: 4400-4410
SOUTH ST. LAWRENCE
AVENUE

Located at the southwest corner of South St. Lawrence Avenue and East 44th Street, sits the proposed thesis site. Fairly central to the Bronzeville neighbourhood, the site is quite accessible by numerous means of transportation. As there are several roadways and sidewalks intersecting the site, it is quite accessible via car as well as for local residents who may walk or cycle to the site. Within a 5-10-minute walking distance there is access to several bus stops and just outside of the 10-minute walking radius, access to Chicago's railway system.

This particular site was chosen for its proximity to a variety of building programs. The inclusion of nearby schools creates the opportunity for after-school programs hosted at the proposed site, as well as ideally offers a safe place for children to wait for parents who may be working late. The building then becomes a safe gathering space of intentional community outreach. Across the north side of the site sits Throne of Grace Church. As the church in the nearest proximity to the site, there is the opportunity for joint programming and collaboration.

Aside from the nearby churches and schools, the majority of the surrounding context is residential homes, duplexes, townhouses, and apartments. Placing the site in a predominately residential area was quite intentional as it creates the opportunity for the site to become an epicenter for the community. The building has the opportunity to become a centralized local site for events, workshops, and an overall inhabitable public space. As the majority of surrounding context is private occupancy, it can be debated that a public space of this magnitude is quite appropriate and needed in the community.

SITE WAYFINDING &
SURROUNDING CONTEXT

-  Proposed Site
-  Schools
-  Churches
-  Bus Stops
-  Train Stops
-  Bus Route
-  Train Route
-  Walking Radius'

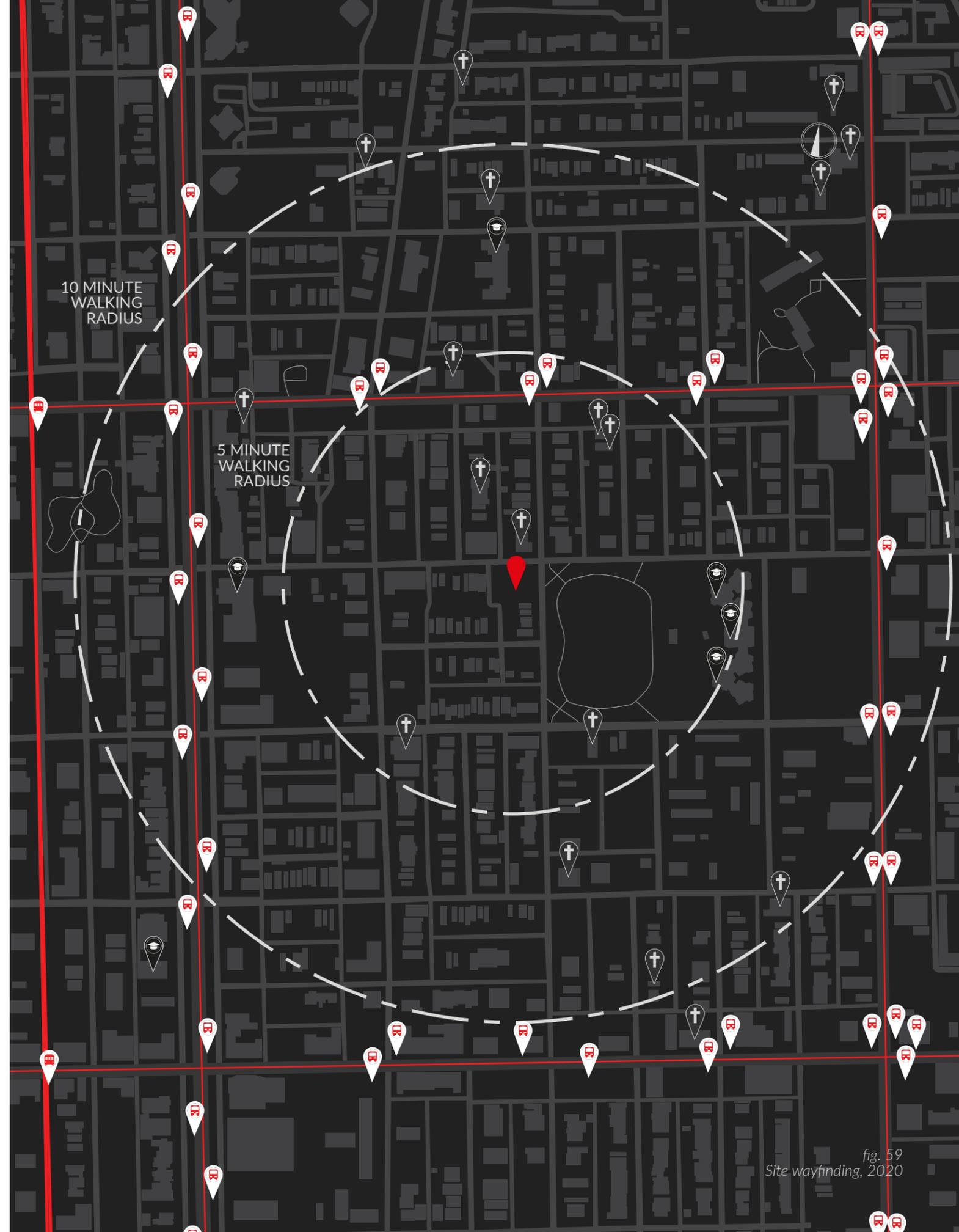


fig. 59
Site wayfinding, 2020

The adjacency of Lillian Hardin Park to the east, allows for the potential of large-scale events and community collaboration. Located in a predominantly masonry neighbourhood, it may be speculated that the site is currently owned by a developer as it is well kept and presently fenced off. Selected for its richness of Black history, the site is an ideal selection as it creates the opportunity to reinforce Bronzeville as Chicago's Black metropolis. The implementation of the proposed design may intervene with the current state of socio-economic affairs, and as such seems fitting for the Bronzeville community.

SURROUNDING CONTEXT [NOLLI MAP]

- Proposed Site
- Public Buildings
- Private Buildings
- Public Pathways
- Private Walkways
- Roadways & Sidewalks
- Greenspace
- Trees



fig. 60
Map of public and private
surrounding site context.
© 2020



fig. 61
South Site
Panorama, 2019

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V.

DESIGN PROPOSAL

“The lived experience of race has spatial dimension, and the lived experience of space has racial dimension.”

