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Edited by Susan Shay, Kelly M. Britt

Heritage as an action word

Uses beyond communal memory

SERIES IN HERITAGE STUDIES

Summary

There is no limit to what constitutes heritage. By definition, heritage is the use of the past for present purposes. Yet, to any given group or population, heritage can be a multitude of things and can serve a variety of purposes. Based on shared memory, heritage can be tangible or intangible, boundless in variety and scope; it can be, for example, objects, landscapes, food or clothing, music or dance, sites or statues, monuments or buildings. Importantly, however, heritage also has many and varied uses and powers. It can be used to control, to unite, to engage, and to empower people, communities, and nations.

In this interdisciplinary volume, authors from around the world explore how different communities, nations, and groups intentionally and creatively use heritage, both tangible and intangible, in a wide variety of ways to positively address social and environmental issues. Significantly, these studies demonstrate how heritage can be an exceptionally valuable tool for political, economic, and social change. Insightful studies are presented pertaining to heritage as social memory, including the nationalistic political use of heritage, heritage as resistance to political powers, traditional knowledge as environmental science, heritage for legal and community action, heritage for building peace, heritage for Indigenous and minority empowerment, and heritage for exploring the past through phenomenological methods. The goal of this volume is to move beyond seeing heritage as only social memory, a mere interpretation of static past events, people or places, and instead explores critically the variety of ways heritage is engaged in the present and can be in the future.

About the editors

Susan Shay, PhD, AIA, is an Affiliated Scholar of the Heritage Research Centre at the University of Cambridge and a US Registered Architect. Her research investigates how participation in legal processes both impacts Indigenous heritage and is a meaningful tool for Indigenous empowerment. She has advised communities and non-profits on the development of preservation and empowerment programs, including technical and cultural exchange and disaster response and recovery initiatives. Prior to pursuing academic research, Susan had an extensive career in private and public practice as a Registered Architect, specializing in historic preservation, adaptive reuse, and disaster recovery, mitigation, and redevelopment. She holds a Doctorate in Heritage Studies from the University of Cambridge, a master's degree in Historic Preservation from Columbia University, and attended Cambridge University's Judge Business School for mentorship in the development of new business initiatives.

Kelly M. Britt, PhD, RPA, is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology (Brooklyn College and The Graduate Center, CUNY) as well as the Director of the Center for Brooklyn and Chair of the Museum and Cultural Organizational Studies minor (Brooklyn College). Her collaborative projects are located in urban settings and focus on gentrification, climate change, and trauma. These include community-based work with the United Order of Tents Eastern District #3, the oldest Black women's benevolent society in the United States, and the Flatbush African Burial Ground Coalition. She also works in a collective of anthropologists exploring COVID-19 materiality as a response to trauma, and with the Van Cortlandt Park archaeological legacy/orphaned collection from the NYC's LPC's Archaeological Repository: The Nan Rothschild Research Center. These research themes are highlighted in her writing, including her latest co-edited volume on 'Archaeology and Advocacy: Urban Intersections' that was published in the spring of 2023.

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