



The Lemon Project: A Journey of Reconciliation

MARCH 24-25, 2023

At the Root:
*Exploring Black Life,
History, and Culture*



13TH ANNUAL LEMON PROJECT SPRING SYMPOSIUM

*This event will take place in person at the School of Education and
virtually over Zoom.*

At the Root:

Exploring Black Life, History, and Culture





LEMON PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

Jody L. Allen, Robert Francis Engs Lemon Project Director
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David Brown, History
Kelley Fanto Deetz, Stratford Hall
Leah F. Glenn, Theater, Speech, & Dance
Fanchon Glover, Chief Diversity Officer, ex officio
Omiyemi Artisia Green, African Studies and Theatre
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American History and Democracy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Caroline Watson, Lemon Project Graduate Assistant

AGENDA

FRIDAY, MARCH 24 All events will be held at Eastern Time (ET)

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| 8:00 AM–9:30 AM | Check-In | Concourse |
| 8:50 AM–8:55 AM | Welcome Jody Allen, Robert Francis Engs Director of the Lemon Project | Matoaka Woods |
| 8:55 AM–9:00 AM | Remarks Provost Peggy Agouris | Matoaka Woods |
| 9:00 AM–10:30 AM | Keynote Judge John Charles Thomas, HON '18 | Matoaka Woods |
| 10:30 AM–11:45 AM | 2 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | “We’ve Come This Far by Faith.” A Panel Discussion on Black Church History in Virginia’s Historic Triangle | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | Hampton Plantation, the Lynching of Howard Cooper, and the Freedom Trail: Centering Community and Creating Connections | Dogwood |
| 12:00 PM–1:30 PM | Lunch | |
| 12:00 PM–1:15 PM | Robert F. Smith: Explore Your Family History Center Community Curation Presentation | Matoaka Woods |
| 1:30 PM–2:45 PM | 3 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | Tangled Roots: Braxton Descendants Research Their Past and Discover Intersecting Black and White Family Threads | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | A Game Plan to Set the Record Straight on Black History in America | Dogwood |
| PANEL 3: | African American Churches, Cemeteries, and the Documentary Records of Black Virginians | Holly |
| 3:00 PM–4:15 PM | 3 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | Where Do We Go from Here: A generational discussion of The Reservation Experience | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | Making A Living: Memory of Slavery, Community, and Businesses | Dogwood |
| PANEL 3: | Past Reflection, Forward Progress: Douglass School, Kokomo, Indiana | Holly |
| 4:15 PM–6:00 PM | Break | |
| 6:00 PM–7:00 PM | The Talking Drum, presented by the Elegba Folklore Society | Matoaka Woods |

SATURDAY, MARCH 25

All events will be held at Eastern Time (ET)

AGENDA

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--|
| 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM | Check-In | Concourse |
| 8:50 AM – 9:00 AM | Welcome | Matoaka Woods |
| 9:00 AM – 10:15 AM | 3 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | Illuminating the Black Communities Displaced by Colonial Williamsburg: The Case of Nicholson Street | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | Celebrating Simms, Oral Histories, and Community Storytelling: Toward a Collaborative Practice for Polyvocal Black Historical Recovery | Dogwood |
| PANEL 3: | Listening to the Elders: Family History, Local History, and Personal History | Holly |
| 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM | 3 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | “Neat in their Cloaths”: Utilizing Material Culture to Expand Black Women’s Narratives | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | Maryland and the World: A Roundtable Discussion about Truth and Reconciliation | Dogwood |
| PANEL 3: | Navigating Black Culture Today: Disability, Safe Spaces, Publication Education, and Preservation | Holly |
| 11:45 PM – 12:30 PM | Lunch | Matoaka Woods |
| 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM | 3 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | Mending the Fork in the Road at the Forks of Cypress | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | Feeding Minds and Souls in Wake Forest, North Carolina | Dogwood |
| PANEL 3: | Honoring Authenticity: An Exploration of Undergraduate Student Research of Campus Iconography | Holly |
| 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM | 3 Concurrent Panels: | |
| PANEL 1: | Life in the Reservation Community: Community-University Partnerships for Public Research | Matoaka Woods |
| PANEL 2: | Historic Preservation, Property Rights, and Landscapes | Dogwood |
| PANEL 3: | The Power of Language: Clinical Perspectives of Systemic Narratives | Holly |
| 3:15 PM – 3:30 PM | Closing Remarks | Matoaka Woods |
| 4:00 PM | Hearth: Memorial to the Enslaved Tour & Discussion You are invited to join us at Hearth for a tour and discussion. <i>Parking is available behind the Admissions Building on Grigsby Drive.</i> | 115 Jamestown Rd. Williamsburg, VA 23185 |

LEMON PROJECT SYMPOSIUM

2023 PANEL DESCRIPTIONS

Keynote Plenary:

Judge John Charles Thomas HON '18



Thomas is a retired justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia and a retired Senior Partner of the law firm Hunton Andrews Kurth. A native of Norfolk, Virginia, he attended the segregated public schools of that city until 1965 when he enrolled at the formerly

all-white Maury High School under the state of Virginia's so-called "Freedom of Choice School desegregation plan." He finished Maury as an honor student and entered the University of Virginia in September 1968 as one of three African Americans in the entering class of 1,400 students. Thomas finished UVa in 1972 earning his BA with distinction. Thomas next enrolled in the law school at UVa which he finished in 1975. In 1975 he became the first African American lawyer hired by the formerly all-white Richmond law firm, Hunton Williams Gay and Gibson. In 1983, the Governor Charles Robb appointed Thomas to the Supreme Court of Virginia, thus making Thomas the first African American and, at 32 years of age, the youngest Justice in the history of Virginia. Thomas served on the Board of Visitors of the College of William and Mary from 2006 to 2017. Thomas is an honorary Trustee of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation that owns and operates Monticello. He is the author of the memoir, *The Poetic Justice*, which was published in October 2022.

