

# Transportation Inequities: What's Data Got to Do With It?



tamika l. butler

May 30, 2025

Talk Data Equity



*All Black Lives Matter and Anti-Blackness is Global*  
*Mobility is a Right and Arresting It Has Been Used to Harm and Kill*  
*Disability, Women's, and Queer Rights are Human Rights*  
*Indigenous Acknowledgement Necessitates Landback*  
*Settler Colonialism Is a Violent and Unrelenting Project*  
*People Over Property*  
*Science is subjective*



# Affirmations



**DR. FUSHCIA-ANN HOOVER**  
• ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

# Presentation Overview



## Who Are You?

- A little about me as a student
- A little about me as a person

## Why Should Planners Care?

- History of Racism
- White Spaces
- Data



## Can I Act?

- Power and Privilege
- Reconsidering Reparations



# Who Are You?

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LAWYERS ON THE  
**FAST  
TRACK**

Tamika Butler  
Legal Aid Society-  
Employment Law Center



**But...**



**...How Did I Even Get Here?**



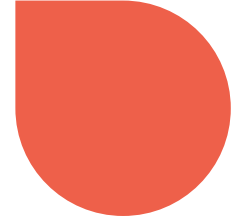
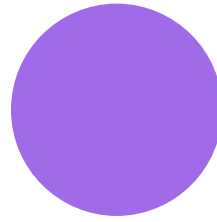
So...



I DO A LOT



**tamika l. butler**  
*consulting*



shining light on inequality,  
inequity, and social justice.



# Consulting Services

Assisting Government  
Clients



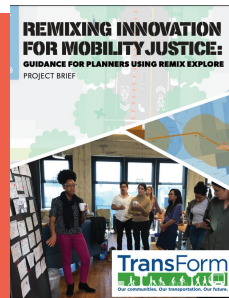
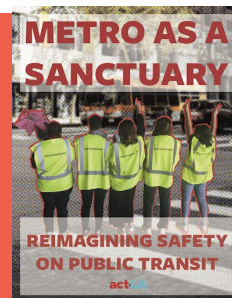
Advocacy & Pro Bono



Streets for Pandemic  
Response & Recovery



Public Speaking & Writing



# Research

## Interests

Urban transportation planning: the study of how people move around cities and regions to connect with each other and opportunities.

- **How did current transportation systems come to be?**
- **Who is and is not served by transportation systems?**
- **How can current and future transportation planning improve people's' access to transportation, and their lives?**



### Travel Behavior

Summary: understanding of how different transportation policies affect different travelers and determine ways to ensure that these individuals, their behaviors, and their motivations inform transportation planning

### Black Geographies & Neighborhoods

Summary: Focus on Black communities, which have historically lacked investment, while still suffering harms from transportation planning. Additionally, these neighborhoods have suffered from predatory investment and development that extracts from the community

### Spatiality of Transportation, Race, & Poverty

Summary: How transportation access can improve--or intensify--disparities.

# Basically...



**I'M ROOTING FOR EVERYBODY BLACK.**



# Decolonizing Methodologies



## Imperialism

How has planning been used for economic expansion and subjugation of 'others'



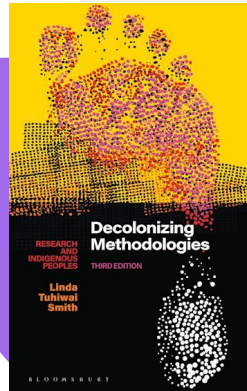
## History

Rewriting and Rerighting




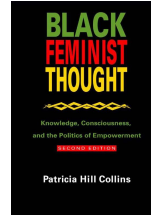
## Theory

Making sense of my work






# Black Feminist Theory



## Dialectical Images

Images of Black women's identities and social positioning are varied, complex, fluid, and in conflict with dominant notions.




## Interlocking Oppression

Black women's bodies are simultaneously marked by racial, gender, sexual, color, historical, class, and other stigmas. Intersectional rather than additive or hierarchical.




## Standpoint Epistemology

Those who understand the phenomenon under exploration are best positioned to evaluate and make claims about the meaning of it. So, center Black women.



