

# Cultural Resource Management Perspectives on African American Struggle with Heritage in Metropolitan Washington, DC



**Matthew Palus  
& Lyle Torp**

The Ottery Group  
Kensington, Maryland

**Wednesday,  
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School of Architecture,  
Room 1111, 3:00 pm

African American communities in Washington and its suburbs in Maryland and Virginia have been repeatedly and strategically displaced during the roughly hundred-year period bracketed by the American Civil War and the height of urban renewal and general municipal planning in the region. These cyclical displacements, often seeing communities moved from fringe areas of Washington City to surrounding rural counties, and then moved again in the face of suburban development, has created sites of archeological and place-based heritage that are being encountered anew in the current moment of commercial and residential redevelopment of land. Cultural resources management has a role to play in these encounters, often through implementation of highly local regulatory frameworks, and African American citizens have new powers to exercise that can shape the outcomes, and continue to

struggle with, protest, and engage regulatory powers to further their own empowerment. The history of collusion between municipal planners and agents of development has left no good faith or trust to build upon while considering these resources. This presentation regards the work of archeologists in such challenging scenarios, and compares recent projects, their outcomes, and their lessons.

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Dr. Matthew Palus is a Senior Archeologist with The Ottery Group. He holds a doctoral degree from Columbia University (2010), and a Master of Applied Anthropology degree from the University of Maryland College Park (2000). He has been an archeologist in the Middle Atlantic region for 20 years, focusing on historical sites pertaining to urbanization and modern

infrastructure, post-Emancipation African American life, and military sites. He is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland.

Lyle Torp is the Managing Director of The Ottery Group, a Maryland-based cultural resource management firm established in 1998. He has over 25 years of experience throughout the Southeast, Middle Atlantic, and Northeast. He holds a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from Wake Forest University, a master's degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of South Florida. Lyle is a frequent speaker on various archeological topics to community organizations as well as at professional conferences. His research interests include cemetery preservation, military archeology, and colonial town development.



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