Friday Evening Performance: The Talking Drum, presented by the Elegba Folklore Society

The drum is a legendary communications tool—a punctuating teller of life as it happens. This lively delivery of African and African American folktales and narratives combine with dance, vocal and instrumental music to engage audiences along a rhythmic journey over continents and through time.

“We’ve Come This Far by Faith:” A Panel Discussion on Black Church History in Virginia’s Historic Triangle

Moderator: Dr. Jajuan S. Johnson

Panelists: *Mrs. Colette Roots, Reverend Carlon Lassiter, and Rondollyn Evans*

The roots of Black religion and spirituality run deep in Virginia’s Historic Triangle. From slavery to Emancipation and beyond, African Americans have built faith communities serving their parishioners’ spiritual and practical needs. Black churches are the social, cultural, and political engine of Black communities and often survive perilous moments from dispossession to direct violence such as arson. The panel will discuss the histories of three churches: Oak Grove Baptist Church, Little Zion Church, and St. John Baptist Church. The churches are tied to the Historic First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, VA, but have distinct histories and testaments of formation and sustainability. Each church shaped the contours of African American landscapes in Williamsburg, James City County, and Yorktown, and their legacies of service and resilience continue. The panel’s purpose is to document the diverse and shared histories of Black churches in Virginia’s Historic Triangle, discuss the historical challenges, and how congregations are solidifying their presence as historic markers that tell a more expansive story of this region.

Hampton Plantation, the Lynching of Howard Cooper, and the Freedom Trail: Centering Community and Creating Connections

Moderator: Nicholas M. Creary, Ph.D.

Panelists: *Nancy R Goldring, Jennifer Liles, Amy S. Millin, MSW, MA, Carol Brooks*

On July 13, 1885, 15-year-old Howard Cooper was dragged from the County Jail in Towson, MD — and lynched. Fifty-six years prior, Maryland’s 15th governor and proprietor of nearby Hampton Plantation (Hampton National Historic Site) had died, freeing some of the hundreds he had enslaved. East Towson, today a descendent community founded by formerly enslaved people from Hampton, has been subjected to encroachment by developers for decades. This panel reflects on the ways that decades of intersecting community, activist, and institutional work has come together to connect and make public the violence of these events. Panelists will in turn describe how community members coalesced under the auspices of the grassroots Maryland Lynching Memorial Project to commemorate Cooper’s lynching; detail how past and current research is ensuring that Cooper’s lynching is located within a broader community context of profound racial injustice; and illustrate how a proposed Road to Freedom Trail, a pedestrian-cycling route linking Hampton Plantation, the site of Cooper’s lynching, East Towson, and other sites demonstrates a local history of exclusion and racial violence even as it creates a recreational space that can bridge communities and enhance the lives of people of all backgrounds.

At the Root: Exploring Black Life, History, and Culture

Tangled Roots: Braxton Descendants Research Their Past and Discover Intersecting Black and White Family Threads

Moderator: Laura Hill, Coming to the Table-Historic Triangle Chapter; Virginia Racial Healing Institute

Panelists: *Viola O. Baskerville, B.A., J.D.; Gerry Gilstrap, MS, CPbT; Allison Thomas*

This panel discussion will reflect on the movement toward African American descendant and allied communities to transform historical narratives through collaborative genealogical research by reaching across ethnic lines to either confirm or deny family stories. African American history is American history; yet Black family history is often difficult to confirm because families were often torn apart, and critical paper documents are often either incomplete or missing. Despite these “brick walls,” key information awaits to be discovered. The panelists will discuss the genesis of their collaboration, their family trees, the types of evidence being collected and their research goals. The panel includes a descendant of Carter Braxton, Sr., Virginia Signer of the Declaration of Independence whose family resourced the College; a descendant of an enslaved man believed to have been owned by the Braxton family, and a descendant of a free person of color whose ancestors migrated from New Kent County to Williamsburg. Our ancestors were witnesses to history. They have testimonies to share. When tested in the crucible of serious genealogical research, these stories can provide the necessary steps toward healing, reconciliation, and liberation for descendants of both the enslaver as well as the enslaved. Hopefully, this panel discussion will encourage those who are researching their Black family history and urge them to cross ethnic lines to untangle their roots.

A Game Plan to Set the Record Straight on Black History in America

Moderator: Peter Gunter Dunnaville

Panelists: *Clarence M. Dunnaville, Jr., and Peter Gunter Dunnaville*

Today there is denial among many that the evils of slavery existed. Further, they deny the pivotal role that slavery played in the establishment of the United States of America. We believe that Colleges and Universities must take the lead in ensuring that the true history of slavery and its legacies, is communicated; and our presentation will propose a basic strategy for Colleges and Universities to follow towards realizing that objective, and for dealing with their involvement in slavery. Our proposal includes establishing truth forums, entering into partnerships with private foundations, developing joint associations among Colleges and Universities, making curriculum improvements,

and a number of other proposals that we feel will assist Colleges and Universities deal with their involvement in slavery.