- George Lipsitz
*American Studies Scholar, & Professor
in the Department of Black Studies at the
University of California*

§ V.I PROGRAMMATIC ANALYSIS & DESIGN APPROACH

The final design proposal stemmed from the intersection of the inspiration of case studies and the desire for architecture which promotes Black excellence, identity, and advocacy of Black history. While not all selected precedents were developed for the predominant inhabitation of the Black community, many of the design implementations and intentions remain relevant and parallel that of the proposed design. Inspired by the aforementioned precedents, a programming approach began to emerge. Coupled with an analysis of Black history, a cohesive design strategy was created which allowed for the refinement of the proposed programming development process. This section will outline the knowledge gained from case studies and their correlation to the final design proposal. Based upon an analysis of Black history, art, and architecture, juxtaposed with relevant projects, a foundation for an initial project emerged which later transformed into the final design proposal.

Designed primarily for the Cambridge area's middle-class, the Idea Exchange building inspired the development of the proposed building from what was initially intended as a library and series of service offices, into a facility offering a multitude of resources (music rooms, art studio, workshop, lounge, etc.). The first of many "bookless" libraries, this precedent influenced the proposed programming as it demonstrated a connection between traditionally separate programs and amenities. The inclusion of a basement level workshop area as well as café in the design proposal, may be attributed to the Idea Exchange Old Post Office.

The only precedent designed by a predominantly Black firm, the Harvey B. Gantt Center demonstrated the value of

historic connection and symbolism. Clad completely in perforated metal panels resembling African woven textiles and quilt patterns from the era of the Underground Railroad, the Center is unabashedly Black, and has no qualms in presenting this.¹⁹⁸ The Harvey B. Gantt Center is an embodiment of pride and self representation, and as such it was necessary to reflect this in the programming of the design proposal, to do so, a series of walls on the façades of the proposal and two other designed walls on the grounds were designated as "canvases" intended for graffiti. Similarly, an afro-centric library and an exterior performance space hold places of prominence in the programming, in so doing, Black excellence is brought to the fore. In the same vein as the Harvey B. Gantt Center, the proposed building would be clad in the "colours" of its people and become a source of pride for the South side Black community.

Located in the same neighbourhood as the design proposal, the George Cleveland Hall Library was an essential case study as not only the location, but program and social backing of this project are quite alike the design proposal. The Library demonstrates the success of majorly Black programming in the Bronzeville neighbourhood as for nearly 90 years it has remained a strong gathering space for Black South Side residents. This communal importance is vital in the creation of a space that would become widely accepted and loved by Black residents. It is essential that a space is created which caters to their needs and fills a gap in the available services, so as to become an important part of this neighborhood. Understanding the particular idiosyncrasies of the site are paramount, as they are what determine the main spatial elements that would become

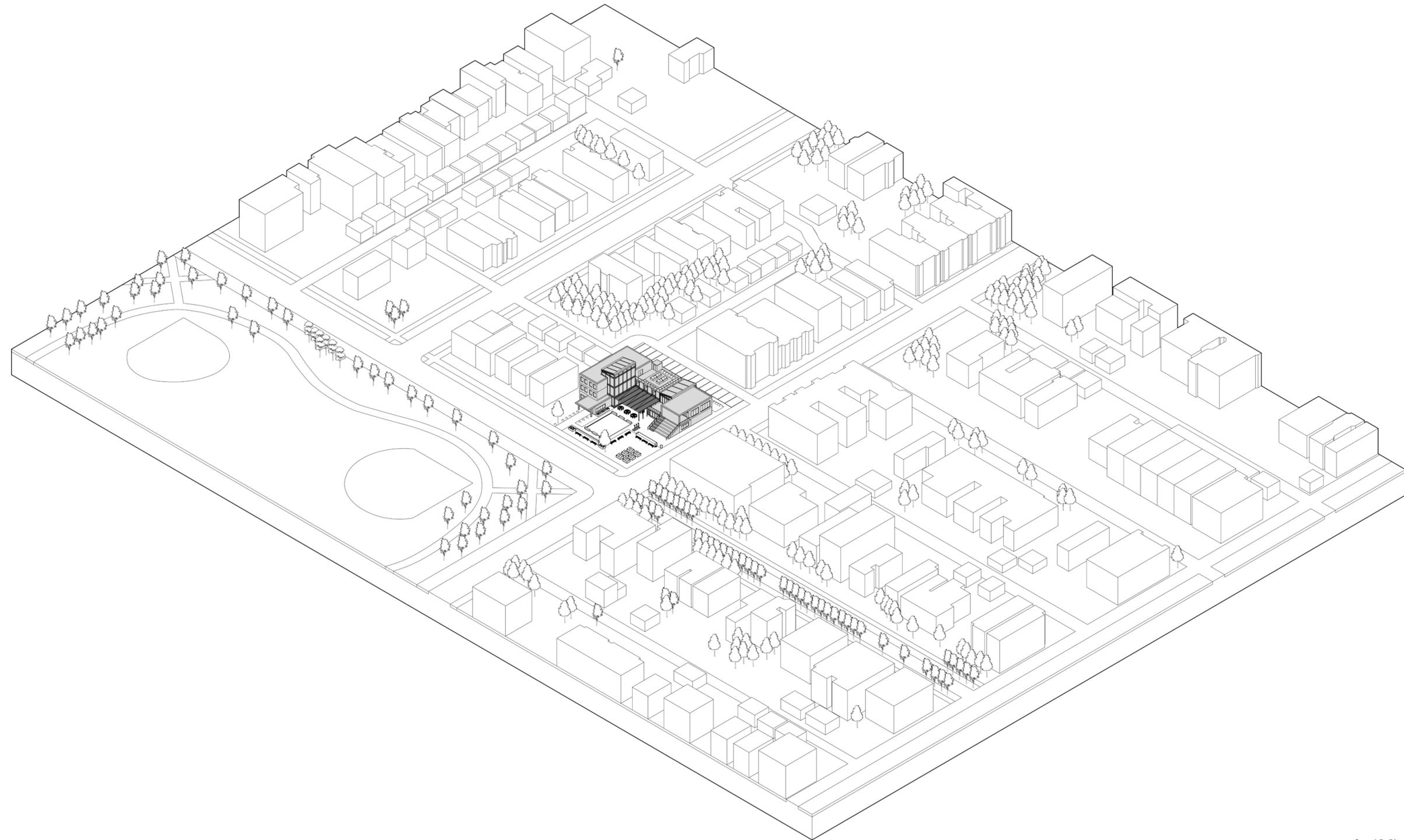


fig. 62 Site Axonometric

present in the design proposal. Proximity to other impactful elements on site will also lead to design decisions which will influence the final proposal.

