

ABSTRACT

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THE LEGACY OF HISTORIC SITES:
INTERPRETING AFRICAN AMERICAN
HISTORY

Sehba Imtiaz, Master's Historic Preservation,
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The history of slavery and its legacy of racism are difficult parts of the national historic narrative. Historic sites have an opportunity to play a role in the current discussion of race in America, by offering historical context and by engaging visitors in a fuller portrayal of the topic. Over the past 30 years, scholars have compiled a loose corpus of guidance on how to interpret the legacy and history of slavery at historic sites. Yet these recommendations do not appear to have had a measurable impact on how the topic is addressed. Pulling together and distilling the various recommendations allows them to be organized into an applicable checklist, which focuses on interpretation, programming, and community engagement. These guidelines are analyzed and tested against four historic house museums, which demonstrate a range of ownership, experiences, and resources. The result is aimed at assisting sites in developing and/or refining their interpretive programs.

THE LEGACY OF HISTORIC SITES: INTERPRETING AFRICAN AMERICAN
HISTORY

By

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Dedication

To my parents, Sadaf Imtiaz and Imtiaz Rehman. And to Safa and Hibbah, for all your love and support in everything I do. Thank you.

An additional shout out to my friends and family for your support and encouragement in all my scholastic and life endeavors.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The manner in which groups understand the past is used to shape their identities and their perceptions of others, and to help justify past and present actions and conditions. According to Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, an anthropologist with an interest in living cultures, “During moments of extreme violence, much is lost as part of the assault on human life and dignity. The past itself becomes a form of propaganda, an illusion of truth, and a political tool because, as Bettina Arnold has written, ‘the past legitimates the present.’ How societies understand the past is thus manipulated to justify violence, the politics of appropriation, and genocide.”¹ The compensation of past injustices through restitution of money or objects is often not sufficient for communities, descendants, or groups. According to Colwell, “instead of wanting things, people often want to reclaim the past, to reestablish the truth of what happened. When a torn society does not fully and honestly confront its past, when the truth about the past remains buried and obscured, the perpetrators of violence in a very real sense remain triumphant.”² Thus, in order to move beyond a sorrowful past, scholars, museum professionals, and social justice activists place an emphasis on the importance of narratives and stories in helping victims transcend past conflicts. Through storytelling, a voice is given to those previously voiceless, which is fundamental to reconciliation.

Widely held attitudes toward racial differences in America were formed in light of various depictions of slavery over the years, “and consciously or

¹ Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, “History, Justice, and Reconciliation,” *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2007), 24.

² *Ibid*, 25.

subconsciously, most expect to have these notions confirmed when they visit public history sites or museums.”³ Expanding and creating a more comprehensive American history which openly discusses issues of slavery and race, may better prepare the American people to function in the continually growing multiracial and multicultural society that characterizes the modern nation. The past has always been multicultural; what is often considered “minority history” has not always been about a group of people who were a minority in the population.

With few exceptions, the depiction of slavery at historic sites and house museums communicated to its visitors a “progress as usual” narrative, and portrayed slavery as a temporary aberration, which marked the topic as requiring no further discussion. Until recently the scores of surviving antebellum plantations spread throughout the South that were visited every year by thousands of tourists offered their visitors’ explanations that avoided almost any discussion of the former black workforces who performed the vast majority of the essential tasks required to operate these impressive estates. More recently historians and preservationists have pointed out that these sites remain contested territory. As Philip Burnham, a scholar on the role of minorities in American life, has observed, not everyone agrees on the value of remembering the plantation and the uncomfortable truths that they contain. As explanation, he notes that, “As some whites have neglected the story of slavery out of embarrassment or condescension, some blacks have doubts about remembering their early roots in the Americas too. The problem is how we have come to see slavery as a degraded existence, forgetting the humanity of the people who endured it. To see

³James Oliver Horton, “Slavery in American History: An Uncomfortable National Dialogue,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 40-41; 43.

them only as ‘slaves’ is one of the most difficult legacies of the plantation...to overcome.”⁴

The history of slavery, and its legacy of racism, continues to have significant meaning in today’s national narrative. The noted historian and scholar of the roots of racism, James Oliver Horton, argues that what we understand today as racism is largely a legacy of the slavery that formally ended nearly a century and a half ago, based on theories of racial inequality which is incorporated into public interpretations of the past.⁵ Justifying slavery served as an impetus for modern American racist theory, which continued to develop after the Civil War and abolition of slavery, and took on the new guise of scientific theory to defend the Jim Crow system of racial segregation. Many colonial period historians research and demonstrate how the laws of that period are fertile terrain for discussing the topic of slavery and link the history of slavery to the present racially polarized society. It is clear that the institution of slavery shaped the American system of racial differences.⁶

Considering the role that race and slavery played in shaping the national narrative is particularly difficult, since history provides both a national and a personal identity for citizens. In the cause of furthering national pride and identity, “Our monuments are still intended to be ‘inspiring’; to revere heroic ancestors more than understand their complexity; to forget the invisible labor of those who built much of the environment; to anchor us in a comfortable past, even if that past requires a

⁴ John Michael Vlach, “The Last Great Taboo Subject,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 57; Philip Burnham, *How The Other Half Lived: A people’s guide to American historic sites* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 57.

⁵ James Oliver Horton, “Introduction,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 1.

⁶ Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum* (London: Duke University Press, 1997), 84.

carefully built replica to hide its flaws.”⁷ History is taught in non-academic settings as well as in school; discussing slavery in “public settings,” i.e. historic sites, is particularly difficult and sensitive because historic sites are generally considered places for family enjoyment and not for confronting the ugly parts of the past. But these sites also provide the opportunity to confront and to help resolve the contradiction between the American ideal and the reality of American history.⁸

The argument for this approach to interpreting difficult topics in American history is informed by the argument presented by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, social historians and museum scholars who have surveyed the American people about their level of engagement with the past. They found that historic sites provide a space with the potential to demonstrate an unbiased version of history. If all historic sites across the nation openly discussed their history of slavery and its legacy, then perhaps their visitors could make informed decisions on current racial issues by learning from past experiences. But of possibly greater importance is the awareness that historic sites must strive to keep themselves relevant at a time when traditional methods of teaching history have been found lacking. One path that is open to historic sites is to provide opportunities for engagement for its visitors and for local communities to make a connection between the historic past and its present legacy.

While the topic of slavery is a troubling subject, the reward for those historic sites who engage in this effort may be considerable. Historic sites have a unique position to provide opportunities for learning about race in a historical context, which can serve as a step toward a broader public discussion on race in the present.

⁷ Burnham, 206.

⁸ Horton, 36-38.

According to the results of a nation-wide survey that measured the extent that Americans are engaged with the past, Rosenzweig and Thelen contend that many Americans believe they are more likely to discover “real” or “true” history at museums and historic sites than in classrooms. It is key for interpreters and curators to understand that for most visitors, historic sites tend not to be the space where they are expected to have a conversation on contemporary racial issues.⁹ John Vlach, a scholar on African American folk life, argues that from his research he discovered that “many African Americans find that the best way to deal with their anger and disappointment is just not to talk about it in public.”¹⁰ The topic of slavery will provoke strong reactions from visitors, but can be harnessed for a useful social project; it can provide people with a means to allow them to understand how they became the people they are.

Maintaining and restoring a building to its appearance during its period of significance,¹¹ has been the traditional focus of historic house museums and sites. But this approach need not be pursued to the detriment of a broadened interpretive focus covering other time periods and incorporating multiple stories into the visitor experience. Considering heritage conservation as a selective process raises fundamental issues about why and for whom the site is being preserved. Yet the interpretation of history can be one pathway to social change. Public archeologist, Carol McDavid, argues that there is a “huge disconnect between academic/professional writing about how to present more inclusive histories... and the everyday docent in some traditional house/history museums, where ideas from the

⁹ Ibid, 43, 49, 53.

¹⁰ Vlach, 58.

¹¹ Gail Thomas, *Department of Parks and Recreation, MNCPPC* (2013), 4-6.

new social history have not yet been adopted.”¹² How can exhibits relate to contemporary society? Museums have historically sought to engage public interest through the presentation of artifacts, but they should also create more informed, responsive, and interpretive products that relate to the world beyond the institutions.

Over the past three decades, scholars both within and outside the academy have argued for the more robust and inclusive interpretation of slavery at various historic sites. A number of scholars have also developed guidelines, recommendations, and case studies from their own professional experiences on how historic sites and house museums can interpret and engage visitors and the local community on the history of slavery the sites are presenting.¹³

Introducing selected scholarly critiques, and portraying the theoretical framework behind the current interpretation of slavery and its legacy of racism, will provide the context for considering the role historic sites can play. Key concepts such as Critical Race Theory (CRT), reconciliation, multi-vocality, and heritage as a field of social action will be presented. These key concepts will provide an understanding of how these guidelines came about, and why many scholars believe the institution of slavery has led to current racial concerns.

The third chapter gathers the various guidelines and recommendations generated by multiple scholars over the past 30 years. This will serve as a starting point for considering the means for measuring the success of current interpretation. These guidelines will be critically evaluated, and recommendations will be based on aspects of interpretation the guidelines have not taken into consideration. Four

¹² Carol McDavid, “Beyond Strategy and Good Intentions: Archaeology, Race, and White Privilege,” in *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2007), 74.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 70.

historic sites have been selected to serve as case studies to consider both the constraints and opportunities in adopting the guidance provided by the scholarly community.

The case studies are: Drayton Hall (SC), Riversdale (MD), Rokeby Museum (VT), and Chase-Lloyd House (MD). It should be noted that all four sites are designated National Historic Landmarks (NHL) as well as listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Their potential for programming, interpretation, and research vary widely according to site and funding opportunities. Together they provide crucial context for assessing their potential for interpreting and connecting the legacy of slavery and racism to broader contexts, and for providing opportunities for engagement.

Significant progress has been made over the years in expanding interpretive programs to include the institution of slavery and the roles of the enslaved at such iconic historic sites as Monticello, Mount Vernon, and Colonial Williamsburg. But what about other sites that are not as well known or funded? How many other sites are interpreting slavery and its legacy, and how well are they doing it? The process of programming and funding at the most prominent sites is not relevant to this investigation, and if this topic is to be addressed widely, then many different types of sites and situations must be recruited, and addressed on their own terms. Therefore, the case studies that have been selected for this study represent those properties with more limited resources and smaller visitation, more like the vast majority of historic house museums across the nation. The approaches must be specific to each site, as

each has unique constraints and opportunities, but it can be an opportunity for similarly matched sites to learn from one another.

Drayton Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, is the 18th-century Georgian plantation house built for John Drayton in 1742. Owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Drayton Hall is administered and funded by a private organization, which aims to present a full interpretation of the historic plantation economy and its occupants, both black and white. Drayton Hall provides a model of the benefits to be gained from carrying out a diverse program of research, including archaeology, documentary research, and oral histories, which provide a strong basis for interpretation and opportunities for community engagement. Drayton Hall demonstrates how a site may combine a range of sources of evidence to inform and engage visitors in a variety of formats.

Riversdale is a five-part Federal mansion located in Riverdale, Maryland, which was built for Baron de Stier in 1801 as the center piece of an extensive agricultural estate. Stier fled with his family from Belgium when the French army invaded Antwerp, arriving in Maryland in 1794. The Baron left the unfinished Riversdale house and property to his daughter, Rosalie Stier Calvert, and her husband, George Calvert, the 6th Lord Baltimore, when he returned to Belgium after the end of hostilities. The property is now owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the site serves as a model for publicly owned historic house museums, to demonstrate how programming and interpretation can be achieved through various (and often limited or competitive) grants and funding opportunities.



Fig. 1: *Drayton Hall*. 2016. Drayton Hall, Charleston. www.draytonhall.org



Figure 2: Imtiaz, Sehba. *Riversdale*. 2016. Riverdale, Maryland.

Rokeby Museum, located in Ferrisburgh, Vermont, is a historic farm property and museum, which is part of the Underground Railroad, and the National Park Service Network to Freedom Program. The historic house and farm site is from 1780, and is associated with Rowland T. Robinson, a Quaker and abolitionist who sheltered escaped slaves. Rokeby Museum is remarkable as it operates with only a single paid staff member and multiple volunteers. As such, Rokeby demonstrates the challenges in undertaking research and providing interpretive programming when funds and limited staff are an issue.

The Chase-Lloyd House in Annapolis, Maryland, represents the many sites that have chosen not to present a more inclusive narrative of its history, and which face a variety of challenges if they choose to do so. Chase-Lloyd is a three-story high-style Georgian mansion, built originally in 1769 for Samuel Chase, but purchased, completed, and lived in by Edward Lloyd IV. Chase-Lloyd is well known for its high-style architectural features, and as a long-time private residence for elderly women. The Chase-Lloyd House provides only limited historical interpretation at present, and has not engaged in studying its history of enslavement or attempted to associate with the local descendant community. The Chase-Lloyd site provides an opportunity to examine how a property might begin to expand its interpretive focus, and to consider the key differences between this site and the others on why a nationally significant site would not provide a full interpretation of its history.

