Assessing University-Community Reciprocity Through the Heritage West Project: An Excavation of West Philadelphia's Former Black Bottom

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ABSTRACT

Educational practitioners have voiced extensive criticism on the lack of reciprocity in university-community engagement. This paper assesses the reciprocity between the University of Pennsylvania's Heritage West Project and the West Philadelphia community. Penn Anthropological archaeologists excavated artifacts from the former Black Bottom neighborhood, demolished in the late 1960s as part of urban renewal. The paper will measure the project's university-community reciprocity through the evolution of its research question, its excavation, lab sessions, and its participant responses. It will review the project's corresponding educational opportunities and probative discussions while suggesting how a more deliberate approach to community engagement will garner greater participation.

The Heritage West Project

In the fall of 2023, the Heritage West Project began its archeological excavation of West Philadelphia's former Black Bottom Neighborhood. Demolished in the late 1960s, the neighborhood stretched from 40th Street to the west, 34th Street to the east, Ludlow Street to the south, and Lancaster Ave to the north. Its erasure displaced 2,653 residents in the predominately working-class African American majority neighborhood (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015). This paved the way for constructing the University City Science Center, 3675 Market Street, and the University City High School, razed in 2015 for the erection of University City Square at 3600 Filbert Street.

Heritage West Project leads, Dr. Meghan Kassabaum and Dr. Sarah Linn, had a limited scope for excavating Black Bottom artifacts. The University City Science Center and University Square occupy most of the former neighborhood. However, the Community Education Center, formerly the West Philadelphia Friends School, at 3500 Lancaster Ave remained. This allowed participants to excavate the remains of four units from the 1840s.

The project's objectives were two-fold. Kassabaum and Linn wanted to initiate an archeology project relevant to the community that also served as accessible fieldwork for Penn Anthropology students. Kassabaum works as an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Penn and the Weingarten Curator for North America at the Penn Museum. Linn serves as the Associate Director of the Academic Engagement Department at the Penn Museum. "Community archeology is about building archeology around the desires of the community. And Penn has an uneasy relationship with the community" (M. Kassabaum, Personal Communication, March 26, 2024).

Despite the university's uneasy relationship with the community, Penn formed a university-community engagement project for students. Penn did not send its anthropology students into the community to fulfill service-learning hours in the traditional sense. Nonetheless, several aspects of the Heritage West Project mirror community engagement models evident in higher education. This paper will assess the reciprocity and democratic engagement evident between University of Pennsylvania stakeholders from the project's initial inception in 2020 to the evolution of its research question, to the dig in the fall of 2023, to cataloging during its lab sessions in the spring of 2024. It will provide a background to Philadelphia Black Bottom's history and demolition. It will show that other communities

such as those in Junaluska, North Carolina have also conducted excavations connected to African American history. Further, it will make recommendations to improve democratic engagement.

Reciprocity and Democratic Engagement

Educational practitioners have voiced extensive criticism on the lack of reciprocity in university-community engagement when applied to community service learning. Dr. Randy Stocker, University of Wisconsin, compares the hour model or traditional-service learning to a form of Colonialism— the university positioning itself as the expert saving the community (2021). Stocker cites Dr. Tania Mitchell (2008) when critiquing the limitations of traditional service-learning activities: tutoring or soup kitchen volunteerism. To Stocker, true service-learning occurs when the university and organized community organizations convene to change the power structure.

