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"Pain Had a Face, Indignity Had a Body, Suffering Had Tears:" Evaluating the Role of Colonial Williamsburg in Portraying Narratives of Enslavement

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Introduction

On a hot and humid evening in late July, I attended "A Friday Night Gathering," one of Colonial Williamsburg's latest programs which seeks to explore the narrative of the enslaved. For $19, guests can participate in learning various songs, lead a dance circle, and play traditional musical instruments. The program is meant to show visitors how enslaved people at the Randolph House – the 18th century home of Continental Congress President Payton Randolph - created community despite their situation, and how they used imaginative methods to garner agency within their environment. However, as I - a 22 year old white woman - struggled to keep the rhythm on my two wooden sticks while a middle aged white woman performed John Travolta's quintessential disco move from "Saturday Night Fever" in the middle of the dance circle, I could not help but feel like our attempts to understand slavery resulted in little more than the trivialization of black culture.

On a cold and blustery afternoon in January, I curled up on my couch and began watching the History Channel's remake of the 1976 hit series "Roots." The series traces the ancestry of Kunta Kinte – who is captured in Africa and sold into slavery in the United States – using the family's lineage as a method to convey the black struggle. In the second episode Kunta Kinte asks Kizzy, a fellow field slave, to marry him. The subsequent marriage scene is striking in both its beauty and power. It opens with Fiddler – a character known for his fiddling skills – proclaiming the two husband and wife, and placing a broom on the ground for the new couple to jump over. The physical broom creates space for a wider exploration of the tension between slavery and freedom, as Kunta Kinte emphasizes that no such ritual existed in Africa, and is rather a way for slave masters to "make fun of us," and "remind us we belong to them."[1] *The couple eventually jumps, and soon a dance circle forms. Fiddler begins to play a melodic refrain and rhythmic dancing ensues. The scene is striking, as a moment of pure joy emerges from an oppressive institution. The links to slavery are there – the institution prevents the marriage from being seen as a true union, and Kunta Kinte struggles to dance on account of having his foot chopped off to inhibit him from running away – but they are not the focus, as instead the viewer is shown the beauty and power of black resistance in the face of slavery.*[2]

As shown above, these two attempts at understanding the enslaved experience utilized the same techniques – music, rhythm, and dance circles – but elicit incredibly different responses. As a participant and viewer, one left me cognizant of my own participation in the trivialization of black culture and the enslaved experience, while the

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[1] *Roots: Part 2,* TV miniseries, directed by Mario Van Peebles (2016; USA: History Channel, 2016): online video, 41:05-41:50.

[2] *Roots: Part 2,* 41:05-44:58.

other highlighted the humanity of the enslaved in the face of oppression. While both sought to provide resistance narratives, offering examples of black cultural expression, the topic of slavery more broadly was approached differently amongst the two. Thus, for me, these two scenes – and my unique response to each - speak to the wider question of how to present the topic of slavery.

The topic of slavery occupies a place of heightened emotion within the collective memory of Americans, and is one where few agree on how to approach. In the context of museum interpretation, it can best be described as a "difficult history," which can be defined as paradoxical and unexplainable occurrences in the United States' past in which one group was subjugated on account of race and assumed inferiority.[3] The legacy of this history remains today, manifesting itself in such themes as institutional racism and socioeconomic inequality. The implicit racism in slavery creates discomfort. While this discomfort can create opportunities for learning, it frequently causes the topic to be watered down, or ignored, in modern presentations of America's past. However, the lasting implications simultaneously positions slavery as a critical aspect of the historical narrative.

In scholarship, slavery has long been incorporated into the academic narrative. Historically, however, white slave owners proved the focus of scholarship of the colonial era. Despite the overwhelming numbers of enslaved individuals living in the United States prior to the Civil War little academic attention was given to their contributions amongst white scholars. African American scholars conversely began pushing for a more complete understanding of American history through the study of African Americans. In

[3] Other topics such as American Indian experiences can also be characterized as "difficult histories." However, this work will focus specifically on slavery and the African American experience.

1926 Carter G. Woodson began "Negro History Week" - which would evolve into Black History Month in 1976 - as a way to draw attention to the contributions of African Americans.[4] Additionally, in 1935 W.E.B. Du Bois published "Black Reconstruction in America," which countered the central narrative of the Reconstruction era by focusing on the humanity of black individuals, and recognizing their contributions to the period.[5]

In the 1950s and 1960s white academics began engaging with the topic of slavery directly. In 1959 Stanley Elkins published his controversial book *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, which drew a comparison between American slavery and Nazi concentration camps, and the impact on human conscious.[6] Elkins argued that the institution of slavery required "absolute dependency for the slave – the dependency not of the developing child but of the perpetual child."[7] Despite the controversy that surrounded the book, the piece proved instrumental in generating more work and research along the topic of slavery. In March of 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the United States' Assistant Secretary of Labor, published the Moynihan Report –formally titled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Attention*.[8] The landmark report contended that black Americans would not have access to equal opportunities as white Americans, as "the racist virus is in the American bloodstream" and that "three centuries of sometimes unimaginable mistreatment have taken their toll on the Negro people" impeded their ability to "win over in the competitions of American

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[4] The Freeman Institute, "Carter G. Woodson," The Freeman Institute Foundation, accessed March 11, 2018, http://www.freemaninstitute.com/woodson.htm.
[5] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
[6] Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (New York: Universal Library Edition, 1963).
[7] Elkins, 130.
[8] James T. Patterson, *Freedom in Not Enough: The Moynihan Report and America's Struggle Over Black Family Life from LBJ to Obama* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), xii.

life."[9] Moyniham ultimately concluded that the "fundamental problem" was "that of the family structure" as "the Negro family in the urban ghettos is crumbling" and "so long as this situation persists, the cycle of poverty and disadvantage will continue to repeat itself."[10] While both texts are problematic as they perpetuate a narrative of black inferiority and white patronage, they are critical in understanding how white academics interacted with the historical concept of slavery in the 1950s and 1960s. However, this is not to discredit all white scholarship centered on the enslaved experience in the 1960s. Winthrop D. Jordan's pioneering piece *White Over Black*, published in 1968, traced the evolution of Anglo-American attitudes towards black individuals throughout the development of America.[11] While a groundbreaking piece, the book sought to understand the black experience by exploring how white Americans interacted with African Americans, maintaining a narrative centered on white men.

The same year, professor Nathan Hare coordinated the first Black Studies Program at San Francisco State University. The program became a formal department in 1969, and over the next four years roughly 600 colleges and universities followed suit, creating their own programs centered on the understanding the lived experiences of black-bodied individuals.[12] The creation of such programs stemmed out of the rise of social history in the 1970s. Forming out of the Civil Rights movement, Social History sought to understand the lived experiences of everyday people, through exploring such categories as women, labor, and African Americans. It is through this framework that

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[9] Patterson, 48.
[10] Patterson, 48.
[11] Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Towards the Negro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), xxvii.
[12] Jeffrey Beeson, "U.S. Celebrates 40th Anniversary of Black Studies Program," MU News Bureau, last modified February 3, 2009, https://munews.missouri.edu/news-releases/2009/02.03.09.brunsma.black.studies.anniversary.php.

black history more fully entered the academic sphere as its own category. In his landmark work, *The Slave Community*, first published in 1972, John Blassingame sought to understand the life of the "black slave" through "his African heritage, culture, family, acculturation, behavior, religion, and personality."[13] Blassingame's work proved the first systematic exploration of the lived experiences of enslaved individuals.[14] Edmund S. Morgan's 1975 book *American Slavery, American Freedom*, builds off Blassingame by exploring the interconnectedness of the concepts of liberty and enslavement and how they ultimately formed the core of the United States as a racialized nation.[15] In the time since, more detailed explorations of slavery have emerged, as scholars continue to explore different aspects of both the enslaved experience, and African American history in full. However, it is important to note that such works have traditionally focused on individuals enslaved on large plantations – with twenty or more enslaved individuals - in the antebellum South, with less attention given to northern slavery, or those on smaller farms.[16]

As Hasan Kwame Jeffries, who serves on the faculty at Ohio State University, recently wrote in the Southern Poverty Law Center's publication *Teaching Hard History*, "slavery is hard history. It is hard to comprehend the inhumanity that defined it. It is hard to discuss the violence that sustained it. It is hard to teach the ideology of white supremacy that justified it. And it is hard to learn about those who abided it."[17] It is thus unsurprising that many tensions arise – amongst both black and white individuals - when

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[13] John Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), xi.
[14] Blassingame, xi.
[15] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1975).
[16] Nell Irvin Painter, *Soul Murder and Slavery* (Waco: Markham Press Fund, 1993), 21.
[17] Hasan Kwame Jeffries, "Teaching Hard History" last modified January 31, 2018. https://www.splcenter.org/20180131/teaching-hard-history.

considering the most effective ways to engage in meaningful discussions on the topic, especially in a museum setting. For some, slavery is best left in the past, while for others it is critical to understanding today. Some caution against linking each African American achievement to overcoming slavery, while others argue everything is inherently connected to slavery and exists in defiance of the institution. How do we discuss slavery in a way that is meaningful and allows us to better understand our own lives, without reducing the African American experience to existing purely in the shadow of slavery? How do we highlight resistance, while also holding the oppressive institution that required resistance? What is the space of slavery in museums?

In effort to answer these questions, Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small put forth a four-part representational strategy in their 2002 book, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. In combining academic scholarship with museum methodology, Eichstedt and Small attempt to understand how museums discussed the challenging topic of slavery. As part of their research, Eichstedt and Small conducted an extensive tour of slavery plantation museums in Virginia, Georgia and Louisiana, visiting 122 sites in attempt to identify how such museums contributed to a complex understanding of race in our present world.[18] As a result they developed a four-point scale of museum qualification based on the manner in which the site discussed slavery.

Symbolic Annihilation serves as the baseline category, and includes museums that ignore the subject of slavery entirely, despite its historical relevance to the site. In erasing the experience of the enslaved, such sites will refer to "servants" as a stand in for "slave"

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[18] Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums (*Smithsonian Books: Washington D.C., 2002), 3.

or "enslaved individual." Similarly, other sites will use the passive voice in tours and signage, which fails to identify an individual as having carried out a specific task, stripping them of any agency or humanity. These sites will employ phrases such as "food was prepared here" or "crops were planted in the spring, and harvested in the fall."[19] Such language implies action without an agent, metaphorically refusing to acknowledge the contributions of the enslaved.

The second stage in this scheme encompasses sites of Trivialization and Deflection. Such museums mention slavery, but in ways that distort and minimize its impact and influence, thus trivializing the experience of the enslaved. Such sites are credited as promoting the "trope of the happy or grateful slave."[20] These sites frequently also emphasize that masters had good intentions, and treated their enslaved individuals well out of a genuine sense of care. Finally, sites in this stage tend to perpetuate stereotypical depictions of the master-slave relationship. Such stereotypical tropes can be understood as stemming out of Elkins's *Slavery*. In his work, Elkin's maintained that the institution of American slavery "produced psychologically crippled adults who were docile, irresponsible, loyal, lazy, humble, and deceitful, in short, who were Sambos."[21] While scholarly work has been done to undo such harmful stereotypes, the legacy of Elkin's work is seen in sites that embody this stage.

The third phase, Segregation and Marginalization of Knowledge, occurs when a museum includes information about enslaved individuals, but presents "it largely through separate tours and displays that visitors [could] choose to see or ignore, depending on their desire." Sites of this nature tend to have separate "Slave Tours," which visitors can

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[19] Eichstedt and Small, 136.
[20] Eichstedt and Small,151.
[21] Painter, 11.

opt in or out of. The master narrative continues to be centered, while slavery is positioned as an auxiliary topic that serves to help the audience better understand the planter elite.

Relative Incorporation is the final phase, and is positioned by Eichstedt and Small as the ultimate goal for any museum. Here slavery is centered within the wider narrative of the museum and is fully integrated throughout the site.[22] Sites identified as those of Relative Incorporation are also more likely to "disturb a positive construction of whiteness and challenge the dominant themes that each state tends to present about its own history."[23] Thus, these sites move away from a traditional Eurocentric approach, and seek to integrate multiple narratives for a more complex understanding. However, it is important to note, while integrated methodologies seek to create a more well rounded understanding, when done poorly they can work to perpetuate stereotypic and dehumanized presentations of both white and black individuals.

In this thesis I use Eichstedt and Small's model as a foundation for considering Colonial Williamsburg's interpretation of slavery. At first, CW seems to align with the methodological framework proposed by Eichstedt and Small. Since opening as a public history museum in 1934, CW appears to have followed the progression of the four stages of interpretation, as put forth by Eichstedt and Small, in regards to their interpretation of the African American experience. CW is credited as formally introducing African American interpretation in 1979, with the hiring of six street actors to portray the enslaved experience. This appears to position CW within the third phase, Segregation and Marginalization, after previously shifting between Symbolic Annihilation and

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[22] Eichstedt and Small, 10.

[23] Eichstedt and Small, 11.

Trivialization. However, in many ways CW continued to exist as a conglomeration of all three phases simultaneously, breaking away from the linear progression expected by Eichstedt and Small. Thus, while in some ways CW aligns with Eichstedt and Small's approach, it is also limited in its ability to explain CW's interpretation of the enslaved.

Additionally, contemporary Colonial Williamsburg employee and scholar, Ywone Edwards-Ingram contends that methodologies such as Eichstedt and Small's, which position 1979 as the beginning of African American interpretation at CW, fail to acknowledge the work of CW's black employees prior to 1979. She argues that such frameworks are limited as they perpetuate a "myopic history that has overlooked the valuable interpretive roles of frontline African American employees."[24] Rather Edwards-Ingram contends that the visibility of such employees caused them to be "included, not excluded, in the public face of Colonial Williamsburg during this period, despite the fact that the museum did not treat these interpretive areas as top priorities."[25] Thus, the period prior to 1979 does not fully embody that of Symbolic Annihilation or Trivialization and Deflection as the presence of African American staff caused the narrative of slavery to be present, even as the concept of race was left unacknowledged, creating an unspoken segregated history.

This then draws into question the effectiveness of using Eichstedt and Small's approach when considering CW's ability to interpret the narrative of the enslaved. In recent years Colonial Williamsburg has struggled to fully embody the idea of Relative Incorporation, despite the work of museum interpreters and program developers to

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[24] Ywone Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979 African American Coachmen, Visibility, and Representation at Colonial Williamsburg," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 1 (2014): 10, accessed January 2, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2014.36.1.9.

[25] Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979," 11.

produce powerful and effective programming centered on the experiences of the enslaved. Simultaneously, however, similar sites such as Mount Vernon have begun to grapple with the topic of slavery in more direct and incorporated ways, but also cannot yet be fully quantified as embodying Relative Incorporation. This raises the questions of whether Colonial Williamsburg can offer a complex understanding of African American history in the colonial period given its current position. Additionally, in comparing CW to other contemporaneous sites, a new set of guidelines for effective interpretation begins to emerge.

Thus I propose a new methodology of understanding, Emotional Humanity. Emotional Humanity stems out of increasing scholarship within the field of emotional history. In 2011 Ute Frevert published *Emotions in History – Lost and Found*, in attempt to apply emotion as a lens to understanding modern perceptions of the past. In regards to politics specifically, Frevert wrote that as a general public we consider politics to be a "down-to-earth business, governed by dry procedures and conducted by unemotional, target-oriented personnel."[26] However, in actuality politics are a highly emotional field, and thus emotion proves critical in understanding the past. Frevert emphasized, "passions could not and should not be ruled out altogether."[27] Thus in considering the realm of politics it is essential to also recognize the role of emotion. In failing to recognize the impact of emotions, we do not understand the full historical narrative. In regards to the colonial period, Frevert's emphasis on emotions can be extended to considering not only the Founding Fathers, but also the period of republic building more widely. The men and women who helped build our nation were fully human, bearing

[26] Ute Frevert, *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 6.
[27] Frevert, 5.

conflicting emotions and desires, and thus must be recognized as such. Thus, I believe emotion serves as an essential component of understanding slavery in the colonial period.

It is based on this understanding of emotion as a historical framework that I propose a new model of interpretation: Emotional Humanity. I hold that in regards to the interpretation of slavery, museums must shift away from a singular centralized, fact-based, narrative, and towards an emphasis on emotion. Shared experiences and emotions form bridges, connecting people across time and place. By focusing on humanity – and the emotions entwined in it - museums can explore the ways in which slavery impacted members of different communities. A centralized white narrative establishes slavery as auxiliary, while one based on emotion highlights the ways that different narratives come together to form a national narrative. This then creates a foundation upon which different narratives can be highlighted. Special programs can highlight different identity groups, while the overarching narrative points the enduring presence of each to ensure that guests recognize the contributions of a diverse array of fully human individuals in shaping the United States. Thus a program may focus on Payton Randolph as a slave owner, while another focuses on his work in government thus allowing the two to work in tandem to show Randolph as a complex and fully human individual. Thus slavery does not act as a threat to our conceptions of the elite planters but rather helps us to more fully understand them as human. Emotional Humanity simultaneously provides a critical foundation for social critique, as it asks us to consider the socioeconomic environment individuals were living in, and how it impacted their conceptions of humanity. Additionally, such a methodology allows for black cultural programming as a form of understanding the humanity of enslaved individuals, and thus supports a shift away from damaged centered

narratives. I contend that a focus on emotion works to prevent the forming of exclusionary dichotomies and thus allows visitors to balance seemingly contradictory narratives simultaneously, such as working towards freedom while holding enslaved individuals.

This thesis will utilize both Eichstedt and Small's approach, as well as Emotional Humanity, to explore how Colonial Williamsburg has presented African American history throughout the last eighty years, beginning with the inception of the museum and following the development of interpretive programming through 2018. By combining archival research, historiography, and oral histories, I argue that Colonial Williamsburg perpetuates an ideological separation of African American history from American history. I will also trace the presence of emotion to emphasize that understanding CW through Emotional Humanity provides a more effective way of evaluating interpretation of the enslaved. To prove this point, my thesis is organized into three chapters.

Chapter one will explore CW from conception in the 1920s to the formal introduction of black history in 1979. This period can most closely be generalized as embodying Symbolic Annihilation and Trivialization and Deflection. I argue that Colonial Williamsburg's creation as a site of American Patriotism during the Great Depression, coupled with the ways in which it navigated Jim Crow era segregation, worked to prevent the museum from being able to accurately and fully portray the enslaved experience. In building the museum, the local black community was displaced, the legacy of which continues to impact the relationship between the two today. Simultaneously, an interpretative narrative rooted in the history of the white planter elite emerged. Thus, the construction of the museum, combined with the emerging

interpretative narrative echoed wider national trends of white exceptionalism and racial discrimination, ignoring the topic of slavery and promoting a narrative of patriotism and national pride. As such, Patriotism proved the guiding sentiment, and thus the humanity of the enslaved is ignored.

Chapter two will then consider the 1980s through the 1990s, as CW began to incorporate black programming into the museum. In this period, CW embodied a segregated methodology, as the enslaved experience was present, but was offered through separate tours – seen in the Other Half Tour - and sites, such as Carter's Grove. Additionally, many of the programs in this period focused on narratives of resistance and culture based on the work of Blassingame. This allowed CW to assert they were representing the full story of the founding of America, while simultaneously maintaining a central narrative of white exceptionalism, thus selectively highlighting the humanity of the enslaved, only when compatible with the wider narrative. However, in this phase CW began to explore the impact of emotion as an interpretive technique, culminating in the recreated slave auction. The 1994 recreated Slave Auction served as a transitional point in which CW attempted to portray a more progressive and integrated presentation of slavery. However, the event was met with a wide array of responses, which continued to influence its ability to interpret slavery today.

Chapter three will look at CW in the 21st century. Considered a frontrunner in the interpretation of black history in the 1980s and 1990s, today CW appears to have stalled in its ability to present a variety of narratives. This chapter combines personal interviews with CW interpreters, and my own observational notes, to understand African American interpretation in the 21st century. This chapter considers a series of special programs, as

well as the interpretation of the historic area itself, to offer a fuller understanding of the development of African American programming at CW. This underscores that ultimately it is the employees – many of whom are trained actors – that drive African American history at CW. I will then form a cross comparison between CW and a series of four contemporaneous historical sites – Montpelier, Highland, Monticello and Mount Vernon – to better understand CW's ability to present the topic of slavery when compared with other sites. Ultimately, I contend that while CW has a series of special programs that engage with the humanity of the enslaved, as a whole the museum continues to perpetuate an ideological separation of African American history from American history.

Having considered the historical legacy of CW, I will explore what it means for CW to fully embody an interpretation of the enslaved rooted in Emotional Humanity. Additionally, I will consider the effectiveness of the National Museum of African American History and Culture – which can be read as embodying Emotional Humanity - in positioning African American history as an integral part to American history. I will conclude by offering suggestions for how CW can improve their interpretation of the enslaved moving forward.

Appendix 1

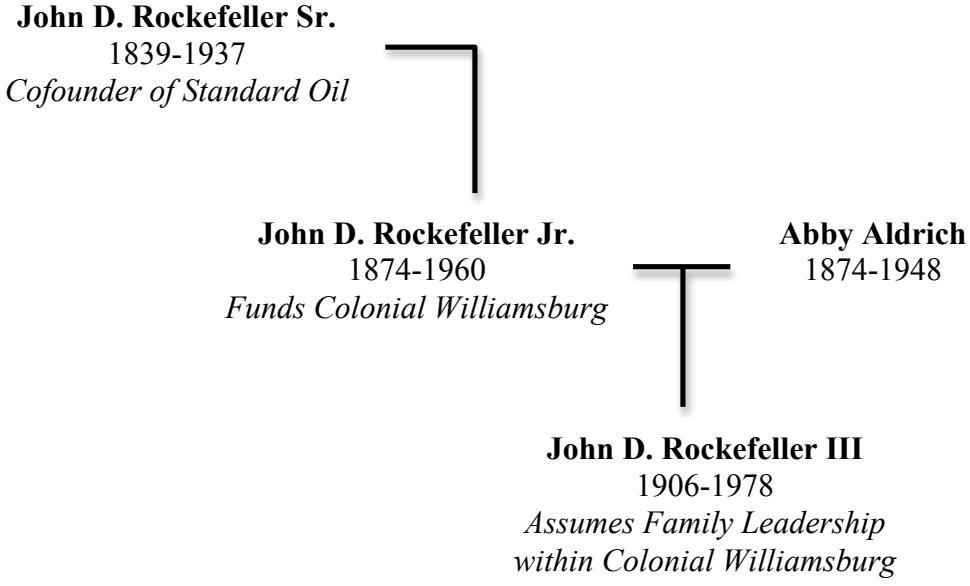
This thesis centers on the concept of museum interpretation. In the landmark piece *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Freeman Tilden defines museum interpretation as follows:

> An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and be illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.[28]

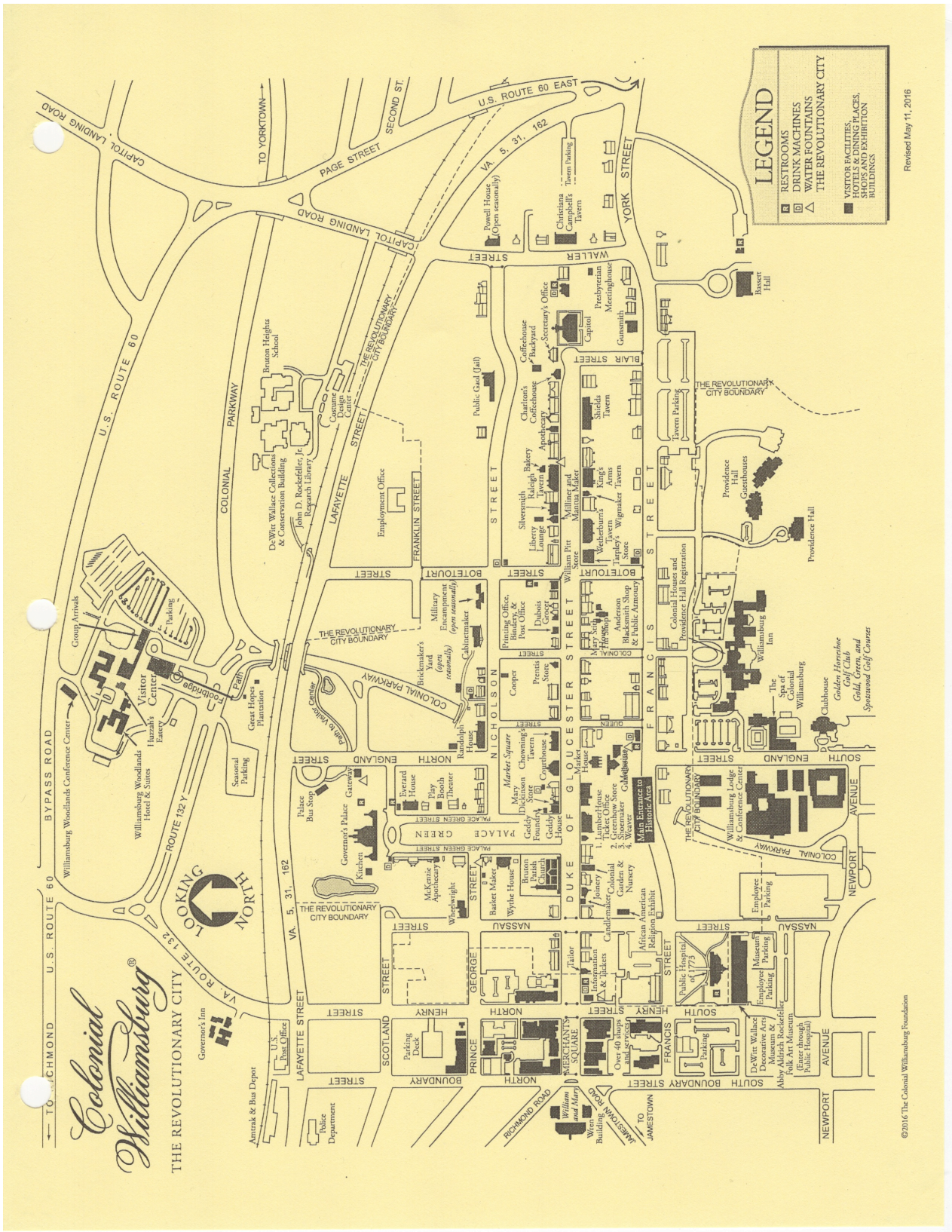
There exist three main types of interpretation:

- **First Person:** when the interpreter embodies a historical figure and interacts with guests as if it was the historical period
- **Second Person:** when the visitor and interpreter interact, with the interpreter guiding the conversation in the historical conversation
- **Third Person:** when the interpreter is dressed in historical clothing but exists in the contemporary world with the visitors

Rockefeller Family Tree – Edited to reflect central family members in the creation of Colonial Williamsburg

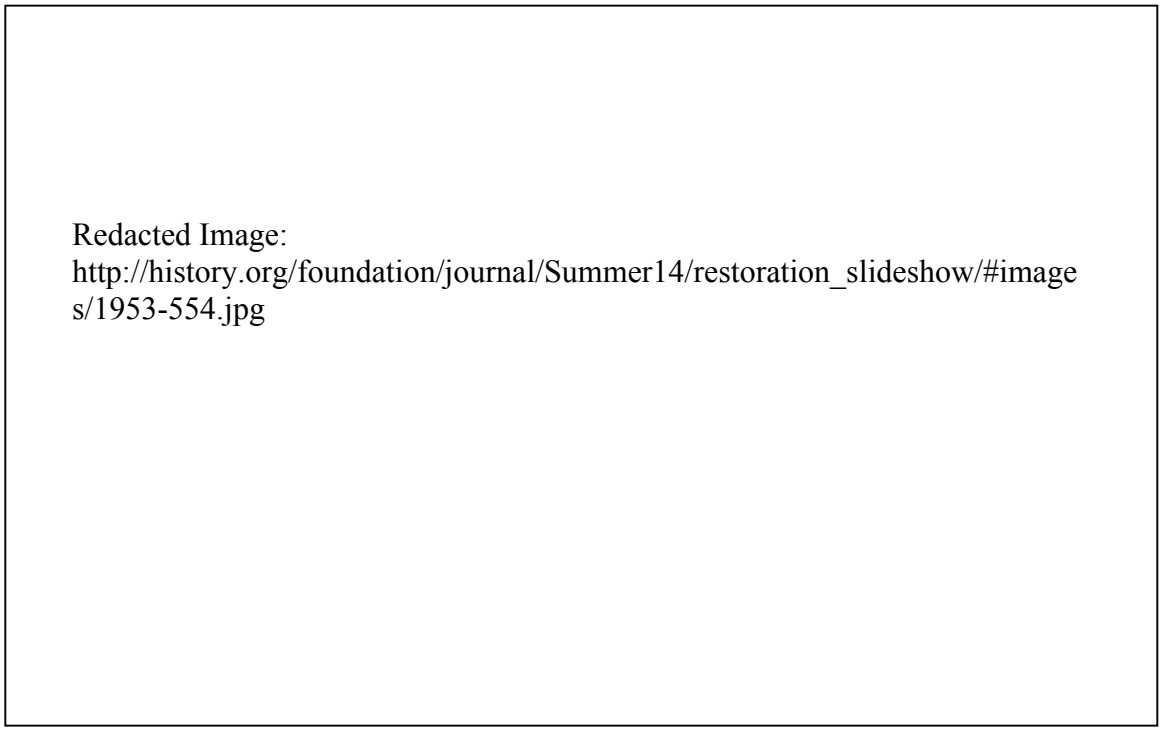


[28] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 33.