The sites offer a foundation upon which to build recommendations for best practices related to the interpretation of slavery. These case studies demonstrate both the opportunities and the challenges in engaging visitors in the discussion of race in

terms of historic conflict, and thus in telling a more complete story of their site. The lessons gleaned from analyzing the four case studies combined with the assessment of the guidance provided by the various selected scholars, will serve as the basis for developing specific recommendations for what can be done to fill in gaps where sites could do more, as well as reveal what the guidelines have failed to consider when discussing the interpretation of slavery. For instance, by grouping the guideline questions thematically, an aspect that scholars do not take into consideration is the mission of the organization or site, and how the mission affects the programming and interpretation. In addition, none of the four case studies have any targets in place to measure the success of their interpretation or of their programming.



Fig. 3: *Rokeby House*. 2016. Rokeby Museum, Vermont. www.rokeby.org



Fig. 4: *Chase-Lloyd House*. 2016. Chase Home Inc. www.chaselloydhouse.org

Chapter 2: Interpretive Narratives of Slavery

The history of slavery and its legacy of racism continues to have a profound influence on the dynamics of modern American society. The interpretive messages conveyed at historic sites that are associated with this most problematic of all difficult aspects of American history have the potential to be a positive force in improving this situation if the topic is presented in a thoughtful, engaging, and insightful manner. The foundation for this contention is the premise that if all historic sites were engaging their visitors and local community members in critically analyzing the past, perhaps it would allow an open discussion of contemporary issues in a historical context. While the interpretation of slavery at historic sites may have improved in breadth and depth over the decades, this discussion is based on the finding that the majority of historic sites continue to avoid or ignore the topic of slavery. On the other hand, a number of scholars have examined the topic in detail, and have presented their ideas for improving the interpretive narratives regarding slavery. By considering these sources from over three decades of research and pulling together the most promising aspects of the best practices they offer, those findings provide a series of guidelines for how to proceed. The scholars have produced case studies as well, many times even applying their particular insights to test their applicability in real time situations. By bringing together the work of these various scholars into a single document, the success of the suggested guidelines can be tested, and they can be translated from a more theoretical perspective into a practical checklist.

Since 1995 visitors at Monmouth Plantation in Natchez, Mississippi, have been able to spend a night in cottages built on the foundations of slave cabins. Monmouth does not provide a specific narrative revolving around slavery, however, in deference to the perceived wishes of visitors. Slaves were referred to as servants, creating a nostalgic perspective on the past to gain visitors seeking an “authentic” experience. But this example prompts the question, do historic sites only market what visitors are interested in, but with the result that they are left unsatisfied?

There are multiple issues with selective history, one of which is that while slavery may be recalled at historic sites, its harsher realities generally are not. While not all slaves were treated horribly, the institution of slavery itself was defined and reinforced through the definition of power and ownership. As Phillip Burnham observed with reference to the Hermitage, home of President Andrew Jackson, in Nashville, Tennessee: “today, the harsh hand of King Cotton is barely remembered at the Hermitage. The estate projects a contented human community instead, a virtue it hardly possessed in Jackson’s day.”¹⁴ Almost 20 years later little has changed. When visiting the Hermitage in 2015, only the “great” qualities of Jackson were presented, along with the gorgeous ornamental garden, with barely a mention of the enslaved workers who made it all possible. During the tour, the focus was placed on the architecture and on social life, while visitors quickly passed through the kitchen and the dining room, with no reference made to the often household slaves who worked there.

Other times, history can be demolished due to a lack of documentation or research, which can result in wiping out an entire narrative of a group of people

¹⁴ Burnham, 52, 54.

because it was forgotten they were there. Everything we encounter, whether the exhibit or the site itself is a product of human hands. In his book, *How the Other Half Lived*, Burnham discussed the consequences of forgotten history: “The slave cabins were long ago removed in order to do lucrative phosphate mining. The slave cemetery, marked by families with shards of glass and pottery, was accidentally raked over in the 1970s by a volunteer group on a clean-up campaign—the volunteers just didn’t recognize the sites as graves.”¹⁵ Burnham argues that presenting the history of slavery is not about polishing the narrative, but in using strategic interpretation to tell a more complete story which is more accessible to visitors.

Burnham further observed that “in a mirror image of Mount Vernon, the vast majority of visitors to Cedar Hill [home of Fredrick Douglass in Washington, D.C.] are African American. The most integrated of America’s heroes, I think, would be surprised to see how little has changed.”¹⁶ Twenty years later, some things have changed, as Mount Vernon has taken numerous steps toward creating a more inclusive narrative of the plantation’s slaves. But rather than focusing on the narrative of such major historic sites, it seems more beneficial to consider how research and interpretive approaches used at less visible, local historic sites, have the potential to provide a wider foundation and to increase relatability of sites nationwide.

Burnham states that “the active agency of people seeking to change their lives is through organized reform.”¹⁷ Sites are beginning to reflect change in attitude by preserving places that recall integral communities with a different perspective of social history, thus demonstrating that historic sites too can be representative of a new

¹⁵ Ibid, 55.

¹⁶ Ibid, 76.

¹⁷ Ibid, 198.

vision. Monuments and sites are permanent alterations to the cultural landscape, so they must be specific in understanding their purpose and what message they are aiming to transmit. By using a more hands-on experience to gain a more nuanced understanding of how the space was used, historic sites can serve as a balancing act, by demonstrating the good which came out of the bad.¹⁸

The issue with recalling violence related to a specific group of people, or suppressing an unpleasant narrative, is that it perpetuates stereotypes from a specific perspective. Historical truth is often socially produced by particular people with specific purposes, interest, and biases. However, Richard Handler and Eric Gable argue that “the truths embodied in historical stories are thus not absolute or universal, but relative to the cultural context in which they are made.”¹⁹ As such people can use the same events and facts to provide different perspectives and tell different stories, especially when combined with previously unknown facts. Raising crucial issues about politics of race through topics of slavery can expose the embedded topics of sexual exploitation, resistance, and rebellion, while breaking down the artificial barriers between the races. “The topic of miscegenation raises disturbing questions about American slavery and its legacy of racism.”²⁰

Any site or exhibition can be interpreted from various contexts and from many perspectives. But what is effective interpretation? For Handler and Gable, it is the ability to critically analyze the social history; to examine the past in order to challenge the belief systems today; to emphasize the goal to pull visitors into self-learning experiences that will challenge their preconceptions. Thus, when historic

¹⁸ Ibid, 199, 202.

¹⁹ Handler and Gable, 4.

²⁰ Ibid, 92.

sites offer such scrutiny and criticism of the history they interpret and present, they implicitly state that they understand the site as a whole as well as its context, and trust the public or visitors to see the big picture.²¹

Sites of discord or sites associated with minority groups are largely invisible in contemporary cultural and historical interpretations and writings, and these sites can be in danger of being vandalized, destroyed, or simply ignored. William Fawcett and Walter Lewelling argue in their essay “that the differential preservation of the archaeological and historical records not only reflects but also fuels race and class struggles over political and economic power... an integral part of these struggles is the way in which the past is viewed and constructed... If we perceive people as lacking historical or cultural identity, then the record of that people also becomes unimportant and prone to destruction, fulfilling the prophecy.”²² A 2004 study of National Register properties presented 823 resources out of 76,000 properties associated with African Americans, just one percent of all listed sites. A report authored by the Center for American Progress, published in 2014, also found that only 5.6 percent of 460 national parks, sites, and monuments are dedicated to African American.²³

This self-fulfilling prophecy is troublesome, especially if the dominant society or culture sees another culture as uninteresting or without validity. As a result, it can

²¹ Ibid, 175, 198; Burnham, 71.

²² William Fawcett and Walter Lewelling, “Lemuel’s Garden: Confronting Issues of Race, Class, and Power through the Differential Preservation of Archaeological Sites in Northern Utah,” in *Lines That Divide: Historical Archaeologies of Race, Class, and Gender* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 41, 54.

²³ Jessica Goad, “Better Reflecting Our Country’s Growing Diversity,” *Center for American Progress*, Pub Date: Feb 2014, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/report/2014/02/19/84191/better-reflecting-our-countrys-growing-diversity/>.

be difficult to preserve a distinct cultural identity while surviving within American society. This can lead to perceptions of failure that reinforce ethnic stereotypes, eliminating the possibility of variation within or between culturally defined categories or groups; “Thus, success or failure becomes attributable to race or class.”²⁴

The topic and narrative of slavery can serve as a platform for discussion on issues of social justice, especially those regarding race. According to noted historian, Ira Berlin, “the intense engagement over the issue of slavery signals – as it did in the 1830s with the advent of radical abolitionism and in the 1960s with the struggle over civil rights—a search for social justice on the critical issue of race.”²⁵ Even now, slavery continues to have a greater presence in American life than at any time since the end of the Civil War. But in order to move past the narrative of slavery itself, and to analyze its consequences for the issues of race, even in the 21st century, the public must first understand it. Thus, Dr. Berlin further argues that “American history cannot be understood without slavery. Slavery shaped America’s economy, politics, culture, and fundamental principles.”²⁶

Rather than continuing to debate the details of historical accuracy or of the culpability of famous individuals, the focus should shift to formulating the methods of education and interaction relating to the topics of chattel bondage and its many legacies. According to Dr. Berlin, one of the past views on slavery has been that “slavery robbed Africans and their descendants of their culture and denied their language, religion, and family life, reducing them to infantilized ciphers. Slavery, in

²⁴ Ibid, 54.

²⁵ Ira Berlin, “Coming to Terms with Slavery in Twenty-First Century America,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 1.

²⁶ Ibid, 2.

short, broke Africans and African Americans.”²⁷ Yet this does not correctly represent the full experience of the enslaved community nor of their descendants’ post-emancipation. Slavery’s legacy goes beyond the victimization, brutalization, and exclusion of a people.²⁸

So then, what are the issues involved with offering fully integrated histories at historic sites? Should the emphasis be on exposure, disclosure, and reinterpretation?²⁹ Joanne Melish argues that there are four main challenges in offering and overcoming issues with fully integrated histories. The first is the ability to persuade the administrative, curatorial, and education staff of the need for reinterpretation. The second is convincing trustees, donors, and members to “buy into new interpretations that not only challenge the celebratory narrative of ‘their’ founders and patriots but also move the objects and documents many of them have donated off center stage.” A third challenge is retraining front line staff to tell a new less celebratory story, and which introduces a more negative portrayal of the property owners who traditionally occupy center stage. And lastly, the most challenging and difficult is to dislodge the counter narrative which has been devised over the years on the basis of limited information.³⁰

Promoters of heritage tourism may have assumed that by creating a context of parallel histories, and by adding African American monuments to the cultural landscape, this would provide an opportunity to ‘heal wounds’ and promote reconciliation. Marie Tyler-McGraw argues that the challenge is to strengthen the

²⁷ Ibid, 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 17.

³⁰ Joanne Melish, “Recovering (from) Slavery: Four Struggles to Tell the Truth,” in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 103-104.

institutions that help individuals and groups exert control over the way they are represented and by providing them expertise in the presentation of their own cultural claims. In order to do this, accurate research and data collection are the core, along with local support from those who have a clear understanding of the cultural inventory and a sense of the potential community benefits. The aim here is to persuade communities to acknowledge complexity and diversity as the motivator for interpretation, rather than using it as a platform for revenue enhancement or as a political strategy.³¹

But how can a site represent the monument's value of present-day relevance, in order to connect visitors to the message, and perhaps create a better understanding of the broader context? The nature of the monument can provoke strong opinions, and can encourage debate as part of the constant experience of the site. It must be noted that a building's perceived historical or architectural value cannot be separated from its painful historical record. This discord value can even overshadow its historical value, perhaps even causing controversies over its listed status or any proposed changes. And even the continuation of the difference of opinions from opposing sides can cause the monument or site to keep its discord value. According to Denis Byrne, the aim should be to come to an understanding that the monument would remain a site of discord, which would become a part of its heritage. This monument can then provide an opportunity to consider places of civil conflict, allowing for their short term conservation, before their historical value serves as a justification for lasting

³¹ Marie Tyler-McGraw, "Southern Comfort Levels, Race, Heritage Tourism, and the Civil War in Richmond," in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006), 166-167.

preservation.³² Byrne contends that often “there is a residue of essentialism present in the heritage field where the urge to conserve old places sometimes goes hand-in-hand with an urge to conserve old ways.”³³ There is an apparent tendency in historic preservation to freeze culture at an idealized stage in its past. Yet the social significance of heritage places are subject to change, innovation, and improvisation, and culture can emphasize practice rather than structure. Thus, historic sites, in order to remain relevant, must become responsive to changing circumstances.