The proposed site is located at the intersection of East 44th Street and South St. Lawrence Avenue, within the Bronzeville neighbourhood, which is composed of nearly 90% Black residents.¹⁹⁹ Within a 10-minute walking radius of the site there are 12 churches and 5 schools²⁰⁰, which both offer opportunities for extended shared programming and an intersection of community outreach. Adjacent to the site, on its northern side sits Throne of Grace Church, a popular Black Christian place of worship in the Bronzeville area. Historically, Black churches were incredibly important as they were used as spaces to preach dreams of liberation and promises of social and political justice during times of slavery and later during the Civil Rights Movement.²⁰¹ As a platform for hope of liberation and as a space for community gathering and support, the importance of the Black church is deeply embedded within the United States. As such, throughout the design process it was vital that the proposal maintain the importance of and create a relationship between the adjacent church as a means to call on the widespread importance of the Black church.

The proposed building was designed to create an activated connection between spaces, to create a natural ebb and flow or coming and going of visitors to the site, and to promote using the site as a space of congregation and liveliness. The relationships between the programs in and around the buildings stemmed from the intersection of case study precedents and the desire to create strong Black architecture to promote Black livelihood

and liveliness. Physically, this meant that the space had to be inviting and un-intimidating. The placement of the exterior amenities was done in consideration of the church and the park, and in doing so creates a point that links both, acting as a courtyard for both. Like a courtyard, public and private space merge and blur and become lively. As the primary design intention was to create a space which exudes a sense of community and promotes further Black excellence²⁰², the proposal was thus named the Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence (BCBE).

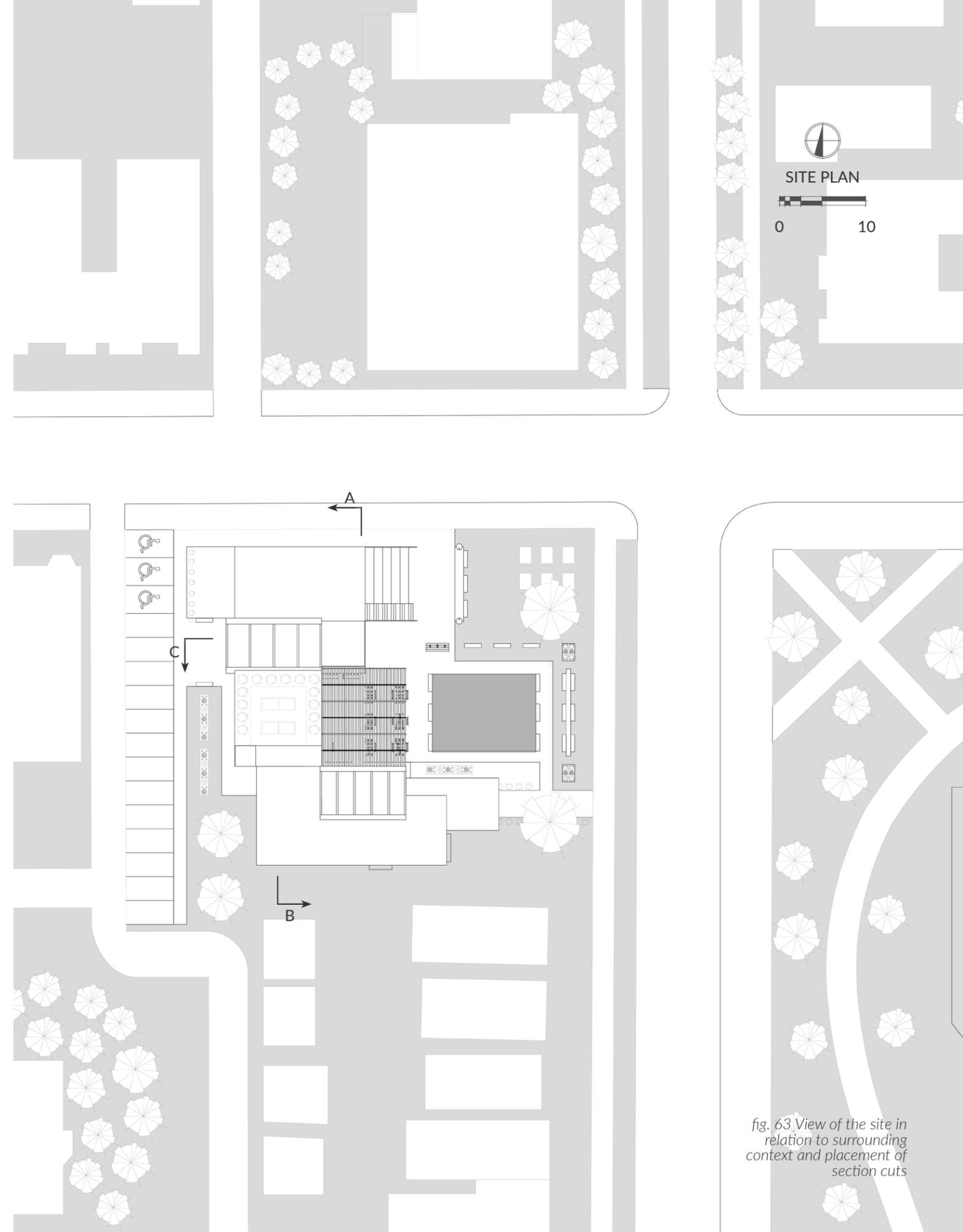


fig. 63 View of the site in relation to surrounding context and placement of section cuts

§ V.I FINAL DESIGN PROPOSAL

The Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence

BACKGROUND & SITE

Located at the center of Grand Boulevard, the Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence was designed as a community safe haven and gathering space for residents of the South Side. A u-shaped building, the BCBEs' primary entrances were intentionally oriented east towards the adjacent park (Armstrong/Lillian Hardin) to create a conversation between the two programs. In doing so, the site is opened up to the public realm and the latter is simultaneously welcomed within the realm of the site.

MATERIALITY

To draw a connection between the existing context of the neighbourhood, the main material selected for the Center is brick. The use of masonry allows the building to connect to the neighbourhood aesthetic, and the inclusion of its mixed material palette allows for the BCBE to appear as a new intervention that retains the material language of the neighbourhood. The many graffiti walls on and surrounding the building have been designed with a white brick coating to emulate the look of a blank canvas. In doing so the idea is to draw attention to these voids around the site as a call to aspiring and existing artists, and as a means to showcase community art in a prideful manner integrated with the building.