African American Churches, Cemeteries, and Documentary Records of Black Virginians

Moderator: Hannah Rosen, Ph.D.

Panelists: *R. G. A. “Trey” Ferguson III, M.Div.; Christopher S. Hunter, Ph.D.; Timothy Case; Lydia Neuroth*

- R.G.A. “Trey” Ferguson III, M.Div., The Black Church: America’s Oldest Negro Academy.

This presentation will discuss the central role the Black Church played in the formation and preservation of African American culture in the United States, the personal and professional development of many of this nation’s first Black leaders, and the creation of indigenous art forms and expressions. It will also reflect on how the role of the Black Church has transformed (and, at times, failed to do so) as integration allowed Black Americans into an expanding number of arenas.

As both a steward of and participant in Black life, history, and culture, the complex history of the Black Church in its many expressions is a critical component of understanding the story of Black America. Whether speaking of the church as the home base of much of the Civil Rights Movement, the training ground for some of the first African American activists, orators, and leaders, or the antagonist to some of Black America’s revolutionaries, the Black Church played an essential role in America’s story. The question in front of us today is what (if any) role exists for the Black Church in a world with transformed barriers for Black people, and how the greater community might find partnership with it.

- Christopher S. Hunter, Ph.D., “The Architecture of the African American Church House 1800 - 1920s”





The purpose of this paper is to introduce the socio-cultural influences upon the design and construction of early African American church buildings constructed between 1800 and the 1920s. The historical cornerstone of African American communities is the institution of the black church. The narrative surrounding this institution centers about the intersection of the people and their events. Little scholarly work has been done on the architectural design and construction of the actual church building. Though African American church buildings can trace their beginnings to the 18th century, it was the rise in the construction of these safe havens of African American life after Reconstruction that propelled this architectural typology to existence. Within the walls of these church houses are oral histories and narratives which speak to the agency of early black communities, while transitioning formerly enslaved people through the end of the 19th century, the rise of Jim Crow and legal segregation, to the height of the modern Civil Rights movement of the mid-20th century.

Inquiry into this little studied topic will speak to how African American communities can take charge of the telling of their own stories while examining and preserving African American memory and heritage.

- Timothy Case, ““Rest Assured”: Space, Memory, Resistance, and Reclamation in John Mitchell, Jr.’s Woodland Cemetery”

Amid a public reckoning with monuments to the Confederacy, attention has turned to another set of monuments born of Jim Crow: historic Black cemeteries. Constructed by and for Black people to honor their dead and preserve Black history, segregation-era Black cemeteries are unique windows into the lives, and memories, of Black communities. This paper looks at the origins and significance of Woodland Cemetery in Richmond and the legacy of its founder, John Mitchell, Jr. Mitchell’s involvement in struggles with white officials and their attempts to shutter Black cemeteries, and his vision and investment in Woodland, illustrates the importance of spaces like Woodland for challenging and resisting Jim Crow. Woodland was a venture in Black independence and racial pride. Its vitality was dependent on its segregated status. As white Richmonders built a memorial landscape to the Confederacy and sought to wipe Black

memory from public space, places like Woodland preserved the history and memory of Richmond’s Black community. This is a story of Woodland’s beginnings, the conditions that led to its formation, the man who envisioned and built it, contemporary efforts to restore and reclaim it, and its persistence as a space where Black memories endure: “rest assured.”

- Lydia Neuroth, “Reaching Beyond the Conventional with Virginia Untold”

For nearly ten years now, the Library of Virginia’s Virginia Untold project has been motivated by goals of increasing access to the records that document the lived experiences of enslaved and free Black Virginians pre-1867. A recent National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grant from the National Archives has expanded the focus of this project to include digitizing specific record types that better illustrate a poorly understood history of Black Virginians. Project manager, Lydia Neuroth, will discuss how the NHPRC grant has allowed for project goal expansion which includes building a platform for users, community members, and those whose history is embedded in the documents to have a voice in the storytelling of Virginia’s complicated history. Employing methods such as blog writing, social media posts, exhibits, panel programs, primary source exercises in K-12 classrooms, crowd-sourced transcription and more, Virginia Untold moves from a traditional digital document sharing site to a collaborative project engaging multiple and diverse perspectives that provide a more nuanced understanding of historic social dynamics within Virginia localities. The session will be presented in a way that encourages dialogue and feedback on how to reach these aims most effectively.

Where Do We Go From Here: A generational discussion of The Reservation Experience

Moderator: Mr. Harvey Bakari

Panelists: *Dr. Marie Bakari; Mr. Willie Parker; Mrs. Deloris Parker*

Skills learned and practiced by enslaved people and free Blacks as apprentices helped them and their descendants make a living from the 1600’s to the 21st century. The Society of Friends of African American History (SOFAAH) panel discussion will explore the legacies of free Blacks and enslaved communities, with a focus on Utopia Plantation burial ground on the James River at Kingsmill, legacies of their descendants in Williamsburg, and the businesses created to sustain their communities. Two Williamsburg natives, Mr. Willie, and Mrs. Deloris Parker will share their community experiences and the evolution of SOFAAH. Learn how the discovery of a burial ground at Utopia, initiated collaboration with the Black community, James River Institute of Archaeology, and Kingsmill. SOFAAH annually performs a memorial ceremony in honor of the 25 enslaved men, women, and children from Utopia. Marie Bakari, author of *Barriers to Microenterprise Initialization, Growth, and Success*, will explore some of the challenges Black businesses often encounter. Explore the benefits of forming a non-profit or for-profit business. Discover some of the rewards and barriers of starting a Black business. Despite the richness of history in Williamsburg,

SOFAAH and the Black community realized there was a lack of public recognition of African American history. The community raised the funds to erect the Martin Luther King Jr. Triangle monument in the former Black business district in Williamsburg.