Scanned Map of Colonial Williamsburg, Received Upon Visit, dated 2016.

"Colonial Williamsburg Will Continue as a Symbol of Our Nation's Finest Ideals for as Long as Those Ideals Endure:" Tracing the Development of Colonial Williamsburg as a Patriotic Museum, the 1920s-1970s



View Down Nicholson Street, Williamsburg Circa 1930[1]

The development of Colonial Williamsburg as a distinctive type of historical museum in the United States proves synonymous with the work of two men: Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin and John D. Rockefeller. Together they worked to restore 1920's Williamsburg to what they thought to be its original colonial style, refurbishing and reconstructing a series of colonial era homes and buildings to their 18th century standing. In doing so they produced one of the first living history museums in the country, which sought to convey the history of white America. Architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable emphasized that living history museums are one of the "most successful and staggeringly profitable American [phenomenona]" as they seek to replace "reality with selective fantasy"

[1] Mary Miley Theobald, "African Americans and the Restoration of Williamsburg," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed February 27, 2018, http://history.org/foundation/journal/summer14/restoration.cfm.

through the "reinvention of the environment as themed entertainment."[2] At places such as Williamsburg the visitor could "learn a little romanticized history, confuse the real and unreal, and have – then and now – a very nice time."[3] Reflecting on his involvement with Williamsburg, John D. Rockefeller Jr. emphasized that the town's greatest value rests in the "lesson that it teaches of the patriotism, high purpose, and unselfish devotion of our forefathers to the common good."[4] While Huxtable emphasizes the entertainment value of such museums, Rockefeller highlights Williamsburg's educational promise. When taken together they underscore the enduring tension between education and entertainment within a museum setting. Within the nation's collective memory, CW "has itself become mythologized – an icon of our revolutions, of entrepreneurial spirit (in the form of W. A. R. Goodwin), of philanthropic largess (in the person of John D. Rockefeller Jr.) and a host of virtues: creativity, determinations, self-sacrifice, courage."[5]

The institution of slavery proved integral in the development of the real colonial era Williamsburg – and the United States - but throughout the first fifty years of CW, it remained noticeably absent. In *American Slavery, American Freedom,* Edmund Morgan traces the emergences of race-based slavery in Virginia, emphasizing the economic impact of the institution, and the ways in which a racial code developed in order to maintain it.[6] Slavery, through its legalized subordination and bondage of people specifically based on the color of their skin, existed simultaneously as central to, and the antithesis of, ideas of liberty and patriotism; fundamental tenets to Colonial

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[2] Ada Louise Huxtable, The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion (New York: The New Press, 1997), 15.
[3] Huxtable, 15.
[4] Philip Kopper, Colonial Williamsburg (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1986), 6.
[5] Kopper, 7.
[6] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1975), 296-327.

Williamsburg, and greater United States. The development of Colonial Williamsburg served to portray white men such as George Washington, who were seen as representing "the American ideals of honesty, courage, and the strength of the individual," in order to "regenerate a lost Americanism that prided itself on the accomplishments and sacrifices of those who had lived in the eighteenth century."[7] Ultimately, Colonial Williamsburg chose to illuminate "the dead and [ignore] the dying."[8] The elite white planters – men such as Washington – were celebrated as nation builders, forming the central narrative of the museum. Simultaneously, the experiences of the enslaved men and women of Williamsburg were erased from the wider narrative.

From its conception in the 1920s, to the formal integration of the experience of the enslaved in 1979, CW sought to provide a narrative of patriotism through a celebration of the planter elite. While CW's interpretive pattern in this period echoed national sentiment, its creation as a source of American Patriotism during the Great Depression, coupled with the ways in which it navigated southern segregation, worked to prevent the museum from being able to accurately and fully portray the enslaved experience. In this period humanity was seen as only applying to white figures, and thus the humanity of the enslaved was ignored. This chapter argues that the sociopolitical climate of the 1920s and 1930s in America established CW as a museum that ignored the topic of slavery.

The Restoration: The 1920s and 1930s

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[7] Anders Greenspan, Creating Colonial Williamsburg, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 11.
[8] Ada Louise Huxtable, "Dissent At Colonial Williamsburg," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), September 22, 1963.

In 1923, Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin, an Episcopal priest and historian, returned to Williamsburg to teach at the College of William and Mary, and resume his position as minister of Bruton Parish.[9] Cognizant of the history of the church, Goodwin set out to return "the building to its grander simplicity… reconstructing high-backed pews like those where Washington and Jefferson had prayed."[10] Moved by the concept of restoration, and an assumed need to provide legacies of the past for future generations, Goodwin "set his sights on the entire town, the nexus between Jamestown and Yorktown, the 'cradle of liberty.'"[11] Goodwin, however, needed funding and turned to John D. Rockefeller Jr., who having been "guided through Williamsburg by Dr. Goodwin, [Rockefeller] glimpsed the village parson's patriotic vision and gently seized it as his own."[12] The private donations of Rockefeller emphasize the emergence of the museum as a privately funded entity, distinguishing it from publically funded sites such as Jamestown and Yorktown. It was not long before "the Williamsburg 'Restoration,' as it would soon be familiarly called, became [Rockefeller's] personal cause, hobby and benevolent mania."[13] Despite his interest in the project, Rockefeller initially "insisted on anonymity," as he worried his open involvement would lead to price hikes and resistance from local residents.[14]

Through the years, John D. Rockefeller Jr. became the primary financial supporter of the Restoration. In a letter to a trusted associate, Rockefeller authorized the financing of the Restoration in full, independent of if "it costs three or four, or even five millions

[9] Kopper, 32.
[10] Kopper, 32.
[11] Kopper, 32.
[12] Kopper, 33.
[13] Kopper, 33.
[14] Kopper, Revised, 143.

of dollars."[15] The financial costs of the Restoration surpassed Rockefeller's initial expectations, and by the time of his death, "he alone had spent more than $68 million here and his heirs would continue to give millions more."[16] Rockefeller saw his involvement as emblematic of the Found Fathers as both sought to be stewards of societal good, improving the lives of those around them. Rockefeller helped construct CW around a central narrative of the celebration of the Founding Fathers. As Colonial Williamsburg continued to evolve and change in the coming decades, it remained centered on promoting feelings of "patriotism, high purpose, and unselfish devotion;" a narrative that Rockefeller was not only drawn to, but sought to promote.

In seeking to restore Williamsburg, Rockefeller and Goodwin were embarking to recreate an entire colonial town. In 1928, H. I. Brock, of the New York Times, noted that "for the first time in modern history – so far as the writer knows – a whole living city is being restored…everything new is to be removed and the old put back as nearly as possible as it was a century and a half ago."[17] The first step in the process of restoring Williamsburg was the acquisition of the property, which currently served as homes and businesses for many of Williamsburg's white residents. In asking residents to turn their homes over for a colonial museum, Goodwin was simultaneously insisting "the identity of Williamsburg's white citizens [be] remade with the American Revolution rather than the Confederacy as its focal point."[18] The American Revolution echoed a time of

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[15] Kopper, 33.
[16] Kopper, 33.
[17] H. I. Brock, "A Town to Be a Museum of '76," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), March 25, 1928. http://ezproxy.macalester.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.macalester.edu/docview/104629362?accountid=12205.
Previously colonial restorations had focused on individual buildings, and thus Colonial Williamsburg represented the first major restoration of an entire town.
[18] Richard Handler and Eric Gable, The New History in an Old Museum (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 33.

optimism and the birth of freedom - as opposed to the "Lost Cause" - allowing the museum to be constructed around the perseverance and greatness of the Founding Fathers. Additionally, for many of Williamsburg's white families, selling their property provided them with much needed financial assistance and security. They could now afford the medical care, new clothes, and automobiles they previously desired, and many chose to use the funds to build new homes on the outskirts of the city.[19] With economic benefits providing additional motivation to sell, the emergence of the museum was overall seen as positive in the lives of Williamsburg's white residents.

Goodwin and Rockefeller were also cognizant that many of the white residences were "occupied by lifelong inhabitants" leading Goodwin to believe "'it would be difficult, if not impossible, and I am inclined to think inadvisable' to force anyone out."[20] The pair instead came up with a series of economic mechanisms to acquire the properties. This included a "buy-now-take-later approach" which allowed white residents to "to continue to occupy their homes for the few remaining years of their lives, without rent, taxes, or insurance."[21] Upon their death, the property would then be assumed by the museum to become part of the Restoration. For some, such tactics called into question the moral character of Goodwin. Residents criticized the "rector for pursuing an interest that so clearly conflicted with his pastoral abilities."[22] Furthermore, Goodwin was known to mislead neighbors, publically stating that the property was for William and Mary, or that "his mysterious "associates" had limited resources."[23] In

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[19] Greenspan, 23.
[20] Kopper, Revised, 145.
[21] Kopper, Revised, 145.
[22] Kopper, Revised, 145.
[23] Kopper, Revised, 143.

attempt to protect Rockefeller's anonymity, and ensure the success of the project, Goodwin was willing to compromise his own moral leanings and public standing.

Some homeowners found Rockefeller and Goodwin's proposal unfavorable, resulting in a tension that would be present throughout the Restoration. Some of the land Goodwin hoped to acquire belonged to the town of Williamsburg itself. In an effort to gain the necessary approval to convert the public land to the Restoration, an all town meeting was held on the evening of June 12th, 1928, at a local school.[24] Legally, the land belonged to the townspeople of Williamsburg; however, by hosting the meeting in a segregated school, "townspeople" became understood as white residents. In 1928 Williamsburg's interracial relations were "circumscribed as much by custom as by law."[25] Virginia operated under Jim Crow legislation, a series of discriminatory laws – both formally legislated and de facto social norms - that sought to segregate white and black residents living within the same community. As such, public spaces such as schools were segregated. By hosting the town meeting at a white school - a school that only white people were allowed to enter - Williamsburg's black residents were intentionally excluded of the conversation about the Restoration.

Although excluded from formal conversations regarding the Restoration, Williamsburg's black residents were highly impacted and involved with the transformation of the town into a living history museum. As part of the Restoration a total of thirty-eight homes owned by Williamsburg's black residents were purchased. Williamsburg's elite were "were happy to see some of the older, less attractive buildings

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[24] Virginia Blanchard, *Mass Meeting,* photograph of original document, 2016, https://www.history.org/features/ throughthedecades/#.
See Appendix 2, Fig:1.
[25] Greenspan, 16.

removed" as they viewed "the poorer houses as a blight on the community."[26] Thus, the removal of such dilapidated buildings contributed to the overall positive relationship between white citizens and the museum. The policy of "buy-now-take-later," allotted to white residents, was not offered to African Americans. They were instead relocated to the newly constructed black neighborhood, Braxton Court, located a few blocks to the west of the museum.[27] In his history published by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, scholar Philip Kopper contends that the newly displaced African Americans were able to find "new homes in specifically funded low-rent neighborhoods."[28] However, "Eliza Baker, a former slave born in 1845, recalled, many of the African Americans' new homes were often 'so small people [could not] get their furniture in.'"[29] A. Edwin Kendrew, who first served as an architect on the project before becoming one of the vice presidents of the foundation, defended the small dwellings, recalling "we tried to keep the costs reasonable in order to make the houses somewhat similar to what the Negroes were accustomed to...not making larger rooms but making them compact."[30] Baker highlights how individuals born into slavery were removed from their homes in order to build a museum that depicted the significance of the very period under which the system of slavery was developed. Thus, from its inception, CW centered on the narrative of the white patriot, leaving little room for the experiences of the enslaved. Racism and legislative discrimination were used to defend the Restoration, positioning it as natural within the status quo of the time.

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[26] Greenspan, 24.
[27] Theobald, "African Americans and the Restoration of Williamsburg."
There are also a number of streets African Americans were able to move to. Theobald writes "Some found homes in a new black neighborhood called Braxton Court, a few blocks west of the restored area. Others moved south of Francis Street on Henry Street, or north of Duke of Gloucester along Botetourt."
[28] Kopper, Revised, 175.
[29] Greenspan, 24.
[30] Greenspan, 24.

Despite being physically displaced as a result of the Restoration, some black residents choose to engage with the project. CW became "a major employer of blacks placing them in both skilled and unskilled areas" such as landscaping, contracting and hospitality.[31] However, it is critical to note that many of these positions were understood as "subservient," in comparison to their white counterparts, who served in more formal and public leadership roles.[32] Nevertheless, "African Americans literally built Colonial Williamsburg."[33] The building of CW echoes that of the United States itself, as the labor of black individuals proved critical to the construction of an institution, but the color of their skin simultaneously prevented them from being formally included. Similar to the United States, the existence of CW must be understood as reliant on, and the result of, the labor of African Americans. Williamsburg's black community recognized that the museum they were helping to build was not meant to tell their story, producing a variety of responses. Aware that the restoration's main purpose was to celebrate the lives of "prominent white Virginians" many of Williamsburg's black residents "viewed the restoration with ambivalence."[34] Others argued that the Restoration worsened relations between the races, and considered it "responsible for promoting segregation."[35] Prior to the Restoration, black community members had owned homes and businesses throughout the main Duke of Gloucester Street, which would comprise the main thoroughfare of the museum. Thus, while the Restoration created jobs for the black community, it also brought more formal segregation to Williamsburg.

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[31] Ywone Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979 African American Coachmen, Visibility, and Representation at Colonial Williamsburg," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 1 (2014): 13, accessed January 2, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2014.36.1.9.
[32] Greenspan, 24.
[33] Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979," 13.
Appendix 2, Fig:2.
[34] Greenspan, 24.
[35] Greenspan, 24.

Conversely, for white America, the museum provided visitors a unique opportunity to celebrate the contributions of the men who laid the foundation for the United States. In an article published on August 22, 1930 in the *Virginia Gazette,* the author noted that through Williamsburg "the shrines made sacred by hallow associations, pregnant with the lives of men who made America the land of the free" would be preserved.[36] Similarly, in November of the same year an editorial was published in the local paper proclaiming Williamsburg as "the mecca for thousands of [visitors] in the years to come" and that it will prove "the most attractive place in America for those who love old traditions and are proud of their Anglo-Saxon lineage and of the men and women who made America."[37] Here whiteness is directly written into the message of the museum. Together these articles work to highlight the construction of Colonial Williamsburg as a museum centered on the success and celebration of the Founding Fathers. By focusing on freedom, and themes of Christian morality, inconsistent institutions - such as slavery - are written out with little room for inclusion. Yet, the museum did not imply that all Americans should find themselves reflected in the space, but rather that it is a museum explicitly created to celebrate the white man. Here emerges a disconnect between the histories of those building the museum and those visiting, highlighting the power of audience expectation in crafting a museum narrative.

In crafting a narrative centered on the celebration of the Founding Fathers, Colonial Williamsburg echoed broader white national sentiment at the time. As the museum came to fruition in the 1920s, Americans were experiencing newfound mobility thanks to the automobile, and economic prosperity after the success of the United States

[36] *Virginia Gazette,* 22 August 1930.
[37] *Virginia Gazette,* 28 November 1930.

in World War I.[38] The country "turned its back on international affairs" and instead focused on its own national heritage. Simultaneously, "interest in the arts was on the rise" and Americans across the country had a growing interest in "restoring historic buildings and raising new ones in old architectural styles."[39] It was within this sociopolitical environment, that CW defined itself as a "shrine that would promote Americanism," by combining "public appeal with historical authenticity."[40] The museum was to pay homage to the days gone by, as "artisans would come to practice forgotten crafts, rediscovering ancient ways to make beautiful and useful things" and "music teachers, students and performers would rehearse the minuets which the Founding Fathers danced and sing the songs with which they wooed the Founding Brides."[41] Once again the tension between scholarship and entertainment emerges. Such a narrative highlights also the ways in which CW fits into wider demographic trends in the United States within the 1920s. Thus, while limited in its narrative scope, CW must be understood as a product of the 1920s.

Considering the sociopolitical context of the 1930s, it follows that CW failed to formally address the narrative of the enslaved in its original construction. For most Americans, their perception "of colonial history in the 1930s closely mirrored that presented by the restoration and did not encompass a broader understanding of the lives of laborers, African Americans, and women."[42] As a result few found fault with the predominantly white and male narrative presented at the museum. CW aligned with the expectation of their audience, meeting white society where it was at, and presenting a

[38] Kopper, Revised, 138.
[39] Kopper, Revised, 138.
[40] Greenspan, 58-59.
[41] Kopper, 33.
[42] Greenspan, 43.

balanced view, as they understood it to be. However, those involved with the Restoration were aware of the importance of enslaved individuals in the colonial period. In April of 1930, Goodwin sent a letter to Col. Arthur Woods, noting that "a great mistake would be made if we did not reproduce a sufficient number of these [slave quarters] to recall the ancient atmosphere and this aspect of the ancient civilization" and that "to exile them completely from the Colonial area, would, I am convinced, be a mistake which we could not justify."[43] Here Goodwin points to the necessity of incorporating enslaved quarters into the Restoration effort. However, his motivation was architectural, as it is not that he felt slavery must be interpreted at CW, but rather that the architectural integrity of the museum would be compromised by not presenting the lots in full. Also, by referring to slavery as an aspect of an "ancient civilization" Goodwin arguably disconnects the institution from the current lived experiences of African Americans. Thus, while the slave quarters would work to educate visitors on the architectural layout of colonial estates, it would do little to draw a necessary link between colonial slavery and the present. Ultimately, despite Goodwin's personal beliefs, the Restoration did not proceed with the construction of recreated slave quarters.

Colonial Williamsburg formally opened as a public history museum, with one hundred and fifty reconstructed and renovated colonial era buildings, in 1934.[44] Kopper notes that when the museum opened, "Hoover was out and bread lines were in. The Depression was on. People hungered for something to cheer about, and they found it here."[45] Although the economic prosperity of the 1920s had come to a close with the

[43] Greenspan, 28.
[44] Mary Miley Theobald, Colonial Williamsburg the First 75 Years (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2001), 17.
[45] Kopper, Revised, 179.

crash of the stock market and onset of the Great Depression, white Americans were increasingly drawn to the patriotic message of American greatness promoted by the museum. Despite the supposed universality of Williamsburg's message, the first visitors were white, highly educated, quite wealthy, and many had "personal ties to those who were founders of the colony or were prominent figures in Virginia politics."[46] Arguably in this regard CW truly was a museum for those who were "proud of their Anglo-Saxon lineage."[47] As the Depression continued, Colonial Williamsburg, unlike contemporaneous vacation spots like Coney Island in New York, "catered to the well-to-do" offering a "refined opulence that, through the purchase of restoration replicates, could be re-created in homes."[48] Thus, in its conception CW existed as a haven; a place where the wealthy could return to the olden days to celebrate the notion of American Exceptionalism and to feel akin to their own ancestors who laid the foundation for the democracy in which they now lived.

In the 1920s and 1930s Colonial Williamsburg emerged as the nation's first living history museum, constructed around reconstructed and replica colonial era buildings. The museum centered a narrative of whiteness, American Exceptionalism, and the devotion of the Founding Fathers to creating a democratic republic built on themes of freedom and liberty. However, in constructing the museum, CW benefitted from the exploitation of Jim Crow legislation. African Americans were removed from their colonial era dwellings, and relocated to cramped black homes. The treatment of African Americans in the Restoration process, combined with the omission of the enslaved

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[46] Greenspan, 40.
[47] *Virginia Gazette,* 28 November 1930.
[48] Greenspan, 48.

experience within the narrative of the museum, signaled that Colonial Williamsburg was a museum for contemporary white Americans about the first white Americans.

A World War and the Cold War: The 1940s and 1950s

As the United States transitioned into the 1940s, World War II became the primary focal point for national attention. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, which formally propelled the United States into the Second World War, "the promotion of Americanism," which "had always been high on the list of Colonial Williamsburg's responsibilities" became increasingly urgent, as "the tension of an impending national emergency spread across the country." As Americans prepared for war, "feelings of national pride and the role of the country's past struggles rose higher than before."[49] Colonial Williamsburg scholar Anders Greenspan explains the concept of Americanism as the:

> belief in the superiority of the past and its ideals. Through the representation of the "great white men" of the eighteenth century, some Americanists of the early 1900s hoped to shape a modern society that embodied not only industrial might but also the values of yesteryear. They effected a combination of both Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian ideals, and in doing so they wished to create an America that was not only industrially powerful but also virtuous. For the restoration's founders, it was time that Americans, native and foreign born, recognized their unique heritage and used it in their everyday lives, emphasizing those beliefs that the founders felt were uniquely American in origin.[50]

While the promotion of such ideals had proved critical to the narrative of CW from its conception, they took on a new light in the face of an increasingly global world engrossed in war. With the U.S. engaging in a major international conflict for the second time in recent years the legacy of the Revolutionary period was no longer reserved for the direct descendants of the original colonists, but was rather extended to all Americans,

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[49] Greenspan, 60.

[50] Greenspan, 13.

independent of their own cultural heritage. In emphasizing carefully constructed notions of democracy and freedom prevalent in the Revolutionary period, CW could not only evoke a sense of pride and Americanism at home, but could simultaneously counter the rise of totalitarian authorities abroad. It was not long before an analogy was drawn "between the American War of Independence and the need to defeat fascism" abroad.[51] With America's involvement in the war, CW embraced a more fully patriotic message, embodied in the hosting of local military personal. The increasingly patriotic message of CW, tailored specifically for the servicemen of WWII, is highlighted in the following vignette:

> He was a GI...a soldier from Fort Eustis...who'd come up with the rest of his unit to tour Williamsburg. Part of our wartime program. I saw this boy in the Clerk's office at the Capitol. He'd become separated from his buddies, and he was standing all alone in front of that Peale portrait of Washington. Suddenly, I heard him mutter, 'You got it for us General. And, by God, we're going to keep it.' And he saluted...You know, I told that story to Mr. Rockefeller a few weeks later. When I'd finished, he looked up at me, and there were tears in his eyes, and he said quietly, 'Then it was all worth while.'[52]

This short vignette is full of patriotic sentiment, as the soldier assures the Portrait of Washington that he will fight to protect the land and values that men like Washington devoted their lives to acquiring. Rockefeller's response upon hearing the story highlights the ways in which CW had been fashioned into a WWII museum that worked to promote American ideals by contextualizing them within the period of their origin. Similarly, such vignettes emphasized the ways in which the museum continued to center white America as the nation moved through WWII.

With so many men – both black and white - fighting abroad in the war effort, CW turned to the local African American population to quell worker shortages. While this

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[51] Greenspan, 60.
[52] Handler and Gable, 63.

opened up more opportunity for African Americans to engage with the museum as employees, as guests they found themselves discouraged from visiting. CW was open to hiring African American service workers and laborers, but "the same could not be said for visitors of the same race, highlighting an essential contradiction of a project that was geared to the promotion of American democracy."[53] Not only was the enslaved narrative formally absent from the museum, but also contemporary black Americans were actively barred from visiting the museum. In May of 1943, Rockefeller drafted a letter to be sent to any black American who asked about visiting Williamsburg. The letter read "the management has not thus far found it practicable to provide for both colored and white guests. I (or we are) am [sic] sorry we cannot accommodate you (or cannot take care of you, or cannot offer you hospitality."[54] This dilemma of what to do with perspective black visitors became unofficially known as the "Negro Problem." This phrasing emphasizes the mentality with which the administration viewed black visitors. They were not an audience to cater to – as white guests were – but rather a potential burden, or problem, that needed to be resolved.

The paradox of promoting democracy and freedom while "forbidding the services of African Americans in restoration owned hotels and restaurants" became more apparent and pressing after the war.[55] Operating within 1940s Virginia, CW was immersed within Jim Crow segregation; however, as a financially independent and private institution CW was not legally obligated to adhere to the policies. However, the museum faced a decision. In servicing black visitors, the CW risked upsetting the local white population, and losing its primarily white visitor demographic. Conversely, in excluding African

[53] Greenspan, 72.
[54] Greenspan, 72.
[55] Greenspan, 74.

Americans, CW was establishing itself as a segregationist institution. Aware of the problem, and the potential impact of either decision, CW sought to evade the problem all together. Prospective integrated tour groups, such as the American Association of Adult Education and the Federal Council of the Church of Christ in America, were told that that the museum "would not be able to handle their groups at the time" on account of their size, with no formal reference made to their racial composure.[56] Vernon Geddy maintained that avoiding the problem would only lead to further complications, and after consulting with other foundation administrators, in 1946 recommended that:

> the policy of segregation be maintained, that blacks be admitted to neither the Williamsburg Inn nor the Williamsburg Lodge, and that racially mixed groups be informed that as the town did not have any hotels to accommodate blacks, African American members would have to be housed and fed at the homes of local black residents.[57]

While it is unclear how many of the foundation officials personally believed in the segregation of blacks and whites, they adhered to the policy nonetheless, mindful of potential negative repercussions for deviating from state legislation. In instituting such a policy, local black residents, some of who worked for the foundation as laborers and others who had lost their homes to the Restoration, were burdened with the personal responsibility of housing black visitors. Thus, black Americans hoping to visit not only experienced segregationist policies, but the task of caring for them was placed on Williamsburg's current black residents - both those involved with the museum and not.

Despite Geddy's recommendation, CW continued to exist between the pressures of integration and segregation throughout the second half of the 1940s, and beginning of the 1950s. While hotels and restaurants remained segregated, the museum itself was

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[56] Greenspan, 74.
[57] Greenspan, 75.

integrated, allowing visitors of all races to engage with the patriotic message of the Restoration. The "end of wartime travel restrictions" coupled with "higher wages and wartime savings" allowed Americans of diverse social classes to travel more freely. This meant that CW now had access to "an even greater audience than before, giving it the chance to educate a growing number of visitors in the virtues of the country's colonial past."[58] Doing so, however, required CW to be cognizant of the national climate at the time. Postwar peace of mind was replaced with the onset of the Cold War and rise of McCarthyism. In the late 1940s and 1950s CW existed in relation to these factors.[59] With the onset of the Cold War, CW continued its message of Americanism as a way to intentionally counter the rise of communism abroad. Liberty became linked to capitalism. Through a presentation of the planter elite that centered on the endurance of virtue and commitment to liberty, CW emphasized the merits and importance of a democratic and capitalist system. Soon CW became a physical opponent to not only Soviet aggression, but also the fear of communism internally. The rise in fears about the presence of communists domestically affected how the American public interacted with sites such as Colonial Williamsburg. As the conversation about communism inherently implied a question of national loyalty, Colonial Williamsburg quickly became a "ready icon to incorporate into…[perceptions] of proper citizenship."[60] To invoke the values of Williamsburg was to be American.