Even as historic sites are responding to changing circumstances, however, how do ordinary people and visitors understand the meaning of the heritage site? People assign symbolic meaning to places, which can sometimes be invisible to an outsider. The social significance of a historic site may combine the obvious, traditional meaning of the site, but also other less apparent meanings assigned to it by locals and certain groups. Thus, any site can have several layers of significance, some of them more publicly accessible than others. Locals can often devise their own conservation strategies that are protective of old places and things in the context of their own “local world” rather than according to some global template. Byrne argues that “the cultural meaning of a place may be contested locally and different local people may ‘narrate’ a place differently.”³⁴

For minority groups, heritage visibility is often a matter of struggle. The aim is to facilitate the visibility of all in the contested and socially constructed cultural landscape. The present landscape is always in a form of contact with those who

³² Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, “Sites of Memory and Sites of Discord: Historic monuments as a medium for discussing conflict in Europe,” in *The Heritage Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 137-138.

³³ Denis Byrne, “Heritage as Social Action,” in *The Heritage Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 151.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 153.

occupied it before; this does not mean that the heritage site means exactly the same to those in the present that it did to those who created it. Here, intangible heritage recognizes the importance of memory, and how the recollections and emotions are triggered by traces in the form of objects, or the sight or feel of familiar places even when there is no tangible trace of its former existence. This interpretation constitutes the social significance of heritage places or landscapes.³⁵ That by understanding the site within the larger context of a cultural landscape, rather than just as a discrete point on the path, the multiple significances of a site can be revealed, making it more relevant to both visitors and to the local community. A distinctive view of the past enables minority groups to maintain a collective identity in the present, as their understanding of the past and of their cultural survival can be a source of strength for individuals and the community.

Heritage is, and can serve as a field of social action. The attachment a person feels toward a heritage place can be based on stories passed down about the place or the experiences, or formed through the course of the struggle which occurred there, or formed through the context of cultural revival activities occurring there. Heritage is used as a resource in an ongoing attempt to create and recreate identity, where mobilizing heritage places as elements from the cultural landscape serve as part of the process of forming and expressing identity. This deployment of places as identity markers can be regarded as a form of social action. The work of identity building is a two way relationship between place and community, where the place has stamped itself on the identity of the community and the community is known for gathering at the place. People and communities are being forced to demonstrate a tangible link

³⁵ Ibid, 155, 157.

between defining who they are as a community and the local landscape, and the way that link is defined is critical to the viability or survival of a community.³⁶ Often times, "...communities use heritage as a part of the 'work' which maintains their effective links with particular localities," forming bonds between social relations and place.³⁷

Specific sites can excite a degree of emotional arousal which needs to be recognized and addressed in interpretation, and which can be defined as "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."³⁸ This emotional dimension is often excluded from interpretation, even though the chief aim of interpretation is provocation not instruction, where the function is to make links, to remind, and to make aware. David Uzzell and Roy Ballantyne state in their essay, *Heritage that Hurts: Interpretation in a Postmodern World*, that there are five factors to influence emotional engagement with heritage itself or interpretation: time, distance, experiencing places, degree of abstraction, and management.³⁹

The meaning and resonance of events from the past change as time separates us from those events. Although the horrible nature of events that transpired at sites is never erased, the resulting anger and anguish can be muted and the number of visitors for whom it might be a cathartic experiences is likely to slowly decline over the years.

³⁶ Ibid, 169-170.

³⁷ Rodney Harrison, "The Politics of the Past: Conflict in the use of heritage in the modern world," in *The Heritage Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 178.

³⁸ David Uzzell and Roy Ballantyne, "Heritage that hurts: Interpretation in a postmodern world," in *The Heritage Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 502.

³⁹ Ibid, 504.

Thus, sites can evolve from being a place of memorial and remembrance to a tourist attraction, depending on the amount of time which has passed. Uzzell and Ballantyne maintain that as time progresses, the emphasis on specific aspects of history changes, and that history can be rewritten or simply forgotten. “As we go back in time we seem to be more willing to ignore suffering and treat events in a more disinterested way as if they are from a ‘foreign country.’”⁴⁰ For historic sites then, time is a key component in understanding the way visitors will react to the memorial or to the space, and can influence the manner in which the staff interprets the information available. Time is also important in influencing the interpretation, as most often, the amount of information grows, as both new research is uncovered, and new technology assists with finding and analyzing data.

Both physical and psychological distance can accentuate or moderate a visitor’s emotional involvement. Uzzell and Ballantyne argue that personal responsibility seems to diminish with distance, and that people tend to be more individually concerned with local issues while assuming that national or international issues are associated with the state or national government. Here, interpretation can enhance mutual understanding and appreciation and promote personal action at different spatial scales.⁴¹ This can also influence how visitors experience places, but it is difficult to know to what degree they share similar feelings in terms of emotional reactions. Staff must be aware of the following: How are people imposing feelings and emotions onto the scene? What are the implications for interpretation? Should a specific atmosphere be created? Who is the target audience? And since emotional

⁴⁰ Ibid, 504.

⁴¹ Ibid, 508-509.

engagement often decreases as time passes, how does this passing affect decisions on interpretation and presentation of information? What should be interpreted, how, and when? And what is the degree of abstraction from the interpretation to the narrative and to the message? The degree of abstraction of heritage being interpreted changes emotional reaction to interpretive experience. Does people-based interpretation lead to a particular or a restricted set of emotions and feelings being portrayed? ⁴²

The promotional, marketing, and management decisions made for a given site is a major factor in influencing the effectiveness of the interpretation. If the aim is to accurately convey an account of conflict, but also to capture what that conflict meant at a human level, these two objectives often are not compatible. Uzzell and Ballantyne argue that the interpretation should aim to interpret with, rather than about, the people; the interpretation “should present perspectives on the world which encourage visitors to question and explore different understandings, values and viewpoints.”⁴³

Accomplishing this goal requires collaboration between the public and local and descendant communities. It is crucial that the staff learn about the social and political landscape of the surrounding community. This is necessary to gauge the feasibility of including a public interpretation component, as well as to determine how they might generate the support required to deal publicly with some uncomfortable aspects of their community’s history.

According to archaeologist Carol McDavid, the staff of any historic site must follow five concepts to enable a fully integrated interpretation which can engage

⁴² Ibid, 507.

⁴³ Ibid, 510.

visitors in a critical analysis of the past. A pragmatic approach to the matter of interpretation enables each person to express their own voice, and to embrace the idea that “some truths are more meaningful and can help us to understand each other better.”⁴⁴ The interpretation should be multivocal, meaning that it reflects the diversity of people who had the opportunity to participate; interactive, to provide a way for people to question the interpretation and for them to approach material from a variety of angles, and then to respond to those questions and challenges; and, contextual, for visitors to communicate how archaeology depends on history, ethnography, genealogy, and on continuities and conflicts of past and present.⁴⁵ This is based on the assumption that by following this prescription, historic sites can provide a platform for visitors or local community members to move towards the idea of reconciliation and acceptance of the past. By accepting the legacies of the past, they can be addressed, allowing the community, or individuals, to move forward on how the past influences a present day narrative.

It should be noted, however, that reconciliation does not imply a single truth to which everyone subscribes. Interpretation should be about storytelling, providing a narrative, which allows for multi-vocality to emerge by engaging with the past and memories in the present. So, “history in this form is a dialogue that critically approaches varying versions of the past while continually aspiring to uncover the truth.”⁴⁶ The argument is that while all narratives should be given equal consideration, they should not necessarily be given equal weight. That way, narratives

⁴⁴ Carol McDavid, “Archaeologies that Hurt; Descendants that Matter: A pragmatic approach to collaboration in the public interpretation of African-American heritage,” in *The Heritage Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 516.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 517.

⁴⁶ Colwell-Chanthaphonh, 27.

are not then subjective, but impose a higher standard of objectivity by incorporating requirements to assess knowledge claims from a range of standpoints. In addition, multiple narratives do not devalue the truth, but often allow opportunities for better understanding of people, events, processes, and structures. There is a need to link macro-level and micro-level events, experiences, processes, and structures in order to reveal hidden truths, as well as to show how history itself is constructed and used as a cultural strategy. Colwell-Chanthaphonh elaborates that "...one of the best ways to demystify organized violence is to start with individual stories".⁴⁷

Within contemporary African Diaspora research, the primary focus has been to examine historical effects of racism: "racism is a thread that connects past and present, and it continues to be a major impediment to social justice in American society."⁴⁸ McDavid and Shackel, in their book *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement*, argue that Critical Race Theory (CRT) should be drawn upon as a foundational tool to discuss the role of racism, and should be integrated into the interpretation at historic sites. CRT represents a wide body of legal and political research, mostly conducted by scholars of color that critically examines the role of race as a social construct, and which organizes both every-day and institutional interactions. It has been used as a theoretical and analytical framework to understand racism as something that continues to be tightly knit into the fabric of society. CRT also argues that racism is deeply embodied in all aspects of life – legal, cultural and even psychological – and maintains that racism is the common, everyday experience

⁴⁷ Ibid, 34, 38.

⁴⁸ Carol McDavid, *The Heritage Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 67.

of most people who are not white; not necessarily through individual acts of prejudice, but through every day taken-for-granted realities of white privilege.

The end result of these intertwined strands of research is to refine, if not to resolve, the question of both the value and the challenge of embracing the legacy of slavery at historic sites. Shackel states that sites and communities "...need to critically analyze and expose racism in the past and present and to dismantle the structures of oppression where we can."⁴⁹ First, there should be a requirement to recognize race and explain it from a historical perspective when telling the story in order to provide a greater understanding of the context. Second, historic sites have an opportunity to explore diversity in the past and promote it in the present, since, as Shackel argues, "racism is not dismantled if you have only like-minded people participating in the project."⁵⁰ Third, sites can partner with multicultural organizations to explore and identify dividing walls in the past and the present, and in order to expand diversity in the field and in interpretations. Finally, sites must embrace a perspective that recognizes a color-conscious past, rather than continues the color-blindness that been the norm. Shackel emphasizes that, "based on my personal experience I can suggest that change only occurs with persistence, partnerships, and public outreach, and sometimes it takes what may seem like a long time."⁵¹ Historic sites have the opportunity to demonstrate that contemporary problems have a historic context and that these concerns are not new, and that people have faced them for a long time.

⁴⁹ Paul A. Shackel, "Civic Engagement and Social Justice: Race on the Illinois Frontier," in *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2007), 247-248.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Recommended Guidelines

Historic sites offer a unique opportunity to illuminate the stories of people who have come from diverse backgrounds, and who have brought along and passed down distinctly different cultural traditions or practices. According to Rosenzweig and Thelen, sharing these stories and traditions through the lens of historic sites can engage the community and the public in meaningful discussions of race and history, and assist in understanding present day issues of cultural interaction.⁵²

The moment when history is made and when the “silences” enter the historical record occurs simultaneously. According to Lori Stahlgren and Jay Stottman, “this uneven contribution creates places where the traditional histories do not tell the entire story. The untold stories are effectively silenced by those with more power.”⁵³

Selective history and the exclusion of specific narratives is an issue which administrators at many historic sites have dealt with over time, and some are attempting to prevent this process or alter the interpretation of selective history. Excluding an entire narrative of a group of people, either because of current social or political issues, or because of a lack of documentation, may have a powerful impact on the public, since many visitors seek to gain an “authentic” experience when visiting historic sites. By avoiding the difficult heritage that historic sites have to offer, the history being presented through exhibits, tours, and interpretation is incomplete. By not understanding the full narrative of the past, the omission can

⁵² Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 22.

⁵³ Lori Stahlgren and M. Jay Stottman, “Voices from the Past: Changing the Culture of Historic House Museums with Archaeology,” in *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2007), 131.

perpetuate stereotypes that this history or group of people, and their issues, are not worth discussing. The opportunity for historic sites and for those seeking to engage in a dialogue about America's complicated legacy of race relations, lies in critically analyzing the past and by demonstrating the good which came out of the bad.⁵⁴

Historic house museums are the focus of this analysis because they are one place where history is created primarily for public consumption. Traditionally they tend to be a snapshot of the past—"what was important to the place, when so-and-so slept here, the wealth of the first owner" – and essentially freezes history at a particular period. The past is presented from a specific perspective with little room for alternative interpretations, and often voices from the past are omitted from these presentations in favor of the histories of those more powerful.

Many major museums, such as Monticello, Mount Vernon, and Colonial Williamsburg, have made relatively great strides toward including portions of the past that were previously silenced. But, the high national profile, unparalleled visitation, and abundant financial resources enjoyed by these sites reduce the value of the lessons learned for the experiences for the vast majority of historic sites in the county. On the other hand, the success of their programs demonstrate that visitors are interested in learning more, and that success can be measured by offering visitors more engaging and inclusive interpretation and a more hands- on approach. These sites also demonstrate how key it is to seek the feedback of visitors in order to measure success and to refine their interpretative offerings.

⁵⁴ Burnham, 205; Rosenzweig and Thelen, 32, 180.