The northern and southern most entrances are clad in a local oak wood panelling to stand out from the majorly brick façades. This design strategy was inspired by precedent research and in doing so, the main entryways of the proposal become quite evident and unique. The buildings'

brick mass is divided in two by a third central entrance, composed of curtain walls and topped by a skylight. Glass is used to create a transparency and visible transition space from the eastern busy public space to the quieter public western graffiti area. The skylight above this space allows in plenty of southern light. In treating the three story curtain wall with the same language, it creates an emphasis of transition and permeability between these areas as well as concretizes the repeated language of glass throughout the building.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

In the basement of the building there are music studios, an art studio and a general workshop which transforms this level into a studio hub of sorts. As many of these spaces produce a significant amount of noise, similar to precedents they were consciously grouped and placed in the lower level to minimize noise pollution to the joyful ambient noises of the above ground programming.

The first level consists of a set of large-scale exterior stairs designed to be used as tiered seating or as performance space, perhaps for the adjacent church. Across the exterior of the ground level are a series of graffiti walls, both freestanding and designed into the buildings mass. Located on the eastern public space of the site, the more southern freestanding wall was designed to further outline the boundaries of the site. This wall creates a sense of privacy and inwardness for the water area, while the benches on the exterior side create a viewpoint to the park calling on the outward-ness and visibility beyond the site. The more northern of the freestanding graffiti walls houses water stations on either



fig. 64 Exterior
Front Center Render

end which may be used as handwashing and tool cleaning stations for local artists and students partaking in intended community center graffiti classes. This wall in particular frames the performance space to the west and creates a distinguished corner green space at the north-eastern site boundary. The inclusion of a large planter with the existing tree creates the opportunity for a visible community garden.

At the center of the exterior programming is a centralized water space. In warmer months this space may be used as a splash pad, and in colder months may be used as a skate rink. This space is surrounded by a variety of greenery (trees and planters) to create a vibrant and luscious environment extending beyond the confines of the park. Whereas, the innermost seating is designed for participants to breach the realm of both in and out of the water space, the surrounding seating and BBQ area is designed for parents and spectators to maintain visibility of children and have the ability participate in the environment without interrupting the flow of play localized in the designated water space.

In the interior, at the north end of the building there is a change room and washroom facility which were developed to service the aforementioned water play area. At the entrance of this area is the northernmost point of entry into the main building. Consisting of a three-sided vestibule, this entrance permits access to the washroom and change room facilities even when the main building is closed. Continuing towards the central interior space of the building is the café and kitchen, in close proximity to the eastern garage door to the BBQ space. In warmer months the door may be opened allowing the interior and exterior dining spaces to connect to

one another and create a community dining area that may be used for BBQs, cookouts, and many other local events. Lastly, on the south end of this floor is the children's area and computer lab. Both were designed relatively near to an entrance to allow for quick and easy access. Within the computer lab is a standing computer station and printing station to offer visitors the ability to print assignments, resumes, and other paperwork while on the go and hassle-free. The first floor thus becomes the public realm. It is meant as a series of spaces which offer many amenities and public services that are somewhat lacking in this community.

The second level is broken up into three parts. The first part, on the north end, is a Wi-Fi lounge. Designed as a space for students from nearby schools or local neighbourhood children to wait for parents to finish work, this area was developed to create an open-access and visible space for interior lounging. On the southern end of this level is the afro-centric library. Designed to house study carrels, an open concept boardroom and group working area, the library occupies the largest portion of the second floor. In addition to the variety of workspaces, the library stacks are proposed to house majorly books on or related to Black history as a means to promote further education and identity of the Black South Side community. In the final part of this level, in the center sits three rotating offices and a mezzanine waiting area/lounge. Designed for use by counsellors, lawyers, and other service staff, the offices are intended for meetings for legal advice, financial aid, and counselling services for interested members of the community. In section it may be seen that the office area was designed at a more significant height than the Wi-Fi lounge



fig. 65 Interior Render
Overlooking the Atrium
Towards the Wi-Fi Lounge

area. As such, the offices are in a public enough space as to not create a sense of shame for those who require the services, and simultaneously offer a secluded enough space to offer a sense of privacy for those dealing with personal matters.

The third level consists of three conference rooms that may be opened up into one large space. These multi-functional spaces were designed to tie back to the intention of creating a space to promote the betterment and celebrate the success of the Black community. The conference spaces may be used for job fairs, workshops, seminars, group counselling sessions or large-scale speaking engagements and events. Also on this level is a green roof. Similar to the ground level designed garden space, this roof area was developed for the potential of community gardening and workshops.

ANALYSIS OF PROJECT

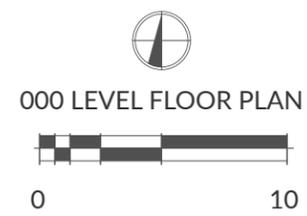
The Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence redefines what is seen as the public and private realm. The building does so by melding both typologies together and creating a space which straddles what would otherwise be a definite line separating interior and exterior, private and public. The BCBE is designed to be constantly inhabited by users from a variety of age groups and needs, many of its spaces, such as the 24/7 washrooms, are open at all times and create a space for disenfranchised, homeless, or an otherwise deemed "undesirable" population to have access to showers, washrooms, drinking water even when the main facility is closed. The tiered seating adorning the prime spot in front of the building was added to the center programmatically as a means to reclaim the word "loitering" and make it positive. Doing so is a means

to show that public inhabitation without a clear purpose is fine, to show that hanging out in public space simply when you have nowhere else to go is fine, to create a safe and public gathering space for youth year round.

The series of graffiti walls on and around the BCBE promote a new form of legal vandalism and personal mark making. In doing so, the public contests the norm and usual architectural practices. The inclusion of public graffiti creates a unique building aesthetic and allows for the Black community to self-represent on the facility designed for their empowerment. Formalizing the practice of graffiti through classes and workshops defies typical single-ownership and rather pulls the center further into the public realm. The BCBE is ultimately a center for Black empowerment, it achieves this by highlighting previous Black success and excellence in the afro-centric library, and through the classes and workshops it is intended to offer. The education of the community through workshops, seminars and fairs is a means of giving community members a hand up not a hand out. By empowering the individual, the community comes out stronger in the process. The center is primarily intended to empower Black Americans by offering these resources, but it does not limit itself to only Black people, rather it is meant to serve a greater multiplicity of ethnicities in educating them through the vast Black American historical and cultural context, and through the instances of oppression and excellence seen throughout this tumultuous history. In this way, the center becomes a space to cater to a wide gamut of South Side residents. The BCBE is the courtyard of the Bronzeville neighbourhood, and as such this is where liveliness may occur.

