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Honoring the Ancestors: Historical Reclamation and Self-Determined Identities in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro

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**Honoring the Ancestors: Historical Reclamation and Self-Determined Identities in
Richmond and Rio de Janeiro**

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**A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
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Doctor of Philosophy**

Department of Anthropology

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APPROVAL PAGE


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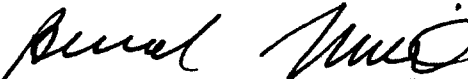
Doctor of Philosophy



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on how history is made meaningful in the present. I argue that within the United States and Brazil, historic narratives and sites are employed in legitimizing and contesting past and contemporary social inequity. National, regional, and local narratives tell the stories of how communities and their members came to be who and where they are in the present. Social hierarchies and inequity are naturalized and/or questioned through historic narratives. Formative education includes telling these stories to children. Commemorative events and monuments tell and re-tell stories to community members of all ages. Enculturation of historical identities, the positioning of self within historic trajectories that connect the past to the present, occurs throughout one's lifetime, developing and shaping one's sense of self. How are members of multicultural, former slaveholding nations, such as the United States and Brazil, taught to see themselves in relationship to the history of slavery? Is this past meaningful in daily life? How are historic sites and figures representing the history of slavery and resistance made meaningful to people in terms of personal, local, and national histories? What pasts are made relevant to whom and for whom? Do ideas of race inform narratives of the past? If so, how and toward what end? Analysis is focused on community action and discussions surrounding two historic cemeteries where the remains of enslaved Africans were interred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the Richmond African Burial Ground, in Virginia and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos in Rio de Janeiro. Upon each site a revolutionary figure is memorialized – Gabriel in Virginia and Zumbi dos Palmares in Rio de Janeiro.

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Introduction

This dissertation is based on ethnographic research conducted in Richmond, Virginia and the city and state of Rio de Janeiro. Broadly, I locate this work as a study in historical anthropology using a political economy framework. How is the past made meaningful in the present? I seek to understand sociocultural modes of challenging, altering, and/or maintaining social inequity and power relationships that pattern access to resources and the material quality of life. This entails viewing social inequity as historically contingent, socially created and maintained, rather than an unfortunate but natural part of society with negative but inevitable repercussions (see Douglass 1854 for an early example of this approach).

I consider that this view of social inequality is positional, as are public interactions with historic monuments and information that marks inequities. Following Michael Blakey's (1998; 2008; 2009; 2010) call for critical, interdisciplinary and community engaged scholarship and drawing on a tradition of African Diasporan activist scholarship (Blakey 2001), the following analysis acknowledges the subjectivity of science, indeed all academic traditions and their practitioners, as well as the socio-political work performed by academic scholarship. Community engaged scholarship is directed by descendant communities whose histories, cultures, and ancestors are being represented by scholars (Blakey 2008; 2010). I see a such an approach as necessarily including analyses of the relationships between past and present; how the past is made meaningful in the present, influencing people's daily lives. I seek to keep this focus overtly present within the presentation of this research, toward a

more critical, community-determined and ethnographically grounded analysis. Toward this end, the following section provides an overview of relevant interdisciplinary literature. My intent is to map this research and my position as a European American woman anthropologist, in reflexive dialogue with the theories and methods I employ.

A Dual Site Approach

The histories of the United States and Brazil include the atrocities of colonialism: European invasions of Indigenous lands, violence and genocide against Indigenous peoples, exploitation of enslaved laborers, forced migrations of captive Africans, and attendant justifications of slavery through ideas of race and scientific racism. U.S. and Brazilian national formations are “intertwined” (Mullings 2005:672) with the histories and ideologies of race, justification of hierarchy, and exploitation (Blakey 1987,1999; Baker 1998; Schwarcz (1999[1993])). Mullings states that “racial systems,” though variously constructed, “are simultaneously national and international projects” inclusive of the histories of European colonialism and violence (2005:672). Anthropology as a science and a discipline emerged in tandem with ideas on race and “natural” human hierarchies within newly formed nations (Mullings 2005; Blakey 1999, 1991, 1990, 1987; Baker 1998; Schwarcz 1999[1993]).

