

**POWER** (pou'ər) *n.* 1. authority; influence, 2. a person or thing having great influence, force or authority, 3. a nation having influence over other nations.

**POLITICS** (pol'ə•tiks) *n.pl.*  
1. the science of government, 2. political affairs, 3. political methods, 4. political opinions, 5. factional scheming for power.

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## Unit 2 — POWER AND POLITICS

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POWER AND POLITICS IS DESIGNED TO HELP STUDENTS EXAMINE THE FORCES OF THE LARGER SOCIETY THAT AFFECT THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC PLACES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE. DECISIONS ABOUT HISTORICAL MATTERS ARE MADE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF POWER AND POLITICS. POWER AND POLITICS INCLUDE POLICIES AND DECISIONS BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND ELECTED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THE DESIRES OF PROPERTY OWNERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS. THIS UNIT WILL INTRODUCE STUDENTS TO WHAT CAN BE DONE TO EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO PRESERVE THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE

*Chinatown in San Francisco is notable for more than its architecture. What makes the community unique and distinctive are the empheral culture—the signage, banners, and the activities that take place in the area. In order to “preserve” Chinatown, it is important to ensure that this living culture continues.  
(Photo courtesy of Antoinette J. Lee)*



### Learning OBJECTIVES

The following Learning Objectives are intended to guide students in understanding how power and politics are involved in deciding what types of cultural heritage are preserved. Students will be introduced to the evolution of the cultural heritage field. They will learn how communities can be empowered to shape these decisions to ensure the preservation of important cultural heritage.

## Learning OBJECTIVE 1:

Students will develop an understanding of how preservation of cultural heritage has developed in the United States, including the roles that power and politics have in shaping the cultural heritage field.

Throughout the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries, upper and upper-middle class, white women and men, primarily from the East Coast, dominated preservation activities. The earliest recorded preservation activities focused on the founding fathers of the nation, such as Ann Pamela Cunningham's efforts to preserve George Washington's home at Mount Vernon in the 1850s. Landmarks of the Revolutionary War, such as General Washington's headquarters in Newburgh, New York, continued to be important to preservationists of the mid- and late 19th centuries. Shortly after the Civil War, preservation of battlefields became a focus of many white people, as did the embellishment of the battlefields with monuments to the fallen.

In the early part of the 20th century, immigrant groups from Eastern Europe that settled in the Midwest began to be concerned about losing their heritage as they became assimilated into American culture. Many founded local historical societies and museums to preserve their memories of the old country as well as celebrate their success in the new world, such as the Old Mill and Swedish Pavilion in Lindsborg, Kansas. In California, descendants of the original Spanish settlers likewise were concerned about the erosion of their heritage as Anglo-Americans moved to the state. Many became active in preserving the remaining historic adobe missions, such as San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, as well as traditional religious and secular celebrations.

During the 1930s, the federal government accelerated its preservation program as part of its effort to counter the effects of the Great Depression. Dozens of out-of-work architects and draftsmen recorded hundreds of historic buildings throughout the country through measured drawings and photographic documentation, which became what is known today as the Historic American Buildings Survey. The Works Progress Administration sponsored the Federal Writers' Project, which undertook the documentation of many aspects of American culture, including the recording of narratives by former slaves and thousands of life stories of men and women from a variety of occupations and ethnic groups. The Federal Writers' Project also produced a series of state guidebooks that remain classics in capturing the tenor and fabric of American life in the late 1930s, including its cultural heritage.

After World War II, national preservation organizations, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other private non-profit preservation organizations at the state and local levels were founded. In 1966, the United States Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act that established the foundation for the federal, state, and local government preservation programs that exists today. Federal preservation activities were focused in the National Park Service, a bureau within the U.S. Department of the Interior. The 1966 Act also created state historic preservation offices located in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, as well as U.S. Territories. In 1980, the Act was amended to extend official status to Certified Local Governments. In the Act's 1992 amendments, the tribal preservation offices were added. The National Historic Preservation Act also established grants to assist local, state, and tribal governments with preservation programs, and enabled the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a wide range of preservation activities and programs.