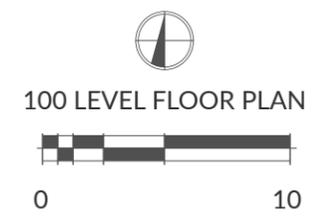
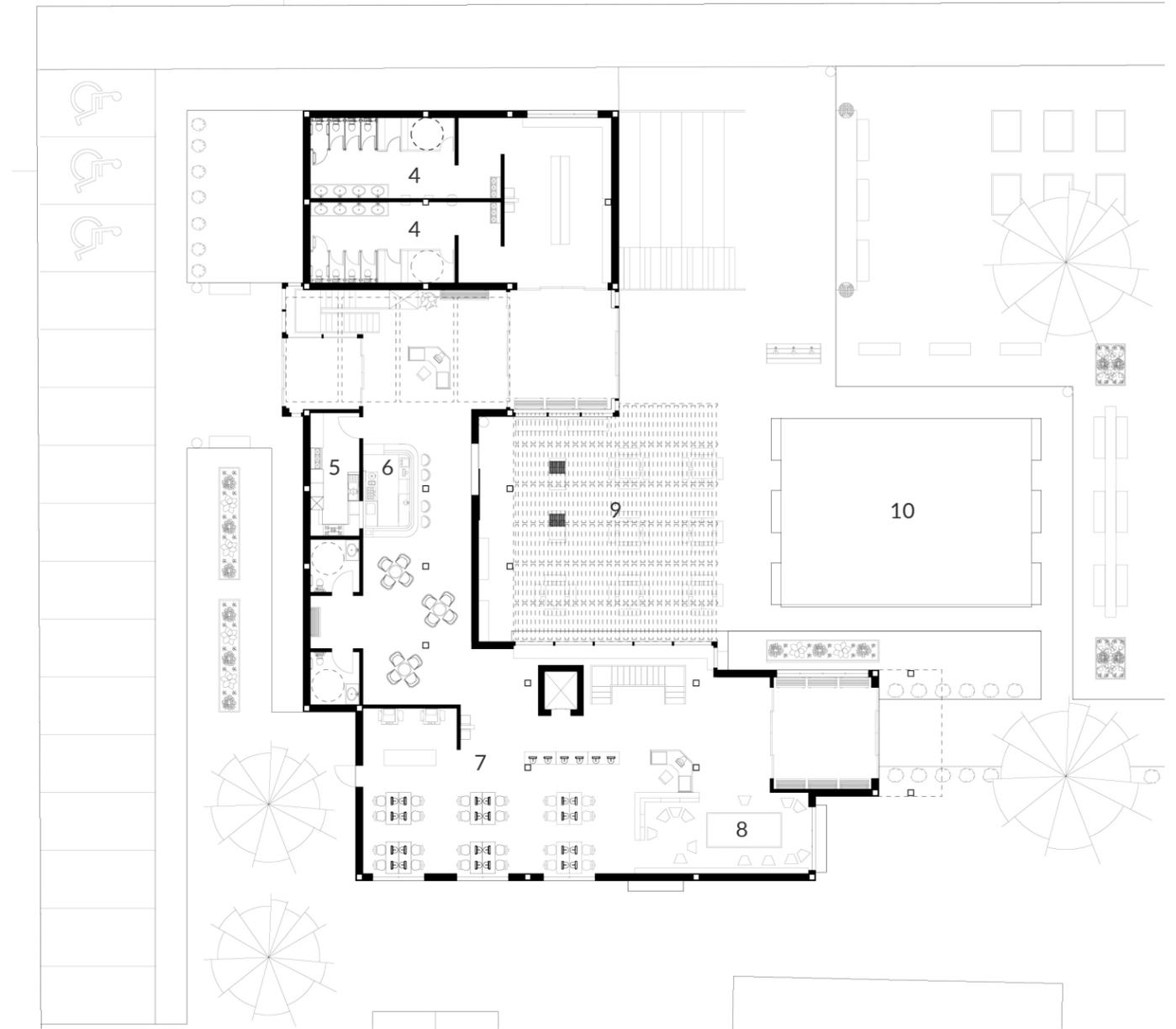


fig. 66 Exterior Rear
Graffiti Walls and Central
Glass Entrance Render



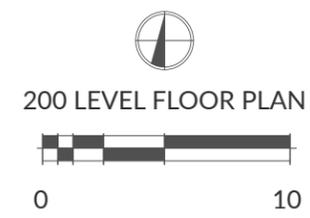
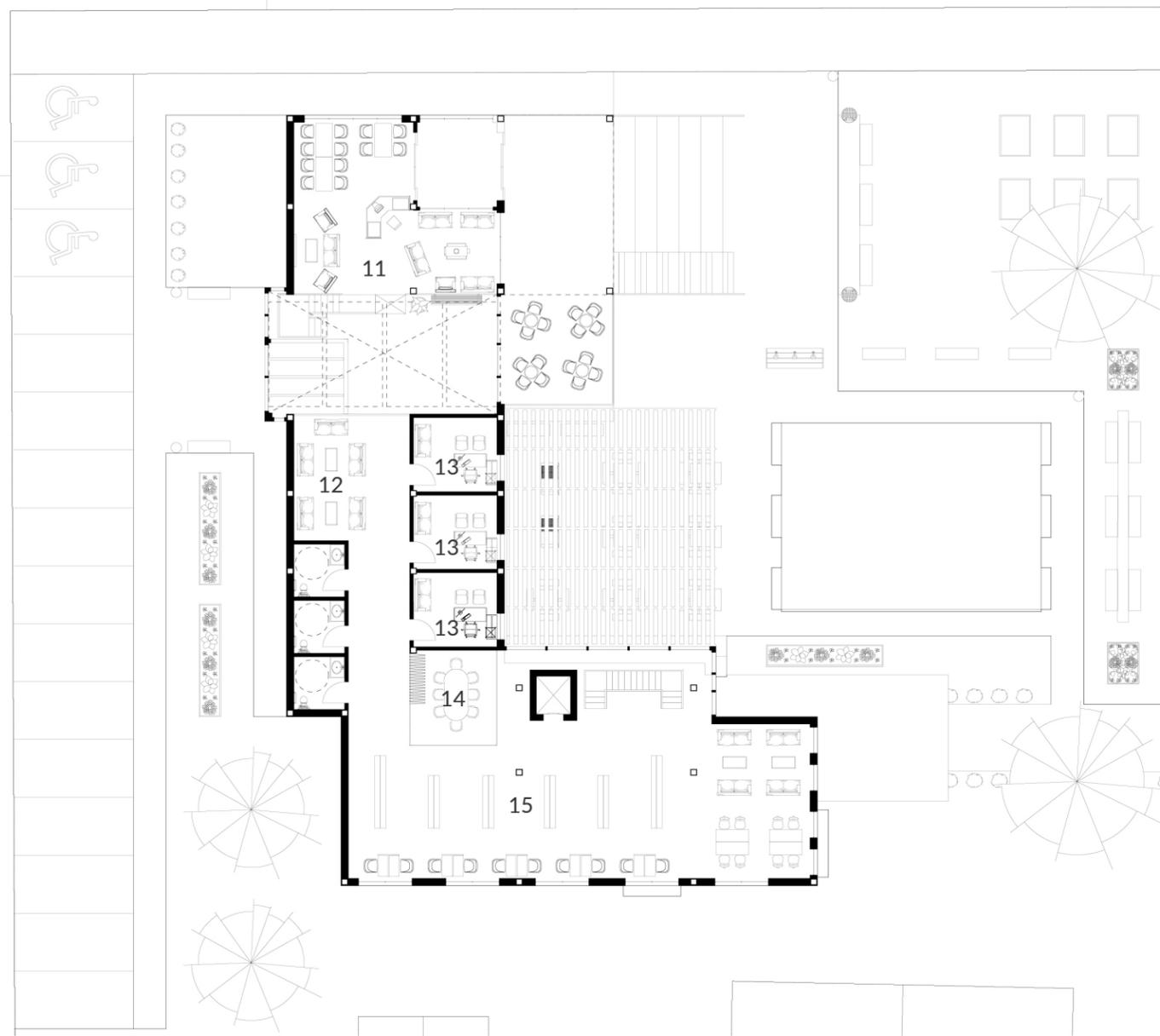
- 1 Music Studios
- 2 Art Studio
- 3 Workshop