Past Reflection, Forward Progress: Douglass School, Kokomo, Indiana

Panelists: *Rev. Dr. William Smith; Sarah E. Heath, Ph.D.; Amy Russell*

This panel will discuss the community efforts in Kokomo, Indiana to acquire and restore the Douglass School, which opened in 1920 and educated Black children in the first through seventh grades. In the mid-1950s, Douglass School figured prominently in the city's desegregation efforts. The school remained in operation until 1968, and eventually was a training center and church annex but was abandoned in the 1990s. More recently, community members joined together to transfer ownership of the building to a local nonprofit organization. The steering committee has obtained the building's recognition as a state and National Historic Landmark and has engaged in successful fundraising to restore the structure. An oral history is ongoing, and the work continues toward the objective of establishing a museum and cultural center. Community members engaged in this project represent a wide spectrum, including local government; an Indiana University regional campus; churches; the county historical society; and local library. Kokomo's history provides ample opportunity to revisit challenging aspects of regional and national American racial history. The school reflected the national trend of segregation, and the city bears the reputation as being the site of a major Ku Klux Klan rally. The Douglass School reflects our community's effort to preserve the history of African American resilience in one Midwestern community.

Illuminating the Black Communities Displaced by Colonial Williamsburg: The Case of Nicholson Street

Moderator: Amy Quark, Ph.D.

Panelists: *Jacqueline Bridgeforth Williams; Anthony Conyers Jr.; Yvonne Tabb Alston; Breyonna Rock; Monika Gosin, Christine Jordan*

A vibrant Black community once lived on Nicholson Street. Today, Colonial Williamsburg's historic re-enactments have taken their place. This presentation will focus on the Local Black Histories Project, a research collaboration between a Black-led grassroots organization, The Village Initiative, and faculty and students at William & Mary. Overseen by a board of leaders from the Black descendant community, the Local Black Histories Project has been conducting research on the economic, social, and political life of the Black community in early 20th century Williamsburg. The partnership has resulted in the creation of an open-access, online archive of oral histories and curated exhibits that illuminate the hidden histories of the Black presence in the "birthplace of the nation." This panel will focus on the creation of an interactive,

online map that brings to life the Black homes and businesses that existed in the Nicholson Street area before they were displaced for the expansion of Colonial Williamsburg. The panel will discuss four main themes: 1) building trust and equitable relations within this partnership between the Black descendant community and the university; 2) the opportunities and obstacles in the research process as we drew on oral histories collected in the past 30 years, a map reflecting recollections of early 20th century Black Williamsburg, photography, census data, and other primary sources; 3) the research findings that reveal a vibrant Black community along Nicholson Street during the late 19th and 20th centuries; and 4) the significance of illuminating these hidden Black histories.

Celebrating Simms, Oral Histories, and Community Storytelling: Toward a Collaborative Practice for Polyvocal Black Historical Recovery

Moderator: Dr. Mollie Godfrey

Panelists: *Mayor Deanna Reed; Dr. Leonard Richards; Dr. Mary Beth Cancienne; L. Renée*

This panel explores the challenges and successes of developing community-university partnerships to support Black historical recovery, archival preservation, and storytelling. Celebrating Simms was started in 2015 by residents from Harrisonburg's Northeast Neighborhood, the local Black heritage center, and James Madison University professors and students. The goal was to remember the Lucy F. Simms School that served Black students in Harrisonburg from 1938-1965. The project has produced a large, permanent exhibit, satellite exhibits at local schools and libraries, an online post-custodial archive, and K-12 lesson plans. Now, we aim to represent the multiplicity of Black voices related to this history by partnering with K-12 teachers and students to conduct oral histories. Mollie Godfrey, co-director of Celebrating Simms, will moderate. Deanna Reed, Mayor of Harrisonburg, will discuss her experience with the project as a member of the Northeast Neighborhood community. Leonard Richards and Mary Beth Cancienne, from JMU's College of Education, will discuss their advocacy for Black history, culture, and leadership in education, and their support for





the teachers and graduate students running the oral history project. L. Renee, Assistant Director of JMU's Furious Flower Poetry Center, will discuss her oral history work with descendants of Black coal miners in West Virginia, her experience speaking to students involved in the Simms oral history project, and the value of teaching collaborative and emancipatory research skills to the next generation. We ask, what methods can communities, scholars, and students use to tell fuller narratives of Black life, history, and culture in our local communities?