As America entered the 1950s, the question of race in the context of visitation at Colonial Williamsburg once again came to the forefront, as a tension emerged between the growing anti-communist rhetoric, and the treatment of African Americans visitors. In

[58] Greenspan, 77.
[59] Greenspan, 75.
[60] Greenspan, 79.

April 1950, it was recorded that in the last fourteen months, six integrated groups had visited Williamsburg. Williamsburg official John D. Green noted that they "were dealt with carefully, and that the groups were kept away from the other restoration visitors while they used the dining facilities at Colonial Williamsburg."[61] While this seems to suggest a growing inclusion of African American visitors at CW, who previously were unable to eat at Restoration owned restaurants, it simultaneously evokes a sense of shame on behalf of the museum. In "keeping away" the integrated groups from the majority white visitors, Williamsburg attempted to avoided upsetting anyone who believed the museum ought to remain segregated. These conflicting interests led some black visitors to vocally complain to CW. George E. Cohen and his wife, both African American, visited CW in 1950. In a letter to the foundation, Cohen writes "while he and his wife were provided with room and board by one of the African American families in town, they were not satisfied with the accommodations and implied that they would have preferred the comforts of the Williamsburg Inn or some other hotel." He goes on to express their "difficulty in obtaining food from the local establishments while they were visiting the town," and that given these barriers "the Negro suffers these embarrassments, discomforts and disadvantages only because a national project privately financed adheres to local public policies. Is it not irony that Williamsburg, restored and publicized as the place democracy was founded, should permit discrimination or democracy in reverse?"[62] Here Cohen expresses the lived experiences of African Americans who chose to visit CW in the 1950s, emphasizing the importance of visitor emotions. Despite the few allowances made on the part of the foundation, the persistent inequality proved apparent

[61] Greenspan, 90.
[62] Greenspan, 89.

and embarrassing. Also, as Williamsburg itself was formally segregated, any deviating from the restored area left them vulnerable to mistreatment and discrimination. Cohen's letter proves particularly poignant as he calls into question the values CW promoted, and the ways in which their decision to adhere to segregationist policies compromised such values. The practice of segregation at CW not only proved inconsistent with the values of freedom and democracy promoted by the founding fathers in the 18th century, but also with 20th century anticommunist rhetoric. In a 1950 letter to CW, Hampton University President Alonzo G. Moron wrote "in these days when we are trying to hold to world leadership and to demonstrate the superiority of democracy over other forms of government, we cannot afford to give aid and comfort to any attempt to spread racial discrimination and segregation."[63] Moron's words prove particularly poignant, as they appeal to national image in the face of communism, and not to humanity. CW's relationship with black visitors subsequently becomes more about the posture of CW's policy then it does about the personal experience of black guests.

While the experiences of black guests were not a priority for CW, other organizations did work to ensure African Americans enjoyed their time in the area. In 1937, Victor H. Green, an African American postal carrier from New York created *The Negro Motorist Green-Book*. The fifteen-page guide utilized his own knowledge, as well as that of other black postal service members, to provide black travels with a list of establishments in New York that would be willing to serve them. Gradually the book

[63] Greenspan, 89-90. Moron wrote this letter to CW in response to a request to have Hampton University house three black female students traveling to Williamsburg as part of an integrated class trip. Moron refused to accommodate only the black students, insisting Hampton house up to thirty students, as separating the three students on account of race would be a detriment to the wider educational purpose of the trip. Even with today's modern infrastructure it takes roughly an hour to get from Hampton University to Colonial Williamsburg. Not only is CW insisting that the three black students stay in separate accommodations, they are also geographically separating them from the rest of their class.

grew into a nation wide guide that sought to protect and help African American travels as they navigated racial tensions and discriminatory legislation.[64] The 1950 edition of the *Green Book* highlighted the Baker House, located on Nicholson Street – which runs parallel to the main Duke of Gloucester Street – as a place where black Americans could safely stay while in town.[65] While the Baker House was the only listed accommodation in Williamsburg, it signaled the ways in which the local African American community worked to provide for black guests, making up for the museum's shortcomings.

Mindful of the increasing criticism regarding CW's segregationist approach to black visitors, John D. Rockefeller III began to move CW away from such policies. In a drafted policy statement from 1950, JDR III states "that all people, as they come here to draw inspiration from this Restoration, will be welcomed and housed and fed in our facilities without regard to race, creed or color."[66] Aware that such a statement might cause racial backlash amongst white community, JDR III maintained that doing so was necessary in order to be honest to the founders of both Williamsburg and America.[67] JDR III's statement proved critical for a number of reasons. For one, it ignored the sociopolitical climate of the 18th century, positioning the founders as idolized figures. In doing so, JDR III negated the fact that many of these men owned slaves, a practice reliant on the dehumanization of African Americans, which likely would have caused them to support the practice of segregation. The statement also highlighted the ways in which

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[64] Jacinda Townsend, "How the Green Book Helped African-American Tourists Navigate a Segregated Nation," *Smithsonian Magazine* (2016), accessed March 22, 2018, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/history-green-book-african-american-travelers-180958506/.

[65] Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library. "The Negro Motorist Green Book: 1950" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed March 22, 2018. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/283a7180-87c6-0132-13e6-58d385a7b9, 79.

[66] Greenspan, 90.

[67] Greenspan, 90.

CW morphed an idolized version of the Founding Fathers to support decisions that are beneficial at that time. It is this concept that is employed throughout CW's existence and allows them to promote a multi-narrative interpretation while still celebrating the Founding Fathers and their contributions to American democracy.

While JDR III began moving CW in a direction towards integration, the process proved gradual. In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Brown in the landmark *Brown V. Board* decision, which overturned *Plessy V. Ferguson* and ended segregation. Foundation President Chorley noted, "from the time our first exhibition building opened in 1932, Negroes have been welcome, doing all that we can in this situation. We have felt that by pushing too far too fast we might only aggravate a prejudice we want to see disappear."[68] Chorley's words highlight the enduring pressure to please white Virginians and visitors alike, felt by CW, thus reflecting the wider theme of the ways in which visitor expectation shapes museum interpretation. While the movement towards integration could easily be categorized as inline with the changing legislation, CW remained concerned with their national image amongst white America.

Along these lines, the CW visitor experience began to be more carefully curated. In 1957, Williamsburg produced "The Story of a Patriot" an orientation film that told the fictional story of John Fry, as he partakes in a series of events leading up the American Revolution. The film, along with a new orientation center, highlighted the ways in which Williamsburg "had become a packaged experience that was carefully regulated by the restoration to portray the themes that they wished to promote."[69] Some argued that in crafting an experience catered to white America, "The Story of a Patriot" bought into

[68] Greenspan, 115.
[69] Greenspan, 112.

stereotypical and racist treatments of black-bodied individuals. In one scene an enslaved individual is shown "testing the drunkenness of a tavern patron. [He] waves his hand in front of the white man's face, and finding him drunk, steals his money."[70] While some saw the scene as contributing comedic humor to the film, others argued that it perpetuated the stereotypical image of African Americans as untrustworthy and dishonest. The inclusion of the scene can also be read as a shift from Symbolic Annihilation to Trivialization and Deflection when considering CW's approach to black history through the methodology put forth by Eichstedt and Small. In including the scene, CW recognized the presence of the enslaved in the colonial period. Edwards-Ingram emphasized this point as the movie provided "compelling evidence that Colonial Williamsburg had recognized that, in its search for authenticity, it had to increase its efforts to be inclusive."[71] However, in playing to stereotypes the scene trivializes the black experience, and thus falls short in a full portrayal of the humanity of the enslaved. Ultimately, CW continued to ignore the black experience in many facets of the museum, and when it was included it was presented in derogatory and racial ways. Thus, in considering Emotional Humanity, enslaved individuals were not portrayed as fully human – despite their physical presence - but rather as auxiliary beings whose existence allowed insight into the lives of the prominent white elite.

It what subsequently reads in an almost contradictory manner, simultaneously CW was taking steps towards exploring the lives of Williamsburg's enslaved residents. In 1957, Thad W. Tate published his research report titled "The Negro in Eighteenth-

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[70] Greenspan, 137.
While not thoroughly explored here, the Story of a Patriot can also be understood as evocative of Cold War themes of American democracy and superiority.
[71] Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979," 19.

Century Williamsburg."[72] Tate had first arrived in Williamsburg in 1954, as a research fellow from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Tate can be understood as embodying a wider movement towards academic history at CW, an interest first signaled with the creation of the Institute of Early American History and Culture in collaboration with William and Mary in 1943.[73] Tate was motivated by his own "involvement in integrating the graduate program" at Chapel Hill, and planned to write a monograph on the topic of slavery.[74] The central finding of the report asserted that half of Williamsburg's 18th century population was enslaved.[75] Thus, from 1957 onward, Colonial Williamsburg was aware of the centrality of the enslaved experience to understanding Williamsburg, yet it would take another twenty years before the narrative was integrated into the interpretative arc.

In the 1940s and 1950s CW sought to promote a narrative of Americanism that white visitors would relate to. However in trying to please both segregationists, and black visitors, Colonial Williamsburg ultimately pleased neither. The geographic location of the museum in Virginia caused it to frequently adapt segregationist policies, despite its Northern benefactors. The foundation feared that through integration they would "offend the client base that it was most trying to attract, forcing the project into bankruptcy, and future efforts to demonstrate the lives of African Americans would be

[72] Tate's paper later became a book under the same title in 1965. More time and space is devoted to this work later in the paper, however as his work was first published in 1957 it is important to make note of it here.
[73] OIEAHC, "Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture," Earl Gregg Swem Library: Special Collections Database, accessed March 11, 2018, http://scdb.swem.wm.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=15.
[74] Rex Marshall Ellis, "Presenting the Past: Education, Interpretation and the Teaching of Black History at Colonial Williamsburg," (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1989), 153.
[75] Greenspan, 114.

for nought."[76] Such fears reiterate the emphasis placed on visitor satisfaction for sites such as CW, and the ways in which guest expectations shape which narratives are presented. As a result, Colonial Williamsburg chose the middle road, allowing the museum itself to be integrated, while hotels and restaurants remained segregated. Such policies, however, likely worked to keep black Americans from visiting. While CW navigated U.S. racial relations, they also continued to develop a central narrative of the enduring legacy and success of 18th century white men and their values. As CW entered the 1960s and 1970s, and began to look towards ways to integrate the enslaved experience, motivated by the Civil Rights Movement and increasing national interest in social history, they found themselves needing to do so within the confinements of an established narrative based on whiteness.

Towards Black History: The 1960s and 1970s

As America entered the 1960s and 1970s the rise of the Civil Rights Movement echoed a wider shift towards the field of social history. As African Americans fought for their rights politically, academics began to push for their inclusion within the historical narrative. As the national tone around discussing slavery began to shift, CW found itself confronted with the question of how to more fully incorporate the narrative into the museum as visitors began demanding a more complete presentation of the colonial period. Thus in this period CW struggled with how to combine the growing demand for black history with a museum identity centered on the white elite.

In the 1960s Colonial Williamsburg continued to struggle with how to broach the topic of slavery given the diverse array of visitor opinions regarding segregation. In 1961 CW offered visitors a survey, as a way to gain a pulse on how people were reacting to the

[76] Greenspan, 116.

museum given the current political climate and the rise of the American Civil Rights Movement. The survey provided information on visitor demographics and asked respondents how pleased they were with CW's portrayals. The survey emphasized that many Americans were still uncomfortable with the topic of slavery and preferred to learn about the lives of the white elite while at Williamsburg. Thus as a result "few visitors complained about the lack of balance in the restoration."[77] However, as CW began to explore the idea of incorporating black history into their narrative arc, they would be faced with the competing interests of visitors based on their geographical origin and political leanings. Some visitors took note of CW's discussions – or lack there of – of black history and sent in letters to make their opinions know. Such reactions allowed Williamsburg interpreters to see how the general public was responding to their presentation of colonial history. In 1963, Marian G. Hittner wrote, "a tour of Colonial Williamsburg the day after our arrival served to demonstrate such severe evidence of discrimination in employment that we would have left immediately, had my son not become ill."[78] For some northern visitors, such as Hittner, the employment of African Americans in purely maintenance positions seemed discriminatory in an era of increasing civil liberties for black Americans. Conversely, some southern families felt that what little integration existed at CW was too much, as E. L. Rose wrote in 1964 "from now on we will not be a friend or booster of your project."[79] While the debate of segregation versus interrogation cannot be solely divided along a north-south binary, it does highlight the two juxtaposed opinions CW tried to balance. Thus, in trying to please a diverse set

[77] Greenspan, 126-127.
[78] Greenspan, 130.
[79] Greenspan, 130.

of visitors, the CW can be understood as being driven by, and responding to, public perceptions of the colonial period.

Despite the range in visitor satisfaction with CW's evasion of the topic of slavery, in the 1960s the museum began to take its first steps towards incorporating the lived experiences of enslaved individuals into the narrative arc of the museum. This echoed a wider national shift towards more inclusive and representative histories, which stemmed from the "various upheavals and social unrests of the 1960s and the disappointments of Vietnam, which had given rise to a widespread fear or disenchantment with the present."[80] Cresap, McCormick and Paget – a New York based consulting firm - conducted a survey for CW to better understand what visitors wanted incorporated into the narrative arc of the museum. Based on the results, the researchers suggested that "more social history be incorporated into the programs at the Foundation" and "prompted the research department, under the direction of Edward Riley, to develop new topics to be researched" that would support a more social understanding of the past.[81] The foundation ended up selecting the topics "colonial crafts, social life of colonial Virginians, economics, theatre and slavery."[82] Ultimately, CW's movement towards an incorporation of the enslaved narrative should be understood as motivated by visitor demands, thus emphasizing the ways in which visitor expectations and public memory inform museum interpretation.

As part of this movement towards social history, in 1965, CW published Thad Tate's 1957 paper "The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg" as a book under the

[80] M.J. Rymsza-Pawlowska, *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 2.
[81] Ellis, 153.
[82] Ellis, 153.

same title. In an introduction to the text, Tate writes that he produced the piece "with the idea that it would for the most part be used by the staff of the organization in whatever way it might serve aid in the interpretation of restored Williamsburg."[83] In the text, Tate emphasized the importance of understanding the contributions of enslaved individuals in the construction of Williamsburg. He begins by noting that by 1760 the ratio of white to black individuals in Williamsburg was roughly half and half, a proportion that remained steady through the end of the eighteenth century.[84] This is significant as CW places its interpretation primarily in the 1770s, and thus Tate's research emphasized that CW would fail to paint an accurate picture of the period unless they portrayed the racial composure of the original colonial city. Similarly Tate writes:

> From the time of its founding Williamsburg was to be linked in many ways with the institution of Negro slavery...Now should it be forgotten that the founding of Williamsburg came at a time when the institution of slavery had only recently begun to take hardened form in Virginia...Williamsburg's development, in short, was to coincide roughly with the real growth of Virginia slavery.[85]

In linking the development of Williamsburg to the codification and expansion of slavery, Tate highlights the interconnectedness of the two. To understand Williamsburg as a colonial city one must understand slavery, as the two cannot be separated from each other as they are so intertwined. Thus Tate is reiterating his previous statement, that CW cannot accurately portray the 18th century without discussing slavery.

Tate goes on to explore the prevalence of slavery within Williamsburg once it was established as the colonial capital. He emphasizes that prior to 1699 - when the capital moved to Richmond - five sixths of all families in Williamsburg were slave owners: the

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[83] Thad w. Tate, The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1965), vi.
[84] Tate, 13.
[85] Tate, 24.

majority of whom owned only one or two, while the elite averaged ten to fifteen, and rarely more than twenty.[86] Here, Tate points to the relevance of discussing slavery at the museum. He emphasizes that slavery was not limited to a few wealthy families, but rather was a widespread institution that the over eighty percent of the town engaged in on a personal level. Thus, to truly represent the colonial period slavery would need to be interpreted at eighty percent of the sites, as enslaved individuals were a critical part of the community in a variety of locations and functions.

Tate's final point revolved around how white Virginians interacted with the topic of slavery. He emphasizes that "any doubt which the average colonist ever had about the wisdom of slavery stemmed either from the unpleasant prospect that the slaves would one day rise up and butcher the master class or else from suspicion that, as a business proposition, slavery simply did not pay its way."[87] While Tate may have overgeneralized the feelings of some, his point remains particularly poignant. It was not an issue of morality that caused some Virginians to question the institution of slavery, but rather the economic costs of maintaining such a system.

Tate's book can be seen as creating a foundation for the interpretation of black history at Colonial Williamsburg. As a CW published book, rooted in research, Tate offers the Foundation accessible and relevant information from which they can build programming. While Tate's book is not without critique – for one it employed derogatory and demeaning language to describe enslaved individuals – it is also an important piece of work. Thanks to Tate, CW was armed with the knowledge and academic scholarship necessary to understanding the role of black individuals in Colonial

[86] Tate, 32.
[87] Tate, 22.

Williamsburg beginning in 1957, and more fully in 1965. This can be seen as a reflection of CW's commitment to academic scholarship. This also confronts the popular argument that insufficient information is the limiting factor in the ability of a museum to interpret slavery. Thus it is not that "the evidence was not there" but rather that previously "few historians had seriously attempted to study early African Americans."[88] Tate's piece represented a critical scholarly effort to more fully understand the lives of African Americans, giving CW an opportunity to incorporate African American interpretation. However in not incorporating the enslaved narrative until 1979 CW chose to not fully utilize the Tate's findings, highlighting the impact of diverse factors – outside of research – in contributing to museum narratives.

In the second half of the 1960s, following the release of Tate's book, CW continued to expand its academic work on the topic of black history. CW looked to produce more scholarship on the lived experiences of enslaved individuals in Williamsburg, but the project was met with little success. In 1965 CW began developing a second book on the topic of slavery, titled "The School for Slaves in Williamsburg," but the project was never finished.[89] Similarly, Robert McColley was asked to write a companion piece to Tate's work, titled "The Negro in Eighteenth-Century Virginia." McColley spent five years researching the project, but it was ultimately rejected in 1974.[90]

Contemporaneously, CW took its first step towards formally introducing black history into the historic area. In 1965 an audio repeater was installed at the Wythe House

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[88]Christy S. Matthews, "Where Do We Go From Here? Researching and Interpreting the African-American Experience," *Historical Archeology* 31, no. 3 (1997): 108, accessed November 10, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616552.
[89] Ellis, 155-156.
[90] Ellis, 156.

Laundry.[91] Colloquially referred to as a "Message Repeater," the device provided visitors with a pre-recorded audio presentation. CW believed that "a pre-recorded message could broach the difficult topic of slavery without causing undue discomfort for white interpreters or black workers who would be exposed to it."[92] The product was first tested in July of 1964, and after being deemed a success the script was recorded by Carl Stuz, a local voice actor, before being formally installed in the summer of 1965.[93] The following text served as the script:

> You are standing in the Wythe House Laundry. Slaves were quartered in rooms such as this and in lofts and garrets of other outbuildings. Body servants probably slept in the halls of the mainhouse and in the bedrooms of those they served. As many as 18 men, women, and children lived and worked on Mr. Wythe's property. Their quarters were usually furnished with castoffs (sic) from the main house.
>
> Most slaves in the colony were field hands for the large plantations upon which Virginia's economy depended. In a small city such as Williamsburg, they were used chiefly as house servants and craft workers. Five of every six families in Williamsburg owned one or more slaves, and many more were required by the inns and taverns.
>
> Here at Mr. Wythe's house, the Negroes were on constant call for a variety of daily jobs. As part of their routine, they prepared and cooked the food, smoked the meats, cleaned, made minor repairs to the buildings, cared for the animals, and tended the grounds.
>
> Throughout Williamsburg's years as a colonial capital, Negros made up about one-half of the town's population. Those who lived at homes like Mr. Wythe's probably fared better than their brothers on the plantations. Here was a broader community life and the possibility of better training in crafts and skills. Like

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[91] Greenspan, 68.
George Wythe was an early law professor – mentoring those such as Thomas Jefferson - scholar, and judge. Wythe owned a number of enslaved individuals at his Williamsburg home, including Lydia Broadnex with whom, some scholars postulate, Wythe fathered a son. Towards the end of his life Wythe became deeply troubled by the institution of slavery, opposing it, and freeing his enslaved individuals in his will. Wythe's participation in the institution allows him to be used a means through which slavery can be discussed, while his strong anti-slavery sentiment towards the end of his life allows him to escape the conversation relatively unscathed.
[92] Ellis, 153-154.
[93] Ellis, 153-154.

> many other Virginians of his time, however, George Wythe opposed the principle of slavery, and through his will freed all of the slaves belonging to him.[94]

The script utilized George Wythe as a means of conveying information about the enslaved individuals on his property to visitors. Much of the information presented through the recorder stemmed from Tate's research, as it referenced the racial demographics of Williamsburg in the colonial period, as well as the high proportion of slaveholding families. The script, however, also reflected more problematic tropes. The script suggested that individuals who were enslaved in more urban environments "probably fared better than their brothers on the plantations." Here CW played to the belief that one type of slavery proved more desirable than another, suggesting that while individuals were enslaved in Williamsburg, their situation was preferable to that of those in the field. Similarly, the script concluded by noting, "like many other Virginians of his time, however, George Wythe opposed the principle of slavery, and through his will freed all of the slaves belonging to him." Here CW presents the "good master narrative," indicative of the interpretive state of Trivialization and Deflection as put forth by Eichstedt and Small. Thus, while CW is beginning to engage in discussions of slavery – moving away some symbolic annihilation and erasure – they are doing so through methods that perpetuate stereotypes and trivialize the enslaved experience. While the installation of the repeater device was an important step in the inclusion of the enslaved, it is simultaneously limited as it portrays an inaccurate depiction of the past. Ultimately, the message repeaters failed to position the enslaved as human actors, thus emphasizing the overarching need for an interpretive technique rooted in the humanity of the enslaved.

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[94] Ellis, 154-155.

The message recorder was met with limited success. Shortly after its installation the mechanism was tampered with, making the audio inaccessible to visitors.[95] While the original device was never repaired, in 1968 CW explored the idea of installing a second recorder in the Brush-Everard House Laundry. While the script was produced and approved, there is no evidence to suggest it was ever installed.[96] Contemporaneously, the 1968 edition of the CW guidebook allotted a paragraph to alerting visitors to the presence of enslaved individuals in Williamsburg. The text worked to "inform visitors of the basic lives of slaves, the differences between city and country life, and the difficulty in discovering details about slaves because of the paucity of sources."[97] Through the message recorders and guidebook, CW was taking small steps in beginning to incorporate black history into the museum experience. In doing so, CW looked to alert visitors to the presence of the enslaved, rather than fully explore the lived experiences of such individuals. However, in utilizing such tropes as the "Good Master" and the superiority of domestic to plantation slavery, CW echoed the theme of Trivialization and Deflection. When considered under the framework of Emotional Humanity, the message recorders and guidebooks began to introduce the narrative of the enslaved, but did so in ways that negated their humanity, and prevented any critic of the institution of slavery.

In 1969 CW administration began serious internal discussions on the incorporation of the African American experience into the narrative at CW. An evaluative report of interpretation at CW, conducted by James Short – Program Assistant for the Department of Interpretation – found "only 'incidental' attention was given to interpretation of black history" arguing that "we have everywhere assigned a low priority

[95] Greenspan, 135.
[96] Ellis, 155.
[97] Greenspan, 136.

to it."[98] In his report Short provides a variety of reasons for why he believed CW had avoided the topic of slavery up until that point. He points to a sense of embarrassment around the subject, and that it can be "awkward" to handle given the diversity of visitors.[99] He continued, noting that CW has not "felt very secure in our specific knowledge of slaves" but offered the important counterargument that the same reasoning could be given for departments such as gardening, which were currently incorporated into the interpretation scheme.[100] He placed the burden of the failure to interpret black history on the white administrators, who assumed "the presence of Negroes on the staff (usually in subservient jobs) was sufficient to suggest that we recognized slavery as once having existed here."[101] Contemporary CW scholar Edwards-Ingram maintains the validity of the white administrators' assessment. She writes "it is not hard to believe that visitors were "doing race" and seeing the black workers mainly as representatives of enslaved people" and thus while all frontline staff wore consumes, "blacks were more likely to be seen as representing general people of the past rather than as skilled practitioners and presenters of colonial craft."[102] For Edwards-Ingram, the presence of black workers allowed guests to interact with the subject of slavery as "Colonial Williamsburg and its visitors participated in a public history rooted in a referential framework that was highly informed by images of blacks as enslaved people laboring for whites."[103] Thus, by simply being present, black employees reminded visitors of the institution of slavery and its impact on the colonial world. Ultimately, Edwards-Ingram's analysis is limited in that

[98] Ellis, 260.
[99] Ellis, 261-262.
[100] Ellis, 261-262.
[101] Ellis, 261-262.
[102] Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979," 21.
[103] Edwards-Ingram, "Before 1979," 18.

it relies on the assumption that guests hold the subservient role of black employees as evocative of slavery. This becomes challenging when hostesses – serving as tour guides - "elected to substitute the euphemism "servants" when referring to slaves," in attempt to avoid the aforementioned embarrassment and awkwardness from broaching the topic.[104] Short's analysis of Williamsburg emphasizes in most regards the museum embodies the symbolic annihilation of the enslaved experience, except when directly confronted with the topic, in which case it moves towards trivialization and deflection by substituting servant for slaves.

Short offered a series of recommendations to increase the presence of black history at CW, highlighting a white directed response. For the most part the suggestions centered around the production of materials, such as papers and films, which explored the subject, or lecture series on the topic.[105] The one exception appears when Short wrote that CW should select "two areas where specific focus could be given [to] slavery in a natural or logical setting."[106] In a 1969 memo, John Harbour – Vice President and Director of Presentation - responded to Short's suggestion, stating that "the Negro employee is not the person to carry the burden of interpreting slavery," and that "there is universal confusion about whether Negroes feel Negro history ought to be studied much more intensively and given broader public notice – or whether it should continue to be kept out of sight" to begin with, and thus he recommends that "employee reactions to [the] new emphasis on this aspect of interpretation need to be better understood" before

[104] Ellis, 261-262.
[105] Ellis, 262.
[106] Ellis, 262.

moving forward with programming.[107] Harbour's words seem both cautionary to the development of black history programming at CW, as well as excusatory to why CW has not done so yet. While Harbour notes that the onus of interpreting slavery should not be put on black individuals, he simultaneously ascribes the burden of determining how and when to discuss black history onto African Americans. In doing so, Harbour seems to excuse CW's negligence of the topic thus far. This argument of CW not discussing slavery out of the best interest of the black community appears in other CW produced work. In reflecting on the development of black history at CW, Kopper writes:

> The oversight was not exclusively the fault of short-sighted management. On one hand, by the 1960s, many blacks who worked for Colonial Williamsburg were solidly middle class. When tentatively invited to interpret colonial black life for the visitors, they declined; some had come too far to be willingly associated with slavery in any way, shape or form… Others looked down on the liberalizing effort by Colonial Williamsburg as an early form of what would be called "political correctness." Simultaneously young blacks were simply uninterested in Williamsburg as irrelevant to their lives in every way.[108]

Kopper's statement attempts to excuse CW for not discussing slavery in the 1960s and 70s by suggesting that the local black population did not want the topic interpreted. Unlike Harbour, Kopper seems to suggest that discussing the topic of slavery is the responsibility of black America, and thus any hesitance they might have to doing so translates into avoiding the topic. Kopper fails to recognize that perhaps CW felt irrelevant to young African Americans because it focused solely on the narrative of the white elite who held their ancestors in bondage, and thus to interpret slavery at CW was to tokenize and exploit the legacy and enduring pain caused by slavery.

