

A. Placekeepers

North Carolina's industrial landscapes are productive sites to examine the layering of the built environment and its consequences. Railroad tracks next to a former tobacco and textile mill village are reminders of the economic geographies of East Durham. Now, the railroad tracks generate questions about environmental justice and the subjection of low-income, mostly Black seniors to noise and pollution in their apartments at the former Durham Hosiery Mill No. 1. Across the railroad tracks lies J.C.'s Kitchen, a "meat-and-three" that has maintained cultural and food geographies of Black southerners at this intersection for three decades. The tagline, "Where the food is anointed, and you won't be disappointed," signals a call to home in a Black religious landscape. Looming behind J.C.'s Kitchen is a modern building that houses the Durham Police Department Headquarters, part of redevelopment efforts in East Durham.



B. Breeding Farm Swamp

This photograph was taken inside a large (37 ha) wetland located near Sparta, Tennessee, on the Eastern Highland Rim. I call the wetland Breeding Farm Swamp, after Breeding Farm Road, which wraps around one end of the wetland. Multiple land parcels are included within the swamp boundaries, owned by the State of Tennessee and private landowners. Topographic maps show other swamps in the area, most not as large. Current land use at Breeding Farm Swamp includes trash dumping and hunting. From color infrared imagery, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service classified the wetland as a forested swamp dominated by broadleaved deciduous trees and shrubs, with a central area that is semipermanently flooded, surrounded by an area flooded seasonally. Aside from this description, the hydrology and botany of the site appear unexplored.



C. Lake Hartwell Sunrise

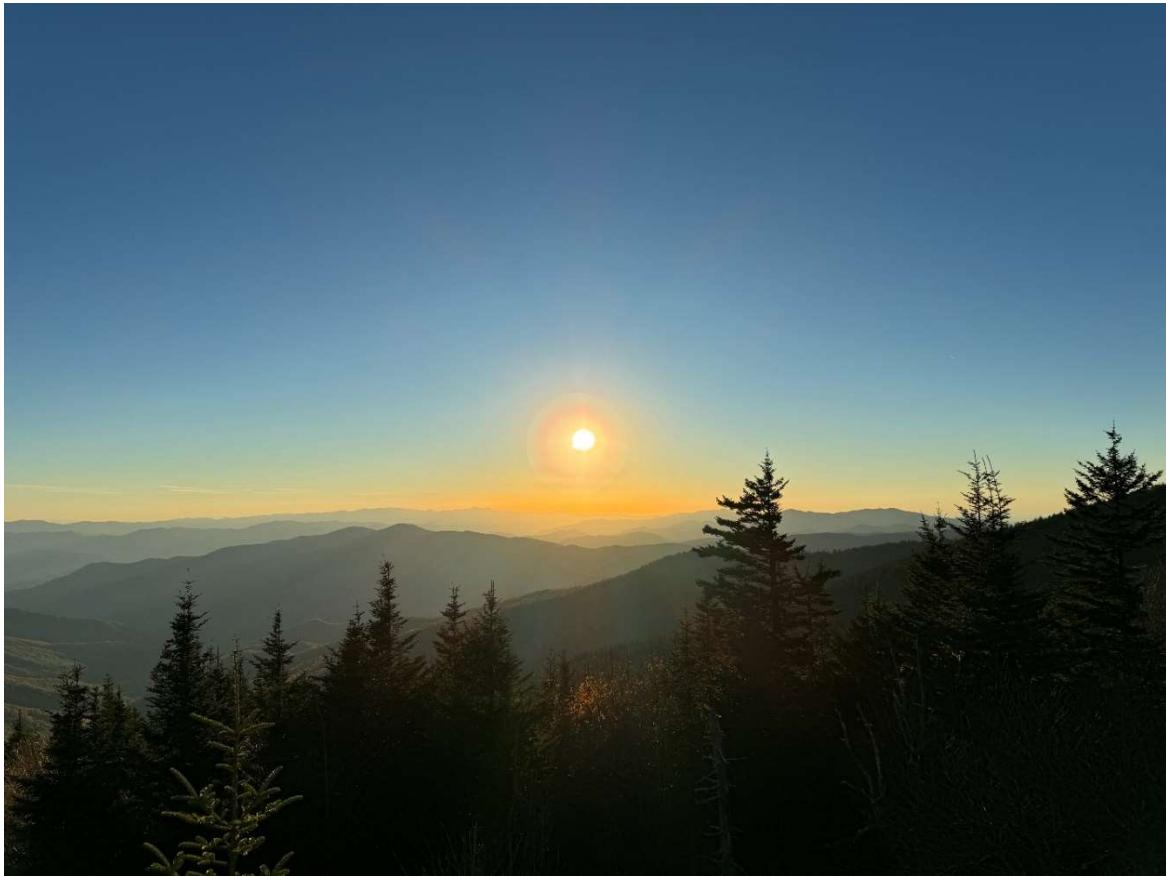
The photograph captures the beauty of a Lake Hartwell sunrise, framed by the rich hues of the red clay foreground. The morning light spills across the landscape, casting a soft glow on the calm waters of the lake. The water's surface is still, broken only by the occasional ripple from a passing bird or fish.