Other practitioners align university and community partnerships with John Dewey's definition of democratic engagement. Dewey, credited as the founder of the Progressive Era's community school movement, did not believe that simply hosting activities in the community constituted democratic engagement. Instead, those activities needed to have a linked process and purpose. The activities needed to enhance democracy on campus and in the community. Inclusiveness lies at the heart of those activities regarding participation, execution, problem-solving, and reciprocity (Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

Arguably, democratic engagement remains the foundation for reciprocity. Practitioners Lesley Cooper and Janice Orrell examine the concept of reciprocity through the values espoused by the Carnegie Foundation "to achieve common goals and contribute to the common good" (2016, p. 108). Attaining said common good includes the "beneficial exchange of partnership and resources in the context of partnership and reciprocity" (Holland & Ramaley, 2008, p. 34). Consequently, Cooper and Orrell posit that reciprocity arises from authentic collaboration, cooperation, and engagement. This translates to the university partnering with the community in good faith. To achieve authentic reciprocity, both parties contribute "their skills, expertise, and knowledge of the university to address serious community issues for the betterment of all" (Cooper & Orrell, 2016, p. 118).

Practitioner Nadine Cruz defines transformative university-community engagement work as one where the academy does not impose itself as the expert. Instead, the university recognizes the knowledge embedded within the community's DNA (Cruz, 2016). Regarding how this relates to the Heritage West Project's engagement, let us pause to review Black Bottom's history for context.

The Black Bottom

Using the term Black Bottom to define a neighborhood has different interpretations. To some, its namesake refers to the concentration of Black homes, shops, schools, and churches within a neighborhood. Many Black Bottoms throughout the US faced "insufficient and inferior opportunities for housing, employment, and quality of life" (Davis, 2018, p. 1). However, the naming of Black Bottom neighborhoods in the US does not necessarily correlate with its demographics. The name of Detroit's Black Bottom, for example, did not result from its influx of African Americans during the 20th Century Great Migration but from French settlers who farmed its rich soil in the 18th Century (Coleman, 2021). In West Philadelphia, Puckett & Lloyd, who wrote *Becoming Penn: The Pragmatic American University: 1950-2000,* contend that only the term "Black Bottom Gang" was publicly referred to prior to the neighborhood's demolition. To them, this suggests:

The concept of the 'Black Bottom" was an African American cultural construction to which elites, prior to the clearances, were not privy, or that the concept acquired inflated significance after the removals as an identifier and rallying point for Unit 3's black diaspora (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015, p. 24).

Unit 3 refers to the neighborhood designated for redevelopment by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (RDA), yet we will continue to refer to it by the culturally significant Black Bottom for the remainder of this paper.

The Black Bottom's erasure may have facilitated the Science Center and the former University City High School's construction. Yet their creation didn't necessarily act as the catalyst for the neighborhood's redevelopment. Edmund Bacon, former director of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC), labeled the neighborhood a slum, calling for its redevelopment during the 1947 Better Philadelphia Exhibit. The Black Bottom neighborhood, nestled between Mantua and Powelton Village, experienced an influx of crime throughout the 1950s. In 1956, urban planner Martin Myerson called for redeveloping the neighborhood as the University of Chicago had transformed its neighboring Hyde Park. The 1958 murder of In-Ho Oh on the corner of 36th and Hamilton streets motivated then Penn President Gaylord Harnwell to form with West Philadelphia Corporation (WPC) with Drexel University, the Presbyterian Hospital, and the University of the Sciences. Creating an R&D center akin to Stanford Research Park and the branding for University City as an "Eds and Meds" neighborhood resulted from the WPC meetings (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015).

Initial plans for the Science Center called for the erection of a high-rise science center, nullifying the need to demolish as many homes. The WPC rejected this proposal, favoring renovating the blighted neighborhood instead. In 1963, the WPC recorded the neighborhood as one "with a total population of 3,432 people and 1,203 dwelling units of which only 241 were owner-occupied, 987 families, of which 444 were white, 543 non-white, 122 business (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015, p. 103). Additional WPC findings showed that "only 127 of 638 structures had any possibility for rehabilitation. All homeowners were carefully interviewed. It was found that only a few had the means to undertake the needed repairs and rehabilitate" (Pucket & Lloyd, 2015, p. 104).