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[107] John R. Short, Typescript Meeting on Re-Interpretation of Slavery, February 14, 1969, folder Black Life Seminar May 25-26, 1969 (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia).
[108] Kopper, Revised, 204.

Amidst internal discussions around the incorporation of African American history, CW continued to garner criticism for the ways in which they handled the topic. As the 1970s approached, the criticism of the absence of the enslaved narrative had become much more apparent, and increasing numbers of visitors began to write to the museum, voicing their complaints. In December of 1971, an African American couple – Mr. and Mrs. F. H. Bonaparte – wrote that there is "a great feeling of alienation because of the almost total absence of the story of the significant part black people played in weaving the historical fabric" of the colonial period.[109] No longer was the brief mention of slavery sufficient, but rather visitors looked to see the contributions of a wide variety of Americans represented in the museum. This echoed the wider movement towards social history, which was continuing to develop at CW in the 1970s. Handler and Gable draw a connection between the rise in social history and the decline in visitation rates:

> According to a social history's proponents in the museum, the entrenched version of the American story focused too narrowly on "great men" and elites, and ignored the works and lives of the vast majority of the American population. Moreover, it was too exclusively celebratory. It privileged national consensus and ignored social conflict, thereby cleansing American history of oppression, exploitation, injustice and struggle. That fewer Americans were coming to Colonial Williamsburg indicated that after Vietnam, Watergate, and the turmoil of the Civil Rights movement, the public was no longer willing to buy the old history of consensus and celebration.[110]

Not only had CW gained criticism for ignoring the topic of slavery to any substantial level, but also for perpetuating a narrative of American greatness amidst growing internal disillusionment. In order to stay relevant, CW would need to reevaluate their interpretation of history, and that meant finally incorporating the enslaved experience to a significant degree.

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[109] Greenspan, 138-139.
[110] Handler and Gable, 4.

In attempting to incorporate the interpretation of African American history, CW looked to the emerging field of social history. Cary Carson was hired as part of this shift towards social history. Having previously worked at historic St. Mary's City in Maryland, Carson was invited to serve as the director of the department of historical research at CW in 1976.[111] In a personal interview, he reflected, "it was our job in a sense to ask the question: what history should Colonial Williamsburg be teaching, presenting on the streets to visitors, that it isn't presenting now."[112] Carson also made note of the importance of presenting a history that was relevant to the lives of twentieth century Americans, as he mused "what do they want to know, need to know about the past, that will put their lives and their understanding of their own society into historical perspective?"[113] In the new era of social history, understanding the past provided a tool to help one understand their own life, and in the 1970s the lived experiences of black individuals proved an important part of that equation.

In 1976 America celebrated the nation's bicentennial. As the year progressed, CW visitors' continued to express their disappointment in CW for not addressing slavery more substantially. In August of that year, Avrom Fischer wrote that the "single worst aspect was the almost total absence of any reference to slavery." He argued that through ignoring slavery, CW prevented young visitors from being able "to comprehend the roots of the racial problems that beset the country in the 1960s and 1970s."[114] Fischer embodied wider visitor discontent, as ultimately it was the "visitors who forced Colonial

[111] Cary Carson, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, February 9, 2018, transcript, 4:44-5:42.
[112] Carson, personal interview, 7:38-7:43.
[113] Carson, personal interview, 7:43-8:02.
[114] Greenspan, 145.

Williamsburg's hand," as they were eager to know about slavery.[115] Slavery was not an institution of the ancient past, but rather continued to affect Americans through its enduring legacy, as seen through the Civil Rights Movement. However, Carson recalls that the public was "often embarrassed to ask" about slavery, as "it was very often awkward for the mostly white audience to ask black people about a history of slavery and slaves."[116] Amidst the criticism, and motivated to meet visitor demands, CW hosted its first Black Studies Workshop for interpreters. The workshop, initially held in May of 1976, was so successful a second was offered in October of the same year. The three-day course aimed to "provide interpreters with the opportunity to formulate a viable approach to the interpretation of the role of the Black in every facet of life in eighteenth century Williamsburg. To be able to present the Black as an individual with an understanding of his history, culture, and the quality of his life."[117] For the first time the humanity of enslaved individuals was to be explored, allowing them to exist outside of the system of bondage in which they were held. However, as the interpretive staff at this time was still exclusively white, the seminars aimed to "make the descriptions and explanations of the role of blacks more three-dimensional."[118] Through doing so Kay White, the event coordinator, hoped to counteract the stereotype of the "shuffling black slave" which had appeared in *Gone With the Wind* and persisted in the minds of many Americans.[119] White is cognizant of the ways in which CW has embodied the stage of trivialization and deflection in its interpretation of the enslaved. However, the museum cannot yet be

[115] Carson, personal interview, 32:09-34:52.
[116] Carson, personal interview, 32:09-34:52.
[117] Ellis, 269.
[118] Virginia Gabriele, "CW Offers Look At Slavery Issue," *Daily Press* (Newport News, VA), October 10, 1976, F4.
[119] Gabriele, F4.

quantified as embodying the stage of segregation, as formal programming had not yet been developed, and the staff remained majority white. The impact of the workshop can rather be seen in the ways in which it encouraged the incorporation of emotion in interpreting slavery.

Despite the work of White and others, when Cary Carson arrived at CW to serve as Director of Research the black experience was still noticeably absent. He reflects that "the visitor who tours the historic area purposely looking for 'the black presence,' as I did, must be prepared to raise the subject himself to get interpreters to talk about it."[120] In Carson's two days of touring, he "heard the word 'slave' only twice…in short, the black presence in our interpretation of Williamsburg is as scarce as black visitors are."[121] Carson makes the point that slavery is continuing to be neglected despite the recent training sessions, suggesting that white interpreters are still struggling with feelings of discomfort around the subject. Thus he argued that the Department of Historical Research should rather be an "R and D, a Research and Development Department," using the information gleamed from research to inform interpretation of the enslaved, as opposed to just answering questions.[122]

Carson recognized the care with which the topic of slavery was to be handled. When asked to complete a comprehensive research report on the presence of a slave quarters at the Brush-Everard House in ten days time, he refused noting "quickie programs, got up without sufficient consultation with curators, architects, historians, and

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[120] Cary Carson to Mr. Longsworth, Duty Officer's Report for July 29-20, 1978, August 7, 1978, folder CWF Black Interpretation, 1978, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia). It is interesting to note that Carson is not a native of Virginia, and thus can be placed within a wider pattern of the "Yankee Invasion" of CW, first seen with the arrival of Rockefeller.
[121] Carson, Duty Officer's Report.
[122] Carson, personal interview, 6:04-7:00.

teachers, have a very high mortality rate," and thus while "no topic of interpretation is more needed" the department ultimately must decline the request.[123] After fifty years of ignoring the topic, Carson did not want CW to produce a lackluster interpretation scheme for the sole purpose of quickly getting it released. Instead the department was to take its time on the project, fully developing it until it felt fit to debut.

As Carson and the fellow directors navigated how to approach the topic of slavery, they laid the foundation for how black life would be interpreted at CW for years to come. Slavery was considered a "difficult subject" that "must be met directly, realistically, and forthrightly" in order to visitors to fully grasp the colonial period.[124] However, in an anonymous prefatory note, CW administrators warned against imposing "the moral judgments of one age upon another" as "both blacks and whites were trapped by a system that neither were powerful enough to abolish in the eighteenth century."[125] While CW would interpret black life, they would not pass judgment on previous generations, thus allowing slavery to exist as an unavoidable institution of the time. In doing so, CW could continue to center the elite white planters and the emergence of democratic ideals of liberty and freedom, while also acknowledging slavery.

Upon his arrival to CW in 1978, Robert Birney, the Director of Planning, held a meeting on black interpretation at CW, to which he invited a number of employees, including the few black individuals currently employed by CW. In reflecting on the meeting he expressed two main points that were brought to his attention. The first was

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[123] Cary Carson and Harold B. Gill, Memo: Request for Research on Slave Quarters at the Brush-Everard House, June 21, 1978, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia).
[124] Peter A. G. Brown, Memo to Mr. Longsworth, August 2, 1978, folder: Reports – Brown, Peter A. G. - Blacks + Slaves Life Interpretation, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia).
[125] Prefatory Note, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia).

that the few black interpreters, who were currently employed as skilled craftsman, "were not going to interpret black colonial history because they were black…they did not feel they had a command of black colonial history" and were uninterested in being diverted away from their current interpretative work to do so.[126] However, they also noted that they were "extremely skeptical that the present interpretative core could be trusted – could be intrusted, maybe, is a better way to put it – to develop a story of black colonial life."[127] Here Birney returns to the question of whose job it is to talk about slavery. The few black employees at CW refused to be rerouted, asserting that the color of their skin did not automatically make them experts on black history. Simultaneously, however, they looked back to CW's attempts to interpret slavery in the past, and were apprehensive at the ability of the current interpretive staff to do justice to such a personal and emotional topic. In a personal interview, Cary Carson reflected on this period:

> Um, it was, it was interesting, the resistance, the first resistance came from those few black employee, those few African Americans we already employed…they challenged us by saying, look, we're not going to play slaves. Um, we're, uh, we are colorless historians and interpreters and we don't want to, we don't want to deal with this. This is not a subject, uh, that we have been trained to deal with. We don't know much about it, and we certainly would expect white visitors be, often to be insensitive, so no deal. Um, our response was, that's not an answer we can accept, so what are your terms. Because Colonial Williamsburg is going to make this an important part of its new programming, what do you insist on? And their answer was, OK, if you want people pretending to be slaves, you go hire actors. So we did. We went to Hampton University, uh, and thats where we found Rex Ellis, uh, who was head of the theater department at, uh, at Hampton … we said Rex, come up here if you would please and, uh, help us launch our program, help us devise and present a program.[128]

Here Carson details CW's path to African American Interpretation. He draws on many themes, as he points to the tensions surrounding whose duty it is to interpret slavery, as

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[126] Ellis, 271.
[127] Ellis, 271.
[128] Carson, Personal Interview, 36:38-41:35.

well as the way audience expectation drives interpretation. By the end of the 1970s CW decided the time had come to broach the topic of slavery more fully, and saw the employment of Rex Ellis and a series of street actors as the means through which to do so.

Conclusion

From its inception, through the 1970s, CW remained a white museum that did not formally address the topic of slavery. While black employees were present, and could be seen as reflecting slavery through the color of their skin, formal programming or interpretation remained noticeably absent throughout the period. To some extent CW can be understood as a product of wider national sentiment, and reflected a wider ignorance towards the contributions of black Americans in the founding of the nation. Simultaneously, however, the pressures of visitor expectations resulted in a slow and tenuous process as CW navigated the tensions of segregation. Ultimately, the sociopolitical climate of the 1920s and 1930s in America, established CW as a museum that ignored the topic of slavery.

To some degree CW fit into the methodology proposed by Eichstedt and Small between the 1920s and 1970s. However, it also proved limited as CW, frequently reflected a combination of multiple stages, as opposed to moving through the methodology in a linear trajectory. While the topic of slavery was formally ignored for most of the period, embodying the stages of symbolic annihilation as well as trivialization and deflection, members of Williamsburg's black community were heavily involved with the museum from its conception. Thus, while not officially recognized, these individuals

helped to highlight the legacy of the black community in Williamsburg, challenging a monolithic racial conception of the past.

Interpreting the period under the framework of Emotional Humanity offers clarity. The period of conception to 1979 can be read with patriotism proving the predominant emotion, and thus limiting the ability of the museum to address slavery. As a whole the museum played to a patriotic sentiment, which subsequently established how guests interacted with both the museum, and the central narrative. While African American employees were present, the overarching structure of the museum did not work to create spaces where the enslaved were seen as human, and thus as a whole the period failed to address slavery. Additionally, Williamsburg's black community was both physically displaced from their homes in order to make room for the museum, and limited to employment in secondary roles. The segregationist policies enacted towards the black community in the 20th century worked to create boundaries to CW's ability to fully depict slavery that endure to today. Thus, by positioning patriotism as the predominant emotion of the museum, CW was unable to acknowledge the humanity of the enslaved, or to offer a social critique of the institution of slavery.

As CW entered the 1980s, and began to engage in more intentional presentations of slavery, this understanding of race and the place of slavery in the narrative of Colonial Williamsburg, continued to impact CW's ability to interpret the enslaved experience.

Appendix 2

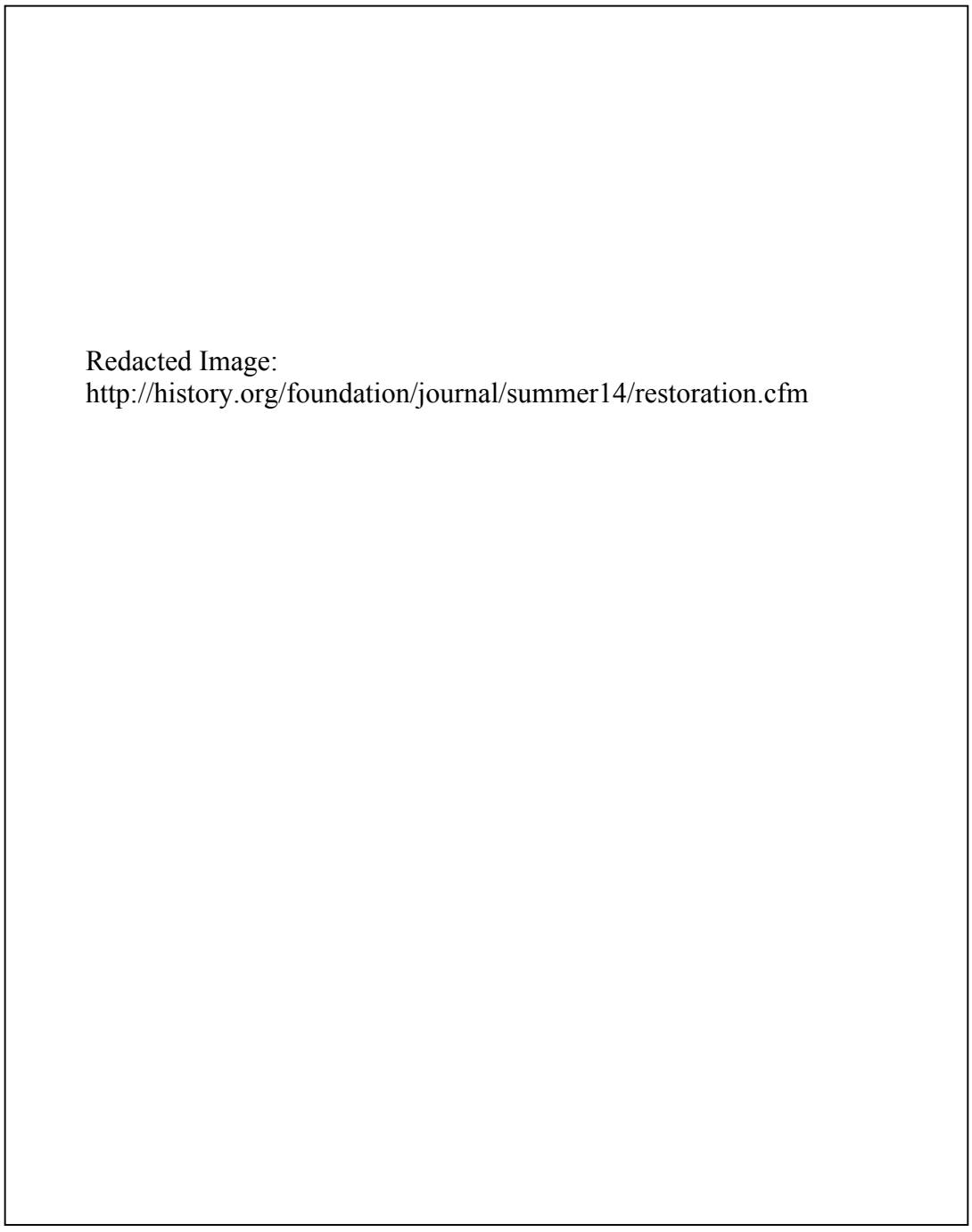

Fig. 1: Image of poster advertising town hall meeting regarding sale of land to Colonial Williamsburg, dated June 12, 1928.

Theobald, "African Americans and the Restoration of Williamsburg."

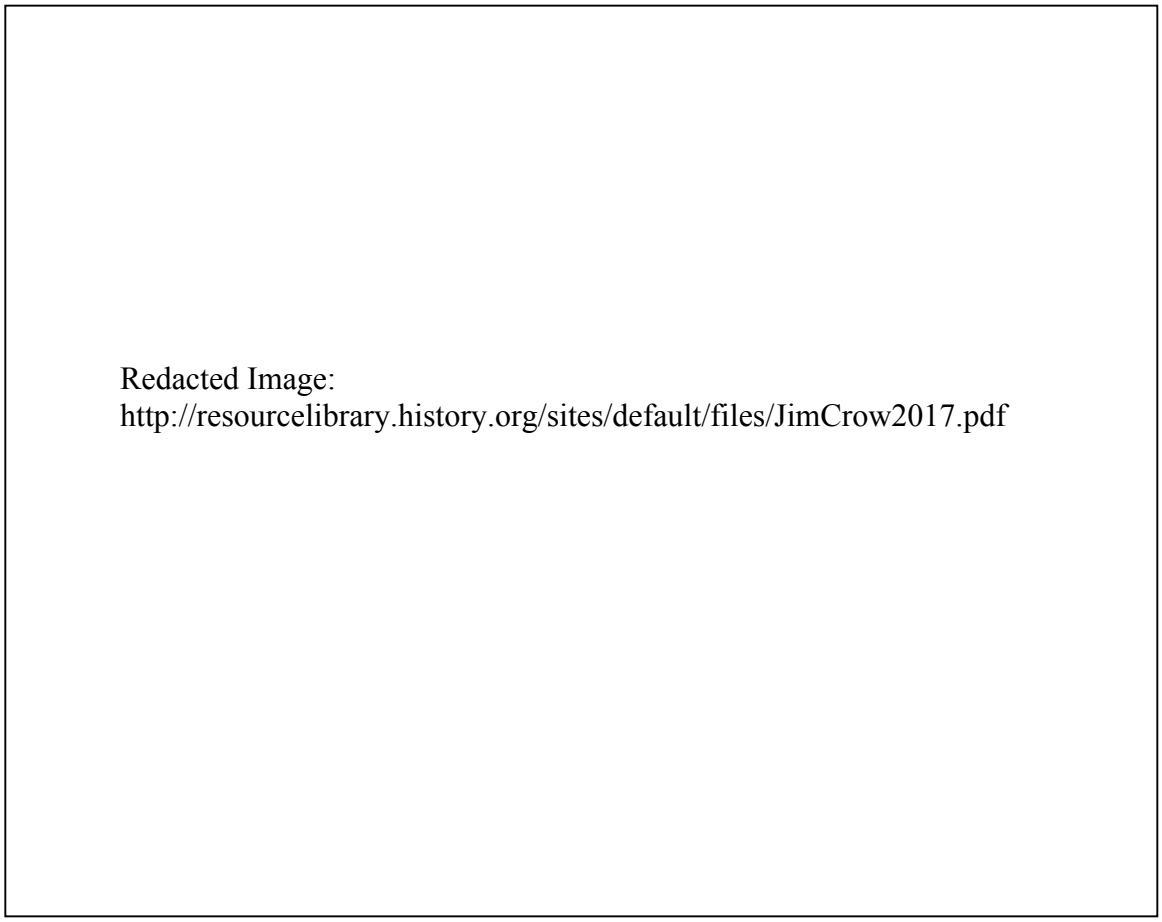

Fig 2: This sketch, from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, shows an African American employee helping in the reconstruction.

Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute, "Williamsburg in the Time of Jim Crow Walking Tour," Colonial Williamsburg Education Resources Library: Restoring Williamsburg in the Time of Jim Crow, accessed March 11, 2018, http://resourcelibrary.history.org/sites/default/files/JimCrow2017.pdf.

"Guys this is important. This is American history:" The Emergence of African American Interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg, the 1980s and 1990s

On a warm June day in 1989, Rex Ellis, the director of the African American Interpretation and Presentations program at Colonial Williamsburg, presented a piece at The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums' annual conference, titled "Museums and Race: A Case Study at Colonial Williamsburg." In his fifteen-minute lecture, Ellis gave a candid overview of Colonial Williamsburg's attempts to incorporate African American history. It did not take long for Ellis to acknowledge the emotional weight of such work for himself as a black man. He reflected on a time when a group of prominent architectural historians came to visit Carter's Grove, Colonial Williamsburg's recreated plantation site. For the architectural historians:

> discussing slavery and convincing Colonial Williamsburg of the importance of interpreting slavery was no more than an academic exercise; no more than a lively debate; no more than one kind of historian exercising his research over another kind of historian. For me they were talking about me. They were talking about my ancestors when they mentioned that the only privy was out in the back yard squatting down; they were talking about me when they admitted that the master built his corn crib better than he build the slave's houses; they were talking about me when they mentioned the most beds were made of straw with old rags for a pillow. But when they said these things and didn't bat an eye when they said it, I realized how far apart they and I were.[1]

Here, Ellis highlights the distinct manner in which Americans interact with the history of slavery based on their own identities. The interaction between Ellis and the architectural historians reflects both the ways CW began to more fully engage in the interpretation of slavery, as well as the tensions that arise from doing such. For the architectural historians slavery is a means through which social history can be realized, while for Ellis it is the story of his ancestors.

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[1] Rex Ellis, Typescript of Museums and Race: A Case Study at Colonial Williamsburg, 1989, Folder 598: General Correspondence 1988-1994, Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia.

In the summer of 1979, CW hired six character interpreters to represent black history through street performance art, thus taking its first tangible steps towards formally incorporating African American history. Short vignettes, depicting subjects ranging from a "tavern slave snapping beans in the kitchen" to "a black Baptist preacher" and "a field hand tending tobacco plants" were used to draw attention to the presence of African Americans in Williamsburg.[2] In a 2018 personal phone interview, Cary Carson paints the scene from these early years: "Gowan Pamphlet, the itinerant preacher, is preaching in backyards, empty lots. We had African Americans roaming the streets on errands and they would engage visitors in the stories they had to tell."[3] Such episodes were arguably hidden in plain sight, as while they occurred on the street they were simultaneously marginalized, unable to be performed more formally. While the vignettes only last a few minutes each, they signaled the white museum's introduction to black history.

In the 1980s and 1990s Colonial Williamsburg can be read as a reflection of the third phase of Eichstedt and Small's methodology: Segregation and Marginalization of Knowledge. CW utilized a series of techniques and methods to keep black history separate from the main Euro-American narrative of the museum. Tours and programs that dealt with the African American experience were clearly labeled as such, and often required a separate ticket. The addition of Carter's Grove in the late 1980s geographically separated the topic of slavery from the rest of the museum. In doing so, however, CW sought to gradually incorporate the narrative of the enslaved without directly challenging the overarching guiding theme of patriotism. Thus, when considered under Emotional Humanity, patriotism remained the guiding emotion, and slavery was

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[2] Theobald, 59.

[3] Cary Carson, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, February 9, 2018, transcript, 41:35-43:36.

positioned as auxiliary. Narratives of the enslaved emerged, but failed to offer a complete understanding of the humanity of the enslaved, rather focusing on specific elements that did not conflict with perceptions of the planter elite. The confluence of influential interpreters, streams of funding, and audience interest allowed programs centered on slavery to grow and evolve at CW. However, despite advances, the interpretation of African American experiences at CW remained highly segregated due to the inability to paint a full picture of enslaved identity, on account of the central narrative of patriotism. CW was the first major living history museum to explore African American history and culture through a segregated interpretation method. While this seemed to position CW as a progressive forerunner in the interpretation of "difficult history," the programming did not truly depict the horrors of the institution of American slavery. I argue that CW's interpretation of this history focused on narratives of resistance, culture, and the lived experiences of specific individuals, in order to assert that they were representing the full story of the founding of America, while simultaneously working to limit meaningful conversations on slavery.

The 1980s

As America entered the 1980s, black history programming at Colonial Williamsburg began to come to fruition. In this period Americans found themselves confronted with a variety of national and global issues. The war in Vietnam had recently ended, and the Watergate scandal remained fresh in the minds of many, leaving a lingering distrust of the federal government. Contemporaneously, the nation celebrated the bicentennial and the Cold War endured. Colonial Williamsburg existed in relation to all of these events. The Bicentennial brought both foreign dignitaries and a record

number of visitors to CW, as its historic location and proximity to D.C. coupled with the opportunity to return to the colonial America, became increasingly appealing and relevant at a time when 1776 was on the nation's mind.[4] Concurrently, the museum's message of patriotism and democracy stood in firm opposition to Communist totalitarianism.[5] However, at the same time increasing critique of the government made room for non-dominant narratives, including that of the African American experience. In 1977 the TV miniseries *Roots* debuted to wide success. *Roots* "represented a new perception of the past and argued that this perception was critical to identity and consciousness in the present."[6] The culmination of such factors signaled that the nation was ready to begin talking about slavery, no longer content with a singular narrative of American exceptionalism.

The 1980s were a period of progress and development for African American interpretation at CW, as regularly scheduled programs were incorporated, giving visitors a chance to interact with the challenging subject of slavery. However the programs ultimately replicated a segregated methodology, as they allowed visitors to choose whether or not they wanted to interact with black history while at the museum. For those visitors who did choose to explore the subject, they were met with a series of culturally focused programs, seemingly emerging out of Blassingame's analysis. These programs focused on elements such as music and storytelling to highlight the emergence of a distinct culture within enslaved communities. This allowed guests to feel as if they had

[4] Theobald, 49.
[5] Mary Miley Theobald, *Colonial Williamsburg the First 75 Years* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2001), 46.
[6] M.J. Rymsza-Pawlowska, *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 31.

done their duty by exploring black history, without having to engage in challenging discussions on slavery.

CW chose to capitalize on this growing interest, which grew out of the popular success of *Roots*, and began to explore ways black history could be incorporated into the museum. Similar to other living history museums of the time, CW "responded to and helped propel more general transformations in how American society thought of and used the past" through the incorporation of slavery into the museum narrative.[7] CW considered black history "a contact sport," due to emotion it incited, but also "a lively history; it's history people care about. That should be incentive enough to we who are professional teachers of popular history. We can expect some bruises to be sure, but that shouldn't dissuade us from getting involved."[8] Eager to please a public interested in learning about slavery, the Curriculum Committee – comprised of Cary Carson and "five other relative newcomers" to the foundation – was asked to "assess the Williamsburg story," and to form a thematic approach that incorporated slavery.[9] This positions the museum as a reactionary space in relation to collective memory, as CW only began to engage in discussions around slavery once national attention had turned towards the subject.