The great majority of the other house museums have been slower to include alternative visions of the past.⁵⁵ Stahlgren and Stottman argue that “a primary goal of historic house interpretation should be creating experiences and telling stories within the context of the lives represented by the house and its collection and about things that mean something to visitors—things they care about and that bear some relevance to their interests and lives.”⁵⁶ Many house museums also struggle to remain relevant to the needs of their community, as a more critical public is challenging traditional historic house museum interpretations and presentations. Focusing on topics such as slavery or gender has necessarily led scholars and some museum administrators to question traditional historic house museum interpretations, and may force staff and visitors alike to reexamine the histories that have been silenced. Paul Shackel argues that “places of the past are one venue for civic engagement and addressing matters of social justice.”⁵⁷ Historic houses therefore can be part of creating a more relevant and inclusive story, and can use their history, their space, and their collection as a touchstone for dialogue.

Designating a site as historic is only one form of recognition. Another aspect of site recognition might be to expand the concept of significance by considering how interpretation and public engagement can interact, and how the interpretation can convey a message about current contentious issues. Over the past 30 years, various scholars and institutions have offered approaches for historic sites to interpret and

⁵⁵ Stahlgren and Stottman, 132-134.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Shackel, *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement*, 258.

engage the public regarding difficult heritage.⁵⁸ There appears to be a gap between the recommendations on the one hand, and their application on the other. A majority of historic sites suffer from low levels of funding, small staff, and limited capacity to conduct research. Critically analyzing the guidelines provided by scholars in terms of their applicability to selected test sites must consider the various constraints that many sites face. Another result of the exercise is to determine whether the general guidance provided by the academic sources is already being followed and, if so, to what level of success. The sites under investigation are: Riversdale (MD), Drayton Hall (SC), Rokeby Museum (VT), and Chase Lloyd House (MD).

The “guidelines” are a compendium of findings and recommendations relating to the interpretation of difficult heritage at historic sites, specifically slavery and racism, resulting from the research of 28 scholars. It should be noted at the outset that there many other publications available that focus on other aspects of the topic of interpretation of difficult heritage; further research would be required in order to develop a more exhaustive listing.

The guidelines are presented under three thematic groups, with a series of questions that site curators, researchers, and staff members can use as a checklist. The themes represent this researcher’s assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the corpus, and an attempt to distill the most helpful elements into pertinent categories: interpretation, education and programming, and community engagement. The themes

⁵⁸ *African American Historic and Cultural Resources in Prince George’s County, Maryland*, The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, February 2012, 4.

provide the framework for analyzing and comparing the case studies, and provide a context for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Under interpretation, sites are asked to analyze what they are interpreting and how, and who is undertaking the interpretation and for whom. Examining the specific details of the current interpretive program allows the sites to consider how well they are using the current space for interpretation, how they are integrating or presenting the various aspects of the site's history, and if they are using this opportunity to critically analyze the past or providing an opportunity for visitors to have their own interpretation. The manner in which they interpret the researched material, either through temporary or permanent exhibits, or through more interactive displays, makes a significant difference in the nature of the impact of the information on the visitor. Furthermore, by knowing their target audience, site staff can use broader interpretation, but specifically mold the available information and interpretation depending on the age groups and visitor interests. Finally, depending on who does the interpreting, whether members of staff are paid versus volunteers, affects both the amount of research that can be conducted, and the specific pieces of information that paid staff members could be required to impart during tours. The following questions are part of the interpretive guidelines checklist:

- The key to integrating history is to use existing spaces to tell the complete story of the site.
 - How were the spaces historically used and by whom? Does the site and its interpretation represent all manners and periods in which the space was used?
- Educating staff and tour guides is as important as educating the public. If there are subjects or background knowledge that staff or tour guides are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with- it can create issues as they are on the frontlines and dealing with the public on an interactive basis.

- What are some measure in place to prevent opportunities for staff or guides to skip over material?
- How do the tour guides react to new information? How do the tour guides receive new information?
- Does the interpretation on site change as new information is found? How often does the staff make an effort to update the interpretation and find new research?
- Does the lack of documentation or research allow interpretive or curatorial staff to evade the topic of race?
- Using multiple types of interpretation can allow for multiple opportunities to engage the visitor, either through plays, displays, hands-on exhibits, oral history demonstrations, workshops, or public archaeology.
 - Does the site currently use various styles and multiple interpretations to engage the visitor?
 - Does the interpretation pull visitors into self-learning experiences that will challenge their preconceptions?
 - Does the interpretation provide some information on the social and material affects that reinforced past situations?
- Analyzing the target audience provides opportunities to reach a group of people who might be interested in specific aspects of the sites history.
 - Who is the target audience?
 - How is the interpretation imposing feelings or an atmosphere during the tour or onto an exhibit? Is this intentional or not?
 - Is the visitor experience personalized?
- Having measures in place so that the information provided to visitors is updated can be a challenge. Volunteer docents might be uncomfortable with aspects of the site's history, and may try to skip over information, that paid staff members would not be allowed to do.
 - Does upper management or staff have any structures in place to prevent those types of issues?
 - What are the challenges with offering fully integrated histories?
 - Does the interpretative or research staff have difficulties in persuading administrative, curatorial, and education staff, along with trustees and donors, on the value of reinterpretation? Are there any difficulties in retraining the front line staff?

Under the thematic group of education and programming, sites are asked to analyze the type of programming they do outside of their interpretative model, and for whom. Multiple scholars focus on programming for school aged children, along with events and workshops for hand-on discovery and participation. Through the use of

programming, sites have an opportunity to expand their interpretation into a broader context, and to make the site, its history, and the discipline itself relevant to a larger community. The following are questions for education and programming:

- Sites have a unique opportunity to expand their interpretation and history by connecting the past to the present, allowing their sites to become more relevant to audiences today. One manner in which to do this is to expand upon the programming topics available for visitors.
 - Does the current programming connect historical issues, such as slavery, to a broader context, such as the slave trade and its consequences?
 - Is there evidence that discrimination or racial issues are still a part of the local community's current culture? If so, does an understanding of the past help visitors connect more with the struggles?
 - How does the programming relate to contemporary society? Is the site involved in creating a more inclusive story and community?
- Having programming for school aged children is an opportunity to connect historic sites to local school curricula, which will allow children to learn more about historic preservation, and also to learn and have a hands-on experience about topics they normally only read about in school.
 - How often does the site host student activities?
 - Is there an emphasis placed on narratives and storytelling?
 - Is the programming interactive?
 - How do the interpreters, curators, or docents use their work to confront and challenge racial stereotypes?
 - Do they offer a framework to publicly interpret history in a more careful and race-conscious manner?
 - Is the language and terminology used inclusive and sensitively presented?

The third thematic group is community engagement. This theme is a key element to creating a more inclusive and relevant historic site. Site staff can use their programming and research to create opportunities for both community engagement and development functions. Through this process, visitors and local community members feel more connected to the site, but it also opens up opportunities for people to interact and use the past to create various levels of communication on different

topics. The following are questions staff members can ask to analyze their level of community engagement:

- One manner in which to engage the community and visitors is through inviting them to participate in researching the site, either through public archaeological digs, or through documentary research, or through oral histories.
 - Is the community given opportunities for discovery and participation in the preservation process?
 - Are there opportunities to provide effective communication to have multivocal and relevant interactions between professionals, community members, public figures, and descendants?
 - Are visitors and community members given a chance to share different understandings or alternative truth claims?
 - How often are the local communities given opportunities for discovery or participation in the research or interpretative process?
- All sites should attempt to understand how their programming relates to their goals as a site, and whether the information they are attempting to provide is actually reaching their intended audience.
 - What are the goals of engaging the public?
 - How often do sites use student activities or programs to engage the community?
 - Does the interpretation and programming draw upon critical race theory as foundational guidelines for tools to discuss the role of racism?
 - To what extent does the work done by the site contribute to or hinder the empowerment of currently oppressed people?

These guidelines make use of specific terminology, which is key to understanding the theoretical framework behind what guides the recommendations. By understanding key terminology, opportunities can be created for practical application in the field. A context is created for how and when these guidelines can be applied to various historic sites, and how these words can provide a flexible framework for each unique situation or site.

The first of these key terms is civic engagement, since it encourages professionals to think about effective ways to participate in community building. The

National Park Service defines civic engagement as a long-term effort to build and sustain relationships with communities of stakeholders.⁵⁹ It includes engaging the public in interpretive and educational programming as well as the planning process. Public involvement is a legal requirement of the planning process as a consequence of environmental regulation, but which typically has no formal application on historic sites and on their interpretive planning. Engagement also requires an ongoing effort and sharing of power, an often difficult task for any community. Civic engagement has helped to keep the National Parks relevant; it transforms these historic sites by making them active centers of democracy and citizen engagement, and allows them to reflect about identity and citizen responsibilities. Dr. Barbara Little states that “...civic engagement becomes a phrase to describe inclusive interpretation or engagement in difficult histories.”⁶⁰

Little provides a chart with six levels of the scope of civic engagement corresponding with phases of citizenship, levels of knowledge, definition of community, and the benefits received. (Table 1). For the lowest level, civic engagement is a single vantage point, where the benefits are few and temporary. In the next two levels, civic engagement characterizes involvement as oblivious and naïve, which correspond respectively to civic detachment and historical amnesia. She argues that on these two levels, people are effectively disconnected and without knowledge of a historical perspective or any cultural vantage point that is not their own. Furthermore, there is little consideration of historical context or cultural differences.

⁵⁹ Barbara Little, “Archaeology and Civic Engagement,” in *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2007), 4-5.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Phase	Community Is:	Civic Scope	Levels of Knowledge	Benefits
Exclusionary	Only your own	Civic disengagement	One vantage point (yours); monocultural	A few and only for a while
Oblivious	A resource to mine	Civic detachment	Observational skills; largely monocultural	One party
Naïve	A resource to engage	Civic amnesia	No history; no vantage point; acultural	Random people
Charitable	A resource that needs assistance	Civic altruism	Awareness of deprivations; affective kindness and respect; multicultural but yours is still the norm center	The giver's feelings and the sufferer's immediate needs
Reciprocal	A resource to empower and be empowered by	Civic engagement	Legacies of inequality; values of partnering; intercultural competency; arts of democracy; multiple vantage points; multicultural	Society as a whole in the present
Generative	An interdependent resource filled with possibilities	Civic prosperity	Struggles for democracy; interconnectedness; analysis of interlocking systems; intercultural competencies; multiple interactive vantage points; multicultural	Everyone now and in the future

Table 1: Educational phases leading to civic engagement and civic prosperity. Six levels of civic scope correspond with phases of citizenship, levels of knowledge, definition of community, and benefits. Little, "Archaeology and Civic Engagement," in *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement*, 7.

In the Charitable phase, the community is seen as a resource, aware of its own multiculturalism, but the culture of the group in power is considered the norm. In the Reciprocal phase, the community is a resource to empower and be empowered by, which has benefits accruing to society as a whole in the present. Finally, in the Generative phase, the benefits from civic engagement extend into the future as well. Here, civic prosperity cannot occur without civic engagement.⁶¹

The term restorative justice is defined as a socially useful heritage which can stimulate and empower both local community members and visitors to make historically informed judgments about heritage and the ways that we use it in the present. Little emphasizes that the aim with restorative justice is to “create a useable, broadly conceived past that is civically engaging, that calls a citizenry to participate in debates and decisions about preservation and development but also, more importantly, to appreciate the worthiness of all people’s histories and to become aware of historical roots and present-day manifestations of contemporary social justice issues.”⁶²

There are three common features of restorative justice projects: multivocal, dialogical, and historical. Multivocal means without eschewing the truth; a multivocal project aims to incorporate many voices and perspectives and approaches the truth from multiple standpoints instead of one privileged position. Multivocal is also an opportunity in a restorative justice project to reflect the diversity of people who had the opportunity to participate. Dialogical is defined as being geared toward cultivating an exchange of knowledge, experiences, and opinions. The project aims to stimulate

⁶¹ Ibid, 7-9.

⁶² Ibid, 1-2.

conversations that are viewed as democratic, evenhanded, open, and inclusive. Historical in this context means to examine change through time from the distant past to the social and political present. The project aims to link individual stories to structures of power.⁶³

The term social capital describes good will, fellowship, and social interactions. Social capital gives rise to connections of trust, shared values, and networks. According to Little, there is a significant difference between communities and people bonding over something as opposed to bridging to heal: “It is important to distinguish between social capital that is bonding, that is, exclusive and homogenizing, and that which is bridging, that is, inclusive and acting across social divides.” By applying the concept of social capital to historic sites, it helps to forge common ground and promote citizen responsibility.⁶⁴

Applying the key concepts of civic engagement, social capital, and restorative justice to the three aspects of interpretation, education and programming, and community engagement can allow historic sites to develop an interactive portrayal of the site’s history while allowing it to remain relevant to today’s audience. (Table 2). Adopting this approach would also allow historic sites to connect more intimately with their visitors by allowing a dialogue to emerge between the past and the present, and by encouraging them to examine how the past can be used to answer pressing current questions about relationships, identity, and society.

⁶³ Colwell-Chanthaphonh, 38.