Listening to Elders: Family History, Local History, and Personal History

Moderator: Ramona Chapman

Panelists: *Carol Miller, Burnell Irby; Sheila K. Dodson; Ivey Kline; Valerie Alfisha Valentine*

- Carol Miller, Burnell Irby, "If They Wanted You To Know, They Would Have Told You"

Searching for our family's history, these were the words our elderly cousin used to silence the asking of uncomfortable family questions. We learned to listen in silence, take mental notes, store memories of things that were said and to take notice of things not said. Our maternal grandmother migrated to Washington DC, and it was through her stories and summer visits to her birthplace that we learned of our Virginia history. Our paternal grandparents migrated from Georgia. Their stories were few and the search more difficult. DNA sites allowed us to find other family members. We connected with them and shared our discoveries. We began compiling the information we discovered about our Virginia family in a three-ring binder and carried it with us to family gatherings. As we shared our story, we listened to theirs. Census records, DNA sites, visits to museums, government offices, libraries and historical places, visits to national and local archives, joining organizations and trying to work with others in a combined search effort. In this presentation we will share the roadblocks encountered during our search and how they continue to affect the finding of our history.

- Sheila K. Dodson, "Navigating Ancestral Roots: A Journey to Knowing My Paternal Grandmother"

The presentation aims to provide a historical perspective of Southern African American existence. At the time I was born, my parents were considered older in comparison to those of my peers. Growing up in a two-parent household and only knowing one set of grandparents created questions in my mind. Who were my father's parents, and why could I not recall their faces? I heard fleeting mentions of names, but they did not resonate. Quite naturally, I gravitated toward elders, and I was inquisitive regarding my extended family. I understood who my parents' siblings were, and I was aware of who my maternal grandparents were, as they lived well into my adult years. However, a void existed regarding my paternal grandparents, specifically my grandmother. For most descendants of slaves, pathways to family discoveries are complex due to reinforced colonial narratives. Through the presentation, I will explore the hurdles of taking on oral and archival histories and making genetic discoveries as they relate to the African American experience in the South. My presentation follows the symposium's theme relating to African American memory, family histories, and genealogical studies. I ask attendees to consider their own histories and how they can recover family narratives.

- Ivey Kline, "The Legacy of Georgianna Saunders: Race, Gender, and Black Midwifery in Southwest Virginia 1914-1940"

Georgianna Saunders (1866-1942) was a Black lay midwife who lived in Salem, Virginia. Her work as a midwife was vital to population growth and women's health in Roanoke and its surrounding counties yet she remains relatively unknown. Throughout her career, Saunders engaged in active resistance against state systems such as the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics (BVS), eugenics, and social categorization by providing health care indiscriminately to her patients. However, despite her importance she has been intentionally silenced, removed, and excluded from the state archive as government officials attempted to eradicate midwifery in the United States during the early 20th century. This project used her surviving birth record notebooks as a lens, with which to view the archives that eliminate and illuminate Georgianna Saunders: the State archive, the self-made archive, and archives of memory. I argue that Georgianna Saunders is a Black Appalachian midwife who engaged with and resisted power structures that attempted to eliminate her recorded existence in life and obliterated her after death. But, while she is a victim of archival silences in the State archive, one can engage with the self-made archive and archives of memory to uncover a richer narrative of an empathetic, respected, and educated woman.

- Valerie Alfisha Valentine, "Lee Hall Elementary"

1963 was a most memorable year for all Americans. That spring had seen the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the summer Birmingham gave us water hoses and police dogs unleashed upon children of United States Tax-Payers. In a few weeks, little brown girls my age would be blown to bits, because their parents/people in their community dared to demand the Freedom and Equality guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. A 3rd grade male cousin and I, a 7th grader, were the only Negro students to integrate the local (whites only) elementary school. We would be apart, and alone each day. We were descendants from African American people who founded an Early American settlement known as 'The Reservation'. It

was a small community of Free People of Color near the York River, just miles from where American colonist Patrick Henry demanded ‘Liberty or Death’ in Williamsburg. There were daily drills as ‘The Bay of Pigs’ incident was in real time for us. About half the student body was made up of military dependents from the Army Base nearby. Langley Field Air Force Base, and 6 other military facilities were within a 20-mile radius. Then the President of the United States was assassinated ... A small colonial community of Free People of Color whose descendants made significant contributions to the Commonwealth, and our nation.

“Neat in their Cloaths”: Utilizing Material Culture to Expand Black Women’s Narratives

Moderator: Dr. Maureen Elgersman Lee

Panelists: *Mrs. Hope Wright; Ms. Rachel Hogue; Mrs. Nicole Brown*

The exploration of Black life, history, and culture in eighteenth-century Virginia necessitates that scholars study archival sources in ways that read both along and against the grain. Interdisciplinary approaches that blend primary sources, material culture, and historical imagining are also essential methodologies that can be applied to understanding the lives of Black women in the British Atlantic world. The Williamsburg Bray School has diverse and unexplored relationships to Black women and girls, their families, and their lived experiences that both stretch and challenge how historians have previously studied this institution. Based on student lists from 1762, 1765, and 1769, of the 86 Black children who were scholars at the Bray School, almost 50% of them were young girls. However, the histories of Black, female scholars at this Bray School have remained widely unexplored beyond small academic circles. Our panel will look at various methodological techniques related to material culture that support fuller, human, and holistic narratives about the Black girls and women connected to the Williamsburg Bray School.

Maryland and the World: A Roundtable Discussion about Truth and Reconciliation

Moderator: Susan Kern, Ph.D.