*The market in Little Haiti, Miami, Florida is a replica of similar market structures in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It was constructed in the 1980s and provides a familiar locale for the community to conduct its market activities. (Photo courtesy of Antoinette J. Lee)*



## Learning ACTIVITIES

- A. Students should visit a historic or cultural site established at least 40 years ago. While there, they should examine its guidebooks and brochures from the past as well as the present as a means of understanding how the property was interpreted when it first opened and how it is interpreted today. They should discuss the changes that have occurred and how they reflect changes in American society during the time the site has been open to the public.
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- B. Students should hold a discussion with community residents and leaders, park or site personnel, political figures, and others who are knowledgeable about how a historic or cultural site was developed. They should discuss the potential effects of reinterpreting the site to make it more appealing to other cultures and how this would have differed from the original concept for the site and its interpretation.
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- C. Students should develop the history of a historic place in their community that has been demolished or destroyed and examine the length of time that the place existed, when and why it was demolished or destroyed, and what has taken its place. They should explore whether or not the place still plays a role in the cultural memory of the community.

# Learning RESOURCES

## PUBLICATIONS

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Graham, Brian, G. J. Ashworth and J. E. Tunbridge. *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy*. London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 2000.

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Lindgren, James Michael. *Preserving New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory*. London: Oxford University Press, 1996.

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Rothman, Hal. *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989.

Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles and Practice*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999.

## VIDEOTAPES

*El Pueblo Se Levanta. (The People Are Rising)*. Produced by Third World Newsreel, 1968, videotape. 50 minutes. Distributed by Third World Newsreel, 545 Eighth Avenue, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

*In 1992, the National Preservation Conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation met in Miami, Florida, and celebrated cultural diversity as the major conference theme. The conference buttons honored this theme. (Photo courtesy of William Lebovich)*



## Learning OBJECTIVE 2:

Students will examine how minority cultures are becoming more involved in formal cultural preservation processes. They will learn how the process of empowerment helps diverse communities assert control over their cultural heritage and encourage economic development.

For many years, the cultural heritage of minority groups was hardly included in formal historic preservation and cultural heritage processes. Lists of historic properties reflecting African American, Asian American, Hispanic American and Native American culture include relatively few entries. While there was growing activism and organizational development in the 1960s and 1970s, few minority non-profit preservation organizations existed before the 1980s. The number of minorities engaged in preservation as advocates or as professionals is small. Information on the role of ethnic groups was excluded from historical surveys and other research activities. As a result, the heritage of many minority communities is not included in the interpretation of many historic places and cultural practices with which they are associated.

Today, the preservation field is working to include the cultural heritage of all of the nations' cultural groups in formal programs, including American Indians, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, as well as the many immigrant groups that continue to redefine America. Diverse people are contributing needed expertise in preservation as well as expanding the nation's idea about what is significant and worthy of being preserved. Today, there are many more identification, preservation, and interpretive programs that are associated with the nation's diverse cultural groups than there were just a few years ago. In addition, more minority preservation organizations continue to develop throughout the nation, some of which are associated with established public and private preservation agencies and organizations.

Successful minority preservation organizations, such as Preserve Eatonville Community in Florida, that celebrate a heritage as well as stimulate the local economy, are being developed across the country. Heritage tourism activities are the focus of many historic places associated with minorities, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia, or the pueblos of the Southwest. Many government agencies and private organizations are increasingly encouraging diverse communities to use the preservation and interpretation of their heritage to encourage economic growth.

## Learning ACTIVITIES

- A. Students should identify a historical society or organization associated with African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Native Americans and learn about their activities. They should interview members of these organizations. They should discuss how the organization has interpreted and presented their cultural heritage for their own community as well as for the general public.
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- B. Students should visit a cultural site or museum associated with a minority group. They should identify the economic and social contributions that the site or museum has made to the community and how public and private investment might be increased in the future.
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- C. Students should discuss how an exhibit could be created to interpret an important historical event, such as Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama city bus in 1955, in light of other events of the time. Students should create a list of artifacts that should be included in the exhibit, plan a route through the exhibit, and develop a self-guided tour brochure. They should also address how this exhibit could serve as a heritage tourism destination and an element in an economic revitalization plan for the community.



*The town of Opa-Locka in South Florida is the location of an outstanding group of Moorish style buildings that date from the 1920s. More recently, the governing officials of the resident-African American community have devoted significant efforts to preserve buildings like the City Hall and express a strong connection with African origins of the architecture. (Photo courtesy of Antoinette J. Lee)*

# Learning RESOURCES

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Torres, Luis, ed. *Voices from the San Antonio Missions*. College Station, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1997.

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