As a result of the work done by the Curriculum Committee, in 1980 CW introduced its first reoccurring program centered on the theme of African American history. The evening program, titled "The Black Music Program," incorporated a variety

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[7] Rymsza-Pawlowska, 113.
[8] Curriculum Committee, *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg; A Plan of Education* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundations, 1977), 42.
Curriculum Committee: Cary Carson, *Chairperson*, Stephen Elliott, Harold Gill, Roy Graham, Brock Jobe and Peter Sterling (*Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg*, v).
[9] Carson, Personal Interview, 52:21-53:29.

of musical traditions and styles - including religious and secular, as well as vocal and instrumental - in order to show the rich history of music and storytelling in the Afro-American culture.[10] Internally, the Foundation developed the Black Music Program with the educational goal of conveying to visitors "how diverse African peoples created distinctive Afro-American music forms in the New World and the forces shaping this emergent American art form."[11] For its first venture into permanent black programming CW picked a noncontroversial topic. Through music, CW could mention slavery, but did not have to dive fully into the horrors of the institution, focusing instead on the resistant power of song and emergence of African American culture. Additionally, the program seemed to echo Blassingame's work on enslaved culture, rooting the program in scholarship. In promoting the program to the general public – a predominantly white audience - CW underscored this notion of Afro-American music as entertainment, marketing it as follows:

> A general admission ticket is all that is required to join the African-American interpretative staff for forty-five minutes of music, dancing, and storytelling. Don't be surprised if you are invited to join in a dance or asked to play an instrument. This program is offered from June through August.[12]

Guests could feel as though they were immersing themselves in African American history without simultaneously committing to a discussion on slavery. The program failed to explore the emotional origin and impact of such songs and dance for the enslaved. Rather, audience participation fostered a sense of community and fun around these

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[10] Rex Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 7, no. 3 (1986): 1.
[11] Curriculum Committee, *Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1985), 50.
[12] Department of African American Interpretation and Presentations pamphlet, folder 565, General Correspondence 1988-1994 (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia).

cultural elements. The program proved economically successful, and continued to operate for throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Based on the success of "The Black Music Program," CW continued to introduce more black cultural programs over the next few years. These programs focused on the development of Afro-American culture amongst enslaved communities in the colonies, but negated the historical context of the period. In 1981, the evening program "African Traditions" debuted, featuring short stories, vignettes and music.[13] The following year, CW added "Black Life," another evening program, marketed specifically for student groups, which explored topics of family life, religion and leisure amongst enslaved communities.[14] Then in 1984 the Williamsburg Lodge, a CW owned and operated modern hotel on site, hosted a one time performance entitled "On Myne Own Time." This ninety-minute presentation used a combination of scenes, vignettes and storytelling in attempt to help visitors understand the private life of black individuals in the colonial period.[15] While the programs ranged in frequency, duration, and content, they all maintained a focus on the cultural aspects of black life, looking at ways in which individuals were able to resist the confines of the institution of slavery and make a life for themselves. Thus, visitors were able to feel as if they were engaging with the diverse narratives of the colonial period while still enjoying their vacation and channeling feelings of patriotism, as such presentations did not seek to criticize the white elite who themselves owned enslaved individuals.

CW did, however, also begin to discuss slavery in this period. In 1981 CW introduced "The Other Half Tour," a two hour guided tour of the historic area that

[13] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 1.
[14] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 1.
[15] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 2.

focused on Williamsburg's black population. The program used both first and third person interpretation to overview the 18th century black experience, including aspects of the transatlantic slave trade as well as both rural and urban systems of slavery.[16] The program was advertised as follows:

> Half of the population in Williamsburg during the eighteenth century was black. This two-hour walking tour discusses this "other half" of the population and their contributions and influence on eighteenth-century Williamsburg. This tour gives an in-depth look at the black experience from the arrival of the first blacks in Virginia in 1619 through the abolition of the slave trade by the English in 1807. This tour is offered, weather permitting, from March through October and requires a special ticket.[17]

The description of the Other Half Tour hits on many central themes to the manner in which CW interpreted African American history in the 1980s. In creating a two-hour tour devoted specifically to the black experience, CW again appeared a progressive forerunner in the field of African American history. Despite showing a commitment to interpreting the narrative of the enslaved, the tour's analysis of the institution remained limited. The use of the phrase "other half" is also significant in not only does it make African Americans an "other," but it also positions them as equal to their white counterparts. While the statistic that enslaved individuals accounted for 52% of Williamsburg's population is frequently cited – centering Tate's research - the equality of the two groups extends little past that. Williamsburg's black population in the 18th century was enslaved, and thus to hold them as equals to their white counterparts who were not only free but held black bodies in bondage, is to do a disservice to the lived experiences of Williamsburg's enslaved residents. Similarly, by ending the tour in 1807, CW could emphasize the abolition of the English slave trade as opposed to the

[16] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 1.
[17] AAIP Pamphlet.

development of southern plantation slavery. While this may stem from the idea that the town "died" with the shifting of the colonial capital to Richmond in 1780, it consequently allowed CW to convey a positive narrative of enduring resistance as opposed to an honest depiction of slavery. It is also important to note that the tour required a special ticket, which visitors purchased for an additional price. Thus tourists not only had to make a mental decision to go on the tour in order to learn about slavery, they also had to make a financial commitment.

The creation of the Other Half Tour can be seen as CW's moment of arrival into a segregated interpretation. Visitors are told that this tour will focus specifically on the black half of Williamsburg, thus creating a clear distinction between white and black history. If a visitor is interested in learning about slavery in the colonial period they can do so on this tour. Conversely, however, visitors who chose not to would leave CW having not interacted with the topic. Thus, the tour appears to embody Eichstedt and Small's methodology as "black history remains secondary and merely reaffirms traditional 'land of opportunity' narratives."[18] This appears to position the museum as encompassing the stage of Segregation and Marginalization of Knowledge as the black experience is separated and serves as an aid in helping guests better understand the white elite. However, when considering the Other Half Tour, researcher Anna Logan Lawson contends that "through the framing of interpretive maneuvers" throughout the tour, "African Americans at Colonial Williamsburg become ethnographic objects themselves, reinscribing racial stereotypes."[19] Lawson's point can be paired with Edwards-Ingram's work, and the notion of "performing race" to suggest that the Other Half Tour works to

[18] Scott Magelssen, Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance (Scarecrow Press, Inc: Lanham, 2007), 82.
[19] Magelssen, 83.

not only separate African American history from American history, but simultaneously that the presence of black interpreters works to reinforce harmful racial stereotypes. Thus, while the tour can be seen as an important step forward in the interpretation of the enslaved, it simultaneously operated under radicalized stereotypes.

The year 1985 saw a continuing commitment to African American interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg, as the foundation released a new internal interpretation under the guiding umbrella theme "Becoming Americans."[20] Directed by this framework, CW aimed to tell a story of nation making, updating the traditionally patriotic message that had been engrained in the foundation since it opened. The theme sought to extend beyond politics to consider the sociocultural environment from which America emerged, and the diverse array of players involved in the process. By emphasizing ethnic assimilation, CW had an opportunity to present a balanced portrayal of African and European storylines, suggesting a larger space for black history at the museum.[21]

In their landmark 1997 criticism of Colonial Williamsburg, Richard Handler and Eric Gable quickly dispelled an optimistic reading of "Becoming Americans" by arguing:

> But no sooner is this critical perspective given voice in *Teaching History* than it gives way to the benign story of ethnic pluralism...Instead of a story of exploitative interdependence within a larger socioeconomic system, we have a story of the differing "contributions" that Americans of varying origins made to the birth and development of American culture. Instead of a story about whites over blacks, we have a story in which Africans are just another immigrant ethnic group, with chances to make a contribution and develop a distinctive culture that parallel those of any other group.[22]

Here, Handler and Gable point to the impact of segregated interpretation models, creating a wider narrative in which CW's black history programs can be placed. They emphasize

[20] Curriculum Committee, *Teaching History*, 1985, v.
[21] Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 116.
[22] Handler and Gable, 117.

that while CW was advanced in their newfound commitment to including the stories of black Americans, CW cannot yet be understood as interpreting slavery itself, as the narratives are not positioned within the framework of the institution preventing the colonial period from being understood in full.

This theme is echoed in the description for the "Black Life Tour" which also debuted in 1985. The tour aimed to highlight the "emergence of a distinctive Afro-American subculture" and the different elements which influenced it. Visitors could expect to learn about "Williamsburg's black residents" through various aspects of their lives, such as family networks, religion and cultural pastimes. While the description does indicate that the tour will include information on "the laws and practices of slavery," it seems supplementary to the cultural focus of the tour.[23] This is supported by CW's choice to use the language of "black residents" to describe the enslaved individuals, overlooking the system of bondage they are consumed in. Thus, while the tour does mention slavery, Handler and Gable's analysis still holds. The lives of notable black residents are held up as universal accomplishment, and the development of a distinctly Afro-American culture is traced.

The "Black Life Tour" represented another instance of segregated programming at CW. Taken collectively, programming in the first half of the 1980s focused on narratives of resistance. While slavery is mentioned – sometimes implicitly and rarely explicitly – the programs instead attempted to humanize the lives of Williamsburg's black residents. While highlighting the agency of enslaved individuals is critical in moving away from a damaged centered understanding of blackness, program developers and interpreters did not take the time to outline to visitors what slavery looked like in

[23] Curriculum Committee, *Teaching History*, 1985, 45.

colonial Virginia, and thus told resistance narratives without contextualizing them within the institution of slavery. This can be attributed to the fact that the interpretation of slavery proved highly controversial nationally, and while CW wanted to engage in the conversation they were not yet fully committed to the potential consequences of doing so. Thus, CW chose instead to emphasize cultural and music programs, as they sold tickets and proved less contentious to the visitor.

In the second half of the 1980s black history programming at CW shifted dramatically as a result of a generous grant from the AT&T Foundation. In 1986 the AT&T Foundation awarded CW a $400,000 restricted grant to be used over the course of four years to help the museum improve and expand its interpretation of black history.[24] CW used a portion of the money to hire Michael Nichols, a professor from Utah State University, for two years. Nichols would study and teach urban-African American history, as well as work with other scholars at CW to further the program.[25] The grant also helped begin archeological research at the Brush-Everard house in the historic area, which was projected to be the principal site of black history interpretation at CW.[26] The black interpreters were also to benefit from the money, which would enable them to consult with a variety of African-American historians, performers and ethnomusicologists in order to remain abreast to the latest advancements in the field of interpretation.[27] Various other avenues for distributing the grant money included educational outreach, the

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[24] Rex Marshall Ellis, "Presenting the Past: Education, Interpretation and the Teaching of Black History at Colonial Williamsburg," (PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1989), 276.
Of interesting note is the fact that based on extensive research I was unable to find where the money came from, and why AT&T chose to financially support the interpretation of black history at Colonial Williamsburg. While there is information on the grant from Colonial Williamsburg's perspective, I was unable to access information from AT&T themselves.
[25] Ellis, Presenting the Past, 276
[26] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 2.
[27] Rex Ellis, Museums and Race, 1.

purchasing of artifacts to convey the black experience, and the hiring and training of additional staff.[28] While the AT&T grant allowed for expanded educational opportunities, it is critical to recognize it as external funding. Thus, while CW was interested in expanding its work in the field of black history, grant money proved essential in providing the financial resources necessary to do so.

The AT&T Foundation grant also allowed for the appointment of Rex Ellis as the first director of African American Interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg.[29] The unit was informally created in 1984, with the hiring of Ellis, but did not receive funding until the AT&T grant was awarded.[30] Initially, Ellis warned against the segregation of African American interpretation at CW. He argued that the "task of interpreting black history at Colonial Williamsburg is so important that it cannot be left to any one group or site; it must be included in the total interpretive effort."[31] While Ellis raises a significant point, evidence suggests that CW was unlikely to embrace an integrated approach to black history interpretation at the time. When considered within the context of CW in the 1980s, the development of a separate black history department arguably seemed beneficial. It allowed for more complete attention on the topic, and for funding to be allocated for the black history unit, helping to provide resources and staff.

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[28] Rex Ellis, Museums and Race, 1.
[29] Erin Krutko, "Colonial Williamsburg's Slave Auction Re-Enactment: Controversy, African American History and Public Memory," *(*Master's Thesis, College of William and Mary, 2003), 47.
[30] Rex Ellis, interview by Lloyd Dobyns, "*Recalling African American Interpretation,"* Colonial Williamsburg: Past & Present, February 6, 2006; R. Birney, Typescript A Brief Chronological History of Recent Efforts to Develop a Black History Program at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation 1985, Folder: Black History Programming Master Plan 1979-1989, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia), 2.
[31] Rex Ellis, Typescript of Charter Document Teaching African-American History at Colonial Williamsburg, A Thematic Approach by Rex Ellis, 1989, Folder: Black History Programming Master Plan 1979-1989, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia), 2.

The role of the black interpreters emerged simultaneously alongside black history programming at CW. Interpreting slavery is an incredibly demanding task, and proves challenging for all who are involved, as it is both a controversial and emotional topic.[32] Carson recalls that Ellis used to tell his staff that:

> you not only have to have a thick skin, but you need to know your history. That is to say the history of enslaved peoples, you need to know it better than…anybody you encounter on the street, because they're ready to ask questions that sound insensitive, and you've got to deal with that and turn it around so that you can make it an actually productive learning experience.[33]

Interpreting slavery proved incredibly challenging, yet critical work, especially as guests were just beginning to interact with the topic at museums. Charles Longsworth, the president of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation at the time, emphasized the significance of the role of the black interpreter, noting that "because blacks are not represented physically in the Historic Area in terms of homes, and room furnishings" their presence must be brought to life through realistic interpretation.[34] Inherent in this statement is that idea that interpreting the life of the enslaved is solely the responsibility of black interpreters. Ellis, however, challenged this, continually calling on all CW employees to take part in telling the story, as if it remained the responsibility of the African American Interpretation unit "the efforts that have been implemented over the last eight years will be of little significance."[35]

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[32] Ellis, Teaching African-American History, 19.
[33] Carson, Personal Interview, 34:52-35:40.
[34] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 5.
It is important to note that underscoring this quotation is the question of why black experiences are not physically represented at CW. This links to longstanding patterns of documentation, through which western academia privileges written documents as a way of accessing historical truths. A lack of written word on the enslaved experience conversely means a lack of physical representation, as sources such as inventory lists and personal journals are used to furnish rooms. This is emblematic of the power of imperialism in influencing the ways in which we remember history.
[35] Ellis, "Black Programs Come of Age," 5.

Rex Ellis may have been ready for CW to talk about slavery in an integrated and complete manner, but that does not mean everyone was. In order to address the topic of slavery more directly, Ellis had to work to find new interpretative techniques, shifting away from CW's traditional styles. Historically, white actors at CW never broke character, but incorporating such a method proved critical in helping the audience navigate black history programs, and ensuring they took away the intended message.[36] The gradual incorporation of black history at CW led some to believe that contemporary African American families would finally begin to visit Williamsburg. Committees were formed under the guiding question of why there were not more black visitors in hopes of finding feasible ways "to attract more of them to Williamsburg."[37] This highlights a disconnect between CW's administration and the general public, as the Foundation felt they were accurately portraying African American history and were confused as to why more visitors of color were not coming to celebrate their progress. Despite his own identities, Ellis also struggled with the notion of how to convey to visitors of all races that African American history is American history and thus worth knowing. In a retrospective interview done in the early 2000s, Ellis reflected on the 1980s, noting:

> there was a very real backlash of people – not just in the community but all around – who *did not* want this subject talked about. They *did not* want it discussed. Here is one contingent not wanting it discussed for their own reason, another contingent – a white contingent over here – not wanting it discussed for *their* reasons. And we're sitting in the middle somewhere saying, "Guys this is important. This is American history."[38]

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[36] Spencer Crew, "Giving Life to Black History," *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter* 9, no. 4 (January 1988): 3.
[37] Report of the Subcommittee on the Interpretation of the Black Experience at Colonial Williamsburg. 1982, Folder: Black History Programming Master Plan 1979-1989, (Corporate Archives and Records Department, Williamsburg, Virginia), 3.
[38] Ellis, Recalling African American Interpretation.

Among both black and white Americans the question of how CW should be talking about slavery – and if it should be talking about it at all - proved highly divisive. Positioned against the notion that 1980's America was ready to talk about slavery, Ellis highlights the diversity of reasons motivating people's reluctance to talk about the subject. For many in the black community the pain of the enduring legacy of slavery was too raw, and CW's incorporation of black programming felt nothing short of exploitative.

For many African American interpreters their work placed them on a tightrope between their commitment to their job and their family. Ellis's grandmother refused to discuss his work with him, but openly talked to neighbors and relatives about her displeasure with his position at CW. Many of his other friends, family and neighbors also actively avoided the topic, and as a result Ellis could "count on [his] hands the number who have come to see the programs."[39] Christy Coleman, who served as director after Ellis's leave, also touched upon this sentiment. She noted that many interpreters "had to deal with friends and family who simply regarded what they chose to do for a living as 'playing slaves for white folks.'"[40] CW interpreter Katrinah Lewis drew on this theme as she noted, "I don't know that [my family and friends] quite understand the work that I'm doing" as her job is more than "just coming down her to play a slave."[41] Lewis emphasized that through her work she tries to promote healing and reconciliation, to help people see that African Americans were a critical element in the foundation of the country, an element that her family and friends do not always understand. For interpret Stephen Seals, however, it is not that his mother does not understand his work, rather that

[39] Rex Ellis, Museums and Race, 3.
[40] Christy Coleman Matthews, "Twenty Years Interpreting African American History: A Colonial Williamsburg Revolution," *History News* 54, no. 2 (1999): 8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42655579.
[41] Katrinah Lewis, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, August 10, 2017, transcript, 27:18-30:00.

"she's tired and she doesn't want to experience this anymore. You know, my mother lived through Jim Crow. She's done. I get it…my mom had earned the right to decide what she wants to or doesn't want to do."[42] While Seals's mom does not want to be reminded of the racism and legacies of slavery generally, for Valarie Gray Holmes's husband the resistance is personal to CW. When asked if her family was supportive, Valarie Gray Holmes, an African American interpreter at CW, reflected, "my husband was not. Let me figure out the right way to say this, he's he was…no he wasn't."[43] Gray Holmes struggled to find the words to express the juxtaposition of her husband's devotion to her and disapproval of CW as an institution. For Gray Holmes' husband, CW was a place that never told his history, rather one that allowed white people to celebrate their achievements. Just because CW was beginning to entertain narratives of African American history did not mean he was ready to forgive the museum for its years of neglect.[44] Thus, even while CW was beginning to explore the topic of African American interpretation, there remained a sentiment within black communities that "Colonial Williamsburg never did us any good so you know we're not going to support that."[45]

Overall the 1980s were a time of transition at Colonial Williamsburg. Black history programs began to emerge and focused predominantly on the cultural aspects of life. The department evolved as a detached venture from the rest of the foundation, both through its funding streams and separate employees. The result was a segregated

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[42] Stephen Seals, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, July 28, 2017, transcript, 57:51-58:45.
[43] Valarie Gray Holmes, interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, June 21, 2017, transcript.
[44] Gray Holmes, transcript.
[45] Gray Holmes, transcript.
This idea of Colonial Williamsburg never doing any good to Williamsburg's black residents, dates back to both the acquisition of property for the Foundation by Rockefeller, as well as the segregated structure of the museum under Jim Crow legislation. For decades, African Americans helped operate Colonial Williamsburg but were reduced to second-class citizens, and did not see themselves reflected in the museum. The legacy of this history will be more thoroughly discussed in the first chapter of the final project.

methodology, which can be noted as bearing with it both positive and negatives. The hesitance to talk candidly about slavery can be linked to the diverse range of emotions and responses held by different stakeholders in the community. For some the topic of slavery was inherently connected to shame and guilt, while for others it showed a side of American history that appeared incompatible with CW's overarching narrative of patriotism and American excellence. Thus, while black history began to be incorporated in the 1980s, CW continued to ignore the topic of slavery directly, choosing to focus instead on cultural development, which proved much less divisive amongst both staff and visitors.

Carter's Grove

In the second half of the 1980s CW renewed its commitment to interpreting African American history more broadly, and began to focus specifically on the enslaved experience. Plans for the reconstructed slave quarter at Carter's Grove, a 680-acre estate owned by the Foundation and located roughly eight miles from the central historic area, first began in 1984.[46] The colonial mansion originally belonged to the Burwell family, and was built in 1755 for Carter Burwell.[47] Archibald McCreas bought the estate in 1928, and it came into the hands of CW in 1969.[48] However, it was not until 1987 when CW received a grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust Fund that the project came to fruition. Construction for Carter's Grove, and the enslaved quarter there, formally began on December 17th of the same year.[49] The following year a number of

[46] Coleman, Twenty Years, 8.
[47] Alan Simpson, *The Legends of Carter's Grove and Other Mysteries*, (Colonial Williamsburg: Williamsburg, 1993), 22-23.
[48] Simpson, 1.
[49] Ellis, Presenting the Past, 279.

donors contributed to the project, as AT&T, IBM, and Philip Morris provided substantial financial gifts.[50]

As Colonial Williamsburg prepared for the reconstruction and interpretation of the enslaved quarters at Carter's Grove, a formal department was constructed to lead the endeavor. In 1988 the Black Programs Unit became the Department of African American Interpretation and Presentations, or AAIP. This organizational shift resulted in a larger budget and staff devoted to interpreting slavery both in the historic area and at Carter's Grove.[51] The formal distinction of department was also critical in that it gave the black interpreters a "direct reporting relationship with the Vice President for the Historic Area," meaning that requests and concerns no longer had to be sent through intermediary units.[52] Some worried that this new structure would segregate resources and information, as well as create further racial divisions within the staff. Ellis, however, maintained that it was critical for black interpreters to have such resources and support available whenever necessary.[53] While up until this point CW had been producing segregated programming, it was at this moment that the internal structure of CW also became formally segregated. It became the duty of AAIP to develop and produce content based around slavery, as "the practice among many interpreters had quickly become, 'if you want to know about black life, go to the AAIP program.'"[54] This separated development structure then worked to reinforce isolated programs, furthering the segregated methodology of the museum. However, the segregated structure must also be recognized as providing the means for

[50] Coleman, Twenty Years, 8.
[51] Krutko, 47.
[52] Coleman, Twenty Years, 8.
[53] Coleman, Twenty Years, 8.
[54] Coleman, Twenty Years, 8.

more intentional and comprehensive programming, thus creating a tension between segregation as both limiting and progressive.

The quarter was completed in October of 1988, and daily interpretation began in March of the following year.[55] The completion of the reconstructed slave quarter represented a defining moment in museum interpretation of slavery nationally. Carter's Grove signified the first time that a museum in the U.S. had "attempted to reconstruct slave quarters on their original site using 18th-century methods of construction."[56] With the opening of the quarter, not only could CW describe the lives of the enslaved, but they could also show visitors the conditions first hand through the recreated slave quarters. Rex Ellis saw Carter's Grove as an opportunity to finally demonstrate how the vast majority of black individuals in colonial Virginia lived, highlighting the conditions of enslavement.[57] The visitor pamphlet emphasized the unique experience to see the presentation of slavery, underscoring daily interpretation, and that guests could visit the three buildings where the twenty-four enslaved individuals of Carter's Grove were thought to live.[58] This is not to say, however, that black experiences remained the sole focus of the enslaved quarter. Colonial Williamsburg's official website invited visitors to come to Carter's Grove as "the grounds include the reconstructed 18th-century slave quarters, which represents life as it was lived by the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Chesapeake – both black and white."[59] Arguably, CW generalized the experience of the enslaved to be representative of poor white farmers. Doing so allowed the content to

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[55] Ellis, Presenting the Past, 280.
[56] Rex Ellis, "A Decade of Change: Black History at Colonial Williamsburg," *The Journal of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation* (1990): 22.
[57] Ellis, Case Study, 4.
[58] AAIP Pamphlet.
[59] Colonial Williamsburg, "Carter's Grove," *The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation,* accessed November 16, 2017, http://www.history.org/history/museums/carters_grove.cfm.

become more relatable to visitors, the vast majority of whom were white, giving them the opportunity to see themselves and their ancestors reflected in the museum. However, by categorizing poor whites as equivalent to enslaved individuals, CW still refused to truly acknowledge the horrific impact of the institution of slavery on the African American experience in the colonial period.

While the opening of Carter's Grove was revolutionary, it also came with limitations. The plantation was located eight miles from the Historic Area, and CW did not provide any formal transportation.[60] Thus, visitors who chose to go to Carter's Grove to learn about the enslaved experience had to find their own means of getting to the site, imposing a barrier to learning even before the visitor arrived. It was also, conversely, incredibly easy for visitors to choose not to visit Carter's Grove, thus barring them from engaging with topic of slavery. The geographic separation of Carter's Grove exemplified the methodology of museum segregation, as the interpretation of black history was physically removed from the rest of Colonial Williamsburg, which through its onsite hotels and restaurants, boasts an all-encompassing experience. Additionally, while the general house ticket to Carter's Grove included admission to the enslaved quarter, it required a separate ticket from that used in the Historic Area. Thus, admission costs and ticketing created a second barrier to visitation.

For those visitors who did make the trip to Carter's Grove, however, the site provided a chance to interact with the topic of slavery on an emotional level. The geographic removal of Carter's Grove from the rest of the historic area allowed the site to explore a wider chronology, breaking away from the revolutionary era and incorporating programming based in the 19th century. Valarie Gray Holmes began working at Carter's

[60] Krutko, 53.

Grove in 1994, as a character interpreter. In a personal interview, Gray Holmes reflected on her time at Carter's Grove interpreting a variety of enslaved and free characters. One of her favorite programs was "Soul of a Sharecropper," which explored the life and experiences of Jenny Joseph, a sharecropper living in South Carolina shortly after emancipation. When asked to reflect on her experiences at CW, Gray Holmes offered a story about a hot summer day when she performed the program four times at Carter's Grove. After her second performance an elderly African American man, dressed in his Sunday best, waited for the crowd to clear before coming up to her and stating "you took me to a place I did not want to go, but you carried me to a place I needed to go."[61] Later that same day, after performing the program for a fourth time, an older white man stopped Gray Holmes after the performance to tell her "when you first came out looking the way you do and speaking the way you do I hated you, but when you finished I fell in love with you. I hated you because you look real and because you sound real."[62] In this vignette Gray Holmes highlights the powerful ways African American interpretation can affect visitors of diverse backgrounds. The two men are stating the same point regarding the impact of the program, though are grounding it in their own unique lived experiences and positionality. Through her interpretation, Gray Holmes asked the audience to confront the painful legacy of slavery and the ways in which it continues to affect individuals of all races today. Thus, for visitors who were able to make it Carter's Grove, the space offered an important opportunity to understand the African American experience not only in the colonial era, but also today.

[61] Gray Holmes, transcript.
[62] Gray Holmes, transcript.

The development of Carter's Grove in the late 1980s signaled the full embodiment of a segregated interpretation strategy by Colonial Williamsburg. While the site included a reconstructed slave quarter, which was the first of its kind and thus highly progressive, tourists also had to make a financial and intentional commitment in visiting. Ultimately, Carter's Grove exemplifies the implicit and explicit barriers put in place by Colonial Williamsburg in order to appear to be presenting slavery while remaining distant from the topic.

The 1990s and the Slave Auction

In the 1990s CW continued to refine its presentation of African American history. In this period CW promoted the traditional narrative of the excellence of the Founding Fathers, and grappled with slavery more directly. The period, however, is most notable for the highly controversial recreated slave auction held in 1994, which drew criticism and support from many diverse bodies. The auction can be understood as both the turning point and culmination of black history at CW as the museum confronted the subject in its most direct way yet, and the response informed future programming. The auction was "the logical next step, carefully and deliberately taken" and provided an opportunity for CW to push the conventional boundaries on how the museum presented slavery.[63] When taken in full, the 1990s highlight both the pros and cons of segregated museum methodology, as well as the effectiveness of Emotional Humanity as an interpretive method to emphasize how CW's utilization of such a technique allowed them to become a leader in the museum field.

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[63] Cary Carson, "Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums," *The Public Historian* 20, no. 3 (1992): 12, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3379773.