This study analyzes the relationships between representations of the past, ideas of race, and ideas of self in two multicultural nations in the Americas. Situating this research, in the following sections I provide an overview of representations of history,

race, and ethnicity in national museums, and the emergence of race and racist ideologies within the U.S. and Brazil. Mullings employs Blakey's (1994) call to "critically scrutinize" (Blakey 1994:280 quoted in Mullings 2005:684) the pervasive racism within anthropology's history as the first step toward creating and practicing an anti-racist anthropology. Toward this end, I offer a discussion of race and racist ideologies as a dialogue between the United States and Brazil, with an emphasis on the relationship of anthropology to these ideas and international conversations. As a European American woman, I further scrutinize racism among European descended anthropologists (who considered themselves and were considered by colleagues to be antiracist) to be critically aware of my own cultural positioning having grown up as a "white" person within a Eurocentric and racist environment. I follow this by discussing my use of the term "identity" within a brief overview of anthropological literature on identity and the self.

The Past in the Present

Past and present are constantly in dialogue whether explicitly so or through a combination of foregrounding and silencing various aspects of a past for present influence and consumption (Trouillot 1995; Bourdieu 2002[1972]; Comaroff 1985; Lowenthal 1985; Igarashi 2000). History is a process, from which the product is inextricable (Cohen 1994). Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995), likewise analyzes history as a social process, focusing on the role of power in history production. History, according to Trouillot (1995) is produced by members of society within and outside of academia. Historical narratives and commemorations are always produced by

people within particular social, political, and historical contexts. For Trouillot, this subjectivity is integral to understanding the ambiguities, efficacy, and locations of power within social productions of history. Humans are “doubly historical” in that we are at once “actors” creating history while narrating the creation (1995: 21-22).

Blakey (1990) critiques selective emphasis within narratives and representations of histories generated by U.S. power holders:

Social inequality and conflict commonly accompany exploitative capitalistic production. To legitimate capitalism, production and expansion are emphasized as progressive goals, while their attendant inequality, oppression, and conflict are symbolically submerged (Blakey 1990:41).

Blakey’s (1990) observations are applicable to identifying the cultural work of narratives, dialogues, and representations of national pasts. I am interested in the use of history and representations of the past to legitimize and/or challenge social inequality in democratic states where egalitarian ideals are central to national identity and the imposition of inequity lacks legitimacy. The public histories of Africans and their descendants within the U.S. and Brazil are generally told with a focus on slavery and/or “cultural” contributions to the nation’s history and identity (food, music, dance, religion) at the exclusion of the intellectual, economic and technological components. This tendency conveys continuity with biodeterministic racial rankings (Blakey 1990; Santos 2005). Frequently, African ancestry and heritage have been silenced in national narratives and local historical representations of the past, arguably because imposed inequalities would be evident.

Blakey argues that in the United States, “the paucity of material on organized slave rebellion and the ceaseless struggle against racial discrimination serve to characterize blacks as passive [thus the inequities of slavery would seem benign]. To view them as such one must indeed omit the bulk of Afro-American history, a history of a culture honed by struggle. Through such successive omission, the museum fosters passivity in those it socializes” (Blakey 1990:43). Blakey (1990) identifies the following relationships in national U.S. museum interpretations that reveal informing ideologies within museum exhibitions and the messages conveyed through their stories:

Euro American	Other
National	Natural*
American	Ethnic (or tribal)
Technological	Artistic
Intellectual	Emotional
Donor	Recipient
Powerful	Passive
*The national-natural dichotomy applies principally to differences between colonizers and colonized. (Blakey 1990:44)	

Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos (2005) recognizes the role of Brazilian museums in “disseminating narratives that make up a large part of the nation’s identity” (Santos 2005:51). Within museum representations of Afro-Brazilians, Santos (2005) identifies the following patterns: 1) “because museum narratives either silence or exaggerate the race issue, they operate by means of denials and the use of stereotypes” 2) “the representation of blacks as passive within the historical narratives” 3) museums “create foundation myths and historical heroes that downplay the role of black people in the building of the nation 4) museums focus on

the “suffering and humiliation of the black population during slavery” serving to “reproduce subordination because they give currency to images in which black people appear as tortured and humiliated” (Santos 2005:51-52). Santos discusses the personal connections sought in national narratives told through museums:

National museums represent images of black people in a way that any person would be ashamed of being identified with. As humiliation continues, subordination reproduces itself in the present. Brazilian visitors who today enter the Imperial Museum or the National Historical Museum will try to find their inheritance and will look for objects that represent themselves. White visitors will find themselves represented by the political elite of the nation and black visitors will find themselves represented by slaves (Santos 2005:60).