fig. 67 Studio and workshop hub level



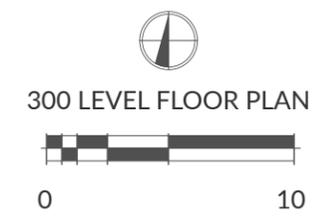
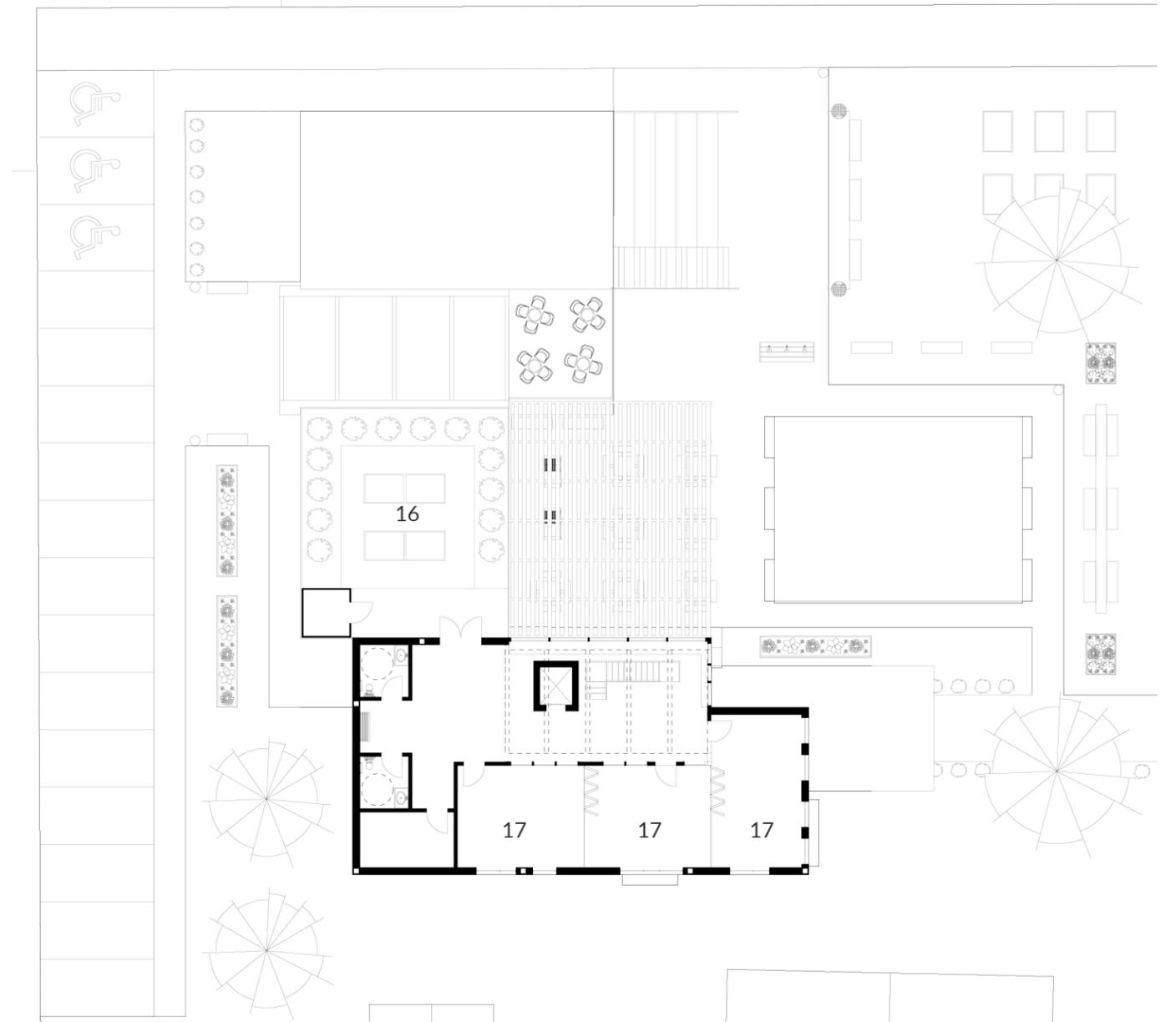
- 4 Public Change Rooms & Washrooms
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Café
- 7 Computer Lab
- 8 Children's Area
- 9 BBQ Area
- 10 Splash Pad/Skating Rink

fig. 68 Community gathering and all-access level



- 11 Lounge
- 12 Mezzanine Waiting Area
- 13 Rotating Offices
- 14 Boardroom
- 15 Library Stacks