⁶⁴ Little, 2.

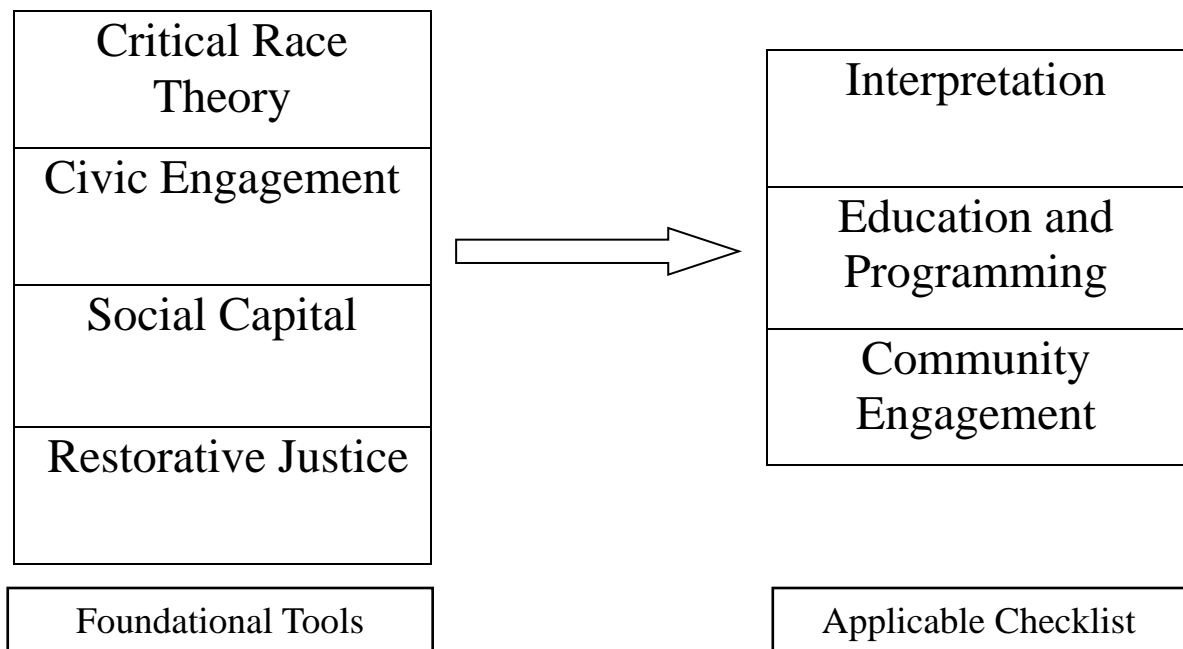


Table 2: Guidelines Matrix.

The guidelines are built upon four key ideas (foundational tools), which are combined to develop a checklist against which site curators and interpreters can analyze and measure their level of success against. The checklist is divided into three thematic groups.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

This chapter delves into the practical uses of the guidelines by testing their applicability to the four selected case studies. As well as listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), each of the properties has been designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). But while each historic site is nationally significant, each property differs in its management, and thus its access to funding and its potential for programming, interpretation, and research opportunities. A brief history will be provided for each site, followed by an analysis of their mission, programming, and interpretation, with reference to the guidelines. The analysis will aim to determine how successful the site is in fully integrating its history of enslavement, along with providing a critical analysis of the site's commitment to using the past to offer a broader context on the issues of slavery by way of engaging with visitors, local community members, and the descendant community.

Drayton Hall, Charleston, South Carolina

A National Trust Historic Site, Drayton Hall's main house is an icon of colonial American architecture and identity. The oldest unrestored plantation house in America still open to the public, it is the nation's earliest example of fully executed Palladian architecture. Its African American cemetery is one of the oldest in the nation, documented and still in use; seven generations of Drayton heirs preserved the house in all but original condition, though the flanking outbuildings have not survived. An NHL (1960), and on the NRHP (1966), Drayton Hall is administered and operated by a privately funded nonprofit organization, the Drayton Hall

Preservation Trust. Their mission is to “research, preserve, and interpret Drayton Hall and its collections and environs, in order to educate the public and to inspire people to embrace historic preservation.”⁶⁵ In an interview with President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Carter C. Hudgins, he mentioned that the mission was broad enough to allow for multiple interpretations to emerge. While slavery is not specifically mentioned in their mission statement, the statement calls for researching and interpreting the full range of the site’s history, which includes the story of slavery. Drayton Hall operates a co-stewardship agreement with the National Trust. The Drayton Hall Preservation Trust provides Drayton Hall with the necessary autonomy to make its own decisions, to raise its own financial support, and to chart its own course within the parameters of its preservation philosophy and that of the National Trust.

John Drayton acquired the land circa 1738, and Drayton Hall was built circa 1747. Archaeological excavations and documentary research demonstrated that there was already a plantation on the site when Drayton bought the land. The plantation house has a distinctive monumentality achieved through its spacious four-room plan and the somewhat vertical proportions of its two-story elevation on a high English basement capped by a double hipped roof. It is also the only house along the Ashley River to survive intact through both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The seven-bay double-pile plantation house is situated within a 630-acre site that was once part of the expansive plantation that was devoted to the cultivation of indigo and rice.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ “Our Mission,” *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.draytonhall.org/about-us-then-now/mission-and-staff/>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Cultivating rice was labor intensive, and involved more than just planting and harvesting the rice crop. Its cultivation likely would have involved at least half of the enslaved people, if not more, who worked at Drayton Hall; it is thought that women played a larger role in rice cultivation than men. If not involved directly with the rice crop, enslaved people also filled various support roles. Coopers made barrels; blacksmiths made tools; carpenters erected houses, barns, sheds, and other dependencies. As the colony became more important and prosperous, so did John Drayton. Drayton Hall went from being a country seat to serving as a seat of power, as Drayton rose through the ranks of the colonial government, eventually becoming a member of the Royal Governor's Council. The ebb and flow of the Revolutionary War meant changes to the plantation system. Crops that had been marketed in England were either sold elsewhere or replaced by other staple crops like wheat and corn. Many enslaved people found themselves conscripted to work for the armies or took advantage of the chaos of war to liberate themselves.⁶⁷

At the conclusion of the Revolution, Charles Drayton purchased Drayton Hall from his stepmother, and adopted the life of a gentleman planter. Documents indicate that Charles Drayton grew indigo around the time of the Revolution and may have continued to grow some for a short time afterwards. Drayton also planted cotton after he acquired Drayton Hall, and in his diaries he made notes about the construction of a cotton barn, cotton stove, and cotton gin house. By 1790, he was managing three plantations from his base at Drayton Hall. With the Civil War looming ahead and the rice economy in decline, when Charles II inherited the property he encouraged his son

⁶⁷ "The Colonial Period," "The Revolution," *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016.

Charles III to look into a line of work apart from the plantation. The Civil War brought an end to the plantation era at Drayton Hall.⁶⁸

At the beginning of the war, there were approximately 30 enslaved people at Drayton Hall. By the time the conflict ended in the Charleston area—on February 18, 1865 after the city surrendered to Union forces—only a few of these people remained. Caesar Bowens was born at Drayton Hall around 1840. Records show a “Caesar” as a slave here in 1855 (Fig. 5), and after emancipation, Caesar and his brother John and his sister Catherine officially took the surname “Bowens.” Like many other enslaved people, they may have had an unofficial surname when they were enslaved. By the time of the Civil War, Caesar was one of only a few enslaved people remaining at Drayton Hall, and his reasons for staying after emancipation are not known. After the war, Caesar Bowens worked as caretaker for the property and lived in the north flanking outbuilding. He became one of the founders of Springfield Baptist Church on Ashley River Road, a congregation that still exists today.⁶⁹

Drayton Hall’s cemetery is one of the oldest documented African-American cemeteries in the nation that is still in use (Fig. 6). The earliest surviving record describes it as a “burying ground” and dates from about 1790, but its use as a cemetery may have begun years earlier. A century later, the cemetery was at the heart of a community of families—of small frame houses with swept dirt yards, vegetable gardens, outbuildings, and fields. In keeping with the wishes of Richmond Bowens, a

⁶⁸ “The Early Republic,” “The Antebellum Years,” *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.draytonhall.org/about-us-then-now/the-history-of-drayton-hall/>.

⁶⁹ “Caesar Bowens,” *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.draytonhall.org/about-us-then-now/the-people-of-drayton-hall/>.

descendant of the enslaved at Drayton Hall, the cemetery has been “left natural,” not manicured or planted with grass or decorative shrubs.

Frank	35	Nancy	30
Dick	45	Clois	40
Lummon	40	Jerrey	60
Moses	14	Nancy	45
K Joe	25	Amelia	15
Joe	25	Linda	28
Caeson	14	Deana	45
Harry	14	Judy	39
Hector	12	Peggy	12

Fig. 5: An excerpt from the 1885 tax list.2016. Drayton Hall, Charleston.
www.draytonhall.org



Fig. 6: The African American Cemetery. 2016. Drayton Hall, Charleston.
www.draytonall.org

As he said, “Leave ’em rest.” Mr. Bowens was born at Drayton Hall in 1908, lived and worked on the property on and off for over 50 years, including as gatekeeper and oral historian, and was buried here in 1998. Only about ten graves have been identified to date, since the markers have long since deteriorated, but depressions are visible from where the wooden coffins have collapsed.⁷⁰

As a privately funded organization and historic site, Drayton Hall is open for tours led by paid interpreters or staff members, who are provided with up to date information based on the findings of documentary research and archaeology. According to Dr. Hudgins, in all aspects of the tours and narrative the information presented is not segregated. When new information is found, there are appropriate staff meetings where the findings are presented, along with separate meetings with the interpretive staff. As the docents are paid, they participate in a coordinated training program; first focusing on the student education program, which is followed by separate training to become an interpreter. Although the tours are not scripted, there are certain pieces of information and research that form an essential part of the narrative that docents and interpreters must present.

Although their primary offering is the main house tour, and they do not display any exhibits, permanent or seasonal, Drayton Hall offers multiple programs and field trips. One such interactive program is *Connections: From Africa to America*, which covers the history of Drayton Hall and those who lived and labored there. The program focuses on the connections, experiences, and contributions of Africans and African Americans to South Carolina, Charleston, and Drayton Hall.

⁷⁰ “The African American Cemetery,” *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.draytonhall.org/visit/the-african-american-cemetery-at-drayton-hall/>.

Museum interpreters present images of primary sources and artifacts to tell the story of the enslaved people and their descendants, and focus on how African and European traditions blended to create the rich Lowcountry culture that exists today. While the scholars Gable and Handler might state that having a separate tour means that the narrative told is fundamentally less important, the rationale behind this specific tour is to expand upon the story and personal lives of the enslaved community of Drayton Hall, which cannot be fully told in the hour-long tour. The standard house tour does mention the enslaved peoples, but like other house tours, also focuses on other aspects of the house and site, including the Drayton family and the elite architecture.⁷¹

The student education programs focus primarily on elementary and middle school children, with nine programs in total, four of which are offered in downtown Charleston. The program, *A Day in the Life of a Colonial Plantation*, provides students with an understanding of places and the role of humans in the long history of South Carolina. Focusing specifically on their third grade program (it also includes programs for grades four, seven, and eight), students are asked to explain interactions between the people and the physical landscape of South Carolina over time, including the effects on population distribution, patterns of migration, access to natural resources, and economic development. They then focus on the settlement of South Carolina by the French, English, and Spanish, and discuss the conflict between the Native Americans and European settlers. With that, they focus on the development of the Carolina colony under the Lords Proprietors and the royal colonial government,

⁷¹ Gable and Handler, 15; "Connections: From Africa to America," *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.draytonhall.org/visit/connections-from-africa-to-america/>

including settlement by and trade with the people of Barbados and the influence of other immigrant groups. Also portrayed is the role of Africans in developing the culture and economy of South Carolina, including the growth of the slave trade; slave contributions to the plantation economy; the daily lives of the enslaved people; the development of the Gullah culture; and their resistance to slavery.⁷²

The staff of Drayton Hall are critically analyzing and interpreting the past history within a broader context. Most members of the interpretive staff have a master's degree in teaching, and are careful to be inclusive and to understand the larger processes at hand. Ongoing research and interpretation of the site is fully supported by the Board and various stakeholders, who are committed to learning the full history of the site and how it relates to America. However, keeping the site's value relevant to the present day is a continuing challenge, especially in terms of race relations. The annual lecture series is often used to examine contemporary race relations, such as the recent shooting in nearby Charleston.

The descendants of both the Drayton family and of the enslaved families are incorporated into the process. Not only do some family members sit on the Board, but they are also part of the oral interview or genealogical studies process, and are considered a resource in themselves; however, interpretation is left to fully trained professionals. For the local community, free lectures and a membership program are offered. Another example is a trip to Bermuda, a special event for individuals who have made annual contributions to Drayton Hall, and is being carried out in an effort to increase the level of engagement of individuals supporting the site. The trip will

⁷² "About Our Programs," *Drayton Hall*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.draytonhall.org/visit/connections-from-africa-to-america/>.

allow the tour group to visit specific plantations and historic sites, many of which were owned by the Drayton family as part of their slave trade.

