Land as Liberation
Appalachian Land Study

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HELLO!

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they/them
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Rename yourself by hovering and clicking “rename”
Why are we here?

- Situate Appalachian land justice work in wider context of land liberation work in the south, in solidarity with BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/People of Color)
- Critically assess the idea of “land ownership”
- Think creatively about our own land stories and connections
- Explore history of Appalachian Land Study and current work
- Learn and apply participatory research methods to build power and create change
What's your Land & Place Story? (10 mins)

Is your work land based?

What's your relationship with land?

What are places that you are connected to?
Lack of funding for independent businesses
Loving hard places to live
Toxic air, water
Lack of long-term vision
Doing place-based work remotely
Who benefits? Is it all people in the community or just the elites?
Lack of funding for independent businesses
Climate change
Loving hard places to live
Histories of expulsions (Indigenous and Black communities being pushed out)
Extractive industry pollution
Resource extraction & poverty
White supremacy
Neoliberal capitalism
Lack of contextual education about land and place
Cronyism
Doing place-based work remotely
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Without current land issues, what would our communities look like?

- Decrease in high risk substance use as a coping mechanism
- Ability to care for ourselves and each other
- More diverse communities, open (or no!) borders
- Clean air, water, soil
- Belief in belonging
- Access to land would be more widespread: it wouldn’t be dependent on capital or privilege, but would be more equitably available. A community land model.
- More cohesive
- Stronger
- Cleaner/healthier
- Less time fighting for our health, more time being creative and free
More Breakouts!

Let’s look at the history of land issues from the perspective of Black and Indigenous Peoples...

(10 mins)
1598
New Mexico colony founded. Don Juan de Onate attacks the Acoma killing 800 men, women, and children—capturing 500 and condemning any male over 25 to have one foot cut off.

1619
A slavery privateer brought 20 African people to Jamestown colony in Virginia.

1775
To finance the “American War for Independence”, the rebel government sold speculative land grants to areas rightfully occupied by native people.

1781
Articles of Confederation declare the US Government to have authority over Indigenous People’s affairs.

1798
US Government begins the process of allotting native land to individual members of the community, beginning the process of removal of native communities from their land.

1830
President Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act of 1830. This gave the US the ability to legally remove native communities from their land.

1838
Cherokee Trail of Tears—the Cherokee were stripped of rights and forced to move from North Carolina to Oklahoma.

1864
Abraham Lincoln creates a reservation in Present-day Washington state for the Chehalis people. This significantly reduced their land.
1865

“40 acres and mule”

1887

Native Land Count 138 Million Acres: Dawes Act Signed. Allotment advocates convince Congress to pass the General Allotment Act or Dawes Act

1890

US Army kills over 300 Native men, women, and children at Wounded Knee

1903

Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock gives Congress unilateral power to breach or modify existing treaties with Indigenous peoples.

1906

Burke Act passed. Authorized the Secretary of the interior to determine who was deemed “competent” to manage their land. This also made the land taxable as it shifted from a trust, often with no knowledge of the allottee.

1910

Black farmers in the United States lost 80% of their land because of their not being able to receive a farm serial number from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

1928

Merriam Report details the vast amounts of land passing from Native hands, criticizing the policies currently in place and the destructiveness of those policies.

1933

The US Home Owners' Loan Corporation instituted the practice of “redlining”
1935
- 6.8 million farms with average 155 acres

1941
- Uranium mining began on Navajo Reservations, and continued for nearly 40 years.

1956
- Relocation Act is passed, pushing native communities to move to urban areas.

1966
- SNCC organized the Alabama Poor People's Land Fund to purchase land and building materials for poor black families that had been displaced from their homes for their Civil Rights activism.

1967
- The Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative Association (SWAFCA) was formed by black farmers living in ten Black Belt counties in Alabama.
- The Federation of Southern Cooperatives was founded.