## Everyday Knowledge

Locate expertise with Black women rather than generating it from outsiders like scholars or policymakers who lack authentic access.



## Social Justice Praxis

Research on Black women must be linked to efforts at changing conditions that subordinate them and their communities.





Listen...

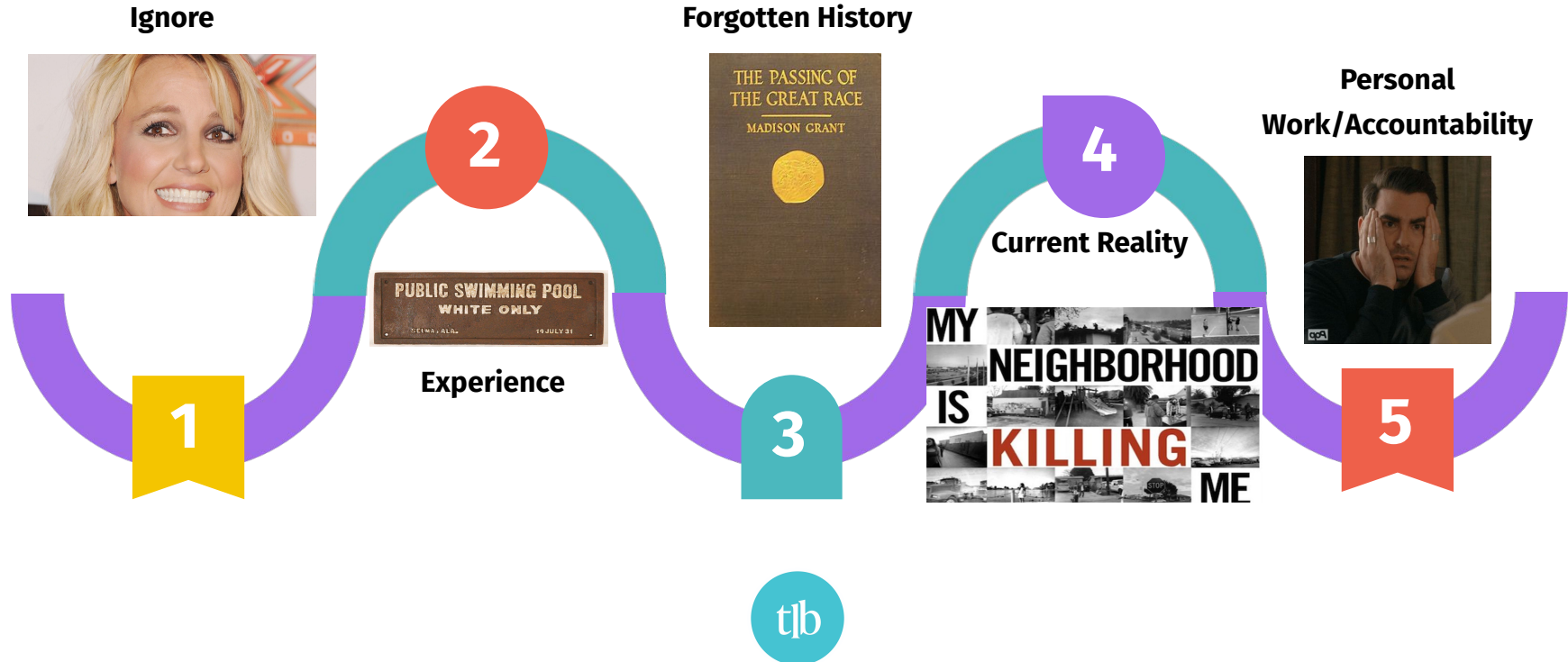


I LOVE BEING  
**BLACK**  
SHIT KINDA  
DANGEROUS  
BUT IT'S  
DOPE



# What Should Planners Care?

# Planning and Race



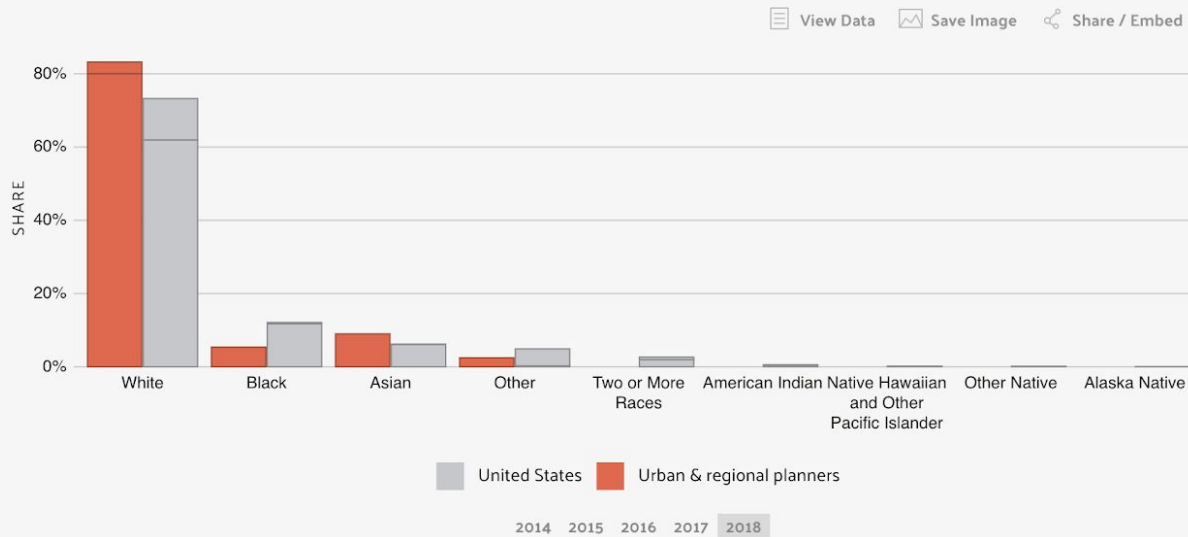