Drayton Hall has been interpreting slavery as part of their narrative for the past 15-20 years; the added focus on slavery was made in order to tell what they consider to be a complete story. However, while Drayton Hall has multiple components as part of its interpretation, programming, and community engagement, a key element missing in their work is the measurement of success. The staff at Drayton Hall do not know what their visitors enjoy or what topic they want to learn more about, unless somebody makes a comment. The staff also does not know what aspect of the site visitors come to see, and the interpretation has included slavery for so long, that they are unsure if over time the additional narrative has made a difference in their visitation numbers. While Drayton Hall is a National Trust site, it is privately funded and has resources and experiences which are comparable to multiple other sites across the country. Overall, Drayton Hall has been successful in providing a fully integrated narrative of the history of the property, and in connecting the past to a broader context through various programming efforts.

Riversdale, Riverdale, Maryland

Riversdale was constructed between 1801 and 1807 as an elegant Federal style manor house for Henri Stier, a Flemish aristocrat, and completed by his daughter, Rosalie, and her husband, George Calvert, grandson of the fifth Lord Baltimore. The volunteer Riversdale Historical Society works with the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) staff to preserve the

cultural heritage of Riversdale and maintain the mansion as an historic house museum. Riversdale was the first historic property purchased by the Commission in 1949, and it was added to the NRHP in 1973 and designated as a NHL in 1997, under four NHL themes: Peopling Places, Expressing Cultural Values, Developing the American Economy, and Expanding Science and Technology. It is under the theme of Developing the American Economy that the Riversdale plantation is identified as having “depended on slave labor; [and that] Riversdale is uniquely important in that there survives a highly unusual record from a slave's point of view of life and work on the plantation, in a journal kept by a literate member of that slave force.” The journal serves as the primary sources of evidence for their slavery related programs, as it provides a rare first-hand account of the life and work of the Riversdale slave force in the last generation before Emancipation.⁷³

Henri Stier purchased nearly 800 acres of land north of Bladensburg in 1801, and began planning for the new plantation which would come to be known as Riversdale. Stier negotiated with architect William Loring to carry out the work, who proceeded with the plan that had essentially been drawn up by the Stiers themselves. By 1803, Rosalie, and her husband George Calvert, had accepted her father’s offer of moving in and finishing Riversdale, who brought with them a substantial population of slaves from their Mount Albion plantation. It is during this time that Rosalie exchanged a series of letters with her family in Belgium, which provides a multitude of information about finishing the mansion and developing the plantation.

⁷³ Susan Pearl, “Riversdale Mansion”, (NRHP Form, M-NCPPC, 1997).

Many of the domestic and agricultural outbuildings of the Riversdale plantation were built during the first decade of the Calverts' occupancy, but according to surviving documents the kitchen/servants' house, which stands a short distance to the east of the mansion, was apparently constructed at the same time or slightly earlier than the mansion. This building, which was described as a "Servants House of Brick" in a fire insurance policy from 1849, has apparently served different functions over the years, perhaps as headquarters during the first phase of construction of the mansion, then as a separate kitchen building, and later as a dwelling for house servants and/or slaves.

Charles Benedict Calvert, son of George and Rosalie, died at Riversdale in May 1864, and the Riversdale estate passed to his heirs. The slave force, which at the time of Charles Calvert's death numbered about 45 and lived in nine houses around the plantation, was manumitted in January 1865 under the new Maryland Constitution of 1864. There is more information about the slave force at Riversdale than at most other plantations of the period, largely because of Adam Francis Plummer, one of the favored slaves, and a near-contemporary of Charles Benedict. Plummer had learned to write at an early age; this unusual ability enabled him to keep a journal recounting 20 years of his life as a slave and 40 more years as a freedman on and near the Riversdale acreage. In addition to the standard information about the slave population found in census records, tax assessments, wills and inventories, information is available through Plummer's writings, included in the publication of parts of his journal after his death by one of his daughters.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Plummer lived at Riversdale from 1829 till 1870, and kept a journal which recorded his life from the day of his marriage in 1841 until his death in 1905. His daughter, Nellie Arnold Plummer, used the journal as a basis for her book, *Out of the Depths or The Triumph of the Cross*, which was published in 1927, and which chronicles the story of Adam Plummer's family from slavery to freedom. Born in George Calvert's Mount Albion, Plummer was taken to Riversdale at the age of 10, where he enjoyed a personal relationship with Calvert's second son, Charles Benedict. When Charles inherited the estate, he allowed Plummer to use three or four acres and a horse or mule for plowing and hauling, from which Plummer sold the produce and kept the profits. In 1845, the Plummer family made plans to escape to Canada because it was unusual for a slave couple to have a legally recognized marriage, so they were going to use their marriage license as "free papers." The couple was betrayed, however, and Emily Plummer (Adam's wife) and her four children were put up for sale by Emily's owner, Miss Hilleary of Three Sisters. Once Maryland slaves were emancipated in 1865, the family was finally free, but Plummer remained at Riversdale as a paid foreman. He eventually bought ten acres of land named Mount Rose, and began building a four room log house, into which the family moved by 1870, and where he died in 1905.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ "Adam Francis Plummer: The story of a remarkable man and his family," Riversdale Brochure.



Fig. 7: Imtiaz, Sehba. *The kitchen at Riversdale*. 2016. Riversdale, Maryland.



Patriarch Adam Francis Plummer surrounded by his family

Fig. 8: Imtiaz, Sehba. *Photograph of image of Adam Francis Plummer and family*. 2016. Riversdale, Maryland.

As a property under the authority of the M-NCPPC, Riversdale is primarily funded and run by Prince George's County. However, the staff may apply for specific grant funding for programs and interpretation. In an interview with Maria Grenchik, the Education and Cultural Resources Specialist at Riversdale, she discussed the challenges and success of the available programming. Riversdale has an active volunteer staff of 35 members, who serve as docents; a "continuing education" is in place to re-train or provide the docents with up to date information as research allows. A guide to the Plummers, other enslaved workers, and servants was provided to the docents this past February to serve as a refresher and to ensure guides are comfortable with the information and are disseminating correct facts.

The docents are not provided with a script, and they are at liberty to craft their own tours with the information they are given during their training. Therefore depending on the docent, the type of tour a visitor may get will vary widely. On occasion, docents may focus on topics that the visitor may have expressed interested in during the hour long tour. That said, the story of Adam Francis Plummer and the diary are always included in the Visitor Center introduction; more details of the family are included when visitors ask questions or express an interest.

Other topics are approached similarly, including the painting collection, the connection with George Washington, and the history of Riversdale in the years after their interpretive period. The goal of the introduction is to provide a brief context for the visitor and focuses mainly on the 1801-1821 interpretive period. In addition, visitors are directed to the pylons in the Visitor Center, which feature copies of primary sources such as the Plummer text, as well as information on other enslaved

families, and they are encouraged to ask questions at their leisure. Riversdale staff are also working toward incorporating regularly-scheduled, special theme tours during Sunday open hours. Developing a themed tour focused on the enslaved workers and servants would be a very good way to further incorporate the topic into the fabric of the interpretation of the site.

In terms of exhibits, Riversdale lacks a specific space to mount a permanent display. In February to celebrate Black History Month, they opened an exhibit on clothing, which is largely based on runaway slave ads. In addition, a permanent exhibit on the Plummer family is on display in the dependency (kitchen); but it is not always open due to staffing limitations. The Riversdale Gardens pamphlet also contained information regarding the enslaved and free people who tended the Calverts' gardens and fields. Their staff gardener, Amanda, makes an effort each year to plant, tend, and harvest typical "cash crops" such as cotton and tobacco, which help guests visualize what the crops looked like that were so important to the success of the plantation. During their garden tours, members of the Kitchen Guild cook in the dependency, and incorporate meals and information about both the enslaved and free workers on the property.

For many years during Black History Month specifically, Riversdale has hosted "The Plummers' Kitchen," which incorporates the tasks of various workers. They do a lot of public programming, as it provides them with a majority of their revenue. Primarily focusing on elementary school children, the program *Out of the Shadows: Riversdale's Servants in the Spotlights*, is designed to highlight the inner



Fig. 9: Imtiaz, Sehba. *Enslaved clothing exhibit*. 2016. Riversdale, Maryland.



Fig. 10: Imtiaz, Sehba. *Interpretive panels in visitor's center*. 2016, Riversdale, Maryland.

economic workings of an early 19th century Maryland estate and working farm. Students take on the persona of a servant while touring the house and learn how each of the rooms would have been used by the servants. During the workshop component, participants learn about goods produced at Riversdale as they grind herbs and spices, make a sachet to take home, and learn about wool carding and spinning. In their other program, students compare and contrast their own living, working, and playing conditions with that of the Calvert children, and with the enslaved children who lived at Riversdale.⁷⁶

As a public site, Riversdale's mission is quite broad and somewhat ill-defined, and aims to engage the local community. This is accomplished by organizing various types of festivals, such as the African American day festival, which they hope will draw in new people and visitors; the is focus on food – popular dishes for the enslaved families versus the free families -- , clothing, and providing a perspective on the side from the viewpoint of the enslaved and free families. In addition, Riversdale continues to host Plummer family reunions, as many descendants remain in the area. The staff are working with Revered Fowler, current head of the descendant Plummer family, to host a multi-generational program in May which will focus on other enslaved families as well. On occasion, Riversdale has also hosted Calvert family reunions. Engaging with the local and descendant communities affords the opportunity to receive feedback regarding the success of these programs, and adds a layer of history and understanding to the site.

⁷⁶ "Riversdale House Museum: Educational Programs," *Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation*, Pub Date: 2016, http://history.pg parks.com/sites_and_museums/Riversdale_House_Museum/Educational_Programs.htm?

Overall, the staff at Riversdale makes a concerted effort to incorporate the information that is available for the Plummers, as well as for the other servants and enslaved workers. Riversdale offers multiple opportunities to engage their visitors in different aspects of the site's history, while attempting to keep the site relevant through public participation and hands-on experiences. The level of the resources available to Riversdale is comparable to multiple other sites, who compete for various grants and other funds, and work with a mix of volunteers and paid staff. It is uncertain when Riversdale actually made the switch to include and expand upon the narrative of slavery at the site, just as the number of visitors who come to the site specifically to learn more about slavery is unavailable. This lack is a key element missing from the overall success of the interpretation, programming, and community engagement aspects of the historic site.

Rokeby Museum, Ferrisburgh, Vermont

Rokeby was home to four generations of the Robinson family from 1793 to 1961. The Robinsons were Quakers, farmers, abolitionists, artists, and authors. Today, the Robinson family's home is a NHL (1997) and on the NRHP (1974), designated for its exceptional Underground Railroad history. Rokeby is among the best-documented Underground Railroad sites in the county, one the National Park Service has described as: "unrivaled among known sites for its historical integrity and the poignancy of the stories it tells." It is also known for the many letters, account books, and diaries kept by the family while they lived in the house that document the first two generations' involvement in the antislavery cause, and for its historic

integrity. Telling those stories is at the center of the Museum's mission, which is to "connect visitors with the human experience of the Underground Railroad and with the lives of the Robinsons, who lived on and farmed this land for nearly 200 years."⁷⁷

Constructed by Thomas (1761-1851) and Jemima (1761-1846) Robinson, Quakers who were active members of the Vermont and Ferrisburg Anti-Slavery Societies, the imposing Federal style house looks over the Champlain Valley to the Adirondacks beyond. Behind the house and sheltered by it is an intact 19th-century farmyard with eight agricultural outbuildings and associated features. The site includes a tourist cabin (ca 1930), the surviving wing of a now-demolished house (ca 1800), a smokehouse (ca 1850), hen house (ca 1900), creamery/ice house (ca 1850, 1940s), privy (ca 1850), toolshed/slaughterhouse (ca 1850), and granary (ca 1850), all of which relate to the agricultural history of the site. A path through the woods to the south of the main farmyard leads past the sheep barn foundation and to the sheep dip (ca 1810); to the north of the house is the foundation of the dairy barn. An open field is still in production, and there are trees that were planted by the Robinsons. To the north of the farmstead is more abandoned orchard and within it, the foundation of a school once operated by the family.⁷⁸

Although Thomas Robinson was an active member, it was his son, Rowland Thomas Robinson (1796-1879), who made abolition the cause of his life and sheltered fugitives at Rokeby. Of the letters to Rowland T. Robinson, approximately 300 date from 1830 to 1865; from 1830 to 1850 abolitionist cause was the most common theme. His regular correspondents during this period included

⁷⁷ "About Rokeby," *Rokeby Museum*, Pub Date: 2016, www.rokeby.org/about.

⁷⁸ Stephen Raiche, "Rokeby," (NRHP Form, Vermont Division of Historic Sites, Jan. 1997).