Panelists: *Brenda Stone Browder; Julie Hawkins Ennis; Tuajuanda C. Jordan; Julia A. King; Laura E. Masur; Amy Speckart, PhD; Alan B. Taylor; William G. Thomas III*

This interdisciplinary panel explores the physical objects and digital tools that are informing conversations among scholars, institutions, and historically marginalized communities who seek the “truth” about the past and reconciliation in the present. Two standing structures, the Commemorative to Enslaved Peoples in Southern Maryland at St. Mary’s College of Maryland and the restored planter’s house at Thomas Stone National Historic Site in neighboring Charles County inspire discussion about visible pasts in different educational contexts. Two websites developed by panelists, *Still, We Speak: Community Archaeology and Jesuit-Enslaved Ancestors*

and *O Say Can You See: Early Washington, D.C. Law & Family* increase public access to archaeological and archival evidence of Maryland history. Meanwhile, genealogists empowered by Ancestry.com and DNA analysis sometimes find themselves at odds with older generations’ ways of dealing with trauma. Family and community historians Brenda Stone Browder, Major Alan B. Taylor, USACE (ret.), and Julie Hawkins Ennis will join Julia A. King and Tuajuanda Jordan of St. Mary’s College of Maryland, Laura E. Masur of Catholic University of America, William G. Thomas of University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and Amy Speckart, independent scholar and staff member at Rare Book School at University of Virginia.

Navigating Black Culture Today: Disability, Safe Spaces, Publication Education, and Preservation

Moderator: Tonia Cansler Merideth, M.A., William & Mary Bray School Lab

Panelists: *Robert Monson; Gabrielle Kubi, Hyeri Mel Yang, Mara Johnson, Jamaal S. Matthews; Dr. Gregg Suzanne Ferguson; Frederick Gooding, Jr.*

- Robert Monson, “Black Men are Disabled Too: Telling Our Stories Then and Now”

This conference’s title, “At the Root: Exploring Black Life, History, and Culture” is very powerful indeed. In the wake of the mass disabling event known as Covid 19 the world is struggling to regain some sense of health and progress. It is important to take pause here and consider the many Black people who died due to pre-existing conditions and disabilities. Many Black men faced the harsh reality of disabilities that are either visible to the naked eye or hidden within. As we celebrate past feats of strength, analyze our present, and reimagine our future, we must tell the stories of Black disabled men. We must unearth the wisdom and the struggles of those men who weren’t afforded the opportunity to be in the limelight. This session will bring forth the wisdom as well as analyze the society that categorizes and pushes Black men beyond health.





- Gabrielle Kubi, Hyeri Mel Yang, Mara Johnson, Jamaal S. Matthews, “‘I’m Going to Try to Make a Better Path... for the New Era of Us:’ Critical Conversation Spaces as Consciousness-Raising Contexts for Young Black Women”

To develop critical worldviews and confidence in their identities, Black girls must make meaning of their lived experiences. Critical conversation spaces (CCSs), which center reflection on gender and race, provide a context for this meaning-making. Without accounting for girls’ pre-existing knowledge, adults’ curricular design may not reflect girls’ experiences and desires. To evolve past adult-driven pre/proscription and prioritizations, we partnered with a local predominantly Black high school to develop a 3-week CCS pilot and documented Black girls’ perceptions and experiences therein. We asked: what needs, wants, and ideas of Black girls should a CCS curriculum foreground? Employing girls of color’s positive youth development, refusals, and collectivism as theoretical frameworks, we analyzed pre-, during, and post-pilot individual and focus group interview data using Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction. Themes pertaining to gendered-racial identity affirmation; awareness, joy, and growth; and responsiveness and commitment to community were developed and used to revise and expand the curriculum. We conclude with recommendations as to how adult allies, particularly university-based Black woman and other woman of color educators facilitating consciousness-raising spaces, might more intentionally cultivate our Black girl students’ identity and sociopolitical development.

- Dr. Gregg Suzanne Ferguson, “CRT in Education and the Just Names Project”

This session will explore the resistance that was faced by Dr. Ferguson and a group of activists to change the name of a West Virginia public school from one honoring a Confederate general, especially in light of the demographic shifts in the community which resulted in the school’s distinction as having the state’s highest enrollment of Black students. The retrospective will be cast pre and post the “Summer of George Floyd” and will also include data from Dr. Ferguson’s research of Black professional educators from across the country whose reflections are organized through the lens of Critical Race Theory in Education, Cultural Geography

and Unconscious Bias. It will also explore implications for Teacher Education programs; and Constitutional interpretation aligning with *Brown v. Bd of Education* and the impact on Blacks’ Civil Rights in public educational settings.

- Frederick Gooding, Jr., “Black Statues: What They Stand to Tell Us in Our Nation’s Capital”

“When and where was the last time you saw a Black statue out in public?” The fact that this simple question may not be so easy to answer is the reason why this session aligns with exploring black life, history and culture at the root. More than just mere “art at the park,” statues are powerful, poignant and public displays of political power. This question becomes all the more relevant when posed to the nation’s capital of Washington, DC, which is literally representative of American democratic ideals. With the nation’s 250th anniversary coming in 2026, one burning question is to what extent does Mary McLeod Bethune stand alone, or rather how many additional Black statues have been added to the city of DC since Bethune became the first Black person to have a public statue erected on federal land in 1974. Moreover, DC is a city that had a peak African American population of over seventy-one percent in 1971, thereby earning the nickname, “Chocolate City,” a nickname that may not be as obvious if one were judging by the city’s public statues alone. The neglected public history of African American memory, specifically through the presence of Black statues openly displayed in Washington DC, tell us much about the value and visibility of African Americans within society—if we know where and how to look and listen.

