ADN 592: DIY Cartography Ariana Farquharson
Final Essay
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An Investigation of the Black Church as an Anchor of Historically Black Communities

A Raleigh bus tour with designer and city planner Matt Tomasulo sparked my curiosity about restrictive covenants, estate property transfer, and other policies or practices that might impact the stamina of historically Black communities. Because digging up these records would take more time and expertise than I had, I modified my research to explore whether a prominent community anchor could defend against discriminatory housing policies and practices. As a key educational site for Black communities since slavery, I chose the Black church as anchor. My assumption was that the church would have been instrumental in keeping these communities informed about housing policies that would help Black residents stay in their homes. This assumption was tested across three map series and four scales: local (Raleigh), county (Wake), state (North Carolina), and national (United States). The series is bookended by local scales, but it is punctuated by a national scale in the second series in an attempt to determine whether local patterns are a microcosm of a larger pattern where surviving Black churches seem to exist only amid traces of their former communities.

Map Series 01a: The Black Church and the Perpetuity of Historically Black Communities

The first map series uses ArcGIS to create maps at each of the four scales. This series asks: "Does the presence of the historic Black church signal the activity and abundance of Black communities?," where the Black community is somewhat loosely defined and all historic Black churches are difficult to extract from the data. As a starting point, the African Methodist

Episcopal Church, founded in 1816 by Richard Allen, allowed me to extract a representative sample of the existing historic Black churches. Though not all AMEs are necessarily historic nor predominantly Black, the likelihood that most are is relatively high. By the conclusion of this series, the answer to my research question remained unclear. I was curious about the concentrations of Black townships and churches along the east coast and farther west, which I noticed at the U.S. scale.

Raleigh The local scale seeks to explore the intersection of churches, Black populations and residential footprints. This approach intends to locate each kind of data and to surface their geospatial relationship to one another. The AME church is represented as bright red diamonds, whereas non-AME Black churches are represented as red outlined diamonds, and all other churches as burgundy diamonds. Church point data is overlaid on top of Black population density, derived from 2016 census data. Blue spatial overlays range from very deep, representing the most dense Black population, to very light, representing the least dense Black population. Residential buildings, rendered in navy blue, suggest areas where Black populations might reside or, at the very least, spend a significant amount of time. This is the first visualized instance where the definition of "Black community" is unclear; however, the intersection of the spatial data with the residential parcels begins to suggest community, townships, neighborhoods, and the like.

Wake County The county scale reflects what is seen at the local scale, where dense Black populations and churches aggregate in the center. Otherwise, Wake Co. alone didn't reveal any unique patterns between Black AME church density and Black population density, though it is

highly likely that many non-AME Black churches make up those lumped into the "all churches" data. As the scale of the maps increased, it became more difficult to distinguish which churches were considered "Black" and which were not. Thus, the non-AME Black church distinction was dropped at this scale. This scale first introduces the idea of historic Black towns, but because they're somewhat difficult to define and determine the exact boundaries of, I used dashed blue outlines to call out the county in which one or more historic Black towns exist/s or would have existed. Though slightly beyond Wake Co., Durham County, known historically for its dense Black populations and cultural influence, stood out in terms of its heavy church concentration. The density of churches in the center of Wake Co. began to mirror the density of churches in Durham Co., particularly along two highways.

North Carolina The state scale raised more questions than answers. My assumption began to take a more notable shift, as counties with historically Black towns didn't have a clear concentration of AME churches. This still does not mean that non-AME Black churches aren't present in those counties, but even within the county boundaries, the aggregation of all churches seems to vary. Northeast North Carolina, for example, shows dense Black populations, but mostly outside of counties with historic Black towns. The number of churches in those areas also seem sparse in comparison to western and central North Carolina. It was important to keep the roadways and some natural areas (e.g. roadways, forests) defined, as perhaps the location of churches was magnetized around other factors (e.g. transportation, natural resources). The coastal region above North Carolina, in southeast Virginia, depicts a county with historic Black towns very close to a high concentration of AMEs and non-AMEs. This area is visually similar to that of Wake Co. Another assumption arose about the movement of the Black population after

the Civil War. With the Great Dismal Swamp – between NC and VA – as a site for maroon communities during enslavement, it is possible that those communities emerged from the swamp and settled nearby. Still, this was only a wild guess. The map and selected data at this scale didn't reveal enough information to make any fair determinations; however, it did inspire subsequent studies using temporal mapping.

United States Unsurprisingly, the U.S. map depicts states within "the Bible Belt" – Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, Virginia, and some parts of Florida, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, Ohio and Texas – as dense with churches. The South was also the key site of American Slavery, so it is expected that the presence of Black populations and all churches would remain strong here. Yet in the transition of the diamonds (churches) across the map, there's a suggestion of movement. This was due to The Great Migration of Black populations from east to west, after the Civil War ended. At this scale, it appears churches generally followed. To help with legibility, contextual detail on counties with Black townships was added. The circles represent areas that seemed particularly dense with churches. In some cases (large, thin circles), the density covered a larger area, but was still notable. In others (small, thick circles), the density seemed magnetized around a central area. It was important to note the status of these towns, as at first glance, it's easy to assume that they're all active; however, most are considered "inactive" based on data from Next Leadership Development's "Black Towns & Settlements" map.