Poverty associated with the neighborhood reflected conditions for African Americans in the 20th Century. Spurred by Jim Crow laws, 140,000 southern African Americans migrated from the South to Philadelphia from World War I through the 1920's and beyond. From the 1900's through the 1940's, West Philadelphia's population shifted from 5 % to 18% African American (Ewbank, 2024). African Americans found work in the railroad and steel industries during World War I. However, many lost those jobs at the war's conclusion. As a result, many African Americans could only find unskilled labor jobs in domestic service or as janitors (Ewbank, 2024). Nevertheless, African Americans made other gains as low-level municipal workers for the City of Philadelphia as well as public transportation workers in the 1940s and 1950s (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015).

Activist and lawyer Dr. Walter Palmer, a former Black Bottom resident, has publicly denounced descriptions portraying it as a slum. Palmer maintains that while the neighborhood had a rough element, it also contained a thriving middle class of doctors, lawyers, and teachers (Rami, 2023). Palmer who works as a part-time Adjunct Professor at Penn's School of Social Policy and Practice. To Palmer, the mischaracterization of the neighborhood represents only one of the injustices perpetuated against it, particularly because the WPC did not give them a voice regarding their neighborhood's fate (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015).

To show their collective voice, hundreds of residents gathered at a 1962 community meeting, opposing the neighborhood's redevelopment and the city's vague plans for their relocation. In 1963, John H. Clay, an African American attorney and developer, led a sit-in outside then Mayor James Tate's Office, demanding a consultant role in the neighborhood's redevelopment. The RDA, PCPC, and Mayor Tate acquiesced, allowing Clay to present housing plans on part of the proposed University City Highschool site. In 1956, Clay's team created a plan for 75 garden apartments and townhomes. The city questioned how Clay's plan would prevent the displacement of African Americans. Clay admitted that most Black Bottom residents could not afford to live there. The RDA gave Clay ninety days to revise his plans. When Clay did not, the city rescinded the agreement (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015).

Using eminent domain, the Science Center's developers acquired land through urban renewal and began tearing down buildings from the mid to late 1960s, dispersing residents throughout West Philadelphia. Construction for University City High School began in 1968. Originally conceived as a magnate science high school, Penn had planned to invest. However, by 1968, Penn was struggling financially and did not offer material support. Instead, it opened as a neighborhood public school that was torn apart by violence within a year. As for the University City Science Center, it did not fulfill its promise as an R&D center but became the nation's first small business incubator (Puckett & Lloyd, 2015).

Notably, the University of Pennsylvania was not an outlier when it came to neighborhood expansion. The above represents what occurred throughout the US during the urban renewal period of the 1960's. Urban universities used federal dollars to expand campus footprints citing blight caused by deindustrialization as the primary cause (Gordon, 2004).

Using Democratic Engagement and Reciprocity to Develop the Research Question

From the offset, Kassabaum and Linn wanted to develop an archeology project relevant to the community that also served as accessible field work experience for Penn Anthropology and Archeology students. Devising the project's research question was not a linear process. The COVID pandemic and conveying the differences between public and community archeology took time. Community archeology does not fit the traditional definition of public archaeology, explained Kassabaum. The findings for public archeology are displayed in museums, which makes it accessible to the public, whereas community archeology is built around the desires of the community (M. Kassabaum, March 26, 2024, personal communication).

Community archeological excavations responding to African American history have gained cultural relevance. Take for example the Junuluska Community Archology Project (JCAP) in an Appalachian section of North Carolina. In 2020, the Junuluska Heritage Association (JHA) partnered with the Appalachian State University Landscape Archaeological Lab to uncover 165 unmarked graves of African Americans in the Clarissa Hill Cemetery. The project also sought to ascertain knowledge of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residents, many of them born as slaves, forming farming communities in Junuluska. Through oral histories and public records, JCAP determined that Troy Holmstead served as an integral part of this community. Obtaining permission from present Troy Holmstead owners, JCAP excavated six units for artifacts. The JCAP community archeology project culminated with a display of findings, artifacts, and photos at the 2021 Appalachia State University Founder's Day celebration (Gokee et al, 2022).