1969
- New Communities Inc. was incorporated in Georgia as the first Community Land Trust in the United States.
- Fannie Lou Hamer founds Freedom Farm Cooperative

1975
- Indian Self-Determination and Education Act passed, recognizing the right of Native American tribes to self-government as domestic independent nations able to exercise their sovereignty over members and their territories.

1983
- First Indian Land Consolidation Act passed. The act promotes tribal land, allotments, and interest consolidation.
The NAACP accused local officials in South Carolina of intentionally inflating taxes (700% in one decade).

Timothy Pigford, from North Carolina, and 400 other black farmers filed a class action lawsuit (<em>Pigford v. Glickman</em>) which said that the USDA had discriminated against them from 1983 to 1997.

The Puerto Rico legislature transferred 200 acres of publicly owned land to the Cano Martin Pena Community Land Trust.

After Hurricane Katrina, policies in New Orleans and Louisiana led to the destruction of tens of thousands of homes of African Americans.

The Uniform Partition of Heirs’ Property Act (UPHPA) was drafted to stabilize tenancy-in-common ownership for disadvantaged families.

Sonoma County, CA returns nearly 700 acres of land to the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians.

The Navajo Nation brought a lawsuit against San Juan county, Utah of racial gerrymandering under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and won.

“The more acres they farm and bushels per acre they produce, the more assistance they receive.”
Themes in Land Looting by the US govt

- Looting Native Land & Murder (settler colonialism)
- Expanded Capitalism
- White Violence (interpersonal racism)
- Broken Treaties/Agreements
- Slavery (exploitation colonialism)

Settler colonialism: displacement and replacement of indigenous people with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty.

Colonialism: dominating power over land, economy, and governance over an existing community/nation/country/peoples.

Land as a commodity

Intentional messaging to group based on race rather than class

Strong sense of community

Capital/material-centric view of land. The idea of extraction/use as “progress”.

Trends of land being returned to Indigenous communities.

Discriminatory practices by industry and the state that disproportionately impact communities of color and low income communities.
Reparations, Whiteness, & Land

- Why land? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaVPvF0boDg&feature=youtu.be
- Confronting Whiteness: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtwoZ2OulhE&feature=youtu.be

Black Land and Power (BLP) is building a land-based movement for Black liberation. BLP is developing interdependent strategies that move us away from extractive economies dependent on the violent enclosure of land, labor, culture, power, wealth and spirit. We assert a fundamental right to the resources required to create our own productive, dignified and sustainable livelihoods through direct control of our own labor and self-governance. Land is a critical resource to achieve this vision. Our membership-based network is actively creating strategies for transformation that are grounded in a long-term vision, shaped by resilience, culture, and creativity of our ancestry, and rooted in our collective liberation. These are strategies that we can begin putting into practice NOW. (www.reparationssummer.com)
Popular Education and Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collective process that includes strategic questioning, information seeking and strategy development for action.

Experts may share their knowledge or play a role in the research process but the goal is that control and use of information is in the hands of people directly affected to determine the best solutions and to aid in action.

Information is Power!
Who Owns Appalachia? The 1979 Study

Overview:

Appalachian Alliance formed after devastating 1977 floods in KY, WV, and VA.

Alliance Task Force on Appalachian Land Ownership held the first meeting at Highlander Center in 1978,

In 1979, student and community researchers sat in courthouses and gathered data from 80 counties in 5 states – that was compiled and developed in state reports and an overall report.
Appalachian Land Study

**Mission:** The mission of the Appalachian Land Study is to provide accurate data about land and mineral ownership and public revenues to communities, scholars, local governments, and other stakeholders.

Priorities from 2016 survey:
1) understanding land ownership inequality;
2) land reform;
3) accountability for legacy costs of pollution;
4) empowering communities; and
5) informing economic development strategies.

