

# Visions and Tensions: Exploring the Politics of Land on the Letitia Carson Donation Land Claim

## Preliminary Share Out

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:  
DR. LAUREN GWIN  
DR. KELLY BOSWORTH



# Project Context

OSU seed funding for transdisciplinary research

- LCLP already transdisciplinary
- Seeking more engagement with arts and humanities

Co-PI: Lauren Gwin and Kelly Bosworth



# Project Context

Conduct series of interviews about the land

- Document different perspectives
- Consider material/conceptual tensions
- Inform future site planning, programming, and partnerships
- Still in process



# Project Context

Kelly Bosworth

- Public historian and ethnomusicologist
- Sound, place, belonging
- Research project: music/sound/noise in Vanport, Oregon



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# Participants

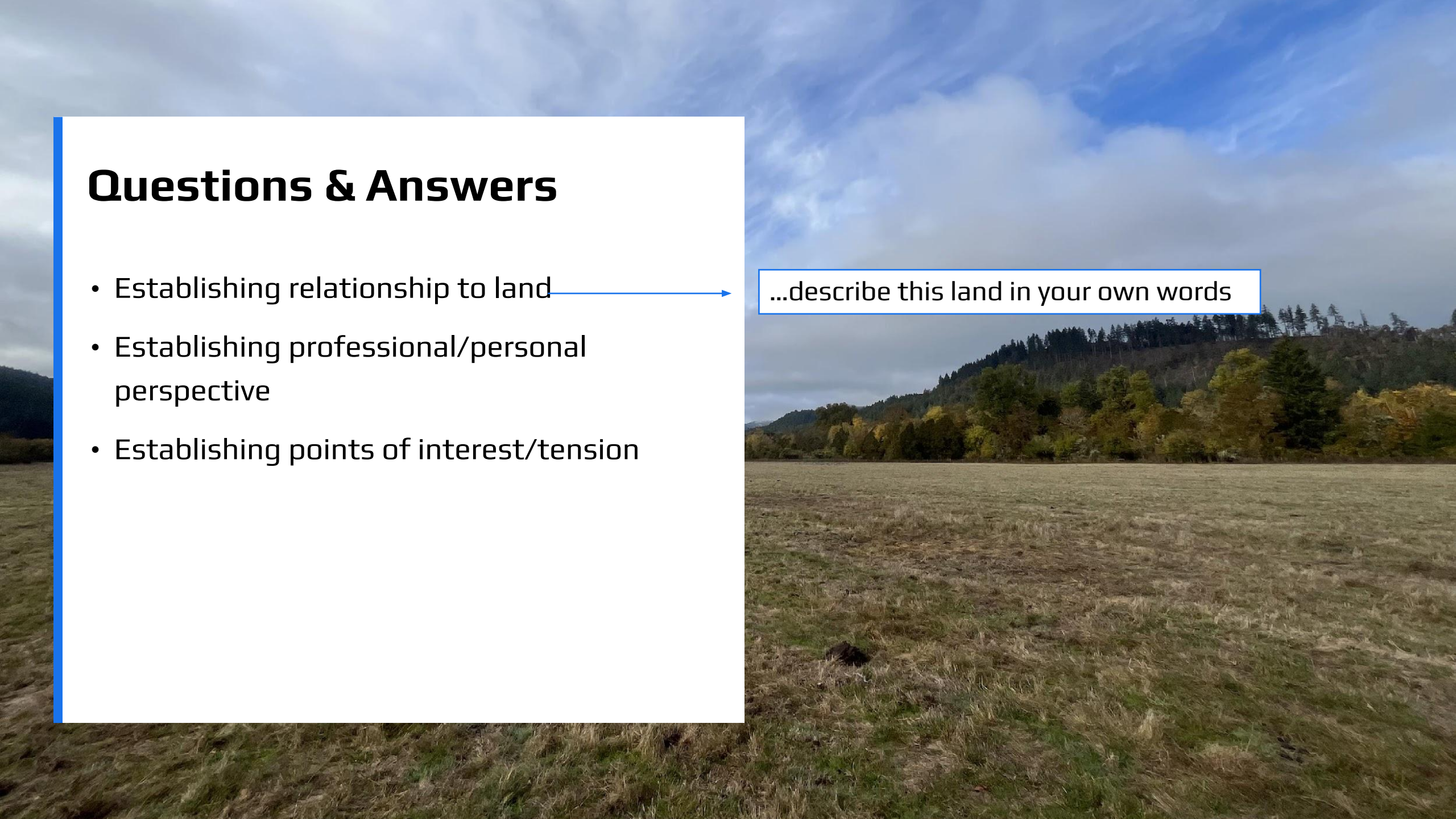
- 16 interviews, Zoom and in person
  - 5 LCLP Core Partners
  - 5 OSU faculty
    - 3 Animal & Rangeland Sciences & 2 faculty advisors from College of Liberal Arts
  - 6 community members
    - K-12 teachers, Black farmers, nonprofit leaders
- Honoraria for non-OSU affiliates
- Gratitude for flexibility, openness, and time