Initiating a similar project in the US 6th largest city had its obstacles. Given the fact that community archeology generally occurs in rural areas, residents have a deeper investment in learning about their history, explained Kassabaum. The same does not always hold true for urban environments, which have more transient populations and less connection to the past. Moreover, archeology remains somewhat isolated to higher education. Even within the higher education realm, many students cannot afford to perform field work in Turkey or Egypt over the summer due to job commitments. "We really wanted to democratize archeology for both Penn kids as well as the community […] And we did not want to dig on campus" (M. Kassabaum, March 26, 2024).

To spark community interest, Kassabaum and Linn partnered with James Wright, the then Director of Strategic Partnerships and Major Gifts at the People's Emergency Center—now HopePHL. Wright connected them with Dr. Walter Palmer and Sid Bolling of the Black Bottom Tribe, a non-profit organization committed to restorative justice for Black Bottom descendants. Note: while some members of the Black Bottom Tribe share ancestry with Lenape Lennis, the name for the non-profit does not refer to a specific Native American tribe. Wright also partnered Kassabaum and Linn with Teresa Shockley, the Executive Director of the Community Education Center. Partnering with HopePHL proved a good fit as it had participated in forums with the Penn Museum on ancestry and heritage. The potential for a community dig emerged through questions on teaching the community to be their own archeologists. Digging at the CEC resonated with Wright because it was part of the Black Bottom. "Community members could participate. And people from the neighborhood could stop by and talk about the dig" (J. Wright, May 5, 2024, personal communication).

Kassabaum and Linn utilized the principles of democratic engagement to develop their project's research question. They tabled at several events including PARK(ing) Day, the Fire and Ice Celebration at the CEC, the Jazz Festival in Saunder's Park, the Juneteenth Celebration at the Penn Museum and the Black Bottom Tribe Annual Picnic. They also hosted a public workshop series, in collaboration with the African American Genealogy Group, as well archiving family histories, in collaboration with Penn Libraries. From those events, they created the community collaboration timeline—an ever-evolving banner--hung first from tables then chain-link fences as it expanded. When it

came to forging community relationships, the continued presence of Kassabaum and Linn—coupled with the fact that both resided in West Philadelphia—helped establish an authentic community buy-in.

"The timeline was a great way of encouraging residents to tell us what they remembered," Kassabaum said. "From there, we could distill what people were really interested in without saying, 'I have an archeological question I want you to pursue.' It allowed us to gather data in a less specified, but open way" (M. Kassabaum, March 26, 2024, personal communication). Notably, the people they spoke with had direct relationships with Black Bottom's history either as former residents or direct descendants. Those conversations and stories impressed upon them the artistry of oral histories (S. Linn, March 26, 2024, personal communication).

From the Penn side, Kassabaum and Linn learned that many students did not have an informed background of University City's history beyond the fact it occupies former Lenape Nation land. In other words, Penn students did not understand the urban renewal side of the university's history and the fact that "parts of it sit on top what used to be a neighborhood" (S. Linn, March 26, 2024, personal communication).

Having obtained interest from both the community and students through an organic open-ended method, Kassabaum and Linn engaged Chad Hill, then a Postdoctoral Fellow in Penn's Department of Anthropology to confirm the existence of Black Bottom homes from the CEC's Parking using Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) and Electrical Resistivity (ER) (Heritage West Blog, 2023). From there they moved forward with the following research questions:

> Can we identify residential structures, or other architecture and infrastructure that has survived in the CEC parking lot? What can the artifacts recovered from the lot tell us about what everyday life was like for Black Bottom residents? How did that change over time? (Kassabaum, Personal Communication, April 6, 2024).