Manuel Ferreira Lima Filho (2013) observes that the focus on torture and pain in museum exhibits in Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais portrays a “historic inevitability” within the portrayal of Afro-Ouro-Preitano pasts. Such distortions make “invisible innumerable references to Afro-Brazilian patrimony in Ouro Preto” (Lima Filho 2013:283).¹ “This blindness,” he states, “prevents visitors to [Ouro Preto] from engaging in critical reflection on the contemporary social exclusion of African descendants” (Lima Filho 2013:283-4).

Beyond museum exhibitions, these kinds of analyses may be applied to representations of and discussions about the histories of slavery and resistance in the U.S. and Brazil.² Are the patterns and the cultural work on subjectivities identified by Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005) verified by the ethnographic record?

¹ All quotes from Lima Filho (2013) have been translated from Portuguese to English by Autumn Barrett.

² Lima Filho approaches objects “as texts” to understand the relationships between “material culture and social relations” by “articulating biographies, aesthetics and artistic process, performances, socio-technical facts and communications” (2012: 284).

Do public history sites, such as monuments and the interpretation of historic places convey these messages? Do people learn these messages in school and/or from their families?

Histories are also, of course, contested in ways that reveal inequity and destabilize power. African Americans and Afro-Brazilians continue to fight for and demand self-determination in acknowledging, commemorating and respecting their histories and their ancestors within national narratives. The two historic cemeteries on which I focus, the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, demonstrate the tensions between the Eurocentric social values enacted through governmental institutions, and the voices of descendant communities. Each historic cemetery holds stories of African resistance to enslavement, as well as the atrocities committed against the enslaved. These stories are told through the remains of those interred, by the descendant communities who seek to have these sites recognized by local and federal governments, and by the revolutionary figures who are commemorated at these sites: Gabriel in Richmond and Zumbi in Rio de Janeiro.

Historic sites are spaces where national and personal identities are produced and negotiated. Ideals of equity and realities of disparity may be brought into relief (or not) by telescoping the past into the space and place of the present. The authority of material culture and even more so, human remains, can profoundly transform one's understanding of space as having a contested past critically connected to socio-political and economic systems of the present, is profound. The conflicts and struggle for different histories that surround such sites reflect the conflict between

ideals of equality and realities of disparity, or between the recognition and obfuscation of such conflict in daily life.

Human actions also transform spaces and places. Grey Gundaker's (1998; 2005) ethnographic analyses of landscape transformations through yard spaces of African descendants in the Americas, demonstrates complex expressions of relationships between past and present, as well as space, place, and home. Gundaker (1998) makes the distinction between "landkeeping" and "landscaping" by saying, "an ethic of landkeeping" is one of "reciprocity between persons and their location, as distinct from 'landscaping,' the craft of staging and maintaining vistas (1998:6). The transformation of "place into home" often involves practices that include "protection and safekeeping, personal virtuosity, community improvement, and honor to family and ancestors" (Gundaker 1998:14). Ancestral remembrance grounds and transforms space into home, irrespective of proprietary claims of "ownership." The most crucial investment that makes a place homeground is not investment of money but of connections, of roots; thus land becomes the place of happening; births, deaths, labor, friendships, disputes, and goings and comings of the generations. Indeed, the places where these connections exist, as in much of the former plantation South [of the United States], African Americans have called "home" whether they owned land or not. These places where parents, siblings, and ancestors are buried, or should be buried if the world actually conformed to proper moral order...(Gundaker 1998:15).

Working with the land in reciprocity, landkeeping, creates home space where “home” and ownership may be contested. Hannah Nelson, an African American woman living in the Northeast U.S. during the 1970s told anthropologist John Langston Gwaltney, “‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ does not mean any more to me than ‘Dixie’...I hate what both of them have really stood for” (1980:5). However, she goes on to say that this is beside the fact because, “I love the ground I buried my mother in” (Gwaltney 1980:5).

Having ancestral presence and a relationship with one’s ancestral community, working toward good character that brings honor to one’s ancestors, and making a stronger community for the future generations are themes that emerge in social action around the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos. “Rights to the living in a place...derive from proximity to the family dead...Thus it should not be surprising that the most stable repository of resources for making assertions of belonging and for warning away intruders from homes and yards is the burial mound” (Gundaker 1998: 15). Ancestral space transforms place into home, keeping the relationship with ancestral communities strong, which in turn allows those ancestors to protect and guide the living toward safer lives and wellbeing.