# Questions & Answers

- Establishing relationship to land →
- Establishing professional/personal perspective
- Establishing points of interest/tension

...describe this land in your own words



"meaningless"  
"until I heard  
the story"

"ancestral  
anchor"

homestead

beautiful

"the beginning  
of Letitia's  
story in  
Oregon"

honor, joy, an  
ancestor's  
home

"historically  
important"

displacement

"one of the  
best  
pasturelands  
in the area"

Kalapuya land

...describe this land in your own words

"rich history  
I never  
knew"

Soap Creek  
Beef Ranch

flat good  
grassland

"pure  
potential,  
not  
developed"

living  
classroom

"magical  
place"

beef  
production  
research  
facility

"you turn  
around and  
there's the  
dump"

Black woman  
homesteader

research  
site

"interest, curiosity,  
frustration,  
imagination, optimism,  
confusion, a lot of  
different emotions"

"holds the  
traumatic part  
of her story"

trauma  
to  
triumph

students  
can feel  
connection  
with her

"Ms. Carson's  
farmland"

"profoundly  
spiritual  
place"

# Questions & Answers

- Establishing relationship to land
- Establishing professional/personal perspective →
- Establishing points of interest/tension

What other places do you consider similar or related to this site?

other sites throughout the whole valley – timber mixed with running water

Berry Creek

other OSU ag research sites

other farm facilities with the mission of research, teaching, and extension

the whole valley is connected through time and space

land cultivated by African Americans – community gardens, food justice programs

nice grass seed fields up and down I-5

timber/open grazing interface

Reuben and Mary Jane Shipley homestead

Maxville, Oregon

What other places do you consider similar or related to this site?

“no other place in the West where you can stand on land that was owned by a Black female pioneer and learn her story”

Mt. Union Cemetery

Eliza and Hannah Gorman House in Corvallis

Albina in N/NE Portland

Indigenous homelands in the US

only place like this

Grove of the Titans in Redwoods National Park interpretive trail

Amanda Trail in Yachats

Black-owned “wildish” land

Donation Land Claim sites

Letitia’s homestead in Douglas County

living history sites

“land sovereignty projects owned by predominantly white institution”

“community gardens worked by community people”

# Questions & Answers

- Establishing relationship to land
- Establishing professional/personal perspective
- Establishing points of interest/tension →

What do you (and your colleagues/neighbors/community members) believe should happen with/on this land in the future?

Are there other (current or possible) activities on this land that might make your work more challenging, or that will be a barrier to what you think should happen on the land?

What might [someone else] not understand about your perspective?

# Preliminary Takeaways



- Years of collaboration and exchange of ideas between partners was clear
  - Importance of site planning process
  - Unanimous desire to honor Letitia Carson
  - Cows are key
- Words with shared importance but multiple meanings, e.g., access, safety, land
  - Access: possibility, risk, moral/legal
  - Safety: increasing belonging, limiting hazards, increase or limit access?
  - Land: relative, resource (scarce/under threat), delimited site (in story, in law), all connected

# Preliminary Takeaways



- Land is naturally “transdisciplinary”
  - For history: importance of land in linking past/present/future
- Intersectional listening
  - Allie Martin: “hearing the ways in which people relate to one another and to themselves”
- Acousmatic question: Who is this?
  - Nina Sun Eidsheim: “listening through the acousmatic question” with the “impossibility that the question will yield a firm answer”

# What's Next?

- Analyze existing interviews
- Conduct further interviews
- Incorporate findings within LCLP
  - Into site plan, future programming, partnerships
- Create a shareable resource for others
- Continue the conversation

# Thank You



**ZACHARY STOCKS**

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**EMMA ROBINSON**

**ANGELA APPLE**

**ARIA CHARLES**

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