

Book Review Symposium

Brandi Thompson Summers, *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-4696-5401-0 (paper); ISBN: 978-1-4696-5400-3 (cloth); ISBN: 978-1-4696-5402-7 (ebook)

Introduction

Brandi Thompson Summers' *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City* provides a vivid depiction of the afterlife of Blackness in the city as a result of urban dispossession. Tracing the devastating impact of gentrification along Washington, DC's H Street corridor, Summers offers an analytical framework for understanding how Blackness becomes decorporealized through systematic displacement and then aestheticized and deployed to organize landscapes and raise capital. Advancing a theory of "Black aesthetic emplacement", Summers enables a continued focus on the continuing significance of Blackness in places like the nation's capital.

In the summer of 2020, only several months following the release of *Black in Place*, the world confronted its valuation of Black life and perhaps most meaningfully weighed the consequences of Black death. The urbanity of this violence was two-fold. In the most common, chronic, and systemic way, the violence of the state, mediated through and meted out by "peace" officers, is part and parcel of the segregated order by which minoritized subjects are subjugated and made productive. In other words, murderous violence is the wage of (Black) urban life. The other is the consequence of those circumstances: the very way that the urban and Black death become constituted.

Hauntingly, this period caused us to witness Black aesthetic emplacement firsthand and in real-time as the visages of the victims of anti-Black state violence became part of the landscape and architecture of many of the world's largest cities. Through murals, and other (now regarded) artifacts of protest, Black death was not only produced by the city, but the city was also now exceptionally marked by it. Spectral, lingering, and castigating, the Blackness of those victims became emplaced. As a result, they made it clear that these cities are geographies of violence, a truth as old as colonial settlement, but one too long obscured by repeated reinvention and "revitalization".

Through aesthetic spatialization of the "post" chocolate city, *Black in Place* shows us how Blackness contributes to our understanding of contemporary urbanization and how it laid an important foundation for how Black people have been thought to exist in cities. In this Review Symposium, Summers' interlocutors critically and generously engage with the implications of this process as a means of arriving at a broader theorization and understanding of Black emplacement, which is only deepened by Summers' response that follows.

Jovan Scott Lewis
Department of Geography
University of California, Berkeley
jovan@berkeley.edu