Methods

To qualitatively assess participant feedback, this writer interviewed sixteen people associated with the project. Three were directly associated with the project's planning: Dr. Megan Kassabaum, Dr. Sarah Linn, and James Wright. Three were associated with the Black Bottom Tribe: Sid Bolling, Dr. Walter Palmer, and Scott Filkin. Twelve undergraduate students, four graduate students and twenty-two volunteers participated in the dig and subsequent lab sessions. Eleven volunteers were interviewed during my two Penn Museum lab visits. The following six interviews pertain to those with direct connection to the Black Bottom and its historical marker nomination: Darnell (Surname undisclosed), Eric Weaver, Faruq Adger, Scott Filkin, Sid Bolling, and Dr. Walter Palmer.

Darnell (surname undisclosed) contributed his prior work in archeology to the dig and lab sessions. This allowed him to guide other less experienced participants. "We're building a narrative. After we sort it, it goes back into the main bag for holding," (Darnell, April 2, 2024, personal communication). Darnell, whose hands continued to sort as we talked, explained that he had immediate family in the neighborhood and learned about the project through a news article. The Heritage West Project represented his first exposure to archeology in an urban setting. Previously, Danell worked in rural communities, through cornfields, forest, and bugs. "Urban archeology has different struggles," Darnell said. "The site we used was a parking lot and the CEC still needed to use it as such. We couldn't excavate as broadly." Each evening, participants had to cover pits with plywood and tarps, which they weighed down with sand-bags and rocks.

As for Darnell's experience with reciprocity, he described Kassabaum and Linn leadership style as guiding participants with a "direct, detailed orientation of the dig." Regardless, they did not force "pre-conceived notions" about what participants would find, learn or experience. Rather, they encouraged open dialogue (Darnell, April 2, 2024, personal communication).

For Eric Weaver, a lifelong resident of Mantua, the neighborhood located to the north of the Black Bottom, the project gave him the opportunity to learn about archeology while simultaneously sharing his memories. Work for the excavation required, "focus and dedication," Weaver said, adding, "you have to get your hands dirty to screen the raw materials uncovered (E. Weaver, Personal Communication, April 2, 2024). To Weaver, the excavation and lab sessions also provided a stress reliver from his work in sales at a University City hotel.

Having graduated from University City High School, Weaver contributed to the project's reciprocity by sharing his memories and experiences. Beyond his professional work, Weaver acts in local theatre. Initially, the project piqued his interest due to its location at the CEC, which Weaver frequented throughout his 1980s childhood. During our conversation, Weaver recalled skateboarding down 40th Street to the arcade, to an impromptu photo op with Princess Grace Kelly at 40th and Spruce streets, to the University City High School's greenhouses to the ever-shifting storefronts on Lancaster Ave. For Weaver, those experiences came full circle when visiting Philly's first African American Brew Pub with the group at University City Square—the stomping grounds of his former alma mater—University City High School.

In a less direct way, Weaver's lab session work at the Penn Museum illustrates reciprocity. "I lived here my whole life and never came." Weaver held up his Penn Museum ID lanyard, which granted him visitor access. The Greek and Roman artifacts, given Weaver's background in theater, made an indelible impression. And it was in front of the Spartan helmets that Faruq Adger filmed Weaver delivering a spoken word narrative of the project.

Faruq Adger, an undergraduate student at Penn, studies Cultural Linguistics Anthropology with a minor in African Studies. Throughout his internship and subsequent participation, Adger built the Heritage West website, working to find connection between the objects uncovered with oral histories. Adger described the lab sessions as building a narrative of the Black Bottom's history. For example, the shells found led them to ask if they came from the Schuylkill River or perhaps a neighborhood seafood establishment? The calcium rich soil discovered led them to wonder what vegetables they grew for food. As for the buttons discovered, "was there a seamstress?" Adger asked, explaining, "We're trying to make a visual representation of the area. What were people doing? What were the shops? How were people interacting with one another?" (F. Adger, April 26, 2024, personal communication).