Mending the Fork in the Road at the Forks of Cypress

Moderator: Brian Murphy

Panelists: *Karen Curry; Frederick Murphy; Tamisha Sales*

This panel discussion will provide a comprehensive background detailing the Forks of Cypress’ history and its interconnection between the slave holding Jackson Family and enslaved ancestors whose descendants are dedicated in illuminating their existence. The historic site is revered in Lauderdale County and holds a sacred place (to some) in local lore. The Jackson Family was influential in early Alabama history, and had close ties to Andrew Jackson and John Coffee, who both fought and negotiated treaties with Native Americans. Coffee and James Jackson formed a land company to purchase former Indian land and built large cotton plantations in the area. A replica of the Forks of Cypress houses a Regions Bank location in downtown Florence, and white residents recount where they were in June of 1966 when the original house burned. During the pandemic, genealogy research increased, offering an opportunity for descendants of the Forks of Cypress to make valuable connections to their ancestral past. This panel will showcase the power of descendants driving the narrative of their ancestors, reconnecting to land once occupied by their ancestors, and the possibility of healing amongst those whose ancestors shared the same lived experience. This panel relates to the symposium in multiple ways. Descendants are transforming

local narratives through family histories and genealogical studies, situating local and family contexts within regional and national narratives. Indeed, the descendants of the Forks of Cypress are providing a model of how descendant communities can work with historical institutions to drive honest historical narratives.

Feeding Minds and Souls in Wake Forest, North Carolina

Panelists: *Dr. Sarah A. M. Soleim; Joy Shillingsburg; Dr. Roxanne M. Johnson, Tenice Caudle*

This panel will explore how Wake Forest University (WFU) and its affiliate the Wake Forest Historical Museum (WFHM) are supporting the efforts of Wake Forest Community Table (WFCT), a grassroots organization in Wake Forest, North Carolina. WFCT is a collaboration between more than a dozen churches and civic organizations that began providing meals in Wake Forest in 2017. In 2020, WFCT began hosting quarterly meetings where community members examine the systems that create food insecurity, including redlining, generational trauma, white supremacy, and slavery. In 2022, WFCT partnered with WFHM to host two community programs related to WFU's Slavery, Race, and Memory Project. In June, 70 community members attended a walking tour of WFU's original campus that focused on the experiences of free, enslaved, and emancipated African Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then, in October, 80 people attended a community dinner at WFHM where guests learned about the enslaved men, women, and children who worked at that site from 1820-1832. At both events, community leaders guided participants through a conversation about memory, memorialization, and the legacies of slavery. In 2023, WFCT and WFHM are planning a program for high schoolers that will explore the history of school integration and a week-long "alternative spring break" for WFU students focused on how local history can build capacity for social, political, and economic change. After sharing their experiences, panelists hope to generate a broader conversation about best practices for developing sustainable partnerships between universities and the communities in which they work.

Honoring Authenticity: An Exploration of Undergraduate Student Research of Campus Iconography

Moderator: Abby Comey

Panelists: *Lorielle Bouldin; Fatoumata Sissoko; Anabelle Midden; Julian Allison*

This panel will explore how Wake Forest University (WFU) and its affiliate the Wake Forest Historical Museum (WFHM) are supporting the efforts of Wake Forest Community Table (WFCT), a grassroots organization in Wake Forest, North Carolina. WFCT is a collaboration between more than a dozen churches and civic organizations that began providing meals in Wake Forest in 2017. In 2020, WFCT began hosting quarterly meetings where community

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Life in the Reservation Community: Community-University Partnerships for Public Research

Moderator: Amy Quark, Ph.D.

Panelists: *Mary Lassiter; Jacquelyn Gardner; Natalie Reid Mallory; Rosa Lee; Molly Robinson; Phoebe Linnell; Annaliese Santana*

This panel explores an ongoing partnership to build an online exhibit illuminating the experiences of the families who lived in the Reservation community along the York River before their displacement by the U.S. government to establish the Naval Weapons Station, Yorktown in 1918. The partnership is a collaboration involving descendant families from the Reservation and The Local Black Histories Project, which is itself a partnership between The Village Initiative, a Black-led non-profit organization, and William & Mary faculty and students in the Social Justice Policy Initiative. The panel will address a key question: what are the opportunities and challenges of community-university partnerships to empower Black





communities to tell their stories, to foster belonging in university spaces, and to pursue emancipatory outcomes? Panelists, including descendant family members, faculty, and students, will discuss their respective roles in research, community outreach, analysis, and design of the online exhibit and will reflect on the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead as the partnership continues. The panelists will also introduce the first completed segment of the online exhibit, titled ‘Life in the Reservation Community,’ that is based on this collaborative research. This project thus frames descendant-led collaborations as one avenue to rectify and heal from the historical injustices wrought by the federal government against Black residents of the Reservation and their descendants.

Historic Preservation, Property Rights, and Landscapes

Moderator: Adrienne Petty, Ph.D.