The red clay banks contrast sharply with the cool blues and purples of the distant mountains, their silhouettes softened by the morning haze. Small tufts of grass cling to the clay, adding a touch of life to the scene. In the distance, the shoreline curves gently, leading the eye toward a horizon where the sun rises, promising the start of a new day. This peaceful yet dramatic scene evokes both tranquility and awe, inviting the viewer to pause and appreciate the natural beauty of this timeless moment at Lake Hartwell.



D. Sunset at Kuwohi in Great Smoky Mountains National Park

This is a beautiful view of a sunset from Kuwohi, the highest point in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Formerly known as 'Clingman's Dome', this mountain sacred to the Cherokee people was formally renamed by the U.S. Board of Geographic Names on September 18th, 2024. The proposal to rename the mountain came from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, who sought to restore the original name of Kuwohi. This name was used by the Cherokee people for hundreds of years until this history was erased when explorer Andrew Guyot surveyed it in 1859. He named it 'Clingmans Dome' after his friend Thomas Clingman, who was a North Carolina Senator that advocated for slavery, served as a Confederate Brigadier General, and never set foot on the mountain. This was a successful example of place name repatriation, or the returning of an Indigenous name back to the landscape.



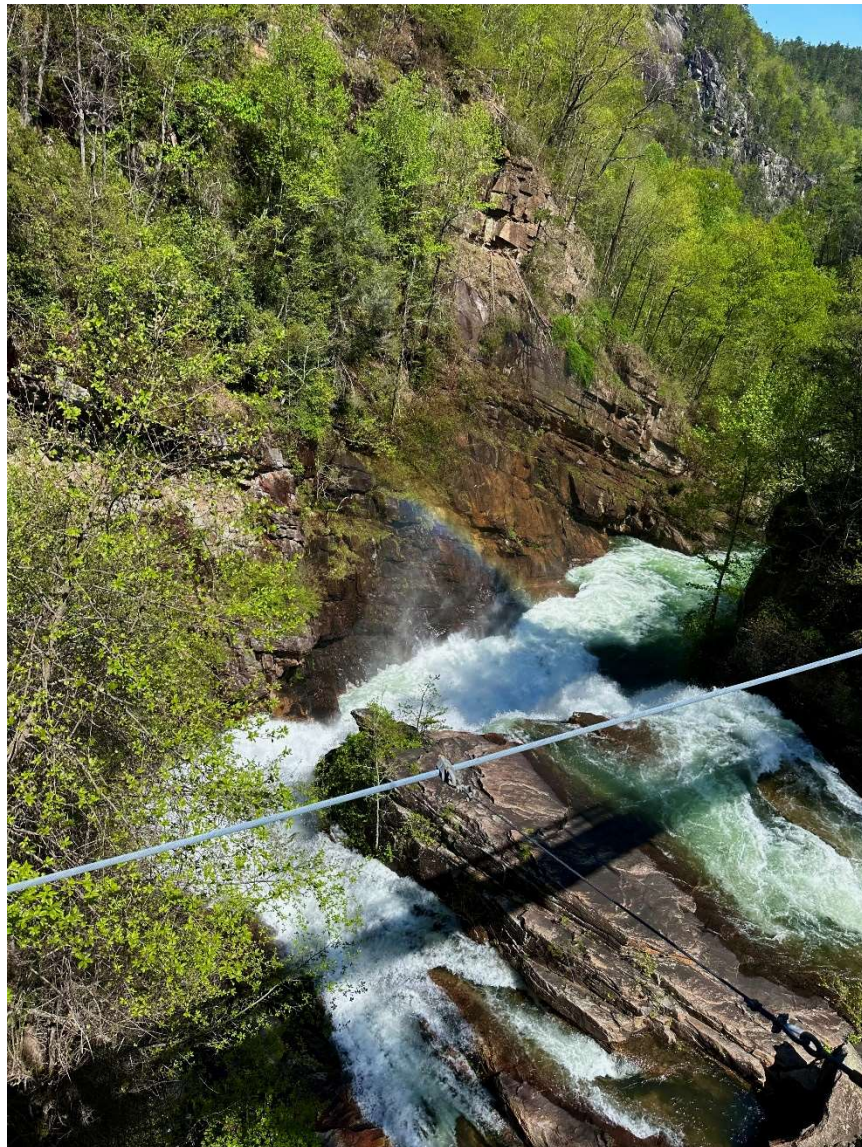
E. Dam Failure and Flood Memorial at Toccoa Falls College, Northeast Georgia