fig. 69 Service and engagement level



- 16 Green Roof
- 17 Conference Room

fig. 70 Outreach and advancement level

EAST ELEVATION



fig. 71 View from the park towards the exterior public space

EAST SECTION - A

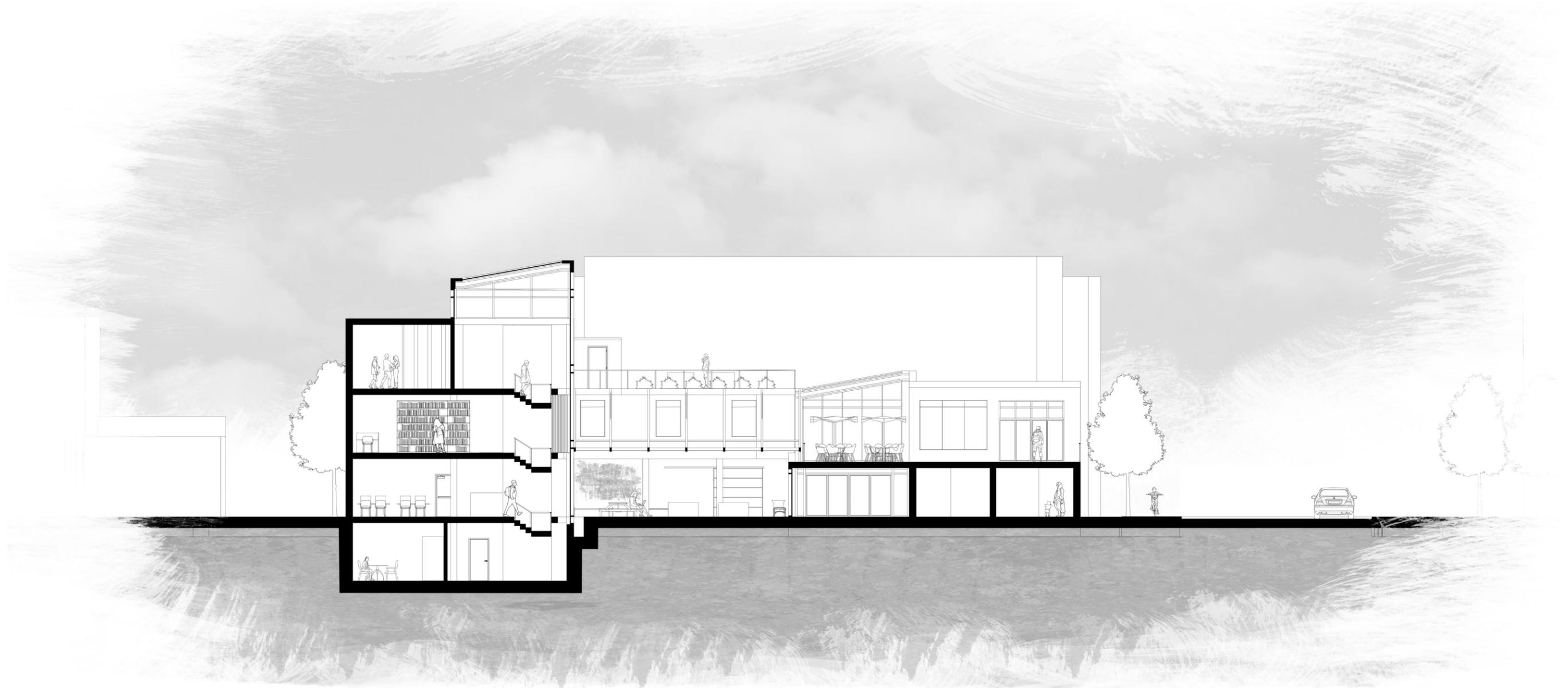


fig. 72 View of basement art studio, first level computer area, second level afro-centric library and third level conference room

WEST ELEVATION



fig. 73 View of main western graffiti walls and material palette transition

WEST SECTION - B



fig. 74 View of interior spatial relations of levels and variance of programming

NORTH ELEVATION

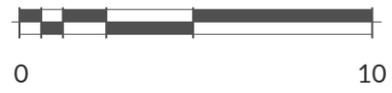


fig. 75 View from Throne of Grace Church towards exterior public space and northern graffiti wall

NORTH SECTION - C



fig. 76 Longitudinal cut through Lillian Hardin (Armstrong) Park and BCBE exterior public space, showcasing the intersection of the public and private realms

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VI.

FINAL REMARKS

"Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

- James Baldwin
Playwright, Novelist, Poet, Essayist, & Activist

§ VI.I CONCLUSION

Across American history the Black community has been systematically oppressed and misrepresented. Since the commencement of western Black history with the first African slaves being brought to North America in the 17th century²⁰³, Black identity has historically been based upon the prejudices of those in power. Society began to shift as the Black community fought for their rights for equal opportunity in terms of education, employment, and access to amenities. Throughout history many afro-centric movements like the Black Arts and Chicago Renaissance brought to light the strength of positive Black representation through art as an outlet.

Chicago, Illinois, a product of historic redlining was selected as it possesses a rich history of Black art and autonomy through graffiti culture and growing Black businesses. Within the city, the implications which race has historically had upon architecture and the modern ramifications of this on design are quite evident, particularly in the South Side community. Although the formerly legal and illegal segregation of Chicago was negatively construed, the concentration of Black people in the South Side produced a series of positive effects, namely a certain Black autonomy and sense of empowerment which persists to this day. Developed to foster this sense of independence, the Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence uses self-representation and community empowerment as tools to continue to enrich Chicago's Black South Side community. The BCBE seeks to enable and encourage a grassroots effort in self expression and representation. The Center supports the people of the area, and as such becomes a clear conveyor of personal identity and feeling, empowering those who make use of the tools. The BCBE is intended

to extend from beyond the confines of its walls and into the surrounding space, in such a way as to encourage Black self-identity and empowerment.

The Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence creates the potential for a platform to ameliorate local education, promote a sense of Black excellence and identity, and advocate aspects of Black history both within and outside of the Black South Side community. The rotating offices bring to light and address to some degree the current disenfranchisement many Black South Side residents face. The workshop and conference spaces were developed to allow for community improvement through educational seminars, workshops and classes geared towards the deliverance of transferable skills and self-empowerment for continued Black excellence amongst the whole of Black Chicago. The afro-centric library was developed as a means to bring to light the many historic successes of the Black community and offer the opportunity to educate other ethnicities to the extensive Black history in the United States.