When Richard Handler and Eric Gable visited CW throughout 1990 and 1991 they remarked that the interpretation of slavery worked to negate class exploitation and racial conflict by providing a simplified understanding, while simultaneously encouraging visitors to regard enslaved individuals as central to the development of American identity.[64] Individuals of color were highlighted, but slavery as a whole remained a difficult subject to broach. In 1991, Rex Ellis chose to leave the department he had founded, and Robert C. Watson came on as the new director of the AAIP.[65] Under Watson's leadership, the museum began to place a greater emphasis on "mainstreaming" the presence of African American narratives within the Historic Area. The foundation's administrators supported this move, as they wanted the full interpretation staff to discuss the topic of slavery, independent of the interpreter's own identities.[66] This paralleled the development of new and more progressive programs, such as "Affairs of the Heart" and "Jumpin' the Broom," which looked at relationships amongst the enslaved community, as well as with white masters.[67] "Affairs of the Heart" specifically focused on the ways in which marriages amongst white masters affect enslaved communities, with a particular focus on interpersonal relationships in a slave holding society.[68] "Jumpin' the Broom" conversely followed the "trials of a young couple who have decided that they want to be husband and wife" and explored the

[64] Handler and Gable, 121.
[65] Krutko, 47.
[66] Krutko, 47.
[67] Krutko, 47.
[68] Bill Sullivan, "Love and Other Complications: Behind the Scenes for Affairs of the Heart," *Making History*, published March 7, 2016, http://makinghistorynow.com/2016/03/love-and-other-complications-behind-the-scenes-for-affairs-of-the-heart/.
It is interesting to note that the program was recently brought back in 2016 after a 15-year hiatus.

importance of relationships in enduring slavery.[69] With fresh and increasingly radical programming, CW's began to see shifts in visitor demographic, gradually attracting a more diverse audience.[70] Overall such programs sought to explore elements of life for the enslaved, while simultaneously avoiding more critical explorations of race.

In 1994 the AAIP department saw change once again, as Christy Coleman succeeded Watson as director.[71] In 1994, the AAIP consisted of ten full time staff members.[72] Despite the attempts of Ellis, Watson, and others to "mainstream" the interpretation of African Americans in CW's overarching narrative, when Coleman assumed the position of director it was still possible for tourists to visit the museum and never encounter slavery.[73] This can be attributed in part to the fact that AAIP programs were self-selecting, and many required visitors to purchase an additional ticket in order to attend.[74] Thus the topic of slavery was not included in a general admissions pass to CW, requiring the autonomous visitor to make the temporal and financial commitment to AAIP programming. Coleman emphasized that as a result in 1994 only an estimated 10% of CW visitors saw or took part in AAIP programs.[75] The failure to mainstream enslaved narratives did not go unnoticed by CW administration, as in April of the same year the Foundation submitted a grant proposal under the premise that it is "still possible for a number of our visitors to pass through the town without ever having the opportunity

[69] Christy S. Matthews, "Where Do We Go From Here? Researching and Interpreting the African-American Experience," *Historical Archeology* 31, no. 3 (1997): 112, accessed November 10, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25616552.
[70] Coleman, Twenty Years, 9.
[71] Krutko, 47.
[72] Krutko, 52.
[73] Krutko, 47.
[74] Krutko, 47.
[75] Krutko, 52.

to confront the reality of life for the enslaved."[76] This quote negates the work of the AAIP by arguing that the problem is that visitors do not have the opportunity to see slavery interpreted, rather than they are actively choosing to not attend programs on slavery. However, the grant proposal is still significant in that it highlights the limitation of a segregated methodology; that visitors can choose to only engage with one historical narrative.

In the fall of 1994 Christy Coleman decided the time had come for CW to tackle the horrors of slavery directly, and proposed a recreated slave auction. Coleman saw the estate sale as the next step forward in CW's attempts to accurately portray the institution of slavery, and the way it impacted lives of everyday Americans.[77] Coleman positioned the slave auction within the wider trajectory of African American history at CW, arguing:

> almost 15 years ago, there were some who weren't comfortable with incorporating the African-American experience in our telling of the funding of this country. Five years ago, there was similar discomfort with the reconstruction of the slave quarter at Carter's Grove. Today these stories and other African-American presentations fascinate and enlighten all our visitors...we have become a resource to other institutions that are taking their first steps in telling the African-American story. We must take our next step. I strongly believe this program is a step in the right direction.[78]

Coleman points to the ways that CW had become a leader in the museum field on the topic of slavery, and emphasized that CW's decisions often garner criticism because they are innovative. Coleman stressed that in order for individuals to become comfortable discussing slavery the conversation must start somewhere, and encouraged Williamsburg to serve as that space. Coleman pressed for CW to develop into a progressive site,

[76] Krutko, 53.
[77] Krutko, 47.
[78] Krutko, 48.

shifting away from its current position as a reactionary museum, and held the slave auction as a concrete way to do so.

Coleman was given the appropriate approval to move forward with the recreated slave auction in October of 1994, but many staff members were reluctant to participant in the auction themselves. Harvey Bakari, a character interpreter, believed that the act of standing on the auction block himself "would be too emotionally disturbing."[79] Even Eran Owen, an interpreter who did eventually choose to participate, noted that he was reluctant to take part, as "sure, it's history, but it's a very painful part of history – for anyone to go through, much less for me to portray someone linked to me personally."[80] Both men hit at the notion of the impact portraying enslaved narratives has on interpreters of color. This raises the question of what can a museum realistically ask an interpreter to portray. Robert Wilburn, the president of the Foundation at the time, argued that as a white man he could not tell black interpreters what they were allowed to interpret, as the interpreters themselves best knew their limits.[81] While Wilburn can be seen as giving agency to the AAIP, he is simultaneously placing the onus of presenting slavery on black interpreters, who then must balance the weight of such a task with the emotional impact of embodying the experiences of the enslaved.

Similarly, when the NAACP got wind of Coleman's decision they struggled to come to a united stance in relation to the auction.[82] King Salim Khalfani, the field activities coordinator for the Virginia branch of the NNACP, stood in firm opposition, arguing that CW was "trivializing the horror of slave auctions for public

[79] Krutko, 14.
[80] Krutko, 14.
[81] Krutko, 14.
[82] NAACP, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

entertainment."[83] In the days before the auction, members of the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference convened for a meeting and disagreed on how to respond formally to CW.[84] Some argued slavery best be left in the past, while others thought that a forty-five minute presentation would prove insufficient at fully representing the horror of slavery, and yet others argued that CW was merely looking to profit over the exploitation of slavery.[85] However, all agreed that plans for the auction should cease immediately, and urged President Wilburn to cancel the program.[86] President Wilburn refused, reiterating his belief that as a white man he was in no position to "tell our African American interpreters that they could *not* do the slave auction."[87] As Carson reflected back on the auction he noted that Wilburn's refusal to cancel the program was "his finest moment."[88] For Carson, Wilburn had the opportunity to say "hey, wait, enough is enough here" but intentionally chose not to in order to create the space for much needed, and more progressive, programming.[89] The NAACP conversely saw his response as negligent to the grievances felt by the modern black man on account of the legacy of slavery.[90] Despite the growing tension between the Foundation and the NAACP, Coleman proceeded with the planning of the auction, insisting that while CW had the opportunity to sidestep the topic of slavery, doing so would make them "no better than Disney."[91] For Coleman, the slave auction represented the opportunity to shift away

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[83] Krutko, 16.
[84] Krutko, 18.
[85] Krutko, 18.
[86] Krutko, 18.
[87] Krutko, 19.
[88] Carson, Personal Interview, 47:08-48:49.
[89] Carson, Personal Interview, 47:08-48:49.
[90] Krutko, 19.
[91] Krutko, 17.
Implied in this remark is the enduring tension and competition between Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Colonial Williamsburg. Busch Gardens, which opened in 1975, is an amusement park organized

from the concept of museums as reactionary. She argued that CW should no longer wait for Americans to be ready to talk about slavery; rather the museum should be the one leading the discussion.

On October 10th, the day for the recreated slave auction had come, and with it over 2,000 visitors.[92] CW titled the program, "To the Highest Bidder," and the brief description alluded to the content noting, "three tracts of land and slaves are up for auction."[93] As the program prepared to start Coleman was confronted by Jack Gravely – a political action chairman within the NAACP – who proclaimed, "this is not the proper place for this to occur!" to which Matthews questioned "why? This is a museum," and Gravely responded, "this is *not* a museum."[94] The exchange explored the position of the museum in public memory, and the conception that the serious scholarship CW is known for does not apply to the enslaved experience. While Coleman saw the slave auction as a way to challenge this connotation, Gravely's words illuminate the way the black community interacted with the museum. Historically CW had embodied a combination of the stages of trivialization and deflection, as well as symbolic annihilation, and those such as Gravely expected the auction to be little more than a continuation of these patterns.

After a brief introduction by Coleman, the program began. The first "slave" to be put up for auction was Sukey, a laundress portrayed by Bridgette Jackson.[95] The program then concluded with the sale of Daniel and Lucy - played by Eran Owens and Christy

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thematically to represent a variety of European countries and cultures. The two sites are often considered to be competing for the same visitors due to the geographic locations. When Coleman states that ignoring slavery would make CW "no better than Disney" she is also implying a comparison to Busch Gardens and the popularization of history at the site.

[92] For comparison, programs I attended over the summer of 2017 averaged 30-50 people.

[93] Krutko, 25.

[94] Carson, "Interpretive Planning," 30.

[95] Krutko, 26.

Coleman – an expectant enslaved couple. As a result of the auction the two are separated, sold to different masters.[96] The AAIP department intentionally curated each aspect of the sale to highlight a unique and horrific aspect of the enslaved experience. Through Sukey the audience was to learn about ways a free black man could purchase his wife's freedom. This becomes juxtaposed with the last scene, which highlighted the ways slavery separated families. The carefully chosen vignettes, which composed the slave auction, spoke to the humanity of the enslaved. They asked the viewer to understand the enslaved individuals as fully human: as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives. Following the program, Coleman returned to the stage, asking for a brief moment of silence in honor of "those who have gone on before us" so that we might "cherish and honor their memory" which allowed us to "be here today."[97] In an article published the following day, the New York Times recalled, "most of the tourists were as silent as if they were in church. Some wept. Three-quarters were white."[98] The comparison to a church is salient, as it highlights the ways in which the slave auction served as a sacred space, inviting visitors into a time of reflection.

The slave auction received a wide array of responses, highlighting the challenges with interpreting difficult histories. For some, such as Reverend Curtis Harris, the auction proved exactly what the NAACP had feared: inauthentic history produced to bring CW money.[99] Others however, including Gravely, were impressed by CW's ability to highlight the pain and suffering that accompanied slavery. Gravely acknowledged that he had enjoyed the program, saying, "I would be lying if I said I didn't come out with a

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[96] Krutko, 27.
[97] Krutko, 31.
[98] "Tears and Protest at Mock Slave Sale," *The New York Times* (October 11, 1994): http://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/11/us/tears-and-protest-at-mock-slave-sale.html.
[99] Krutko, 31.

different view…the presentation was passionate, moving and educational."[100] When asked by a local reporter why his view changed, Gravely stated simply, "pain had a face, indignity had a body, suffering had tears."[101] The power in the slave auction rested in the humanization of the enslaved experience. Guests were asked to see the black-bodied individuals as fully human – with desires and dreams of their own - which then made their treatment as property even more poignant and disturbing. Thus, while Eichstedt and Small would categorize the event as embodying the segregation of knowledge, it also must be understood for the innovative ways in which CW interwove the horrors of slavery with the humanity of the enslaved to produce a more complex understanding of the institution and the ways it impacted lives. Ultimately, the slave auction proves challenging to quantify within the methodology proposed by Eichstedt and Small, supporting a movement towards Emotional Humanity as a framework. Emotion was used as a way to convey the horrors of slavery, as individuals on both sides of the institution were portrayed as fully human. However, the auction was still centered on the white elite, and thus CW cannot yet be understood as fully embracing the humanity of the enslaved. The auction sought to explain the white economy thus maintaining the importance of exploring slavery as a way to better understand the central white narrative. Ultimately, the strength of the program resided in the focus on emotion, as it asked visitors to see the enslaved as fully human, thus making the practice of such auctions even harder to comprehend.

While the NAACP was quick to renounce Gravely's statement, and Gravely himself retracted his second stance for one in alignment of the NAACP, newspapers were

[100] Krutko, 31-32.
[101] Carson, "Interpretive Planning," 51.

sure to emphasize his "change of heart" at the hands of CW.[102] For some, CW did not do enough to show the horrors of slavery, as one black female audience member commented that "if they're going to show it they need to show the horrors of it."[103] Amidst the range of critiques, CW presented a united front in support of Coleman and the auction, and many looked forward to reproducing the event in the future.[104]

The slave auction can best be understood as both a turning point and as the culmination of CW's interpretation of black life. Under the direction of Coleman, the museum broached the topic of slavery in its most graphic and direct way yet. No longer was CW relying on wider national conversations on slavery to inform its interpretation, instead they were the one's leading the discussion. Carson recalls that "whippings and hangings" formed the "two self imposed limits as to what we would reenact," and that the slave auction was a way for CW to mark "how far we were willing to go."[105] However, the diverse array of responses highlighted both the complexities involved with interpreting slavery at the museum level, and called into question the place of the museum in society. CW never recreated the slave auction program, and in the years following the Foundation continued to produce programming centered around enslaved experiences but without the same fervor, suggesting a shift back to CW as a reactionary space. Ultimately, the slave auction can be read as a critical movement towards a focus on the humanity of the enslaved, while also limited in scope.

In 1999, CW revived its commitment to African American history with the yearlong guiding theme of *Enslaving Virginia.* In 1999 only 4% of CW's nearly one

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[102] Krutko, 32.
[103] Krutko, 33.
[104] Krutko, 33,
[105] Carson, Personal Interview, 48:49-49:46.

million annual visitors were African American, and the decision to adopt the theme of *Enslaving Virginia* can likely be seen, in some respects, as an attempt to increase visitor diversity.[106] *Enslaving Virginia* was promoted as an integrated museum experience, as over 400 front-line staff received training to interpret slavery, and were "prepared to portray a variety of scenarios, to talk about difficult and painful aspects and to celebrate the contributions of Africans in the making of America."[107] Carson recalls that the name was intentionally chosen as a way to emphasize that "slavery reworked the values of the white people as much as it reworked the lives of black people."[108] While the theme suggested a more inclusive interpretation, it sets up a comparison between enslaved Africans and men such as George Washington who are often celebrated for their contributions to the American Revolution. The framework traditionally applied to the Founding Fathers cannot simply be widened to include enslaved individuals, however, as it neglects the institution of slavery and assumes them to be willing participants in the process of nation building. Also, the narrative arc focused specifically on the contributions of individual African Americans – such as Lydia Broadnax and Eve – as opposed to enslaved individuals collectively. While this is important in moving away from a damaged centered approach and in recognizing the humanity and agency of the enslaved, it fails to convey the period in full, selecting instead a particular narrative that is compatible with the wider message of CW.

The year devoted to the narrative of the enslaved also highlighted the challenges of portraying slavery, as some black interpreters refused to represent enslaved individuals

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[106] Dan Eggen, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery," *Washington Post* (July 7, 1999): A1, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/local/daily/july99/williamsburg7.htm.
[107] Coleman, Twenty Years, 11.
[108] Carson, Personal Interview, 54:20-54:29.

as they argued it was both demeaning and too emotionally draining.[109] Similarly, in a personal interview, Richard Josey, a former character interpreter hired as part of *Enslaving Virginia,* recalled that the period also included a normalization of racism amongst the interpretive staff: "at this point in time, I saw racism. And not the overt sort of 'hey boy!' but what I like to call the normalization of racism in regular world, regular day, kind of work."[110] While CW displayed an external image of dedication to conversations on race and mastery of the topic, internally the museum struggled with how to engage with such a difficult and emotional topic.

Nevertheless, the increased presence of African American voices was a welcome change to some black visitors who were excited to see the historically white museum tackle a subject "often given short shrift."[111] Some black families, such as a couple from New Carrollton, Maryland, had previously been disappointed by the absence of slavery in CW, but after seeing the commitment to African American interpretation, chose to bring their three daughters, as well as a set of grandparents to the museum.[112]

In *Enslaving Virginia*, CW attempted to counteract the downside of segregated museum methodology by integrating the narrative of the enslaved throughout the museum, and thus making it much harder for visitors to opt out of discussions on slavery. Kate Lanier, a spokeswoman for CW emphasized that previously "the slavery perspective was in very small doses…it was separated. But this year it's everywhere."[113] Lanier's words suggest that CW has shifted from a segregated museum methodology to an

[109] Eggen, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery."
[110] Richard Josey, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, December 7, 2017, transcript.
[111] Eggen, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery."
[112] Eggen, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery."
[113] Eggen, "In Williamsburg, the Painful Reality of Slavery."

integrated one. Gone were the days of separate tours, as now CW was said to have embraced the complete, and multi-narrative, story of America.

In the 1990s, CW began to complicate its presentation of black history, moving into more complex and controversial interpretations. Under the leadership of Christy Coleman, the slave auction proved the pinnacle of CW's willingness to directly challenge the controversial topic of slavery in an innovative manner. While CW never repeated the slave auction, the Foundation did reaffirm its commitment to presenting enslaved narratives in 1999 when it adopted the guiding theme of *Enslaving Virginia.* In this period, CW not only continued to operate under a model of segregation, but also gradually began to looks towards integrated practices. Intertwined throughout this period, however, were the challenges that come with confronting difficult subjects directly. As CW adopted more progressive programming, African American interpreters themselves became increasingly apprehensive as to what they were comfortable presenting. Similarly, a wide array of audience reactions emphasizes the inability to create a universally agreed upon manner in which to interpreted slavery. As the 1990s came to a close, CW was experiencing its most widespread and integrated interpretation of African American history to date, on account of the work and leadership of many.

Conclusion

When CW introduced black history programming in the 1980s, they became the first major living history museum to broach the topic. However, in doing so CW took a highly segregated approach, as black history remained separated from white, or American history, in both content and interpretive locations. While programming sought to engage with the enslaved narrative, it was simultaneously limited. By focusing on the

development of culture in enslaved communities, the programming did not directly challenge the predominant emotion of patriotism, and thus the humanity of the enslaved was positioned only in relation to the planter elite. Thus, with patriotism at the center, CW could not show the emotional impact of slavery, resulting in superficial cultural programming.

Additionally, the separation of black and white programming perpetuated the ideological separation of African American history from American history in popular views. Visitors were required to attend special programs and tours to learn about the black experience, and while Carter's Grove offered a physical representation of life for enslaved individuals in the colonial period it was geographically removed from the rest of the museum. Thus, while these programs explored black history, they were dependent upon intentional commitments from visitors. Ultimately, CW utilized a series of implicit and explicit barriers throughout the period in order to avoid actually presenting slavery, despite a general trend towards the interpretation of black history.

The slave auction sought to engage with slavery in the most direct way yet by showing the physical buying and selling of human beings. In doing so, the program also highlighted the humanity of the enslaved – calling on themes of marriage and family - and incited an emotional response from the visitor. Thus, the slave auction can be read as the point at which CW most fully embodied Emotional Humanity. However, the presentation was also limited through a maintained focus on the planter elite. Thus, the humanity of the enslaved was positioned in relation to, and dependent on, the white planters, and could only be explored in areas that did not threaten or critique the slaveholders too harshly.

When taken in full the period of the 1980s and 1990s saw CW engage with slavery more directly, while simultaneously maintaining a focus on patriotism. As the 1990s came to a close CW remained a frontrunner when considering the ability of a museum to interpret slavery effectively. While a segregated methodology had proved enduring, the introduction of the interpretive theme *Enslaving Virginia* suggested that CW was moving towards a more integrated approach. However with the new millennium, CW was set to celebrate its 75th anniversary. In a commemorative history book published by CW, the foundation vowed to "celebrate this landmark with a nod to the past and a vision of the future, confident that Colonial Williamsburg will continue as a symbol of our nation's finest ideals for as long as those ideals endure."[114] Here CW reiterated its commitment to presenting a story of patriotism and American ideals. Slavery, however, proves inconsistent with this narrative, as the institution acts as the antithesis of democracy and freedom. By committing to highlighting American ideals, CW is simultaneously pledging to continue to exclude a true interpretation of slavery from its narrative arc.

[114] Theobald, 2.

"Maybe They'll Ask Better Questions, Other Than, 'Are You Hot in Those Clothes?'" Colonial Williamsburg and its Contemporaries in the 21st Century, 2000-2018

When considering CW as a museum, alongside its contemporaries today, CW is no longer a forerunner. In a personal interview in 2017, former interpreter and program developer Richard Josey reflected on the impact of the new millennium on the interpretation of slavery at CW. Josey recalled:

> So, so going into the early part of 2000, you know, when we hit that Y2K, 9/11 is happening and you know, it was really sort of a, a real funky sort of reactionary period for us. We were trying to figure out, OK, if people aren't traveling, and we are having to cut budgets, what is it that we do to still be relevant in the minds of people, all people, and also be helpful in people's, you know, just trying to live today.[1]

After a period of innovation in the 1980s and 1990s CW found itself interacting with a country rattled by the events of 9/11. Increased traveler anxiety contributed to surmounting financial instability, and as a result Carter's Grove was sold in 2006, after closings its doors in 2003. Concurrently, the rise of the Tea Party in the second half of the 2000s challenged the CW's interpretation of the enslaved. In a personal interview in 2017, Stephen Seals, who currently portrays the Nation Builder James Lafayette at Colonial Williamsburg, recalled "back in 2009 or 2010, when the Tea Party really started, we got a very, very particular type of guest here because this became Tea Party Mecca."[2] Despite CW's attempts at more progressive interpretations in the late 20th century, the fact that the museum was built around the celebration of the planter elite positioned CW as a logical gathering point for members of the Tea Party. While the Tea Party does not have a single uniform agenda, members harken to the Revolutionary Era as a period of greatness, and seek to operate our government as they believe the Founding Fathers intended. Thus, in the early 2000s, CW found itself trying to balance a more progressive

[1] Richard Josey, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, December 7, 2017, transcript, 11:33-13:04.
[2] Stephen Seals, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, July 28, 2017, transcript, 22:44-23:30.

view of interpretation, with surmounting financial instability and an increasingly diverse audience.

Many of the programs that emerged in the 21st century are limited in their breadth and scope, and perpetuate an ideological separation of black history from American history. The programs seem to fall along similar lines as those from the 1980s and 1990s as they focus on the culture and music of the enslaved, to provide space for discussions of enslaved experiences without fully engaging in the complex and painful portrayal of enslaved life. However, there do exist a series of programs that utilize emotional humanity as a means of exploring the impact of the institution of slavery. Thus, I contend that in the 21st century, CW continued to offer African American history in a segregated manner, perpetuating an ideological separation of African American history from American history.

Program Development

In evaluating programs that are able to push the normative limits of the interpretation of slavery at CW, it is important to consider the process of program development. When Carson arrived at CW, programs emerged from the Research and Development Department. New programs, coming out of R & D, would be tested, and if found effective, would then be passed to the Interpretation Department. Additionally, character interpreters would be assigned a historian, with whom they could work closely. Carson spoke to this pairing as he noted "it was then the historian's role to be in a sense the first critic to say, I think that works or no, that doesn't. All of this proceeded from my belief, and the belief of my colleagues, that actors - thespians - bring something to the

development of a character that cannot be found in the written record."[3] It was this relationship that "separates a talking head historian from an actor," allowing the experience to be more enjoyable and less academic.[4]

However, as a result of CW's recent financial insecurity, the process of program development has begun to shift. When Carson left the foundation twelve years ago, the process of program development had already begun to change. Historians were increasingly less involved in the aspect of program development. Carson emphasized that in "the last four years since Mitchell Reiss took over, there's been a drastic, an emptying out of research innovation."[5] As a result, "for the first time in 87, or however old Colonial Williamsburg is, [years], there is no research department left. There is no historian. There is a trainer – a woman who is a trained historian from William and Mary – but she is now the one and only trainer."[6] While Carson's words speak to much larger questions about the decreasing commitment of CW to academic scholarship, they also emphasize the ways in which program development has shifted. Once the joint effort of historians and interpreters alike, the process of development has now become the responsibility of interpreters themselves – many of whom are trained actors, not historians.

Many of the interpreters I spoke to over the summer reflected on the ways in which they have had to take program development upon themselves. Lewis emphasized "I did not come here to write or direct, I came here to act."[7] However, Lewis recounts how she gradually grew into a playwright and director on account of feeling as though

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[3] Cary Carson, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, February 9, 2018, transcript, 18:34-20:03.
[4] Carson, 21:12-21:13.
[5] Carson, 22:45-23:04.
[6] Carson, 1:10:07-1:11:15.
[7] Katrinah Lewis, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, August 10, 2017, transcript,30:00-30:02.

there was no one else to take on the responsibility. She reflected on how she would get to practice "and there was nobody to direct it, and I was like ok, ok, you come here, and you go there."[8] Similar to Lewis, Seals came to Williamsburg to act; after spending a number of years as a freelance actor, he was excited about the prospect of more permanent employment in theater. However, like Lewis, Seals also found himself in the world of programming development, as he applied for a job as Director of African American and Religious Programming when he noticed "there wasn't anybody management wise, kind of fighting that fight."[9] While this can in part be attributed to the shift in program development, as previously mentioned by Carson, the problems become exacerbated in the field of black programming. While Lewis and Seals can be seen as moving up in the foundation, their formal training in theater, as opposed to history, reflects a shift in African American program development.

While the experiences of Lewis, Seals and others, suggest a shift in the ways in which African American programs are developed today, their involvement does allow for the production of more provocative, and personal, pieces. Seals notes that the best programs are those that "have the African American voice," as previously he was upset as frequently the "person writing African American programming wasn't black."[10] Seals is not implying that one can only write to their lived experiences, but rather that the previous writer would falsely claim "oh yeah, I understand the black experience" which closed him off from feedback, or continued learning.[11] In his work as a program

[8] Lewis, 30:30-30:32.
[9] Stephen Seals, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, July 28, 2017, transcript, 8:31-9:30.
Richard Josey also experienced a similar trajectory while at CW, initially beginning as a character interpreter, before shifting into development.
[10] Seals, 48:05-51:58.
[11] Seals, 48:05-51:58.

developer, Seals chose to work in subversion. He aimed to connect the visitor to the topic of slavery in a way that "is emotional or visceral, that makes it so that they can't treat the subject matter as something that doesn't pertain to them, or that's not important to them."[12] Seals said the strategy emerged out of a frustration that while he "was given plenty of power to develop programs" he had "no power to compel people to do what I needed them to do," to be willing to engage in challenging conversations around the subject.[13] To some extent, Seals method of subversion can be linked to Emotional Humanity, as he seeks to show visitors the humanity of the enslaved as a way to begin a critique of the institution of slavery. Thus, subversion provided a way for Seals to work outside the system and incorporate emotion into his work. Here Seals hinted at the relationship between the visitor, interpreter, and program developer, and how he was able to develop programs that engaged with the topic of slavery, while appeasing visitors. However, Seals also noted the limitations of his position within the wider institution:

> Sometimes [CW has] a problem keeping what works, and then we also have a problem with getting rid of what doesn't work. Um, as a supervisor, I found that I often could not give the type of criticisms that I actually wanted because it would have meant that we would've had to have gotten rid of a good amount of our workforce, which they would not have allowed us to do. But I thought that there were a lot of interpreters here who either needed to have the fear of whatever deity they believe in and put into them, or they needed to go, because they more wanted to tell us what their job was as opposed to doing what we needed them to do to make this place the best place. Yeah. That was what I often as a supervisor, that's part of what I didn't like about being a supervisor was that I often felt like I could not truly enact improvements in my work environment.[14]

Seals' words are striking as they highlight the institutional limits present despite a developer's vision. Seals also speaks to institutional resistance to a more expansive

[12] Seals, 9:30-10:31.
[13] Seals, 9:30-10:31.
[14] Seals, 55:46-57:14.

interpretation of the enslaved experience, thus setting up a disconnect between special programming and the wider museum.