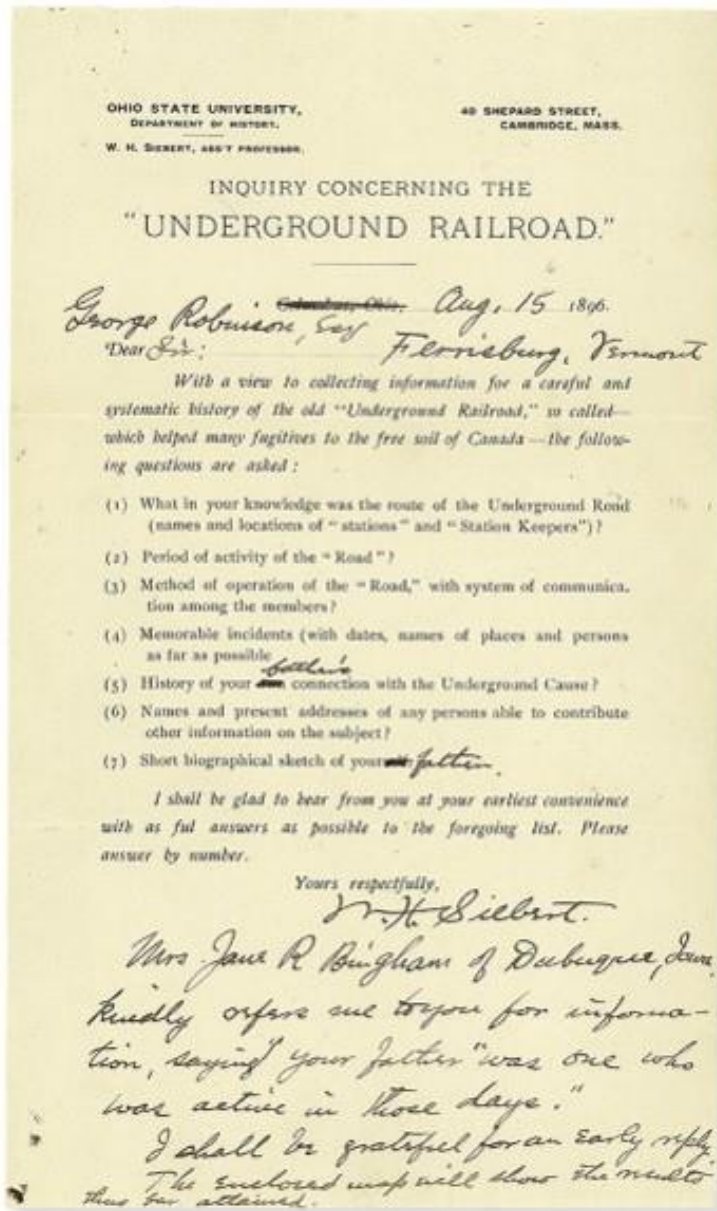


Fig. 11: Image of document "Inquiry concerning the Underground Railroad." 2016. Rokeby Museum, Vermont. www.rokeby.org.

Joseph H. Beale, Oliver Johnson, Charles Marriott, Orson S. Murray, and Charles C. Burleigh; he also received letters from such national figures as Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, and Isaac T. Hopper. Reading through this correspondence shows how thoroughly Rowland Thomas Robinson's Quaker and anti-slavery beliefs were entwined. He was also part of an anti-slavery vanguard in New York, who were constantly pushing for action. Several other letters in the Rokeby Collection provide

specific and detailed information on fugitive slaves. It is primarily from these documents that a detailed picture emerges of how one "stop" on the Underground Railroad (UGRR) operated.⁷⁹

In 1837, Oliver Johnson, an agent for the New England and American Anti-Slavery Societies, wrote to Rowland T. from the Jenner Township, Pennsylvania, located just 30 miles from "the line." Being so near Maryland, the area had "at all times no small number of runaway slaves, but they are generally caught unless they proceed farther north." Johnson wrote to interest Rowland Thomas Robinson in hiring one of those runaways, Simon, for whose capture a reward of \$200 had been posted. "He is 28 years old, and appeared to me to be an honest, likely man," said Johnson. "He is trustworthy, of a kind disposition, and knows how to do almost all kinds of farm work. He is used to teaming, and is very good to manage horses. He says that he could beat any man in the neighborhood where he lived at mowing, cradling, or pitching." The farm operation at Rokeby was at its height during these years, and the Robinsons need for hired hands was constant. Johnson's knowledge of that need and the relative safety of Vermont no doubt brought Rokeby to mind as a likely place for Simon.⁸⁰

This letter, like many others, document Rokeby as a place where fugitive slaves were sheltered, and place it firmly in the broad pattern of abolition from 1830 to 1865. It allows the UGRR to be envisioned as a web or network of safe homes, based on family, religious, and friendship ties rather than as a linear railroad of anonymous stations. Rowland T. worked to educate former slaves before the Civil

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

War and former slaves after its conclusion. In 1839 Robinson started his own school, building an impressive, two-story brick building with a bell tower on Rokeby land just north of the house and farmstead. Although not a boarding school, it attracted pupils, many of them Quakers, from out of state. In addition, Rowland Evans Robinson (son of Rowland Thomas), made his living as an author, whose several stories used the UGRR as a theme. Between the 1920s and 1940s, Rowland Evans's son and daughter-in-law started taking in summer tourists as boarders, and they used the house's association with the UGRR as an attraction.⁸¹

Rokeby Museum is a privately owned property, run by the Rowland E. Robinson Memorial Association. Rowland "Rowlie" and Elizabeth Robinson, the last of the Robinson family to own the property, had no children, and when Elizabeth died in 1961, she left the entire property and its contents to be operated as a museum. The museum has a single staff person, museum director Jane Williamson, who has worked tirelessly to conduct research and to attract funding to expand the interpretation and programming available at Rokeby. Tours are provided by expert volunteer guides, who are provided with updated information and history, but they are free to craft the tour, as they are only provided for the main house.

In 2013, Rokeby opened the Underground Railroad Education Center, which has on display the permanent exhibit, *Free & Safe: The Underground Railroad in Vermont*. It took nearly 10 years to accomplish, and was aided by a planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The exhibit chronicles the stories of Jesse and Simon, two fugitives from slavery who found shelter at Rokeby in the 1830's. The exhibit traces their stories from slavery to freedom, and uses audio

⁸¹ Ibid.

recordings and a theater, with historic texts, documents, and images to bring their story to life. It serves as a means to examine the UGRR in depth while leaving the Rokeby house and grounds open to broader interpretation. The interpretation also provides a broader context for abolition, an overview of the institution of slavery, and does not gloss over racism in the north, as well as student programming to accompany the exhibit. The educational program provides documentation and lesson plans for students, before, during, and after visits to the exhibition and site. *Free & Safe* effectively challenges widely held views about the UGRR in Vermont and nationally, while acknowledging the role that African Americans played in the fight against slavery. Unfortunately, no other African Americans are mentioned besides Simon and Jesse, and this is due to the fact that documentary records are very limited, and these two were the only ones who were properly mentioned and on whom the museum staff could develop a full narrative.⁸²

Rokeby also provides broader programming for elementary and middle school children, which focuses both on the UGRR, which provides copies of letters, historical background, and student activities, and another program on farming and the agricultural history of the farmstead. For middle and secondary school children and young adults, Rokeby provides Educational Kits, which focus on history, civics, and journalism on Frederick Douglass' visit to Vermont and speeches by radical abolitionists. These provide primary source documents, discussion questions, and a selection of books for further reading.

⁸² Jeffery Marshall, "Free & Safe," *The Public Historian, Exhibit Reviews* 36, no. 3 (2014): 173; Exhibits," *Rokeby Museum*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://rokeby.org/exhibits/>.



Fig. 12: *Free & Safe Exhibit*. 2016. Rokeby Museum, Vermont. www.rokeby.org

In addition to their programming and interpretation, Rokeby provides lectures and events which focus on a broader context, connecting Rokeby and Vermont to issues at a national scale. An example of an upcoming event is *In Plain Sight: Black Faces, White Spaces & Other Stories* – Carolyn Finney, where scholar-activist Finney will share her research on why African Americans are underrepresented in the outdoor recreation, nature, and environmental movements. Her lecture will bridge environmental history, cultural, and race studies to argue that the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and racial violence have shaped our understanding of the “great outdoors” and who should and can have access to it. Other events and lectures have and will focus on the Quaker or agricultural history which is associated with Rokeby.⁸³

⁸³ Ibid.

Rokeby Museum has succeeded in creating a highly approachable, informative, interactive, professional, and thought-provoking exhibit—no small feat for a small, underfunded historical museum. In addition, they have worked towards connecting the history of abolitionists and slavery to a broader context, both historically (through Quakers and agricultural trends and history) and currently (through their events, lectures, and programming). No archaeological excavations have been conducted at the site, due to limited funding and resources, which is a missed opportunity to pro-actively engage the local community. Another missed element is the lack of record keeping for the visitors who come, and the reasons they come, and what they are more interested in learning about. Overall, Rokeby has provided multiple opportunities to engage the visitors on discussion of issues of race, and has worked towards keeping the value of the site relevant to present day visitors.



Fig. 13: *Free & Safe Exhibit*. 2016. Rokeby Museum, Vermont. www.rokeby.org

Chase-Lloyd House, Annapolis, Maryland

In April of 1970, the Chase-Lloyd House was listed as a NHL and on the NRHP for its architectural significance, as it is the only three-story brick house in Annapolis constructed prior to the Revolution. Construction of this Georgian mansion began in 1769 by Samuel Chase, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. But by 1771, Chase was forced to sell his partially completed house to Edward Lloyd IV, a wealthy planter and owner of the Wye House Plantation, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Lloyd hired architect William Buckland to complete the structure, which took an additional two years. The house remained in the hands of the Lloyd family until 1847, when it was sold to Miss Hester Ann Chase, a descendant of the original owner. In 1888 a member of this family, Mrs. Hester Ridout, bequeathed the house to the Protestant Episcopal Church to be used as a home for elderly women.⁸⁴

Although the Chase-Lloyd House is known almost exclusively for its architectural significance, the social history of the men and women who lived and worked in the home provide key information on labor and political relations in the city and the state. During its early history, the Chase-Lloyd House was associated with some of the most influential men in Maryland. While the narrative of early owners, Samuel Chase and Edward Lloyd IV, describe the political and planter life of wealthy, white, male slave-owners in the colony of Maryland during the late 18th century, the narrative of the enslaved persons, such as Sall Wilkes who worked in the home, describes the largely untold story of the life of the disadvantaged, black women and men who labored there. By expanding the histories of both the elite

⁸⁴ Patricia Heintzelman, "Chase-Lloyd House," (NRHP form, NPS, 1974).

property owners and their labor force, the Chase-Lloyd House could work toward presenting an integrated history to visitors to the site.

Recognizing the importance of the enslaved servants' history in the Chase-Lloyd House provides a diverse and inclusive perspective on life in Annapolis, and the Chase-Lloyd House is a case study which can demonstrate the potential of expanding its narrative. Acknowledging the sacrifices African people had to endure in order to build America is the first step to reconciling with our past. For the Lloyds, membership in elite Chesapeake society required a large and fashionable house with an efficient staff of servants and other workers, many of whom were enslaved. By 1774, around the time Lloyd completed his Annapolis home, Maryland lawmakers officially ended the colony's participation in the international slave trade, although not for the benefit of the enslaved population but primarily to put pressure on England. When the state refused to abolish slavery, several slave owners began to grant manumissions, documents that freed enslaved persons from the bonds of slavery. This helped create a new population of free blacks in the city of Annapolis by the start of the 19th century.

Sall Wilkes' story is an integral part of the social history of the Chase-Lloyd House. Her place and date of birth cannot be verified but she appears in Lloyd property records after the arrival of Elizabeth Tayloe from Virginia to the Wye Plantation. Sall lived at the Wye plantation in Talbot County and was among the first servants sent to work in the Annapolis house. Working closely with the Lloyds meant that Sall likely occupied the position of domestic servant. Her significance to the Lloyds is highlighted during the wedding of Mary Tayloe to Francis Scott Key in

1802, which took place at the Chase-Lloyd House. Janice Hayes-Williams, an Annapolis historian, references a letter found in the Lloyd Papers from Elizabeth Tayloe that mentions Sall's contributions in preparing the Chase-Lloyd House for the wedding.⁸⁵

Over the course of her life, Sall had six children born into slavery – Sally, Pucky, Anna, John, William, and Charlotte. When Sall was sent from Wye House to the Annapolis house, her daughters often accompanied her.⁸⁶ Relationships between slave masters and their enslaved women often resulted in mixed-race children. As with many enslaved house servants, there is a question about the paternity of Sall's children. Her position in Annapolis and connection to the Lloyd family had given her the opportunity to use marriage as a way of purchasing freedom for her daughters. In 1816, her daughter Anna married a prominent free black man named Henry Price, the son of Smith Price, one of the founders of the African-American community in Annapolis and among the few black landowners in the city.⁸⁷ Sall's children continued to be prominent members of the African American community in Annapolis, and she would become the great-grandmother of Daniel Hale Williams, an American general surgeon who, in 1893, performed the second documented successful pericardium surgery to repair a wound. Williams also founded Provident Hospital, the first non-segregated hospital in the United States.⁸⁸ There is an abundance of information available on Sall and her family, their lifestyle, and their

⁸⁵ Lloyd Papers. MS 2001. MdHS; Janice Hayes-Williams, interview by Imania Price, Annapolis, MD, November 13, 2015.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Maryland State Archives, Marriage Records, Arundel County, MD. 1810- 1845.