Map Series 01b: Raleigh: Black Church to Black Community Development, 1830 - 2019

Known historically as a sector boasting a high concentration of Black residents, the Southeast region of Raleigh, between Wade Avenue and Hillsborough streets, is also dense with churches. The fifth map takes a deeper dive into locating the historic Black church within past and present Black communities. Suspecting that there might be more at play when it comes to the concentration, activity and perpetuity of these communities, a timeline of national and local events was added for additional insight. As a case study, I relied heavily on Carmen Kimberly Cauthen's definition of "community" in her book, *Historic Black Neighborhoods of Raleigh.* Here, "community" is much more clearly defined as "neighborhood." Consequently, it was easier to uncover fifteen of the twenty-one Black churches that are present in nine of the eighteen historic Black neighborhoods and five historic districts. Two of the fifteen are not shown due to legibility, but they are located to the northwest. The AME and Black non-AME distinctions return and are mapped to their founding years along the Raleigh timeline. Lines with Black circles represent a church that exists within a historic Black neighborhood; gold circles, a church within an historic district, and shades of blue circles, the Black population density of the area in which that church sits. The outer blue national timeline matches expectations of dense church plantings post-Civil War, yet the population density of these churches post-War seems to vary. The enactment of Jim Crow laws in 1870 may hint to this variation. Another iteration maintaining the presence and location of non-Black churches (as shown in the local scale) might provide further insight.

Map Series 02: U.S. Historic Black Towns and Churches Over Last 200+ Years

Dense church aggregations along the Southeast, in the Midwest and far West, which are apparent at the U.S. scale of Map Series 01, prompted inquiry for a relational study: *Given the Black Church's role in community education, how instrumental was it in establishing the longevity of historically Black towns? Was the Black Church as community anchor strengthened from the Great Migration of Blacks from the South to the West? Is the Black Church alone enough to help Black towns withstand forces of decline?* Using RAWGraphs as a sketching tool, and a custom dataset, I drew out comparisons between the duration of towns and the number of churches per region over the course of 200+ years. My dataset delineated town information by region: number of towns, number of churches, town duration in years (sums, averages and medians), town founding years, town ending years, and number of active and inactive towns. Each town was then visually mapped from its starting year (open arrow) to its closing year (closed square), except in cases where it is still considered active. Many of these years are loose determinations, as factors impacting an "active" status range widely from official incorporation to population spikes. Loose determinations are due in part to the various ways in which researchers and historians define terms ("town," "active"), and in part to the need for a large enough sample size of historically dense Black residential areas to make any determination about a church's influence upon a town. Ultimately, the fate of Black townships seemed to have little to do with the presence of Black churches. Case studies from each region add biographic insight into other influences upon a town. For example, Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Midwest) boasted thirteen churches and lasted thirteen years, due largely to a crippling race massacre, whereas Allensworth, California (West) had just one church and endured for twenty-two years, despite

also facing several challenges. Location, natural resources, job opportunities, race-driven policies and events, the deaths of community leaders, and more, often collaborated to destabilize even the most prolific Black townships.

Map Series 03: Past and Present: Community Activity in Historic Oberlin

The final map series invited the opportunity for an auto-graphic inquiry back at the local scale. Raleigh's Oberlin Village – and its two historic Black churches: Wilson Temple United Methodist and Oberlin Baptist – maintained a presence across all maps thus far. To develop a fuller picture of what an historic Black community formerly supported by an historic church might look like today, I observed Raleigh's Oberlin Village on church Sunday, between the hours of 8 a. m. – 12 noon. I first parked in the shopping center lot near La Carreta Mexican Restaurant to observe community activity shortly before Wilson's church service began. Then, I walked Oberlin Road, beginning at Wade Avenue, where Wilson Temple sits, down to Smallwood Drive, in the direction of Hillsborough Street, where the Village District begins. I observed how the old (in sepia and black and white), has become modest, and quietly intermingles with modern commercial and residential buildings (in blue). In my conversation with resident and Wilson churchgoer Cheryl Crooms Williams, I learned that, while the face of the community has changed over time, due in part to housing policies and urban renewal, Black churches may partner with other institutions – including non-profit organizations and historically white churches – to preserve historic imprints through service, tours, the arts and worship. Other insights about community activity come from Google Reviews, including former residents of modern buildings and out-of-town visitors enjoying a bite to eat at an historic deli (now closed) or a tour at the historic cemetery.

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*Note: *A wide range of online articles was used to determine each town's dates and activity. I've just listed general sources that were helpful across many of them.*