“Help people change patterns such as concentration of ownership by corporations and absentee owners, which might include developing community land trusts, changing tax laws, examining the use of lawsuit settlements for “conservancy” funds, and envision land use planning for the future;”

“The first Who Owns Appalachia left a lot open - showing the impossibility of determining ownership in a highly complex situation. I’d love to see that complexity taken head-on, as in: ok, we have this landownership mess, how do we move forward given the nature of the existing situation.”

“Very amazing and empowering to do as a participatory project the first time - I am interested in helping more people feel like they can do research and get information and figure out what it means for areas.”

“movement building; visioning; land reform tied to sustainable economic development work”
How do we see/experience ownership?

- Boundaries
- Inheritance
- Maps and property lines
- Police protecting property
  - Police brutality and who is seen as having “rights” to ownership
- “NO TRESPASSING” signs
- Gated communities
- People often care more for what is “theirs”
What is “property” for?

Building wealth

Sense of/tangible safety

Status

Place to call home

Development

Perpetuating power dynamics (who has been historically allowed to acquire/own property)

Place to cultivate
A brief history of land surveys

Gunter’s chain: 1624-1900

Steel tape: 1867

Modern theodolite

The “great theodolite”: 1787
How cool would it be to have community-based participatory land surveying?
Top Landowners in Mingo County, WV (total acres):
1. Pocahontas Land Company (33,330)
2. Cotiga (17,325)
3. First Century Bank (10,089)
4. Heartwood Forestland Fund (5,357)*
5. Carbon Fuels Properties (4,518)
6. Wapiti Woods (4,269)
7. Mingo Wyoming Coal (3,863)
8. Twelvepole Limited Partnership (3,210)
9. Suvac Inc. (3,045)
10. Southern WV Energy LLC (2,899)

Total deeded acres in Mingo County: 196,991
Deeded acres of Top 10 Landowners: 87,905 (45%)

*Heartwood Forestland Fund holds several parcels recorded as 0 acres on the deed. Based on the area of parcels when drawn on the map, total acreage is 17,623.
“What is the Land Matrix? It is the current structure of land ownership, use and distribution, and everyone and everything that supports that structure, knowingly or unknowingly, to keep it in place. This includes businesses; local, state and federal governments; local residents; plants and animals; and, of course, the land itself.” -Terran Young, Big Stone Gap, VA
What is the hidden story of land where you are?

What information or knowledge do you need to tell the story?
**TRANSACTIONS:** Who/what is involved in buying/selling - or accumulating/losing - land?
Economies: What are the dominant, formal economies the land supports?
COMMONS: Who/what does the land support outside the “formal” economy?
Enforcement: Who/what prevents access? How has access changed?
## Power Mapping the Land Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current landscape</th>
<th>Opposing/threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(the taken for granted world, what we see easily)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal structures</th>
<th>Allies/opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. local class structure, dependence on industry, property revenues, regulatory agencies)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Underlying structures |  |
|-----------------------|  |
| (e.g. racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, imperialism, social movements, local knowledge) |  |

**Assumptions** (the world views that reproduce these systems)
What do we want to know about land?
Reconciling and resisting colonization::Transformative Land Work

- Black land and food networks
  National Black Food and Justice Alliance
- decolonization
  Questions about “Home”
- reparations
  Land Reparations & Indigenous Solidarity Toolkit
- building commons
  Community Land Trusts Are a Model for Reparations
- Who Owns it?
  Appalachian Land Study

How can I look into the history of colonization and land looting locally?

How can participatory research push further my work/mission towards land liberation?
Evaluation

“I feel more informed”

1 - not really 5 - definitely

“I have an idea or next step for what I could do in my community.”

1 - not really 5 - definitely
Thanks!
Credits

-Parts of this training were developed by Charice Starr of Highlander Research & Education Center.

-Members of the Alliance for Appalachia New Economy & Land Team also contributed to the planning of this workshop.

-Most of the content for this workshop was originally developed through slide templates and training for virtual participatory workshops provided by PeoplesHub. Materials are available to participants through a Creative Commons attribution non-commercial license.