The many dedicated graffiti walls are intended to offer a means by which individuals, through organized classes or personal action, may leave their mark on the building. This mark making is integral to the programming of the Center, as it is through this personal act that the most essential and raw self-expression may occur. The Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence promotes the re-acquisition and democratization of public space by enabling the markings inherent to this community to start appearing on the building's facade as a communal patina. A series of walls on the building's facade encourage the use of graffiti as a means of expressing a communal zeitgeist. Promoting the use of a space for



fig. 77 Interior Afro-Centric Library Render

the community, for the people and of the people. As opposed to what is typical for the city of Chicago, the BCBE promotes and encourages loitering, so called lounging—that is to say, the use of a space at all times; and formalized defacement of public property through the use of graffiti and spray paint arts. Public space is melded in the program of the building and is intended to act as the courtyard of the neighborhood. In this way, community and liveliness is promoted, thus creating a greater social cohesion of identity in the community.

It is beyond the scope of this project to propose a solution for racism, rather the BCBE is designed to ameliorate the perception of Black identity by the community and by other ethnicities, and to enhance the state of education in regards to a Black history and a Black context in historic and modern America. The historic lack of integration into a unified society has indentured Black society to a life of systematic oppression which historically has repressed any thoughts of self identification and identity. The Bronzeville Center for Black Excellence has been designed in such a way as to become the backdrop for greater social reform, one of tolerance, acceptance, and empowerment. How does one promote Black excellence despite historic segregation and debasement? One possible answer is through the use of an architecture that has been designed with "Black" in mind, designed for Black people, by Black people, of Black People. Although one project cannot solve or undo the history of oppression and continuity of racism, this project is intended to commence and further the conversation of the Black diaspora, Black excellence and identity not only in Chicago's South Side, but across the United States of America.



fig. 78 Exterior
Front Winter Render

VII.

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"Architecture should be working on improving the environment of people in their homes, in their places of work and their places of recreation. It should be functional and pleasant, not just in the image of the architect's ego."

- Norma Merrick Sklarek
Architect

SELECT DEFINITIONS

Abolitionist: of, relating to, or supporting abolitionism: advocating the end of slavery²⁰⁴

Antebellum Period: United States era between the years after the War of 1812 (1812-15) and before the Civil War (1861-65)²⁰⁵

Black Arts Movement: a period of artistic and literary development among Black Americans in the 1960s and early 70s. Based on the cultural politics of Black nationalism, which developed into a set of theories referred to as Black Aesthetic, the movement sought to create a populist art form to promote the idea of Black separatism²⁰⁶

Black Chicago Renaissance: the surge of artistic expression, community organizing, and social activity in Chicago's Black community during the 1930s to 1950s, and which figured prominently in the years leading to the modern Civil Rights movements of the 1960s²⁰⁷

Black Codes (Laws): restrictive laws designed to limit the freedom of Black Americans and ensure their availability to cheap labour force after slavery was abolished during the American Civil War²⁰⁸

Black (African) diaspora: the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans and their descendants to various parts of the world during the modern and pre-modern periods²⁰⁹

Black excellence: portraying or the possession of outstanding features and/or qualities that manifests the historic success and current pride of the Black community²¹⁰

Black identity: a self-identified sense or set of attributes pertaining to ones' personal recognition of what it means to be a member of the Black community²¹¹

Black Lives Matter Movement: an international activist movement which builds power to bring justice, healing and freedom to Black people across the globe and strives for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise²¹²

Black Power Movement: a revolutionary 1960s and 70s movement that emphasized racial pride, economic empowerment, and the creation of political and cultural institutions. During this era, there was a rise in the demand for Black history courses, a greater embrace of African culture, and a spread of raw artistic expression displaying realities of African Americans²¹³

Civil Rights Movement: a mass protest against racial segregation and discrimination in the southern United States that came to national prominence in the mid-1950s. This movement had its roots in the centuries-long efforts of African slaves and their descendants to resist racial oppression and abolish the institution of slavery.²¹⁴

Enslave: to reduce to or as if to slavery²¹⁵

Fair Housing Act: U.S. federal legislation that protects individuals and families from discrimination in the sale, rental, financing, or advertising of housing. It furthermore prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, disability, family status, and national origin²¹⁶

Great Migration: the widespread migration of African Americans in the 20th century from rural communities in the south to large cities in the north and west. From 1916 to 1970, it is estimated

that some six million Black southerners relocated to urban areas in the north and west²¹⁷

Harlem Renaissance: a blossoming of African American culture in the 1920-30s, particularly in the creative arts. Embracing literary, musical, theatrical, and visual arts, participants sought to reconceptualise "the Negro" apart from the White stereotypes that had influenced Black peoples' relationship to their heritage and to each other²¹⁸

Jim Crow Laws: a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. Named after a Black minstrel show character, the laws – which existed for about 100 years, from the post-Civil War era until 1964 – were meant to marginalize African Americans by denying them the right to vote, hold jobs, get an education or other opportunities. Those who defied Jim Crow Laws often faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence and death²¹⁹

Lynching: a form of violence in which a mob, under the pretext of administering justice without trial, executes a presumed offender, often after inflicting torture and corporal mutilation. *Lynch law* refers to a self-constituted court that imposes sentence on a person without due process of law. Both terms are derived from the name of Charles Lynch, a Virginia planter and justice of the peace who, during the American Revolution, headed an irregular court formed to punish loyalists²²⁰

Oppress: to crush or burden by abuse of power or authority²²¹

Racial discrimination: discrimination, unfair treatment, or bias against someone or a group of people on the basis of their race²²²

Red Summer: in United States history, the summer of 1919 marked the culmination of steadily growing tensions surrounding the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural south to the cities of the north that took place during World War I²²³

Redlining: the illegal practice of refusing to offer credit or insurance in a particular community on a discriminatory basis (as because of the race or ethnicity of its residents)²²⁴ IN Segregation:

Segregation index: are dissimilarity indices that measure the degree to which a minority group is distributed differently than Whites across census tracts²²⁵

South Side (Chicago): the historically predominantly Black and disenfranchised area of Chicago, Illinois²²⁶

Transatlantic Slave Trade: a segment of the global slave trade that transported between 10-12 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas from the 16th to 19th century. It was the second of three stages of the triangle trade, in which arms, textiles, and wine were shipped from Europe to Africa, slaves from Africa to the Americas, and sugar and coffee from Americas to Europe²²⁷

Underground Railroad: a secret network of abolitionists who helped African Americans escape from enslavement in the southern United States to free northern states or to Canada. The largest anti-slavery freedom movement in North America, this network brought between 30,000-40,000 fugitives to British North America (now Canada)²²⁸

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