Burial Grounds are potent spaces for maintaining connections between this world and the ancestral beyond. As Pereira (2007) shows, the forced migration of Africans to the Americas and European colonial disregard for African bodies, in life and death, was a torture deeply felt by living witnesses who could not properly bury their dead.

Pereira (2007) argues that this is yet another dimension of suffering that Africans in Rio de Janeiro were subjected to, having to see the manner in which their loved ones and community members were discarded within the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos. Burials were “social and spiritual occasions” according to Gundaker (1998:16). For people whose social universe often pivoted on relationships between the ancestors and the living and whose sense of well-being entailed serving ancestors and spirits associated with specific places, communities, and descent groups, forced departure from the homeland assaulted the very foundation of family and personhood (Gundaker 1998:16).

In Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, the city landscapes are most saliently marked by the descendants of slaveholders, who honor their ancestors and signify their claims to the space, places, histories, and local and national subjectivities through street names, building names, monuments and historic narratives. African descended residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro claimed and reclaimed self, home, and respect by transforming two cemetery sites where Africans and their ancestors were buried against their will and with an utter lack of respect. Within the context of forced migrations and enslaved labor, the “landkeeping ethic” is powerful in claiming the land where one’s ancestors worked, died, and are buried in, as “home,” and rightfully so.

Ideas of Race and Anthropology: the United States and Brazil, in Dialogue

Thomas Holt, quoting Stuart Hall's call to "deal with the historical specificity of race" argues for an analysis of race and racism as "socially constructed" and thus "constructed differently at different historical moments and in different social contexts" (Holt 2000: 20). Any discussion of race must approach constructions of race as "historically contingent" and, therefore, requires "mapping the relations of power, the patterns of contestation and struggle out of which such social constructions emerged" (Holt 2000).

Mullings (2005) begins her review of anthropology and ideologies of race with Gunnar Myrdal's 1944 classic argument that the "American dilemma" stems from racism and is characterized by a myth of meritocracy and class democracy. Roberto DaMatta describes Brazil as a society that "tries to institutionalize an individualistic, egalitarian political system in an ideological landscape that is impressively marked by hierarchy and holism" – terming this contradiction the "Brazilian dilemma" (2007[1979]:xi). In the United States and Brazil, these 'ideological landscapes' include biodeterministic models that justify "racial" hierarchies in societies whose legitimacy supposedly rests on meritocratic and egalitarian principles. Historical narratives that represent inequity as inevitable or natural serve to reconcile ideals of equality with realities of disparity.

Next, I sketch the histories of the biological idea of race within the U.S. and Brazilian contexts beginning with the European conceptual predecessors in the fifteenth to

eighteenth centuries and extending the discussion to ideological shifts after World War II into the present. My goal is to demonstrate how the idea of racial categories within the U.S. and Brazil emerged in dialogue with European conceptualizations of social hierarchy. The history of anthropology is at the center of this discussion.

European conceptualization of race

“Western” biological and natural sciences, and the classification of humans into “races” were intertwined developments in Europe. During the eighteenth century “Enlightenment,” a focus on empirical knowledge and the tenets of scientific inquiry, observation, recordation and theory emerged. The Great Chain of Being, while having ideological beginnings in the works of Plato and Aristotle, was a system of ordering the universe by hierarchically ranked categories that informed the European world-view well before the eighteenth century (Marks 1995; Gregory and Sanjek 1996[1994]). However, European categorization of human beings according to “race” began to emerge in the fifteenth century; however, these categories were initially loose, based on differences in appearance and geography reported in travel accounts. They did not form a fixed hierarchy of human potentials and achievements until the mid-eighteenth century.

The hierarchical ordering of human beings by “race” emerged concurrently with and provided justification for enslaving and exploiting Africans and Native Americans (Gould 1996 [1991]; Gregory and Sanjek 1996[1994]; Blakey 1999; Smedley and Smedley 2012; Baker 1998; Douglass 1854; Firmin 2002[1885]). This development began when Carl von Linné, or Linnaeus, challenged the Great Chain of Being by

asserting that the “natural order” involved a tiered, rather than vertical, relationship between Class, Order, Genus and Species (Marks 1995:6-7). Linnaeus’ classification system subdivided humans into the racial categories by continental association which were already familiar: American, Asiatic, African and European (Spencer 1979, Stocking 1968). However, Linnaeus also added characterizations to describe dispositions and the “mode of governance” he believed attributable to each race. These divisions, as Michael Blakey argues, associated people of African descent with “nature” and people of European descent with “culture and civilization” (Blakey 1991:17–18; see also Baker 1998; Smedley and Smedley 2012).