## Race & Ethnicity

### MOST COMMON RACE OR ETHNICITY OF URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNERS

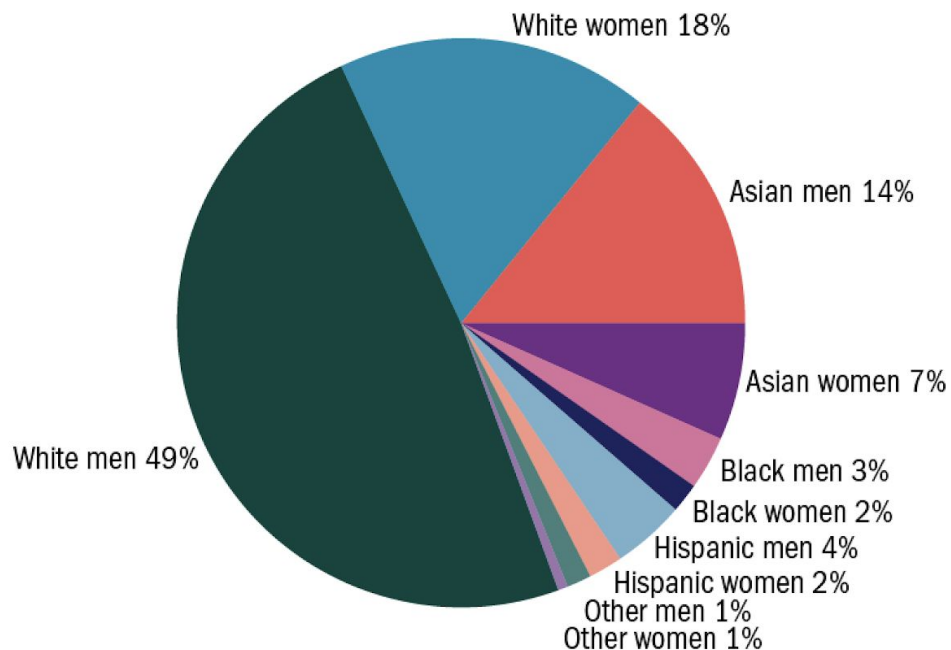
1. White (Non-Hispanic)
2. Asian (Non-Hispanic)
3. Black (Non-Hispanic)

80% of Urban & regional planners are White (Non-Hispanic), making that the most common race or ethnicity in the occupation. Representing 8.98% of Urban & regional planners, Asian (Non-Hispanic) is the second most common race or ethnicity in this occupation. This chart shows the racial and ethnic breakdown of Urban & regional planners.

