

Learning from Black Pedestrian Experiences in Portland, Oregon

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“Bus Stop” by Ekoa Holmes, 2017.



Self Introduction

- I am a second-year Master's of Urban Planning student at the University of Arizona
- I'm passionate about urban restoration, urban design, universal accessibility, and community revitalization.



Findings and Key Themes

Four common themes were found during the analysis of the project.

1. Racialized and Racist Experiences
2. Intersectionality of Race and Gender
3. Stress Related to Police and Policing
4. Gentrification and Neighborhood Change



“First Offense” by Genesis Tramaine, 2018.

Racialized and Racist Experiences



“Untitled” by Kim Ryu, 2017.

- The mental and emotional impact of experiencing racism
 - *“It’s just an added stress to your commute wherever. Even when it’s a leisurely commute.”*
- Driver’s Bias
 - *“I will come to an intersection on one side and be waiting because there’s cars and then as soon as a white person steps on the other side, oh, car stops.”*
 - [regarding infrastructural changes to remedy pedestrian-driver relationship] *“I don’t think it’s going to help because, again, it’s about their perceptions of race and not about, oh, this is a crosswalk, I should stop for people. Because they don’t see Black people as people.”*

Intersectionality of Race and Gender



“Rare Groove” by Tim Okamura, 2018.

- Additional layer of anxiety
 - *“I would say I’m extra aware, and cautious of everything that’s going on especially at night when I’m by myself.”*
 - *“I think my gender at night scares me more than my race...”*
- The impact of gender expression
 - *“I think my hair plays a lot in my walking experience... white people think it’s something they can comment on or touch.”*
 - [In regard to evaluating different situations] *“If I was white would this happen? If I was a big black man, I don’t think that would happen as often.”*

Stress Related to Police and Policing

- Immediate effect from outside perceptions
 - *“I got anxiety to wear my yellow jacket to go out because it was just too identifying... So since then, I have always bought black and gray.”*
 - *If I see [police officers] I automatically take my hands out of my pocket. I’m making sure they are where somebody can see them.”*
- Self dismissiveness
 - *“I feel like I don’t exist when the police are around, or not very safe, or I don’t have the same rights.”*



“La Hara” by Jean-Michel Basquiat, 1982.

Gentrification and Neighborhood Change



“The Death of The Neighborhood” by MTO, 2014.

- Sense of belonging
 - [regarding current gentrified neighborhoods] “... you walk down those streets now, you look, and you are made to feel like you don’t belong here.”
- Erasure and displacement
 - “It’s sad when you don’t meet as many people that were born and raised here. It’s kind of rare. Then if you met us, ask us where we started and where we are now. It’s a huge difference.”
- Acknowledgement of barriers
 - “What bothers me the most is that I have lived here all my life and I can’t even own a home here.”

Conclusion

- Black pedestrians are not afforded the generally-expected liberties of existing in the public space (or even their private space).
 - Instances of racialized bigotry and implicit biases contributes to the designation of Black pedestrians as “outsiders” instead of being seen as legitimate members of a community.
- Planning professionals and policy makers must take this disparity into consideration when designing plans for the public space so an equitable environment can be produced.



“Ahmaud Arbery Prayer” by Nikkolas Smith, 2020.