Americanus: reddish, choleric, and erect; hair – black, straight, thick; wide nostrils, scanty beard; obstinate, merry, free; paints himself with fine red lines; regulated by customs.

Asiaticus: sallow, melancholy, stiff; black hair, dark eyes; severe, haughty, avaricious; covered with loose garments; ruled by opinions.

Africanus: black, phlegmatic, relaxed; hair – black, frizzled; skin – silky; crafty, indolent, negligent; anoints himself with grease; governed by caprice.

Europeaeus: white, sanguine, muscular; hair – long, flowing; eyes – blue; gentle, acute, inventive; covers himself with close vestments; governed by laws. (Linnaeus quoted in Smedley and Smedley 2012:219)

In 1795, Johann Friederich Blumenbach further classified humans into five races – Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malayan. In the late 1700s and into the 1800s, debate about human origins centered on the issue of natural inequality and the competing theories of multiple origins (polygenism) versus singular human origins (monogenism) (Douglass 1854; Gregory and Sanjek 1996[1994]; Armelagos and Goodman 1998). “Natural” ranking and racial hierarchy, however, was defended and justified by supporters of both schools of thought (Armelagos and Goodman

1998:360). Ethnology and anthropology emerged during the nineteenth century, providing “pseudo-scientific support to the racist dogmas that defended slavery” (Drake 1980:2; See also Douglass 1854; Smedley and Smedley 2012). Quantifying difference between categories of life became a mechanism by which the ideologies of racism were justified by science as irrefutable.

The Idea of Race and Anthropology in the U.S.

In the United States, anthropology emerged as a discipline in the 1850s. The first official American study in anthropology was published in 1851 (League of the Iroquois by Lewis Henry Morgan) and the first academic position in Anthropology was filled by Franz Boas who founded the Department of Anthropology at Columbia in 1896 (Fluehr-Lobban 2006). Debates over slavery in the nineteenth century were at the nexus of an intimate relationship between the discipline and the socio-political and scientific climate in which anthropology emerged.

Samuel Morton, in the 1830s, employed craniometrics to support his arguments for white racial superiority and to defend slavery on the grounds of intrinsic inequality of the races (Gould 1996 [1991]). “Cranometry,” based on the false premise that intelligence was directly related to cranial capacity and head shape, was used into the mid 1900s and served as justification for social inequality (Blakey 1987). Monogeny and polygeny as modes of explaining human origins shifted in popularity in concert with shifts in justifications of slavery. Lee Baker (1998) traces the discipline of anthropology and its close relationship with U.S. racism and inequity:

Until the mid-nineteenth century most scientists explained racial inferiority in terms of the “savages” fall from grace or their position in the “Great Chain of Being.” The idea of monogenesis – that Negroes were fully human – was integral to both paradigms. U.S. scientists, however, revived earlier ideas of polygenesis – multiple origins of the human species – in the wake of growing antislavery forces and slave revolts. The proponents of these arguments eclipsed the single-origin thesis prior to and following the Civil War, even after Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) should have abated them. The first American anthropologists advanced the polygenesis thesis within the highly politicized antebellum period, and these efforts were aimed at setting Negroes apart from Whites and defining the Negro’s place in nature. The most influential scholars of this school were Samuel Morton, Josiah Nott, and Louis Agassiz (Baker 1998:14).

Frederick Douglass, recognizing the socially embedded nature of science, discussed the “fashion” of science, in an address titled “The Negro Ethnologically Considered” in 1854. Specifically discussing the theory of polygeny, Douglass argues that science is employed to justify social inequality and the violation of human rights within the institution of slavery.

Pride and selfishness, combined with mental power, never want for a theory to justify them - and when men oppress their fellow men, the oppressor ever finds, in the character of the oppressed, a full justification for his oppression. Ignorance and depravity, and the inability to rise from degradation to civilization and respectability, are the most usual allegations against the oppressed. The evils most fostered by slavery and oppression, are precisely those which slaveholders and oppressors would transfer from their system to the inherent character of their victims. Thus the very crimes of slavery become slavery’s best defense. By making the enslaved a character fit only for slavery, they excuse themselves for refusing to make the slave a freeman. A wholesale method of accomplishing this result, is to overthrow the instinctive consciousness of the common brotherhood of man. For, let it be once granted that the human race are of multitudinous origin, naturally different in their moral, physical, and intellectual capacities, and at once you make plausible a demand for classes, grades and conditions, for different methods of culture, different moral, political, and religious institutions, and a chance is left for slavery, as a necessary institution” (Douglass 1854:15).