Adger's role in the Heritage West Project speaks directly to reciprocity and community engagement. During the excavation, Adger worked outside the CEC, explaining the project's objectives, fielding questions to passersby. Adger plans to capture additional interviews as well as discussions on how the community wants to share their findings with the public. "I want to take away negative connotations of African Americans in the Black Bottom. There were so many different types of people here: African Americans, indigenous people, and immigrants" (F. Adger, April 26, 2024, personal communication).

For Adger, his work with the Heritage West Project reflects his family's connection to West Philadelphia and activism in the city. Robert Adger, his great grandfather, has a Pennsylvania Historical Commission Marker on the 800 block of South Street for activism. Relation William Adger was the first African American to receive a degree at the University of Pennsylvania in 1883. "I want to follow in their activist footsteps," Adger explained.

Test Units 1, 4, and 5: 32 N. 35th Street (Structure)

Description of Unit	Size	Objects Found	What the objects suggest:
Located on the former site of a wooden twin home built in the early 1850's. Team excavated part of the basement, which had been filled with trash from houses demolition in the 1930's (prior to the 1960's decimation)	This consisted of three adjacent 1-meter x 1 meter (about 3 foot square) units.	A 1900 Indian Head penny A diaper pin Several fragments of plates and bottles Rain-blo gum wrappers Electrical covers Nails Abundant iron fragment near the floor and pipe Glass shards	The abundant iron fragments and pipe hint that household industry may have occurred in the basement. The glass shards may have come from a nearby dairy farm.

Test Unit 3: 32 N. 35th Street (Privy)

Description of Unit	Size	Objects Found	What the objects suggest:
Circular outline of brick-lined privy (outhouse). The cross-section of it shows 80 years of life for those living at 32 N. 35th Street, surrounding community and nearby Quaker School	Excavated 5 feet	Slate pencils Lice combs White buttons Fragments of decorated pottery Food remains (cow bone) Complete Weiss beer bottle Oyster shell Thin shards of glass (possibly from a picture frame)	The Weiss beer, was bottled in the 1860's or 1870's. Made by Johnson & Co., this beer was bottled here in Philly and was light, effervescent, and sour, sometimes served with raspberry syrup.

Test Unit 2: Warren St. Rowhomes

Description of Unit	Size	Objects Found	What the objects suggest:
Consists of three rowhomes torn down during the large-scale Black Bottom demolition.	Three rowhomes	Brick Rubble Small objects Several fragments of plaster Curb stones Bone button Straight pin Shell fragments Nails Tile Plaster	The fragments of plaster tell us the colors people choose to paint their walls. The curb stones that lined our neighborhood streets. Memory from Black Bottom resident on bone button: residents dressing up for church.

Test Unit 6: Front of the CEC Building

Description of Unit	Size	Objects Found	What the objects suggest:
Located in the front of the CEC building, formerly a Quaker School.	23 centimeters (9 inches)	Pottery: white and blue fine porcelain shreds Patterned red clay crock-metal Coal Plastic Pit	Pit suggest possible landscaping activity, or a pine tree formerly located in that spot.

Figure 1. The above tables show the material excavated from four units constructed in the 1840's. Participants washed, sorted, bagged, catalogued, and stored artifacts. Rubble went with rubble, brick with brick, plateware went with plates, buttons with buttons and so forth. Findings, courtesy of the Heritage West Project Blog (https://www.heritagewestphl.org, 2024)

Activism pertaining to the Black Bottom's erasure goes back decades through the work of Dr. Walter Plamer. Recently, Palmer, and neighborhood activist Sid Bolling, co-founded the 501 (c) (3) Black Bottom Tribe with the intent of opening a community cultural center. Palmer and Bolling also worked with the University of Pennsylvania to incorporate a Pennsylvania State Historical Marker at 3600 Market Street. Despite university and community dialogue, moving the historical marker forward in the nomination process has reached a stalemate. Scott Filkin, Director at Penn's Office of Social Equity and Community submitted a nomination. "We worked hard on an application with Dr. Palmer, along with historians, Edward Epstein, and John Puckett. We even had an initial Ok from[then] interim [Penn] President Wendell Pritchett," Filkin explained. "In the end though, we were unable to agree on the language of the marker" (Scott Filkin, personal communication, April 11, 2024). The language Filkin references relate to Penn acknowledging that it bears ultimate responsibility for eliminating the Black Bottom. As Bolling argued, "We will not agree until Penn admits what it did," (S. Bolling, March 17, 2024, personal communication).