Ultimately, when considering the ways in which CW interacts with the topic of slavery today, the museum can be understood as most closely maintaining a segregated methodology. African American history is held as separate from American history, and programming remains auxiliary to the main narrative of the museum. While there exists a series of special programs that thoroughly explore the topic of slavery, with a focus on emotion, the impact of such programs has yet to be expanded to the rest of the museum. These programs can thus be taken as representative of the benefits of Emotional Humanity as an interpretive framework. Similarly, when compared with other contemporaneous sites, CW is no longer held as a frontrunner in the field of African American history. Thus, CW does not fully embody the segregated methodology proposed by Eichstedt and Small, but simultaneously does not yet met the criteria of an integrated museum, thus causing the evaluation of the museum to become blurred. Thus, the manner in which CW interacts with the topic of slavery perpetuates an ideological separation of African American history from American history.

Colonial Williamsburg Programing

In the last few years, CW has worked to more fully integrate the narrative of the enslaved into special programming. Seals noted that today "90 to 95 percent of [non-Nation Builder Programs] have the African American voice, and it's somewhere. And when I started [as Director of African American and Religious Programs] back in 2013, that was closer to about 10 to 20 percent."[15] The integration of the enslaved narrative into formal programming is significant as it enables guests to interact with slavery on a

[15] Seals, 48:05-51:58.

more frequent manner, which works to underline the importance of recognizing the contributions of the enslaved.

Over the summer of 2017 I was able to attend a number of special programs at CW that portray the enslaved experience. To me, many of these programs embodied the concept of Emotional Humanity. CW operates on a weekly schedule, and thus the majority of these programs were limited to a specific day within the broader sequence, occurring two or three times over the course of that day. The majority of programs were also included with a general admissions ticket to Colonial Williamsburg. Programs were selected using the "African American" and "Slavery" filters on the calendar of events, published by CW on their website. The following section explores my experience attending a variety of CW programs, as well as examines the ways in which the programs related to wider themes connected to the interpretation of slavery.

Journey to Redemption June 23, 2017

On a Friday morning in late June I attended *A Journey to Redemption*. Despite the light rain, the program was moderately well attended, with roughly thirty-six people in the audience, the majority of whom were white families with young children. The program, which is performed three times each Friday, at the Charlton Coffee House stage, lasted roughly half an hour.[16]

The piece followed six character interpreters – three black, three white – as they portrayed a variety of 18th century characters, as well as reflected on their 21st century experiences interpreting slavery. The first fifteen minutes of the production are

[16] The Charlton Coffee House stage is one of the two main outdoor stages in the historic area. It is located in a grove next to the Coffeehouse, near the Capital, at the end of Duke of Gloucester street. Due to its central locality, visitors often hear a program going on, and venture in, despite original plans or intentions. Many of the programs I attended this summer took place at the Charlton Stage.

positioned within the 18th century, and explore the institution of slavery as it impacted white and black Americans alike. Unlike many CW programs the narrative was not linear, but rather jumped from character to character as different themes such as the relationship between master and slave, the desire of an enslaved woman to have children, the economics of slave owning, and faith, are explored. Fifteen minutes into the performance the tone and period shift as the interpreters break out of character – a rarity at CW – and take on their 21st century identities. The next fifteen minutes are spent reflecting on the personal impact of portraying slavery. The cast emphasized the importance of friendship, trust, and grace in the process of interpreting slavery.

Through the half hour production, the cast aimed to "[underscore] that although slavery was more than 150 years ago, systematic oppression has lived on for generations – and America is still grappling with its effects."[17] The program, which was initially developed for Black History Month, seeks to meet the audience were they are, inviting them to think critically about slavery and its impact on our world today. While the program did little in terms of portraying the institution of slavery, it did explore the emotional impact of such work and emphasized that it is a subject that affects all Americans.

Journey to Redemption explored the personal challenges of interpreting slavery for modern black interpreters. Lewis, who portrays the enslaved women Lydia and Jenny as part of *Journey*, finds strength in calling to the spirits of the enslaved people. She aims to "tell their stories in a way that honors them, and that's honest about the oppression, about the system, about their contributions, but also to be honest about the humanity of

[17] Nicole Trifone, "Crossing the Invisible Line: Commitment to Portraying the African American Experience Goes Beyond Black History Month," *Trend and Tradition,* Winter 2017, 54.

the enslaved people."[18] Lewis is part of a wider set of African American interpreters at CW who draw on their individual heritage to gain strength for their interpretation. For many, "their heritage – their own connections to enslaved and free Africans and their descendants in the Americas – informs and also complicates their work."[19] It is this same personal connection that simultaneously makes interpreting slavery so challenging. Seals emphasized that he has had to learn to compartmentalize so that when he is at work he is able "to do whatever scenes I need to, and deal with people however I need to and I tend to be fine for the most part, but it does mean that when I go home I don't want to deal with it."[20] Seals then recounted an experience with a former girlfriend who had wanted to watch *12 Years a Slave* together, and the debacle that ensued. While lighthearted, Seals simultaneously touched upon the incredibly powerful ways that having to portray the enslaved – individuals not considered human in the eyes of their masters – affects one's sense of self, and how they interact with the world. Despite the personal impact of portraying the enslaved, interpreter Jamar Jones, of *Journey*, reiterated the importance of such work, as "giving Mingo a voice is part of what" keeps him going.[21]

The mental impact of interpreting slavery is not limited to those who portray the enslaved. As part of *Journey*, interpreter David Catanese reflected on how "speaking and acting towards the group he's come to regard as friends, in a way he doesn't personally agree with, weighs heavily on him."[22] While treating his friends and collogues as property proves uncomfortable, Catanese also recognized how he must use the historical

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[18] Lewis, 4:51-7:55.
[19] Ywone D. Edwards-Ingram, *The Art and Soul of African American Interpretation,* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2016), 9.
[20] Seals, 17:27-18:58.
[21] Backstory, "Crossing the Line," Exposure, March 1, 2017, https://backstory.exposure.co/crossing-the-line.
[22] Backstory, "Crossing the Line."

power allotted to white men, like himself, to help convey the story of the enslaved. He emphasized, "white people have a duty to tell the ugly side, as white men are positioned above everything else."[23] Slavery as a system did not impact only black individuals, but rather everyone living in the colonial world. The "18th century was integrated, it was not equal, but it was not segregated…there were certainly spaces where black people were not, there certainly were spaces where white people were not, but as a whole it was not a segregated situation."[24] Thus, it is ultimately the responsibility of black and white interpreters alike to engage in integrated depictions of slavery, despite the inherent power dynamics and discomfort, in order to present a fuller, and more realistic understanding of the past.

Actualizing such programming proves a challenge, though, due to the inherent discomfort the topic of slavery produces. The humanity, and the mental health of the interpreter – both black and white – creates a barrier to what CW can portray. One interpreter reflected on their colleague's experiences portraying a slaveholder, emphasizing the limits of what one is able to do and still be able to "go home and look at yourself in the mirror."[25] Through a first person interpretation of history CW asks interpreters to display the violence and ideologies emblematic of slavery on a daily basis to a variety of guests with different interest levels and lived experiences. As a result, many programs separate the enslaved experience from the master-enslaved relationship, in order to incorporate the African American narrative, without having to put both the white and black interpreter in degrading positions. However, this often means that the interpretation of slavery is positioned as the responsibility of the black interpreter. While

[23] Sarah Kolenbrander, Personal Notes, June 23, 2017.
[24] Lewis, 37:42-39:22.
[25] [Redacted Name], Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, August 7, 2017, transcript, 16:22-17:14.

all interpreters are trained "in some way shape or form" to address slavery, the onus of the task continues to be placed on black staff.[26] This in part links back to the notion of audience expectation, and the ways in which black history is segregated from American history. As black history is seen as separate it is thought to be the expertise of black interpreters, and thus visitors expect to learn about the enslaved from dark skinned individuals.

Journey seeks to provide the groundwork for reconciliation, by drawing connections from the past to the present. However, its pleas for visitors to see African American history as their own is not fully actualized in the rest of the historic area, as the inherent discomfort created in having to display the institution of slavery, along with interpreter mental health, work to maintain segregated programming.

Papa Said, Mama Said July 10, 2017

On the evening of July 10th, I attended *Papa Said, Mama Said*, an evening program that explores the tradition of oral storytelling amongst enslaved communities. As an evening program, offered twice a week at 7 pm and 8:30 pm, tickets are not included in general admission, but are available for an additional fee.[27]

The program is participatory, as audience members are asked to play a variety of characters to help the interpreters tell a series of stories. The program opened with an interpreter introducing the importance of storytelling amongst enslaved communities, and a series of three stories follow. At the conclusion of each story, the interpreters recounted the moral of the tale, highlighting the ways in which enslaved communities used such stories to teach their children how to navigate the institution of slavery. Morals ranged

[26] [Redacted Name], 13:24-13:58.
[27] I attended this program with participants from the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute, and thus I cannot speak to the audience demographics.

from the necessity of working together, the importance of responding with "yes sir" and "no sir," and the ways in which staying humble nourishes the soul.[28]

Papa Said, Mama Said remains a favorite amongst visitors, and in many ways resembled the cultural programming of the 1980s. CW advertised the program to visitors, writing, "in enslavement, African Americans continued to share cultural morals and values from generation to generation. Participate in this delightful, interactive program as instructive fables come to life, celebrating the significance of African oral tradition."[29] The program utilized audience participation as a way to engage visitors in the idea of slave resistance. While the program hinted at the conditions of slavery, it is grounded on themes of culture and resistance, causing it to closely resemble the Blasingame-inspired programs of the 1980s. *Papa Said, Mama Said* did not aim to highlight the conditions of the institution, but rather the means through which they were resisted. Thus, the program ultimately proved most effective in promoting the production of a distinctly African tradition amongst the conditions of enslavement, but did little to present the conditions that were being resisted.

CW advertised *Papa Said, Mama Said* as "celebrating the significance of African oral tradition." Historically, CW has been credited with emphasizing the importance of the written word, and the ability to cite everything presented in the museum within period sources. Thus, this statement raises the question of the importance of documentation in presenting African American narratives at CW. Through my oral interviews I explored this question of scholarship, and how you interpret the history of a people that did not leave forms of documentation as traditionally defined and accepted by western forms of

[28] Sarah Kolenbrander, Personal Notes, July 10, 2017.
[29] Colonial Williamsburg, "Papa Said, Mama Said," Calendar: Papa Said, Mama Said, accessed July 10, 2017, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/plan/calendar/papa-said-mama-said.

academia. Stephen Seals spoke to this divide as he recounted his experiences watching *Hamilton*:

> Like I don't cry. I cried, and I had to think about it like, why am I so emotional right now? And I understood, it didn't take very long because for the first time in my life, even working in Williamsburg for 9 years and being a 40 year old man, I had never connected to George Washington, or to colonial history, to American history. And the way that I did at that very moment, seeing this strong black man who looks like me portraying very earnestly my history - that made me really emotional. It makes me emotional right now just talking about it. But there's, there's one researcher here who does not like Hamilton, and they do not like Hamilton because they do not feel that it is actual history, that is teaching people the wrong history. When my point is, yeah, there are a lot of things that are not correct, but there are a lot of things that one, are, and two the essence of the story is there. And three, it's really about connecting us to our history. And it does that, in spades. So, for me sometimes, making it possible to educate people means that you have to make some compromises in the way in which you're interpreting, the history or the way in which you're telling the history, and it's just necessary.[30]

Here Seals not only highlighted the documentation debate, but also showed its importance and impact in portraying difficult history. For Seals, the flaws in the legitimacy of *Hamilton* pale in comparison to its ability to make him –a black man in America – feel connected to Colonial History. He implied that CW's commitment to documentation, as defined by western academia, prevents contemporary African Americans from being able to see themselves represented in the museum, despite increased black programming. His emotional response to *Hamilton,* simultaneously spoke to the sense of belonging that arises from seeing oneself represented. The decision to prioritize documentation over a more inclusive and representative narrative illuminated the power placed on historians in influencing the narratives CW tells.

This then raises the question of what should be defined as acceptable and reputable history. One interpreter argued, "when you talk about slavery you can say yes

[30] Seals, 38:44-40:28.

to every scenario because people are people. It happened somewhere."[31] While a document likely will not say that a master raped an enslaved woman, it happened, and thus the questions becomes when informed assumptions are able to be taken as fact. Lewis blurs the line even further as she reflected on how "the people here talk to me…I ask them for guidance, and they guide me. The voices come. That has value."[32] She reflected on her own experiences speaking to the spirits of the enslaved peoples of Williamsburg as she asked them for guidance. She questioned the emphasis on documentation, as it is the personal experience of communication with the spirits that informs her interpretation. She pushed back on the weight placed on scholarship, claiming while:

> we can take what we do know of the time, and the things that are documented, and be dogeared at finding that documentation, and hang our, hang our hats on the documentation. But also understand the whole outfit is not made by the hat that you hung on that hook. So we have to, we have to flesh it out and fill it out; we have to give value to a Western academia, and the systems that have been created there. But we also have to give value to the oral tradition, to the songs that are still sung in the black church today, that go all the way back.[33]

Lewis then returned to her own experiences interacting with the spirit of Lydia Broadnax, one of the enslaved individuals whom she portrays. She recalled how she will ask Lydia what she thinks of different interpretation elements or facts, and that Lydia will tell her in "overt and subtle ways, and I trust that. That there is integrity in that, as much as there is integrity in the fact I have her manumission papers. That there's space for both, and you have to make space for both."[34] This idea of one's intrapersonal connection with the enslaved extends past the idea of documentation, connecting to a

[31] [Redacted Name], 24:09-24:16.
[32] Lewis, 42:46-46:18.
[33] Lewis, 42:46-46:18.
[34] Lewis, 42:46-46:18.

wider theme of the work of interpreting enslaved history. In allowing Lydia, and others, to guide her interpretation, Lewis prioritized emotion in order to emphasize the humanity of the women she portrays.

Papa Said, Mama Said deviates from traditional CW programming through its emphasis on oral tradition. The question of the place of documentation in telling narratives of the enslaved remains prominent, and *Papa Said, Mama Said* offered an opportunity to engage with non-written sources in a way that is considered scholarly and meaningful. Simultaneously, however, the piece appeared to echo the style of programming popular in the 1980s, as it focuses on culture as a means of resistance, without fully exploring the institution of slavery itself. Thus, while the program highlights ways CW can expand its definition of academic documentation, it is simultaneously limited in its message.

A Friday Night Gathering July 21, 2017

A Friday Night Gathering extended the theme of cultural programming by allowing visitors the opportunity to "join the Randolph's people as they gather to sing, dance, and make merriment."[35] With a capacity for 60 guests, my friend and I were two of seven when we attended the program in late July. The interpreters opened the program by stating, "when the cats are away, the mice will play."[36] As explored in the introduction, this program not only perpetuated the 1980s style programming, but also seemed to exist in an inbetween betwixt the stages of segregation and trivialization. While the program intended to show that music and dancing were not just about having fun but also helped convey important information, the effect is lost somewhere between

[35] Colonial Williamsburg, "A Friday Night Gathering," Calendar: A Friday Night Gathering, accessed July 21, 2017, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/plan/calendar/a-friday-night-gathering.
[36] Sarah Kolenbrander, Personal Notes, July 21, 2017.

the rhythmic clapping and participatory dance circle. As my friend and I reflected on the program afterwards, she noted that the program felt almost demeaning to the interpreters, as if they were asked to play dumb for the enjoyment of white visitors.[37] Apprehension towards the program existed amongst those involved, as one of the interpreters who frequently performs in it noted that it was not as well done as she would have hoped.[38]

Considered in conjunction with *Papa Said, Mama Said*, both programs enabled visitors to feel as though they were engaging with the topic of slavery, while focusing on the cultural aspects of enslavement. The programs, which focused specifically on slavery, also perpetuated the guiding methodology of segregation, which was prominent in the 80s. Both programs featured only black interpreters, and thus continue to suggest that interpreting black history is the work of black employees. Lewis supported this idea as she noted that CW's legacy at times hinders its ability to be innovative when it comes to interpreting slavery. Lewis holds that many employees see things as being "done in a certain way;" that we "tell this story in this way" because we tried "to do this x amount of years ago and it was met in this way so we are not going there again."[39] Here Lewis likely alluded to the Estate Auction held in 1994, which received a wide array of heightened responses, to suggest that in some respects CW has chosen more reserved programming in order to avoid unwanted commotion or attention. However, Lewis countered by noting that "we are a different people than we were 30 years ago, or 20 years ago or 10 years ago, or 5 years ago" and thus it is time interpretation methods change.[40] In constant tension with visitor expectations, Lewis sees CW as maintaining

[37] Kolenbrander, Personal Notes, July 21, 2017.
[38] Kolenbrander, Personal Notes, July 21, 2017.
[39] Lewis, 54:01-54:25.
[40] Lewis, 54:34-54:56.

1980's style programming as a way to ensure visitor stability. Former Vice President of the Historic Area, Ted Maris-Wolf echoed this sentiment. He noted that CW operates as a nonprofit, and thus as it relies on ticket sales to stay open, must produce programs that "resonate with the public," which translates to meeting them where they are.[41] Instead of choosing to be a leader, pushing people to think critically about the ways in which slavery impacts our world, Lewis sees CW as following a previously laid out trajectory. Thus, it follows that programming such as a *Friday Night Gathering* is produced, and while it explores the African American experience, is ultimately limited in its presentations.

Faith, Hope, and Love July 13, 2017

Faith, Hope, and Love is promoted as "an uplifting story places you in the heart of the enslaved community. How much will Johnny and Dolly risk to be together? To be free? How far will their community go to help them?"[42] The program is offered Thursdays at Charlton stage. Despite the 103° heat, I was joined by roughly forty people, all of whom were white presenting, and the majority of whom could be categorized as either a young family or older couple.

The Baptist Preacher Gowan Pamphlet –played by James Ingram Jr - narrated the program, introducing the situation of the young enslaved couple: Johnny and Dolly. Over the course of the program, Johnny encouraged Dolly to run away with him; a scene that allowed the audience to learn more about the potential risks and benefits of attempting to run away. In the subsequent scene Pamphlet married Johnny and Dolly, and they jumped the broom while "swing low sweet chariot" played in the background.

[41] Ted Maris-Wolf, Meeting with Sarah Kolenbrander, July 20, 2017.
[42] Colonial Williamsburg, "Faith, Hope, and Love," Calendar: Faith, Hope, and Love, accessed July 13, 2017, https://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/plan/calendar/faith-hope-and-love.

Suddenly however, the wedding is interrupted – a reminder that nothing is sacred within the institution of slavery – as the young couple is warned that the slave patrol is coming, and that if they hope to run they best leave now. The play then ended as Johnny and Dolly fled, and the slave patrol entered wielding guns. The fate of Johnny and Dolly is left unknown – an ode to the uneasiness created by the institution of slavery - and the anxiety caused by the patrol is palpable amongst audience members.

While *Faith, Hope, and Love* is striking in its ability to convey the constant oppressive presence of slavery, Seals warned against inserting underdeveloped white characters – in the role of the slave patrol - into a piece for the sake of integration. Seals shared the following words about the piece:

> We do a scene here that, I call it the black love scene, I love it, but uh, the thing that bothered me about it was that the "law" would come in - which are basically the only white people in the show - would come with their guns to break up this slave meeting. My notes on that, as product development manager was, you know, I don't have an issue with them coming in to break it up in the manner in which they're breaking it up, the problem I have is that you are making them caricatures, and I understand that you don't want to give them, you don't want to give the guest reasons to think that these guys are right. I get that. But if the guests don't see these people as human, if they don't see them as actual people, they will either tune out or they will go, this is not true, or they just won't care.[43]

Discussions around the importance of humanization in regards to slavery often look to those who were enslaved. Seals pointed to the necessity of showing the white men maintaining the institution as fully human, as doing so is critical to a complex understanding. In not considering those who upheld slavery as equally human, guests – and Americans alike – are able to see slaveholders and patrolmen as an "other;" immoral men benefitting from a system that they themselves could never think of participating in.

[43] Seals, 29:09-31:14.

Seals emphasized that such behavior is unproductive, and fails to help us begin to process the wrongs of slavery as a nation.

The importance of presenting a fully humanized view of those involved in the institution of slavery proved critical when considering integrated programming. The integration of multiple narratives is not only crucial in helping guests understand Williamsburg as a colonial city, but also helps humanize the lives of those involved in the institution. However, the balance of integration and humanization has also proven incredibly fraught, as it often dissolves to stereotypical depictions of both black and white individuals. Carson reflected on how at times attempts to incorporate metanarratives led to an introduction of stereotypes. He remembered one program in particular which looked at the relationship between a young female mistress and her slave, noting "it played, I felt much too much to the stereotype we often hear voiced by an uneasy public that many slave owners love their servants, they love them like they're children."[44] Carson explained that while there likely were slaveholders who felt this way, overall the scene validated a misconception. Thus, while the scene attempted to highlight the interconnectedness of white and black individuals, it ultimately did so in a way that minimized the black experience by playing to stereotypes. This arguably offers a case against integration, as the pieces may have been stronger had they focused solely on the emotion of the enslaved as opposed to incorporating white characters for the main purpose of a more inclusive program.

Overall, while *Faith, Hope, and Love,* and similar programs, seek to portray an integrated narrative, the result evoked stereotypical presentations. Thus, the program offers proof of why Emotional Humanity provides a more nuanced understanding for

[44] Carson, 49:45-52:22.

framing the interpretation of slavery. While integration is vital, it should not be the ultimate goal, as it is also critical that guests see all those involved in the institution of slavery as fully human. *Faith, Hope, and Love* reiterates the importance of portraying the humanity of all those involved in the institution, both black and white, as doing so allowed the guest to better understand their position and actions. Thus, while *Faith, Hope, and Love* effectively, and emotionally, conveyed the story of an enslaved couple hoping to find freedom through runaway, it fell short in creating a fuller understanding of the period, and the ways white and black individuals reacted in response to each other, and the institution of slavery.

A Gathering of Hair

One piece however does fully reflect a humanized portrayal of the enslaved – embodying Emotional Humanity - but does so at the cost of an integrated narrative. In her interview, Lewis reflected on a piece she co-developed, titled *Gathering of Hair*, which seeks to show the humanity of the enslaved. Lewis beautifully summarized the power of such programming, stating:

> I'm not portraying slaves, I'm portraying human beings and the most profound experiences that I've had portraying these people is when I'm able to interact with our guests that come here and get them to have that insight however that comes. If it's through - two other women and I've written a piece called "Gathering of Hair" which is, really its kind of a romantic comedy. It's funny. It's these women that are getting together and they're doing each other's hair. You're talking about their men, and there's jokes galore, and some of the jokes are a little raunchy. And yes slavery is there, it's in the room, the oppression is in the room. But the piece is about these human beings, and having people having people have that shift. It makes, it makes thinking about the period of 400 years where slavery was legal and widespread in our country. It makes it even that much more horrifying but it also honors the human beings that were.[45]

[45] Lewis, 4:51-7:55.

Lewis makes note of a variety of important factors when it comes to recognizing the humanity of the enslaved, and helping guests do the same. Through a focus on hair, the piece allows the audience to see the women as fully human – learning about their lives and the men they love. Yet, as Lewis notes, slavery is ever present; "the free black woman cannot see her enslaved beau unless his master gives permission, and one of the enslaved women is late to meet her friends because her request for a pass turns into a prolonged encounter with her master" - and its intermingling with a range of human emotions causes it to become even more potent.[46] The presence of slavery, joined with a more complete understanding of the women, models a humanized interpretation of the enslaved.

Such a presentation allowed CW to work within the tension created by the conflicting desire to highlight the oppressive nature of the institute of slavery, while also moving towards a more desired-centered understanding of blackness. Seals links to this tension, as he found:

> there are too many people who want to show the evils of slavery without understanding that for me, as a black men, I want to understand not what my people went through, but how they survived it. I want to know where their hope was. I want to know where their families were. I want to know who they were. Sure, I care about what they had to endure. Sure, I care about the conditions which they were made to be put under, but that's not what fuels me. What fuels me is understanding how they thrived despite that.[47]

By failing to show the humanity, slavery is reduced to a series of oppressive acts done to a submissive people. Seals emphasized the importance of not centering violence, but rather positioning slavery as the beginning of a legacy of resistance. Ultimately, for Seals and Josey alike, it is not about "what masters did to slaves" but rather "the agency of

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[46] Trifone, "Invisible Line," 56.
[47] Seals, 32:56-34:18.

black people" in resisting such conditions that is critical to portray.[48] It is important to note, that resistance narratives are not equivalent to cultural programs. Rather they seek to present enslaved individuals as fully human, and thus as taking concrete steps in responding to their condition; which included but can not be limited to creating a unique culture.

While Seals spoke to the importance of humanizing the enslaved when considering the African American visitor, Lewis extended the power of such a presentation to the white visitors. Lewis recounted an experience in which she was portraying Lydia Broadnax, and sat on the Palace Green with a young, white, mother who was watching her children play. She recalled:

> And I remember we sat there, and she really listened to Lydia, and we watched her kids play, and we got real quiet and both of us just, just started crying, and it was just like there was something that we were understanding about the horror of that situation, and it was very profound and we didn't talk a lot about it, we just sat, and shed some tears. And it was beautiful and sad, and then you know we got back, back to history and I gave her some more facts and then we went on about out business.[49]

Lewis chose the concept of motherhood as a way to connect with white audiences. The historical record makes no mention of Broadnax having children herself, a decision which Lewis has attributed to Broadnax's husband not wanting to bring an enslaved child into the world, as the status of a child stems from that of the mother.[50] Lewis drew on Lydia's likely desire to have children, in order to generate a sense of comparison with the white mother by creating a shared bond, thus illuminating Lydia's humanity. Slavery,

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[48] Josey, 1:02:01-1:03:10.
[49] Lewis, 12:55-15:21.
[50] Lewis, 12:55-15:21.
The term "husband" is used loosely here as enslaved individuals could not legally marry in colonial Virginia and thus there is no written record of Lydia's marital status While theories exist, and Lydia is commonly linked to Ben, a second enslaved individual owned by George Wythe, the legitimacy of this cannot be confirmed.

and the conditions it created, are present in the conversation, as it determines Lydia's husband's dissuasion from having kids, but the interaction itself is grounded in humanity. Ultimately, the two women were able to bridge the divide created by race and different lived experiences to find a sense of togetherness and unity.

The interpretive experiences of Lewis, Seals, Josey, and others, highlight the importance of emphasizing the humanity of the enslaved, and subsequently of incorporating black and white narratives. While critical for the ways in which it displays the enslaved, a *Gathering of Hair* subsequently perpetuates a segregated methodology, as while white masters are mentioned, they are absent from the play itself, and thus the piece remains focused on black women.[51]

Through a variety of special programs CW is able to engage with the topic of slavery. Eichstedt and Small hold "Relative Incorporation" as the ultimate goal for a museum presenting slavery. However, the series of special CW programs emphasize the need for a focus on the humanity of the enslaved, as integration alone does not ensure a complete understanding. While some programs, such as *Gathering of Hair* succeed in presenting the enslaved as fully human, and thus offering critiques of the institution of slavery, other programs such as *Papa Said, Mama Said,* offer more limited understandings. As programming at CW is done on a weekly rotation, the day you visit CW strictly determines what you will see, and thus how guests interact with the topic of slavery. Ultimately while each program itself is limited in its scope, as a whole they seem to signal a shift in CW's presentation to a more humanized narrative.

[51] A Gathering of Hair was not currently running while I was at CW, and thus I was unable to see the program myself.