As Douglass' analysis demonstrates, ideologies of natural ranking were fundamental to premises for promoting and justifying slavery and inequality within the United States as a reflection of "natural" order. Douglass dismantles contemporary social constructions of "Western" civilization as the locus and genesis of the earliest forms of civilization, and criticizes the appropriation of Egyptian culture as part of Western heritage (Douglass 1854; Blakey 1991). Douglass' (1854) analysis of scientific narratives is applicable to investigating ways that history narratives tell stories of slavery as evidence of the inferiority of the enslaved, conveying the Euro-centric, self-justifying, and circular arguments that Douglass explicates.

Anthropology became established by the 1890s, and following a Darwinian model, sought data that supported a ranked hierarchy of humans as "scientific" proof of African inferiority (Drake 1980:2). Within this context, African American scholars voiced opposition to anthropology as a discipline that supported racism and oppression within the United States. Franz Boas, a Jewish immigrant from Germany, critiqued anthropological methods and conclusions regarding European superiority and African inferiority from his vantage point as a member of an oppressed group in Germany and as a scientist of physics and geography (Drake 1980; Blakey 1987).

St. Clair Drake, in describing the climate of the late nineteenth century, states:

Racism which had always existed in the North was now exacerbated, and practices, of segregation and discrimination were entrenched. Theories of biological determinism, along with Darwinism, suffused the intellectual life of the period and were eventually used against European immigrants as well as blacks. Virtually no one, black or white, questioned the idea that groups inherited varied special propensities, although blacks fought against the idea that they inherited deficient and defective mental powers. "Gifts" of musical ability, endurance, compassion and spiritual power were stressed by black leaders as group assets. (Drake 1980:9)

Even among anthropologists who argued against racist conventions, biodeterministic essentialism nevertheless directed their pursuits. Organizations in the U.S. North, such as the “Friends of the Negro” promoted a “romantic racialism” focusing on the supposed moral inferiority of Africans and African Americans while encouraging racial equality within education systems (Drake 1980). Moral inferiority was argued to be evidenced by behaviors such as “an inclination to sloth and laziness” or emotionalism and underdeveloped reason (Drake 1980) employed terms reminiscent of Linnean racial characteristics of “governance.”

Anthropology, as Lee Baker (1998) chronicles, provided much needed scientific justification for the exclusion of African-Americans from citizenship and for segregation after slavery ended. Blakey characterizes the shifts in anthropological foci from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century as connected to shifts in labor exploitation from slavery to “a free yet unequal wage labor system” (Blakey 1987:10). Blakey also notes the early critique of Frederick Douglass (1854).³

Hrdlička put cranial comparisons forward to explain the social and economic disadvantages of blacks during segregation and of Southern Eastern European immigrants; the new urban underclass and cheap labor associated with the rise of American industrial capitalism. America’s democratic and egalitarian ideals stood in stark contrast to the glaring social and economic inequalities between black, immigrant, and other workers and a predominantly Anglo-Saxon landed and industrialist class. Class differences were often viewed in racial terms and scientifically justified on biological grounds. Thus racial and biodeterministic theories (which attribute disadvantages to natural causes) resolved the contradictions between inequalitarian relations of production and an ideology of ‘equal opportunity.’ In fact, this is precisely the role Douglass had claimed of

³ See Blakey 2001 for a discussion of the tradition of activist scholarship among African Diasporan scholars.

Morton's work which obscured the contradictions between Christian philosophy and slavery [Douglass, 1854] (Blakey (1987:10-11).

Once the problems of society were framed in racial and biological terms, physical anthropology appeared well suited to provide the solutions to "social problems" (Blakey 1987). Physical anthropology offered a laboratory and intellectual forum for finding a social "solution" to the "problem" of creating an ideal society through racial means, and particularly limiting racial admixture. "Hrdlička, like others in the field, was concerned about the increasing potential for intermarriage between whites, blacks, and Indians, but that was 'largely controllable by law and general enlightenment'" (Blakey 1987:11). For Hrdlička, the problem that was most crucial, related to immigration.