The principles of democratic engagement and reciprocity are evident in Bolling's plans for the community cultural center. For Bolling, the proposed center would teach local youth about their history. "We want to introduce them to a new way of thinking. We want to get them away from the violence. They're dying on the streets. They think their worthless" (S. Bolling, March 17, 2024, personal communication). Unfortunately, Bolling has experienced obstacles securing both funding for the center as well as the dedicated commitment of volunteer hours from the Black Bottom Tribe's members.

As a Black Bottom neighborhood native, Bolling has direct experience with the neighborhood both before and after its demolition. Bolling's grandmother, who ran a boarding house, helped those migrating from the south get on their feet; his mother was a heroin addict. Bolling has had his own battle with addiction. Now sober, Bolling has spent the last several decades supporting recovering addicts through a variety of programs.

Bolling gives Kassabaum and Linn a nod for the Heritage West Project's democratic engagement, saying, "they're doing good work." When it comes to Penn at the institutional level, he's not as generous. "That's the big myth, that Penn wants to help," Bolling said. "They just keep taking away from the Black Bottom." From Bolling's perspective, the community wants to run the cultural center how they see fit without having anyone "overseeing our work." Bolling levels similar criticisms against Drexel and University City Square. "They have a black owned brewery, so what?" (S. Bolling, March 17, 2024, personal communication).

Assessing Dr. Walter Palmer's reaction to the Heritage West Project did not prove as fruitful. Initially, this paper sought to address Penn's role as an anchor institution: plunderer or philanthropist? During a brief phone call initiated by Bolling, Palmer politely, yet firmly, told this writer that he did not have time for an interview unless I could demonstrate how my paper directly corresponds to his fight. Palmer advised that I evaluate the W.D. Foundation website before reaching out again. Bolling commented—not as a direct response to Palmer's refusal—but in a way that helped me understand, "A lot of community people have talked about their experiences and have been misrepresented" (S. Bolling, April 9, 2024, personal communication). Having reviewed the website, I concluded that this paper's aim did not directly relate to the breadth Palmer's Civil Rights work and did not attempt further conversation at that time. Once I narrowed the paper's focus, further attempts to contact Palmer went unanswered. That said, both Kassabaum and Linn presented the project to both Palmer's undergraduate course at Penn, thus indicating Palmer's role in fostering reciprocity and democratic engagement

Results

Kassabaum and Linn do not have another excavation planned at this time. However, participants will continue to construct a narrative from its findings. Adger will continue to record oral histories from residents. Kassabaum and Linn will determine how the community would like to share its findings with the public. Taking this into account, this paper sought to measure the project's reciprocity with the community. It provided a definition of reciprocity from practitioners Cooper & Orrell. It offered an example of best practices, as suggested by practitioner Cruz. It emphasized Dewy's position on democratic engagement throughout. It introduced the components of critical-service learning. And it reviewed how Kassabaum and Linn both formulated and executed the project's research question. Let us examine whether it met the above metrics through those parameters.

Cooper & Orrell (2016), contend that university and community partnerships achieve authentic reciprocity when both parties contribute their "skills, expertise, and knowledge of the university to address serious community issues for the betterment of all" (p. 118). As anthropological archeologists, Kassabaum and Linn sought input from the community to form its research question through democratic engagement. In this capacity, they relied on the expertise of the community: their memories and oral histories. Simultaneously, Kassabaum and Linn utilized their skills to lead the excavation. By excavating remains decimated through urban renewal, they addressed critical community issues: the displacement of 2,653 residents in a predominately working-class African American majority neighborhood. The project did not specifically tackle the displacement through a critical service-learning lens; it aspired to study what the artifacts extracted said about the residents' everyday lives. Nonetheless, probative discussions—both in and out of the classroom-- ensued.