Panelists: *Kelley Lemon; LaToya Gray-Sparks; Aysha S. Ames; Rachael Finch*

- Kelley Lemon, “Connections through the Black Agricultural Landscape”

The number of minority farmers are disappearing rapidly across the United States, with the current numbers of black owned farms in particular hovering around 1.4% (Hegeman). In the state of Illinois, the number of black-owned farms is less than 100, with the largest population located in and near the city of Pembroke Township, Kankakee County, Illinois. This work seeks to expand upon the knowledge and understanding of where our food comes from, through the lens of landscape architecture, the rural and urban built environment, and the stories of the Illinoisan black farmers. A series of mappings highlight history, ecology, wildlife, people, soils, plants, food, vegetation, and the physical routes – both current and historic – across the state of Illinois. This work is a piece of a larger project of stories, imaginary regional-scale drawings, and recipes with foods grown and collected from the state, gently reminding us of our connectedness to each other and the earth that sustains us.

The work particularly captures many of the themes of the Lemon Project, beyond the traditionally academic written and oral formats. The working method of contemporary and historical mappings document farms, ecologies, people, and landscape, to visually communicate the connections and tracings over time.

- LaToya Gray-Sparks, “Mapping Landscapes of Erasure: The Reconstructing Randolph Project”

Black landscapes matter, but what should historians and historic preservationists do when the physical indicators of a landscape no longer exist? How can digital technology be used to unveil histories and physical landscapes that were purposefully wiped off the map? The “Reconstructing Randolph Project” seeks to address these questions. My praxis involves researching and mapping Black spaces that were wiped off Richmond’s landscape because of urban renewal. Relying on archival data, oral histories and old topographical maps, Reconstructing Randolph reimagines a landscape that conveys Black resilience and resistance. It is also my hope that this curated documentation can be used to advocate for reparations to African Americans (and their descendants) directly impacted by catastrophic urban planning interventions. The “Reconstructing Randolph Project” involves the intersection of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Black geography, archival investigations, and oral histories. Further, it explores the geography of memory to fill in the gaps of Black landscapes that were purposefully erased. I believe that this project helps to answer the overarching question of how Black communities can take charge of their narratives and tell their own stories by reinserting their history and cultural heritage onto a white-washed landscape.

- Aysha S. Ames, “The Georgetown Slave Sale: How Untold Stories Shape the Narrative of Truth and Reconciliation”

Drawing on genealogical records, Georgetown University archives, and my own personal connection to Georgetown’s 1838 sale of more than 272 enslaved people, this presentation will explore ways in which the legality of slavery has resulted in many untold and hidden stories. The presentation will begin with understanding how slaveholding was commonplace for many prestigious educational institutions. And, how ties to slavery in a vast variety of ways, directly and indirectly, contributed to the success of institutions, like Georgetown. This presentation joins the scholarly conversation investigating questions of Georgetown’s role in perpetuating slavery and racial discrimination, and also explores ways in which the Maryland Jesuits used the property rights gained through slaveholding to advance the status of Catholicism in the United States.

- Rachael Finch, “Restoration, Revival, & Reconciliation: Re-defining the Narrative of the Cultural Landscape in Williamson County, Tennessee through the Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School”

Living alumni Charles Buford recalls, “this school taught us all that we could be somebody in life.” But the history of Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School began over one hundred-fifty years

ago. Even older than the school's history, is the land and the families who inhabited the Duplex community of Williamson County, Tennessee. Their stories provide a unique opportunity for us to gain valuable insight into the significance of protecting, preserving, and re-defining the cultural landscape. Their stories of enslavement, war and peace, freedom and families, segregation and opportunity, rebirth, and renewal comprise people, place, space, and preservation. Restoring and relocating the Rosenwald school will authentically tell its story to a broader, diverse audience, focused on its origins and the lasting legacies from Jim Crow to Civil Rights. This presentation will answer how communities and scholars strategically utilize the built environment to tell the full story of Black life, history, and culture promoting best practices in collaboration, shared authority, and equitable partnerships.

The Power of Language: Clinical Perspectives of Systemic Narratives

Panelists: *Kristie Norwood, PhD; Linia Willis, SLPD, CCC-SLP; Shana Matthews, M.A. CCC-SLP*

Licensed Clinical Psychologist Dr. Kristie Norwood, Certified Clinical Speech-Language Pathologist Dr. Linia Willis, and

Certified Speech-Language Pathologist, Shana Mathews will discuss how expressive language and nonverbal communication shape the narratives that echo from African American communities to institutions and beyond. These dynamic black female leaders in academia and clinical practice offer unique personal and professional journey's in the conversation of transforming narratives about how language can be used as a tool to cultivate an environment of safety in sharing African American stories. This presentation will expound upon the health disparities that exist within health sciences. Specific focus will be on how the fields of mental health and speech language pathology are impacted and ways that institutions can make culturally appropriate changes. A framework for educational systems and institutions of higher learning to support African American stories, incorporate culturally appropriate language, and provide environments that foster belonging for African American students and leaders in health-related industries will be provided. This panel will explore how one HBCU is providing innovative approaches to galvanize students and faculty to share their narratives to promote cultural healing and wellness in the areas of mental health and speech-language pathology. -How to use appropriate language to support the sharing of African American narratives -How can institutions of higher education develop programs and trainings that provide safety for African American stories?

Notes:

13TH ANNUAL LEMON PROJECT SPRING SYMPOSIUM

The Lemon Project:

A Journey of Reconciliation

MARCH 24-25, 2023

At the Root:
*Exploring Black Life,
History, and Culture*



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