⁸⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "Daniel Hale Williams", accessed January 17, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Daniel-Hale-Williams>

history which can greatly assist in expanding the current information available at the house. However, none of this information is being interpreted in any sort of manner at this time.

The house is privately owned and managed by a Board of Trustees; its mission is to carry out the legacy of its last private owner, Hester Ann Chase Ridout. In 1886, Ridout stipulated in her will that she wanted to establish and endow a safe haven where elderly women "may find a retreat from the vicissitudes of life." The Chase Home, Inc. strives to accomplish this mission while maintaining period artifacts and the material fabric of a self-sustaining landmark building.⁸⁹ At this point in time, the Chase-Lloyd House provides no interpretation, information, or mention during its public tours of Sall or the enslaved community, nor does the site provide any programming to expand its context. The staff focuses primarily on taking care of the elderly women who live in the house, and rarely focus their resources on conducting additional research on the history of the house. Public tours guided by volunteer docents provide only a glimpse into the house as access is restricted. While the docents are trained in the beginning, they are not provided with any formal script or directed to mention specific historical information.

Prior to 2015 the Chase-Lloyd House had little historical information to provide on the social and enslaved history of the house. Considerable new information was made available to the site administrators via a thorough report on the history of the house that was carried out by graduate students at the University of Maryland. The document, entitled *The Chase-Lloyd House at 250: Significance of Function and Integrity of Form*, could provide the basis for upgrading the guided tour

⁸⁹ "The Chase Lloyd House," *Chase Home Inc.*, Pub Date: 2016 www.chaselloydhouse.org/about-us.

to include the history of Sall Wilkes as part of their narrative. Sall's story is important and further research should be conducted on her and the other Lloyd, Chase, and Harwood enslaved servants. Her history and that of others helps enlarge the social context of the Chase-Lloyd House and highlights the importance of recognizing and relating African American contributions to the life of the home.

Overall, the resources available to the Chase-Lloyd House are comparable to other sites that are privately owned and funded, yet with the abundance of information presented to their interpretive staff, they have a unique opportunity to use their interpretation, programming, and community engagement strategies to become more relevant and to connect to a larger audience by expanding their historical context.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

Over the years, opportunities to learn more of the history of slavery, and to participate in discussions on the legacy of racism in America have increased significantly. In addition, multiple scholars have observed that historic sites are still sites of contestation, and that curators and interpreters should engage in interpreting slavery to their many audiences. The history of slavery, and its legacy of racism, continue to have significant meaning in today's narrative. Using the argument presented by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen that historic sites provide a space to demonstrate an unbiased version of history, this paper argues that historic house museums have an opportunity and a role to play in discussing race relations in America today. By using strategic interpretation, education and programming, and community engagement to expand their narrative into a broader context, sites also have the means to remain relevant to modern day visitors. The aim of this project is to encourage historic house museums to seek the co-existence of differing perceptions, and demonstrate that telling the stories of enslaved people allows for a more comprehensive and historically accurate experience for visitors.

The distilled guidelines are based on the ideas of Critical Race Theory, social capital, restorative justice, and civic engagement as foundation tools to develop an applicable checklist for sites to measure their current level of success. Organizing the guidelines into three thematic groups provides further refinement of the key concepts: interpretation, education and programming, and community engagement. The themes provide the framework to analyze and compare the case studies, and also allow historic sites to operationalize the guidelines. The case studies offer a foundation

upon which to build best practice recommendations when looking at the interpretation of slavery, and a means to test key elements which should be added to both the interpretation of slavery and to understanding the applicability of the guidelines.

The four case studies were selected for their potential to demonstrate the wide range of resources and experiences historic house museums have to offer. Three of the sites provide opportunities for visitors to engage in the discussion of race in terms of a historic conflict, while using strategic interpretation to tell the complete story of their site. They have also use multiple methods to connect with a range of audiences, using programming for school aged children, multiple tour options, and engaging with both the local and descendant communities.

Drayton Hall (SC) demonstrated that while it was owned by the National Trust and privately funded, its mission was to interpret the full story of the site, which included the history of the enslaved peoples. It demonstrates how multiple resources and paid staff can greatly assist a site in developing multiple perspectives, and provides opportunities for engagement for school aged children, local community members, and members of the descendant family.

Riversdale (MD) is an example of a publicly owned historic house museum which relies on public funding and competitive grant opportunities to expand upon its narrative. One of the few period houses that has in-depth period documentation due to diaries left by Adam Plummer, it uses the opportunity to engage visitors in programming about black history and slavery. While at the same time it struggles with not having paid docents, who sometimes become uncomfortable as new research is discovered.



Fig. 14: Public archaeology day at Drayton Hall. 2016. Drayton Hall, Charleston.
www.draytonhall.org



Fig. 15: Simon's Story- Free & Safe exhibit. 2016. Rokeby Museum, Vermont.
www.rokeby.org

Rokeby (VT) demonstrates how even small sites with limited funding and resources can continue to expand upon their narratives, providing a full interpretation, yet still connecting their interpretation to a broader and more current context through selective programming, such as lectures and workshops.

The mission of the Chase-Lloyd House (MD) is not focused on interpreting the historic site, but rather is aimed at serving as a home for elderly ladies. Yet Chase-Lloyd represents an opportunity to expand upon their limited interpretation, especially now that new and exciting research findings have been presented to them.

Recommendations:

The archaeologist, Dr. Rodney Harrison states that there is potential for the “interpretation and management of multicultural heritage to produce positive values that lead to greater social inclusion,” and that sites must recognize that there are complementary but different ways to represent groups associated with the site.⁹⁰ By developing programs of interpretation and management that are mindful of and celebrate differences, a more dynamic understanding of the collective past through community building may be established. This allows for local community values to be presented rather than relying on a more national and homogenous use of heritage. Historic house museum staff can begin to incorporate local understandings into research, interpretation, and historical data, allowing their site to not become more inclusive, as well as more relevant to the local community.⁹¹

Critical Race Theory (CRT) presents a platform to expand interpretation and promote public engagement at historic house museums. CRT should be incorporated into plans for promoting collaboration, shared power, openness, and reciprocated knowledge. This means staff and board members of an organization are working purposefully toward a broad mission statement, which includes how an accurate account of the history is a necessity for sound interpretation. Public archaeologists

⁹⁰ Harrison, 183.

⁹¹ McDavid, *The Heritage Reader*, 516.

Lori Stalhgren and M. Jay Stottman conclude that "...a primary goal of historic house interpretation should be creating experiences and telling stories within the context of the lives represented by the house and its collection and about things that mean something to visitors—things they care about and that bear some relevance to their interests and lives,"⁹² and by doing so, it will allow the sites to remain relevant to current audiences.

The first recommendation through which historic sites can broaden their context and diversify is through the use of an Interpretation Committee (IC). In their work at Farmington Plantation in Louisville, Kentucky, Stalhgren and Stottman experimented with the site to form an IC, "which includes members of the local community, including African Americans and archaeologists; and a general refocus of interpretation on the entire plantation, including those enslaved."⁹³ The IC assisted the staff members to concentrate on the way the museum is presented to the public. They published a brochure about slavery at Farmington, created a walking tour of the grounds around the main house that focuses on slavery, and erected a memorial to the enslaved people who resided at Farmington. In addition, the brochure discusses slavery in much more detailed terms, giving specific information about those enslaved and what their lives at Farmington may have been like based on archaeological and documentary evidence.

The descendant community participated through informal yet invaluable consultation, and the various forms of communications began a dialogue with the local community, creating more interest in the topic of slavery and African American

⁹² Stalhgren and Stottman, 134.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 141-142.

life; “Farmington has fostered that dialogue through new programming and new projects.”⁹⁴ As part of the IC, members of the descendant community continue participating in interpretations and informally researching oral histories of the plantation, along with presenting a quick five minute “play” at the end of tours, which consists of a dialogue between an enslaved woman and man. The visitors are then invited back to a meeting room to discuss their thoughts and feelings after the play, and many times discussions are led by members of the descendant community. Through public archaeology programs, new historical research, and community involvement, Stahlgren and Stottman state that Farmington is “recognizing and interpreting slavery in the past, in turn helping to deal with present racial tensions by providing a place for dialogue.”⁹⁵

The second recommendation is to develop engagement programs to involve the community. Through the process of discovering history, the idea is to make the process of research a focus and attraction for the museum, which can encourage the community to participate and discover that history for itself. Stahlgren and Stottman argue that “local participation in the historical process is crucial for true success.”⁹⁶ By using historical research methods, both as a process and as a tool to engage the community and to allow them to access and help control the production of their history, it allows the community to serve as a stakeholder, making them more interested in the history, the site, and the discipline.

An example of this approach is the Cliveden historic site in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania which has reworked its mission to include accessibility and preservation

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 147.

as part of its approach. Research into the Benjamin Chew Papers continues to reveal the family's extensive slave holding, and today Cliveden serves the surrounding community and region as a center for the exploration of race, history, and memory. The staff shares the Living Kitchen project's archaeological, architectural and social research, by aiming to involve the public in the restoration and program goals for experiencing the spaces and explore together how kitchen history can inform contemporary issues, such as social mobility, food justice, and gender roles in America. Living Kitchens at Cliveden invites the community to join them 'at the table' to deepen their understanding of race, history and memory, and strengthen the foundation for community renewal in Germantown.⁹⁷

Programming for children' and developing partnerships with local organizations are another key to reaching the community Children tend to discuss the information from the outreach projects with their families at home, and in turn the family may be more motivated to participate in the project on a community level. Links with local organizations allow local historic sites to establish permanent ties to the community and neighborhoods to build the outreach efforts.⁹⁸

A third recommendations is to keep track of documentation or record keeping about the number of visitors which are interested or would like to learn more about slavery related topics. If sites are not keeping track of how their visitors and local community members are reacting, learning, or engaging in the material, then how will staff members understand key gaps which they may be missing? A quick resolution

⁹⁷ "Living Kitchens at Cliveden," *Cliveden*, Pub Date: 2016, <http://www.cliveden.org/living-kitchens-at-cliveden/>.

⁹⁸ Kelly Britt, "Archaeology- the "missing link" to civic Engagement? An Introspective Look at the Tools of Reinvention and Reengagement in Lancaster, Pennsylvania," in *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2007), 164, 168.

for this is through visitor surveys following a programming event or tours. By better understanding local issues which may be relevant to the community members, the staff can create programming opportunities to encourage members to connect the past to the present; designing a space to incorporate opportunities to encourage dialogue through posing direct questions, using objects that relate to larger experiences, and presenting information interpretively. Even at a successful model such as Drayton Hall, staff are unaware of whether their programming and interpretation are making an impact positively or negatively, on their visitors. Tracking the numbers also allows for a continuous feedback loop for staff to gather visitor opinions, and demonstrate commitment to this approach. In addition, sites can provide a measure of success by documenting numbers, and demonstrating their impact can always assist with funding opportunities.

While the guidelines have been found to be applicable and practical for historic sites to compare their current interpretation and programming against, a key element these guidelines fail to consider is the mission statement of the organization which owns or runs the historic site. While museums and historic sites can act as forces of change and can encourage active participation, these guidelines are really focused towards sites who already have an aim to be relevant, wish to be marketable, and encourage a local constituency to become stakeholders in their mission, programming, and history. For historic sites whose main purpose is not the interpretation of the site's history, these guidelines can still assist them to develop their interpretation and programming strategies for future use.

These recommendations can be used by both larger and smaller sites, regardless of resources, experiences, and organizational capacities. If we really want to engage people in the site and its history, we need to invite them behind the curtain; offer them opportunities to be part of the planning process, helping to make decisions; and invite them to assist in research. By developing strategic interpretation engaging in innovative programming, and inviting and educating the community, the museum staff at all three of these locations is aiming to reshape residents' understanding of their role in a larger scheme of society. Successful museums that are committed to the idea of civic engagement create exhibits that respond to information gained through interaction with the community, look at the past to make obvious hierarchical structures of power, and offer the stories and views of communities from the inside. They provide a space for visitors to practice activism through encouraging discussion or offering activities that mine engagement, and they model behaviors and ethics for citizens to emulate. In addition, a key element is their mission statement and their goals as a museum, which includes providing a full interpretation through community engagement, but also keeping themselves relevant to the current audience through a mutual process of discovery.

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