Data from [the Census Bureau ACS PUMS 1-Year Estimate](#).



## Scientists and engineers working in science and engineering occupations: 2015



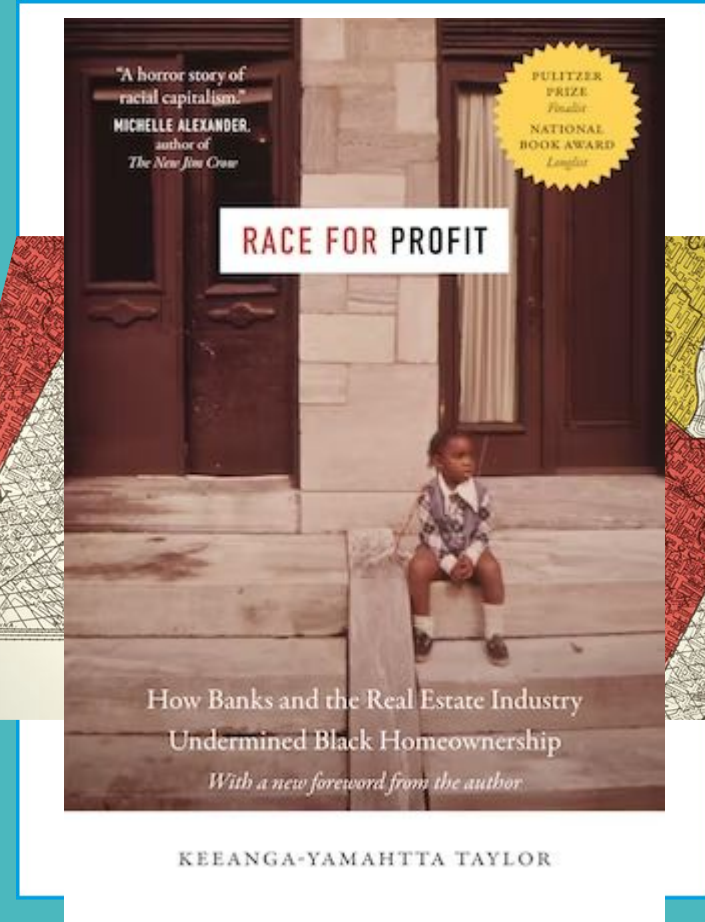
NOTES: Hispanic may be any race. Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and multiple race.  
*Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 2017*



# Centering Whiteness...

A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America

- **Forgotten by?**
- **Who is centered?**
- **Citation?**





**“Whiteness itself refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color. This definition counters the dominant representation of racism in mainstream education as isolated in discrete behaviors that some individuals may or may not demonstrate, and goes beyond naming specific privileges (McIntosh, 1988). ... These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all, but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people.” (emphasis added)**





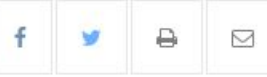
# So Data...

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# MLB's inclusion of Negro Leagues stats reframes greatest-player debate

By [Alex Butler](#)



1/3

# Why is Data Important?

- What is happening here?
- Who is impacted?
- Where do we go from here?
- How do we get there?



# Data Dangers

Know the biases in the data:

- Who is interpreting the data?
  - What are their/your biases?
- What is the ground truth?
- Who is represented in the data?





# Engagement Not Outreach



**There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.**

**Audre Lorde**







# Can You Act?

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# Moving Towards Institutional Change

1

Create and/or seek out  
*"Brave Spaces"* to explore  
the role of power in your  
work

2

Understand the role that  
*power* plays in your  
current work

3

Analyze and challenge  
*privilege*

tlb





# Thank you!



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