

**GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
WORLD HERITAGE INITIATIVE**



**Creating a Serial Nomination of U. S. Civil Rights Sites  
for the World Heritage List: an Overview**

**PROJECT GOAL**

To successfully nominate a group of U.S. Civil Rights site to the World Heritage List, thereby achieving the highest possible level of recognition for these historic resources and affirming the universal significance of the American struggle for racial justice and its importance to the world.

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

The Georgia State University Center for Neighborhood and Metropolitan Studies, Department of History, and Heritage Preservation Program are developing a Serial Nomination of U.S. Civil Rights Sites to the World Heritage List. This project expands the initial proposal of the three Alabama churches on the 2008 U. S. World Heritage Tentative List by adding additional National Historic Landmarks and possibly other sites related to the modern struggle for race reform. The first phase of this project, to run through the end of 2018, will be to prepare the materials necessary for the National Park Service (NPS) to determine if the nomination should move forward. Ultimately the decision to place the sites on the World Heritage List would be made by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The GSU World Heritage Initiative will coordinate the efforts of property owners, stakeholders, scholars, and preservationists in preparing a draft Serial Nomination for the National Park Service Office of International Affairs to submit to the World Heritage Committee. Under the leadership of GSU faculty, two committees will form, one of Scholars and one of Preservationists, both of which will assemble experts in the field including some with prior experience working on World Heritage nominations. These committees will evaluate relevant civil rights properties for inclusion in the nomination, and they will conceptualize an argument for Outstanding Universal Value of the proposed civil rights sites using the UNESCO's Criteria for World Heritage.

The GSU Team consists of five professors and a Project Manager, who will coordinate the work of faculty and committee members and direct graduate assistants in assembling the appropriate documentation necessary to argue authenticity and verify the historical integrity of the properties. The GSU team will work closely with property owners and stakeholders in developing a management plan through which the proposed World Heritage sites and buffer zones will be protected in perpetuity. The team will keep in regular contact with representatives of the NPS's Office of International Affairs, seeking advice throughout the process of preparing the nomination.

The GSU team is assembling a preliminary list of U. S. civil rights sites for possible inclusion in the project. In 2000 Congress directed the National Park Service to prepare a nationwide study of the story of American Civil Rights. The resulting document, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*, is guiding the selection of sites for this project. The NPS framework includes three themes - Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations; Racial Desegregation of Public Education; and Racial Voting Rights – and will be used to identify potential civil rights sites for inclusion in the World Heritage nomination. Documentation for sites is being collected and property owners will be contacted to determine their level of interest.

A *World Heritage and Civil Rights Sites Symposium* was held in Atlanta on the Georgia State University campus April 20-22, 2017, at which the committee members, historic property owners of the proposed sites and relevant stakeholders gathered to discuss the objectives of the initiative, the expectations of the project, and the obligations that would result from selection as a World Heritage Site.

After careful deliberation by scholars, preservationists, property owners and stakeholders, the final group of sites to be selected for the serial nomination will be identified. Each property must serve as an exceptional example that together demonstrates the struggle for racial equality as an Outstanding Universal Value that transcends American boundaries and influences the world's struggle for human rights. Each property must be in good condition, have physical integrity, and eventually, will need to have a management plan that provides for the site's protection as well as buffer zone around it.

## **BASIC REQUIREMENTS**

Collectively the historic sites chosen to participate in the Serial Nomination will tell the story of the modern Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The date range for this nomination will likely be the 1950s-1960s. In addition, properties in the U.S. are required to have owner consent and be considered "nationally significant," that is a National Historic Landmark, a National Monument, or an area that Congress has established as nationally significant (for example a National Historic Site or National Historic Park). Finally, property owners must consent, in writing, to being included.

## **WORLD HERITAGE CRITERIA**

World Heritage criteria are very different than those used in the U.S. for determining a property's significance. Each site must serve as an exceptional example that together demonstrates an *Outstanding Universal Value* that transcends American boundaries and influences the world. For this project, three criteria are under consideration:

CRITERIA 2, The Interchange of Ideas:

"To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design."

CRITERIA 3, Testimony to Cultural Tradition

"To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared."

CRITERIA 6, Heritage associated with events of universal significance:

"To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)."

The application of the criteria for the nomination will be expressed in a statement of Outstanding Universal Value, which will be prepared by the Committee of Scholars, historians and other experts from around the world, many of whom have experience with World Heritage nominations.

## **OTHER WORLD HERITAGE REQUIREMENTS**

In order to qualify as World Heritage sites, each property must be of exceptional quality and significance. Besides qualifying under World Heritage criteria, each site must have:

1. **Authenticity.** Properties meet this condition if their cultural values are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes such as their form/design, materials/substance, use/function, location/setting, and other, less tangible factors.
2. **Integrity.** Properties meet this condition if they display a measure of wholeness and intactness; they need to include all of the elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value.
3. **Comparative value.** The nominated properties should be compared to other similar properties, both on the World Heritage list and not, inside the U.S. and worldwide. The comparative analysis should explain the importance of the nominated property both in its national and international context.
4. **Appropriate boundaries.** Boundaries should be drawn around each property to incorporate all the attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value and to ensure its integrity and authenticity.
5. **Adequate buffer zone.** Properties need to have an identified area surrounding them that has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that support the property.
6. **Protection.** Properties must have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory, institutional and/or traditional protection and management to ensure their safeguarding.
7. **Management plans, both individual and coordinated.** Each property should have an appropriate management plan which specifies how the Outstanding Universal Value of a property should be preserved for present and future generations. The plan should include cycles of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback. For serial nominations, a system that ensures the coordinated management of the separate components is essential.

Each of these elements will be reviewed and approved by the Committee of Preservationists, experts from around the world, many of whom have experience with World Heritage nominations.

## **GSU WORLD HERITAGE INITIATIVE TEAM**

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**For more information, please go to [www.worldheritage.gsu.edu](http://www.worldheritage.gsu.edu)**