Slavery in the Historic Area

Traveling through the Historic Area today, the narrative of the enslaved is still noticeably absent in many of the buildings and trade shops that are interpreted throughout the museum. This appears to suggest a disconnect between the historic area and special programming. The emerging focus on the humanity of the enslaved, as found in the special programs, is absent from the rest of the museum. While CW has move towards a more integrated approach, the overall lack of incorporation of the enslaved narrative remains a weakness of the museum. One interpreter noted:

> I think doing better about integrating it into all the sites is something we need to work on as a museum. We've done better in the last few years don't get me wrong. We've gone away from "go to Great Hopes, talk about slavery; come to town, don't." We've gotten away from that which is good, but I think that's something as an institution we need to work on.[52]

Although the topic is increasingly present in the historic area, sites such as Great Hopes Plantation and the Payton Randolph House remained the primary sites for the interpretation of slavery. Major sites such as the Palace and Capital, along with many of the trade shops, leave the subject untouched. Thus in many cases a guest has to intentionally choose to go to a special performance, at one of the two main stages in the historic area, in order to learn more about slavery.

Great Hopes Plantation

The Great Hopes Plantation builds off the notion of the separation of black and white history. The 2014 Official Visitors Guides to Colonial Williamsburg tells guests that Great Hopes Plantation "re-created on the edge of the Historic Area along the pathway from the Visitors Center" represents "the broader experience of life in the Tidewater" as on "plantations such as Great Hopes, farmers and slaves - and occasionally

[52] [Redacted Name],10:06-10:33.

Indians - blended together European, African, and Native cultures to form a distinctly "American" way of life."[53] After Carter's Grove closed to the public in 2003, Great Hopes was positioned as the place visitors could go to learn about slavery. Cary Carson spoke to the benefits of this transition as he mused when "Colonial Williamsburg eventually sold Carter's Grove altogether, we the historians and interpreters were delighted to move the quarter into town to Great Hopes. So that coming from the visitors center, you could believe you were still in the countryside."[54] While much closer to the central historic district, which likely results in higher visitation than Carter's Grove, Great Hopes does maintains the theme of geographical separation as it is located off of the main path. By placing the recreated plantation site on the path between the Visitor Center and Historic Area, Great Hopes is positioned as little more than a brief pause on the way to the main attraction. It is under that logic that Great Hopes' closure in 2016 follows, as faced with surmounting financial instability CW chose to make Great Hopes a non-interpretive site, replacing interpreters with placards. The agricultural aspects of Great Hopes have been moved to the Prentis Field, closer to the center of town, but farming, as opposed to slavery, proves the focus of the site. Thus, the story of Great Hopes embodies a disconnect in the interpretation of slavery, as its geographic location initially shows an attempt at integration, but the removal of staff from the site suggests a movement away from such methods. Thus, when considering Great Hopes, CW does not appear to be working towards an integrated approach with the same fervor as in special programming.

Randolph House Tour

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[53] Colonial Williamsburg, *Colonial Williamsburg The Official Guide* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2014), 85.
[54] Carson, 1:07:09-1:08:16.

The Randolph House serves as the main site for the interpretation of the enslaved within the Historic area, and is increasingly critical in the wake of the removal of staffing from Great Hopes. As guests move through the house with an interpreter, they are frequently interrupted by Eve, portrayed by Hope Wright, who is one of the enslaved peoples owned by the Randolphs. Wright has been portraying Eve for the last twelve years, and has worked at the Randolph in some capacity since 1999.[55] Eve provides an opportunity to learn about domestic slavery, and to deconstruct the assumption that domestic slavery was preferable to field work.

The topic of slavery is not left solely to Eve, as interpreters of the Randolph are also expected to broach the topic. Josey reflected on a time in which he shadowed a young white female interpreter on a tour of the Randolph. Josey sensed a lack of respect amongst the guests on account of her identity, independent of the quality of her information, and thus emphasized that the experience "shows how much skin complexion, or identity, plays in the minds of our visitors as to whether they will receive what it is you're saying or not, or if they see you as being an authority or not."[56] Even spaces such as the Randolph House, which employ third person interpretation strategies, are expected to be the domain of black interpreters.

In considering presentations of slavery in both the Historic Area and in special programming, CW seems to exist in an in between. While special programming reflects a shift towards Emotional Humanity, the interpretation of the historic area itself remains

[55] Hope Wright, "Eve" (interpretation, Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute, Williamsburg, VA, July 24, 2017).
[56] Josey, 22:14-23:26.

centered on the founding fathers, creating little room for a thorough understanding of slavery.

Cross Comparative Study

Once considered a forerunner in the interpretation of slavery, today CW is considered more restrained in their approach as compared to similar sites. As part of my research, I traveled to a variety of public history sites, to evaluate their interpretation of slavery, along the lines of Emotional Humanity, as compared to CW. The museums represented a spectrum of modes for interpreting slavery, and did so with varying levels of emphasis on humanity. While at places like Highland slavery proved auxiliary, other sites such as Mount Vernon offer a more comprehensive experience when compared with CW. Although these sites are constructed around singular homes of specific slave holding Founding Fathers, as opposed to composite towns like CW, the comparison still proves worthwhile.

James Monroe's Highland

James Monroe's Highland is located in Charlottesville, Virginia.[57] House tours are offered on the hour, and allow guests the chance to learn more about "the fascinating life of the tireless public servant who fought and bled in the American Revolution…and issued our first hemisphere-wide foreign policy statement: the Monroe Doctrine."[58] Such a telling leaves little room for the enslaved experience, and it follows that the forty-minute house tour made but two mentions of slavery. However, guests who visit on Friday or Saturday from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm from April to October, have the opportunity to participate in the "Slavery at Highland" program. This program features a table with a

[57] Appendix 3, Fig: 1-4.
[58] "Tours and Tickets," James Monroe's Highland, accessed February 12, 2018. http://highland.org/plan-your-visit/tours-and-tickets/.

series of document facsimiles that explore the life of the enslaved at Highland. An elderly white woman oversaw the table and was there to answer any questions that might arise for visitors. Highland exists as a mix between symbolic annihilation and segregated knowledge. For the tourist who visits between Sunday and Thursday, slavery is conspicuously absent. While the "Slavery at Highland" program does exist, allowing insight into the lives of the enslaved, the program is extremely limited and separated from the main narrative of Highland. By centering the narrative of Monroe, the humanity of the enslaved is left unexplored, and guests are not asked to critique the system as it pertained to life at Highland. It should be noted, however, that Highland is comparatively a small museum, and thus it lacks the resources for more expansive interpretation.

James Madison's Montpelier

James Madison's Montpelier, located roughly 30 miles outside of Charlottesville, reflects a movement towards more expansive understanding of slavery, yet maintains a segregated methodology.[59] The main house tour focuses on the life and work of James Madison, making brief mentions to Paul Jennings – Madison's personal enslaved valet – but extending the discussion of slavery little beyond that. Included with a general admissions ticket is the Enslaved Communities Tour, an optional tour that seeks to provide information on the enslaved peoples of Montpelier. As a separate tour, Montpelier embodies the idea of a segregated methodology, as guests are able to learn about slavery but must be personally motivated to do so. However, on June 5th, 2017 Montpelier debuted a new exhibit entitled "The Mere Distinction of Colour," which:

[59] Appendix 3: Fig. 5-6.

> Inspired by a Madison the exhibition builds on 17 years of archaeological excavation, documentary research, and oral history and cultural exploration. Visitors will move through the cellars of the main house to six reconstructed slave dwellings and work buildings in the South Yard. This unique experience examines the institution of slavery in the Founding Era, celebrates the humanity of Montpelier's enslaved people, and confronts the legacies of slavery in today's world.[60]

Montpelier sees the exhibit as a way to directly confront the characteristics of Madison as both the writer of the Constitution, and a slaveholder. As a whole the exhibit seeks to explore the humanity of the enslaved in isolation from Madison, and thus while it aims to humanize the enslaved at Montpelier, the interpretation remains supplementary to the central narrative of the museum. Despite this limitation, the exhibit has been met with success. In a review of the exhibit, Kyle Walcott emphasized "it should be understood that this will be an exhibit every African-American must visit in order to become one with our own identity."[61] This is a significant statement, especially when juxtaposed with consistently low visitation rates of Black Americans to CW, and the ever-present rhetoric of CW as not having anything for African Americans. Thus, while the legacy of a segregated methodology remains and manifests itself in a limited presentation of enslaved humanity, Montpelier is simultaneously taking important and progressive steps towards more fully incorporating the narrative of the enslave people at Montpelier.

Thomas Jefferson's Monticello

Thomas Jefferson has become representative of the tension between liberty and slavery; penning the Declaration of Independence, while simultaneously owning and

[60] "A More Complete Americans Story," James Madison's Montpellier, accessed February 12, 2018. https://www.montpelier.org/learn/a-more-complete-american-story.
[61] Kyle Walcott, "How the Mere Distinction of Colour Can Change Your View of Slavery," accessed February 12, 2018. https://blavity.com/how-the-mere-distinction-of-colour-can-change-your-view-of-slavery.

benefitting from enslaved labor.[62] National interest in the supposed love affair [read as rape] of Sally Hemings has prompted visitor interest in slavery at Monticello, Jefferson's estate. In recent years Monticello has built off this momentum, and now offers "the Hemings Family Tour" as an alternative to the traditional house tour. While at Monticello I was able to participate in both tours, and the differences between the two were striking. On my traditional house tour, all sixteen guests were white presenting – many of whom where elderly – and the tour focused exclusively on the life of Thomas Jefferson. The Hemings Family Tour conversely featured an extremely diverse group – with roughly half the group presenting as African American. The group also had a low mean age, with most guests appearing between twenty and thirty-five. While the focus of the tour was on the enslaved individuals, the information could be extrapolated to allow the visitor to learn more about Jefferson. When asked why he had chosen to take the tour, one of the young white men on my tour noted that he believed it was "honorable of a place like Monticello to highlight parts of its less honorable past." For him, and many other visitors, the tour signaled that Monticello seeks to understand the complexities of Jefferson as a human, which thus means understanding him as a slaveholder, and not just as a Founding Father.

Through the Hemings Family Tour, Monticello pushed the established boundaries of the interpretation of slavery. The tour entered through the service entrance, immediately connecting the guests to the enslaved as opposed to Jefferson. When considering Monticello as a whole though, barriers do arise, as visitors must choose to partake in the Hemings family tour as opposed to the general tour. A financial barrier exists as well, as during the main season of March to October a traditional ticket costs

[62] Appendix 3: Fig. 7-9.

$29, while the Hemings Family Tour costs $30. The Hemings family tour also does not offer discounted senior or child rates. Thus while seemingly small, the financial barrier does prove significant, and could impact visitation patterns. Thus, while the tour engaged in more meaningful discussions of slavery, and thus Jefferson, guests are still able to visit Monticello and avoid the subject.[63]

George Washington's Mount Vernon

Compared to similar sites, Mount Vernon proves a frontrunner in its interpretation of slavery.[64] Located outside of Washington D.C. in Alexandria, Virginia, Mount Vernon is home to our nation's first president. While the house tour itself feels less like a tour and more like a zoo - as guests are quickly moved from room to room, meeting a variety of interpreters along the way who recite a scripted blurb on loop – the site is still able to engage with slavery in a meaningful and integrated manner. For an additional $4 guests can take part in a walking tour that explores the life of the enslaved. The tour visits various locations, and is centered on the personal narratives of Washington's enslaved people.[65]

Mount Vernon's strength, however, is revealed in the museum exhibit *Lives Bound Together*. As the visitor enters the exhibit, they are met with the following statement, "the story of slavery at Mount Vernon is complex and painful. But it is also a story of strength, humanity, and hope." Through *Lives Bound Together*, Mount Vernon

[63] For the sake of consciousness, I have only explored the house tour aspect of Monticello. As part of my experience I also participated in the "Slavery at Monticello Tour," which was free with admission and was a walking tour of Mulberry Row, where the enslaved individuals lived. The tour was extremely well attended, with upwards of 100 people, and included a thorough exploration of slavery. Thus, operating under the assumption that guests are to go on the general house tour and the slavery at Monticello tour, one would leave with a rather comprehensive overview of life at Monticello. However, in its construction the "Slavery at Monticello tour" perpetuates a segregated methodology.

[64] Appendix 3, Fig. 10.

[65] On account of the extreme heat and humidity on the day of my tour, I ended up doing more sitting than walking, in order to avoid fainting, and thus cannot fully speak to the content of the program.

seeks to both explore the institution of slavery as it occurred at Mount Vernon, while also providing narratives of resistance. They trod the careful balance of presenting agency and oppression, and the result is an incredibly moving and provocative exhibit that is not afraid to critique Washington. The exhibit's strength pulls from its ability to intertwine the story of Washington with that of the enslaved. In the forward to the exhibit's companion book, Barbara Lucas writes:

> careful reading of Washington's papers reveals the extent to which his and his family's lives were intimately intertwined with those of the enslaved people who surrounded them and labored for them – operating the plantation's economic enterprises, supporting the household's legendary hospitality, and, to a large degree, underpinning Washington's influential public service.[66]

Lucas's words emphasize the ways in which understanding the lives of the enslaved are integral to understanding Washington, just as understanding Washington is integral to understanding the enslaved. The museum uses the lives and work of the enslaved to emphasize different aspects of Mount Vernon. Christopher Sheels, Washington's enslaved valet, is used to learn about how Washington ate, while Penny is used to explore enslaved childhood.[67] Jefferson scholar, Annette Gordon-Reed summarized the magnitude of the exhibit, as "the enslaved people who lived there – what they did, how their lives unfolded, how they attempted to order their lives, and what actions the Washingtons took to control their lives – must be an integral part of any story that is told about this place," and the exhibit seeks to do that.[68] Through *Lives Bound Together*, Mount Vernon allowed the guests to not only learn about slavery, but to do so in a

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[66] Barbara B. Lucas, "Forward," in *Lives Bound Together: Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon,* edited by Susan P. Schoelwer, (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 2016) IX.
[67] *Lives Bound Together: Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon,* edited by Susan P. Schoelwer, (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 2016) 35, 52
[68] Annette Gordon-Reed, "Introduction," in *Lives Bound Together: Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon,* edited by Susan P. Schoelwer, (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 2016) XVII.

manner that is inseparable from George Washington, thus asserting that the black experience is critical in understanding American history.

Thus, *Lives Bound Together* exists as an example of Emotional Humanity. Through the exhibit visitors understand George Washington through his enslaved, which then allows them to learn about daily life for the Washington's, envision George Washington as a slaveholder, and learn about the specific individuals who were enslaved at Mount Vernon. The three separate aspects of the exhibit all seek to promote a more holistic understanding of life at Mount Vernon. The exhibit does not aim to pass judgment on Washington, or to negate the horrors of slavery; rather to elicit an emotional response from the visitor that enables them to engage with the conflicting and seemingly contradictory nature of the institution of slavery.

In a phone interview, Cary Carson pointed to the strength of places such as Mount Vernon in interpreting slavery when compared to CW. He mused:

> Certainly the momentum has moved to other institutions. It is true that that happens. Even in the history of Colonial Williamsburg there were times where it was at the forefront – certainly in the 1930s and 40s as a restoration, it was doing something that American museums hadn't done, and then again in the 1950s into the 60s during the Ed Alexander period it was pioneering in certain interpretive techniques that I think were invented here, or at least showcased here, and in the 70s and 80s as you've already mentioned, it was again the place to watch. But that energy for whatever reason moves onto other institutions… And I think interestingly Mount Vernon right now is doing much more than Colonial Williamsburg even has the capacity to do now.[69]

Carson reflected on the trajectory of CW throughout its existence, eventually concluding that it no longer has the capacity to be the frontrunner it once was. He echoes wider sentiment that places such as Mount Vernon are now engaging the topic of slavery in more direct and complex ways that CW is able to. This then raises the question why CW

[69] Carson, 1:11:13-1:12:15.

is to confront slavery in its interpretation, and what would need to change in order to do so.

Conclusion

In constructing a comparison between CW and similar sites, CW appears unable to engage with slavery in the same manner. When considering the boundaries to CW's interpretation of slavery – bearing in mind the importance of visitor expectations, interpreter apprehension, and wider foundation historical policy – the socioeconomic environment under which it was constructed ultimately prevents CW from being able to truly engage with the subject. By maintaining a focus on the Founding Fathers, CW fails to truly incorporate African American history, and thus perpetuates the ideological separation of black history from American history. While there exist special programs that signal a more comprehensive interpretation of slavery through their embodiment of Emotional Humanity, as a whole the museum is limited in the breadth and scope with which it addresses the subject.

As CW continues to center the experiences of the Founding Fathers, and other prominent white men, in their interpretation of colonial history, they are unable to present a fully integrated, and humanized, history. In the most recent issue of *Trend & Tradition*, CW's lifestyle magazine, President Mitchell Reiss wrote "we have always known that some of America's most celebrated Founders, even as they fought for the cause of liberty, also chose to keep men and women in slavery."[70] While Reiss speaks to slavery, it is in relation to the Founding Fathers, and set up as a history necessary to better understanding

[70] Mitchell Reiss, "Complex and Complicated Stories: Honing the Interpretation of 'Human' History," in *Trend and Tradition*, Winter 2018.

men like Washington. However, this maintains slavery as an auxiliary topic, told to help the visitor to better understand the centralized narrative of the Founders.

In order to move forward, into more progressive interpretation methods, I argue CW needs to restructure their narrative arc to move towards more inclusive narratives. Slavery is not something you can "pluck out and highlight" as it was a "foundational element of the revolution."[71] It is this centrality that also requires it to be seen as a history relevant to all visitors. Josey speaks to this, as he notes that their exists an assumption "that African Americans desperately need to hear about [slavery], and white folks, they don't need to hear about it."[72] Thus, the topic becomes less about promoting understanding, but rather perpetuating a separation by maintaining that slavery only relates to African Americans. Josey emphasized that this mindset is damaging, as it allows museums to maintain a narrative centered on white men. Ultimately:

> slavery is equated to African American history, which the, generally the identified audience for that is African Americans, who make up less than five percent of the audience…if there isn't a demand for it…then what impetus do you have to incorporate [it especially if] the donor base, you know, doesn't include African Americans?[73]

For Josey, CW has been able to maintain their focus on the prominent white men of the 18th century, as it is the narrative that most closely matches their visitor demographics, and thus there has been minimal pressure to change.

This seeks to ask the question of if CW is capable of presenting a more incorporated narrative of the enslaved. While similar museums such as Monticello and Mount Vernon are able to produce more comprehensive narratives, CW perpetuates an ideological separation of African American history from American history. Faced with

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[71] Josey, 8:54-11:04.
[72] Josey, 20:30-21:56.
[73] Josey, 1:10:11-1:12:34.

mounting financial struggles, and a shrinking historical and interpretive staff, the challenge now seems greater than ever. This raises the question of is a museum built around the enduring promise of democracy can ever truly grapple with one of America's original sins?

Appendix 3

Figure 1: View of Highland Slave Quarters

Figure 2: Taken inside Slave Quarters at Highland. Normal location of "Slavery at Highland" interpretation. One the day I visited the weather was too hot and the interpretation was moved outside.

Figure 3: Slavery at Highland Interpretation Table Set Up

Figure 4: Slavery at Highland Interpretation Station, July 22, 2017.

Figure 5: The Mere Distinction of Colour Promotional Art Piece, James Madison's Montpellier

Figure 6: Enslaved Quarters at Montpellier.

Figure 7: Slavery at Monticello Walking Tour Meeting Location

Figure 8: Front View of Monticello.

Figure 9: Hemings Family Tour at Monticello.

Figure 10: Entrance to Lives Bound Together Exhibit at Mount Vernon.

Towards Emotional Humanity at Colonial Williamsburg

At present, Colonial Williamsburg remains a white museum and thus perpetuates an ideological separation of African American history from American history through their presentation of enslaved experiences. While in many ways CW echoes the four stages put forth by Eichstedt and Small, I argue it is more effective to evaluate the museum under the framework of Emotional Humanity as it allows for a more nuanced understanding.

Understanding CW as a direct representation of Eichstedt and Small's methodology is limited, and works to negate the nuanced interpretation CW offers. To label CW as existing in the period of symbolic annihilation and trivialization in the mid twentieth century is to negate the work of African American employees, who through their physical presence introduced the topic of slavery. Additionally, the 1994 recreated slave auction is considered one of CW's pioneering moments where the museum chose to interact with slavery most fully. However, when considered through Eichstedt and Small's lens it is most closely characterized as segregated, and thus loses some of its nuanced meaning. Thus, while CW generally follows the trajectory as put forth by Eichstedt and Small, such a qualification ultimately proves limited.

Conversely, understanding Colonial Williamsburg through the lens of Emotional Humanity allows for a more complex understanding. CW was constructed around the central narrative of the white planter elite, though not their emotions regarding how they interacted with the topic of slavery. This narrative seeks to emphasize a selective understanding of the white elite, as their participation in the institution of slavery is diminished. Thus, while narratives of the enslaved exist, they are positioned in relation to the white elite. Thus, the enslaved are prohibited from being seen as fully human, as

doing so requires a critique of the institution of slavery. However, there do exist a series of special programs which more fully engage with the humanity of the enslaved, but as a whole the museum continues to center the white planter elite, and in doing so comprises their ability to tackle slavery directly.

Emotional Humanity offers a lens for understanding CW both in the past, as well as moving forward. Beginning with its conception, CW positioned patriotism as the enduring emotion. Echoing the wider national sentiment of the time, the museum sought to explore themes of white exceptionalism. The lives of the Founding Fathers were used as a means through which American Democracy could be celebrated and positioned as the superior source of government in a rapidly changing and international world. However, doing so worked to silence the voices of Williamsburg's African American community, both historically and presently. The local black community was physically displaced in the process of reconstruction, and Jim Crow legislation prevented them from being able to formally participate in the process. However, African Americans provided invaluable labor in helping to construct the reconstructed museum itself. Thus, similar to the United States, Colonial Williamsburg was built off the labor of black individuals, and would not exist without them. However, just as in true in conceptions of American history, the experiences of the African Americans were written out of the museums narrative, as it focused instead on the white elite. Thus, when considering Emotional Humanity between the 1920s and 1970s patriotism proved the predominant emotion, and thus the experiences of the enslaved were written out, despite the physical presence of the African American employees, and their contributions to developing the museum.

In the 1980s and 1990s Colonial Williamsburg retained a focus on patriotism while simultaneously attempting to incorporate enslavement into the museums interpretation scheme. Initially, much of the programming on slavery was cultural, as doing so allowed the museum to depict enslaved individuals as human, without challenging the predominant narrative of the white planter elite. This is emblematic of Emotional Humanity without the central component of social critique. Such presentations allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the enslaved, without creating intentional space for critiques of the institution of slavery, or the participation of the planter elite in maintaining the institution. The 1994 recreated slave auction serves as an example for the validity of Emotional Humanity as an interpretative method. The recreated slave auction sought to push visitors to interact with slavery in a more direct and confrontational manner by showing the buying and selling of physical human beings. The slave auction highlighted more than mere transactions, however, as it emphasized the ways in which such sales tore families apart, and impacted individuals on a personal level. Thus, the program aimed to pair the violence of slavery with the humanity of the enslaved to make it a more nuanced and impactful interpretation. Overall the period of the 1980s and 1990s emphasizes a shift towards incorporating the humanity of the enslaved. However, as the museum retained a central narrative of the exceptionalism of the planter elite, interpretations of the enslaved remained limited, and as existing in relation to white figures.

Finally, in looking at CW in the 21st century, the museum has adopted programs that work closer towards achieving an emphasis on Emotional Humanity, however, as a whole remains limited. A set of influential African American interpreters have worked to

develop a series of programs that position the enslaved as fully human. By focusing on the humanity of the enslaved, as opposed to depictions of the violence of the institution, the status of enslaved individuals as property becomes more horrific to comprehend. The audience learns to relate to the enslaved individuals, and thus must begin to wrestle with the institution of slavery. While these programs seek to implement Emotional Humanity, as a whole the museum continues to prioritize a narrative of white exceptionalism, and thus struggles to fully portray the enslaved experience.

The value of Emotional Humanity can also be seen when considering other museums. The National Museum of African American History and Culture offers an example of a museum centered on themes of Emotional Humanity, as opposed to a central white narrative. The museum seeks to utilize emotion as a way to assert that African American history is American history. The NMAAHC opened in 2016, and stresses that understanding the African American experience is integral to understanding American identity and history. The museum maintains that despite dehumanizing conditions, African Americans created community, identity, and history. The different exhibits and collections throughout the museum reiterate and expand upon this message. The foremost aim of the museum is to help the visitor recognize the merit of African American history. Once this has been accomplished, the museum argues that African American history is an integral part of American History, as the two are inextricable. In order to understand American history one must understand the African American experience, as American progress and expansion is the direct result of the exploitation of black bodies. However, the African American experience is incredibly nuanced. It is composed of a series of juxtaposition between progress and oppression, as gains and

drawbacks are intertwined within each period. Thus, the museum invites the visitor to first recognize the lived experiences of African Americans, and then to apply them to our conceptions of America at large. As the visitor progresses through this process they are confronted with a series of emotions. One room is meant to embody a slave ship, while a second holds the casket of Emmitt Till. As the visitor passes through such spaces they are overcome with emotion, and through this emotion recognize the importance of considering the African American experience. The NMAAHC is cognizant of the emotional response and has intentionally installed contemplative courts where visitors can pause and reflect on the space. The intentional construction of such sites also emphasizes how the museum is meant to challenge the visitor. The NMAAHC employs emotion as a means to help the visitor see African Americans as human, and recognize the relevance the black experience has to their own lives, independent of their race. Overall the NMAAHC is an incredibly powerful experience, yet under the methodology set forth by Eichstedt and Small it would be quantified as embodying a segregate methodology as it is focused specifically on the African American experience. Such a categorization highlights the limitations of Eichstedt and Small's methodology and the need for an emotion based methodological approach to museums is seen. Thus in considering the NMAAHC the validity of Emotional Humanity is underscored.

While the NMAAHC and Colonial Williamsburg exist as quantifiably distinct types of museums, the use of Emotional Humanity at the NMAAHC provides insight into how it could be more fully incorporated into CW's interpretation. I argue that as CW looks towards the future the ability of the museum to fully engage with slavery is dependent on the incorporation of enslaved humanity and emotion. The topic of slavery

proves both controversial and divisive in museum presentations, as there exist many different stakeholders, each with a personal investment in how slavery is presented. I argue that by focusing on humanity, and allowing historical figures of all backgrounds to be seen as fully human, differences can be bridged and we can begin to works towards collective healing.

In order to achieve a more complex and complete interpretation of slavery, I argue CW would need to fully embrace the framework of Emotional Humanity. While CW has begun to more fully integrate the narrative of the enslaved in their interpretation, the process remains limited as it often devolves into stereotypic depictions that the audience struggles to connect to. While showing the interactions of diverse individuals is critical, it must be done in a way that allows all parties to exist as fully human. For CW, embracing Emotional Humanity would require a decentering of the museum's central narrative. The museum cannot fully address slavery in a meaningful way while patriotism remains the guiding theme. To show the humanity of the colonial period – and the ways in which diverse individuals interacted with one another – the museum must come to resemble the colonial period. While 52% of the original Williamsburg was enslaved, only a fraction of staffed interpreters today are black. Slavery is allotted to specific sites, such as the Randolph House, despite its prevalence throughout town. These errors must be undone in working to bring Emotional Humanity to the interpretation of the enslaved at Colonial Williamsburg today.

For CW, moving towards a presentation of slavery rooted in Emotional Humanity is a risk as it requires the museum to transform itself; however, I contend it will allow for more meaningful presentation of the enslaved. The narrative of the museum would have

to move away from the patriotic narrative it was founded along. As a result, visitor demographics – which have stayed steady for the last number of decades - would also shift. However, embracing Emotional Humanity provides an opportunity for CW to engage the public in a more complete understanding of slavery, which perhaps will enable guests to be able to ask African American interpreters "better questions…than, are you hot in those clothes?"[1]

[1] Stephen Seals, Interview by Sarah Kolenbrander, July 28, 2017, transcript, 1:21:38-1:21:40.

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