

Travel Proposal Abstract for the 2009 Geraldine Knight Scott Travel Fellowship
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For generations, landscapes of the American South have been formed and transformed by the push and pull of economic forces. As a recipient of the 2009 Geraldine Knight Scott Travel Fellowship, I have organized a journey through eight southern states during which I will visit landscapes that have thrived or declined to different degrees as a result of their prevailing historical and contemporary economic patterns. Through investigating and documenting these sites, I aim to discover how the landscape helps us to understand and acknowledge the impact of our economic choices.

My interest in designing a travel proposal through the Southeastern United States stems from my academic background in landscape architecture (MLA '09) and city planning (MCP '06). I am interested in traveling to a region where conflict between the physical landscape and economic development is revealed in many forms in both urban and rural settings, especially where traditional land-based economies have confronted significant pressures to conform to the demands of international markets and corporate conglomerates. I chose the American South as the venue for this travel because it is a region where the landscape and the economy are irrevocably intertwined. It is a region where economic intervention has both irreparably altered the landscape and hastened significant technological and cultural changes over time. Studies of the intersection of the Southern economy, society and landscape have fascinated people over time. America's first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, spent time studying the South from an economic perspective, in his case investigating the inefficiencies of slavery and the cotton-dependent economy of the Antebellum South.

With the fellowship, I will spend two months (Feb. 10 - Apr. 18, 2010) traveling by car through the American South to explore, write about, physically document, and experience landscapes significantly inscribed by prevailing economic patterns. My main objective is assess how and to what extent economic development and prioritization affect the condition of the landscape, both in terms of environmental health and the vitality of local culture. An important part of my proposed field methodology is to make contacts with individuals who play roles in facilitating public awareness around landscape issues or have leadership positions. I have arranged to make site visits in the company of such individuals to understand a variety of perspectives on what is taking place on the ground.

Once travel is complete I will compile a graphical compendium of my observations and findings for publication (most likely on the web) as well deliver a presentation of key themes at a UCB colloquium in the fall of 2010.