Addressing best practices, Cruz argued that the university should not act as the expert bestowing its knowledge on the community. Rather, the university should rely on the knowledge within the community's DNA. Of course, the project could not have existed if Kassabaum and Linn did not exert their knowledge as anthropological archeologists. But as documented, they pursued the community's feedback at every stage. In turn, the community shared its experiences and history. From that, additional reciprocal relationships transpired. Penn students learned about the impacts of urban renewal. Both Penn students and community members learned about the value of community archeology. Students from Philadelphia public schools as well as other programs at Penn and Drexel, discussed what the project evoked.

Discussion

Education served as a primary motivator for Kassabaum and Linn. As stated, they wanted to utilize the Heritage West Project to engage the local community while simultaneously giving Penn students the opportunity to participate in community archeology. Yet their desire to educate did not end there. Throughout, Kassabaum and Linn have introduced the project to students from Philadelphia public schools as well college and graduate students at Penn and Drexel Universities. Like the project, the focus of that education varied in scope.

From the perspective of primary and secondary education, this included both visits to the dig as well as lectures at public schools. Approximately sixty third graders visited the excavation site in the fall of 2024. Students and volunteers explained how the dig related to their research question, explained Kassabaum . The 3rd graders did not come to the site with a history of the project but had studied archeology in school. "That group was really engaged," Kassabaum explained. "We have pictures of them standing on their tippy toes, hand-up, trying to get people's attention. They wrote us thank you notes, with comments such as 'I had no idea there was a neighborhood here before'" (M. Kassabaum, April 26, 2024, personal communication). For secondary education, Linn presented the project to 9th graders at the School of the Future. In that instance, the students knew more about local history, and Linn introduced them to the practice of community archeology. As for higher education, they have held undergraduate and graduate classes at both Penn and Drexel. "Some courses were hyper focused on studying the history of black West

Philadelphia," said Kassabaum. "Others focused on archeology in general" (M. Kassabaum, April 26, personal communication)

Conclusion

On balance, I would argue that the Heritage West achieved reciprocity and democratic engagement. Kassabaum and Linn worked with both the Penn and surrounding community throughout every stage of the project's formation, dig, lab sessions, and subsequent education. Concurrently, this assessment had its limitation both in my exposure to the project as well as Kassabaum and Linn's approach to community participation.

Limitations

As a student in the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, I did not learn about the Heritage West Project until conducting research for a term paper in March of 2024. This prevented me from observing the dig or interviewing participant interaction with residents. In addition, I would argue that while Kassabaum and Linn sparked community interest from events in the neighborhoods directly surrounding the former Black Bottom, this did not generate significant community participation. Arguably, only one community organization, the Black Bottom Tribe, participated. Bolling in fact lamented that its membership languished. As a result, I would suggest widening the scope to other community organizations throughout West Philadelphia. After all, Puckett and Lloyd (2015) noted that many former Black Bottom residents scattered, some moving to Southwest Philadelphia others to Wynnefield.

In my former work as a general assignment staff reporter for the *University City Review* (2006-2016), I encountered several robust community organizations. Following the advice of Stocker, when universities partner with well-organized community organizations, they augment potential for change. Not all the organizations I interacted with had a direct connection to the Black Bottom. Yet stories of its destruction underscored redevelopment debates throughout the Powelton Village, Mantua, Spruce Hill, Walnut Hill, Squirrel Hill, and the Southwest Philadelphia neighborhoods. Presenting the Heritage West Project to the above community organizations could create opportunities to capture additional oral histories. Further, it could result in greater community participation should the Heritage West Project initiate further excavations.

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