When the Kelly Barnes dam at Toccoa Falls College in northeast Georgia failed on November 6, 1977, the floodwaters killed 39 students and college staff and caused about \$2.5 million in damages. A few years earlier, after an impoundment on Buffalo Creek collapsed in West Virginia in 1972, Congress passed the National Dam Inspection Program. However, funding was not allocated with that legislation and thus no inspections occurred. After the Kelly Barnes failure, President Carter approved funding for the Corps of Engineers to perform inspections of high-risk dams throughout the US and created the Association of State Dam Safety Officials. The flood memorial to the left of the falls recognizes the tragic loss of life here while serving as a reminder that we also must act proactively and take actions after tragedy to reduce risk to others in the future.



F. Tallulah Gorge Falls, Georgia

Historically dubbed as the “Niagara of the South”, Tallulah Gorge Falls is a natural icon of the Northeastern Georgia mountains. Within its deep canyons, lies a rich and turbulent history that has shaped the canyon into the place we know today. After becoming one of the battlegrounds for Georgia's first environmental conservation movements, the gorge's once-wild rapids were subdued by human development, with the construction of a hydroelectric dam in the early 1910's. Subsequently, tourism to the area dwindled, causing the falls to fade from the public's mind. Decades later, the rapids were revived with the designation of the area as a state park, bringing about a new era of interest and popularity. Despite its revitalization, the influence of humanity is still present through controlled water releases that only manage to show us a fraction of what was once an unstoppable force of nature.



G. Boots firm on the ground

Latinx population growth in the U.S. South has been outpacing other regions nationally so much so that scholars, such as Perla Guerrero, have grown to redefine the South as the Nuevo South. Calling to highlight Latinx folks in the South, this photo showcases boots- popular and common Southern footwear- to challenge notions of “othering” by demonstrating how Latinx communities contribute to and integrate into the South. Boots firm on the ground, this photo depicts my father, overlooking land he previously labored in as a farmworker and now managing as an owner. Like Magnolia trees, his boots are rooted in the Southern landscape and demonstrate the impact he, like other migrants, has contributed to its cultural, economic, agricultural, and academic landscape. This photo hopes to break beyond divisive barriers and see ourselves as one collective South that cannot thrive without our represented and understood collective cultural, environmental knowledge, and labor contributions.



H. Blue Ridge Parkway

On September 28th, 2024, Hurricane Helene irrevocably altered Southern Appalachia, a region once deemed a “climate refuge.” Torrential rains turned peaceful streams into torrents, carving new channels and reshaping the mountains. The fierce winds ravaged forests and homes, shattering lives deeply intertwined with this cherished landscape. In the aftermath, a haunting beauty emerged: towns that once thrived now echo with silence and debris. The closure of the Blue Ridge Parkway struck hard, further impacting local economies already in distress. While autumn typically showcases the vibrant colors of the mountains, my photograph captures a quieter, lesser-known beauty—winter’s embrace.

Southern Appalachian residents understand the allure of every season, appreciating the serene beauty of this “off-season.” This image serves as a reminder that even in dormancy, Western North Carolina and Tennessee possess enduring beauty. As we rebuild and renew, let us find hope in the subtle transformations of our landscape.