A question of perhaps even greater concern than 'mixture of the coloured races with the white' is that of the immigration of whites of every extraction. What do these diverse strains bring in the way of physical and intellectual endowments, and what in these respects are the results of their mixture with the native population (Hrdlička in Blakey 1987:11)

Hrdlička's privileging of "old American" whites as the racial ideal was based on his interpretation of European expansion and natural selection. Eugenics proponents such as Charles Davenport and Madison Grant targeted minorities and whites within the U.S. population implementing sterilization policies and seeking to limit immigration - all explained within social terms of progress while effectively controlling labor forces (Blakey 1987). In 1926 the Johnson Act was passed to deny entry of "non-Nordic" peoples into the United States (Blakey 1987).

The Problem of Eurocentrism and Racism in American Anthropology

Sociological studies such as *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) by W.E.B. Du Bois and *The Negro Family in the United States* by Franklin E. Frazier (1939), were examples of analyses of African American life, for which there were no counterparts within contemporary American anthropology (Drake 1980). African Americans did not pursue anthropology as a profession until after the 1920s when a few African Americans such as Carolyn Bond Day, Irene Diggs and Zora Neale Hurston chose to practice the discipline (Drake 1980).

W. Montague Cobb entered the burgeoning field of physical anthropology precisely when biological determinism was popular and eugenics was at the peak of popularity and funding (Rankin-Hill and Blakey 1999; see also Smedley and Smedley 2012). Though Cobb was also influenced by the ideologies of his time, seeing essentialist “special aptitudes” in African Americans, he brought a critical approach to race and biology not otherwise represented in anthropology, particularly contemporary physical anthropology (Rankin-Hill and Blakey 1999:115-122). Cobb’s experiences and observations of racism drew him to address questions of race, biology and social inequality within the field of anthropology. Rather than solely focusing on African Americans as analytical subjects of social change (in contrast to Boas), Cobb was interested in African American strengths and adaptability, and in identifying strengths and weaknesses in European societies:

The defects of modern European civilization are so obvious, particularly in respect to its dependence on exploration and periodic slaughter and its failure to adjust population size and caliber to resources, that while its material achievements excite amazement, its

social organization hardly evokes excessive admiration (Cobb in Rankin-Hill and Blakey 1999:121)

Franz Boas challenged anthropological assumptions of inequality by emphasizing the plasticity of human biology and the significance of environment in shaping that biology (Boas 1911; Drake 1980; Gould 1996 [1991]; Blakey 1999). W.E.B. Du Bois provided entrée for Boas to be accepted as an anthropologist among African American intellectuals by quoting Boas in the Atlanta University Series Number 11. Drake states that Du Bois's move, "certainly must have given anthropology a role in the 'vindication' struggle it had never had before and put the seal of approval on Boas as a friend" (Drake 1980:11).

A Boasian model of contrasting and comparing evidence was applied against racist assumptions to question their validity (Boas 1911). However, as Drake points out, "the Boas statements were always cautiously phrased and Boas never stated that the evidence showed that all races had equal capacities," only that "no one had ever been able to prove that they did not" (Drake 1980:11). Zora Neale Hurston studied anthropology with Boas, collecting biological measurements from African Americans in addition to her research on African American folklore and religion.

Boas' student, Melville Herskovits, sought for and documented "African carryovers" in the words of his wife, Frances, – "'pure' Africanisms – for he was seeking firm leads that would point to regional and tribal origins of the African – derived populations of the New World" (Herskovits quoted in Drake 1980:15). Herskovits' 1941 *The Myth of the Negro Past* aimed to dismantle what he viewed as one of the main tenets of racial prejudice in the United States: the mythology supporting

prejudicial views against people of African descent as based on five falsehoods.

These falsehoods are summarized as follows:

- 1) People of African descent are child-like and readily relinquished their cultural heritage upon entrance into the condition of slavery – a condition to which Africans adjusted easily and without resistance, unlike Native Americans.
- 2) The Africans trapped by slave traders were poorer, of less intelligence and therefore more easily trapped and placed into slavery.
- 3) Enslaved Africans represented peoples from continental Africa with different languages and customs making cohesion and identity retention impossible.
- 4) The superiority of European customs caused any possible retentions to be relinquished in favor of European ways.
- 5) “The Negro is thus a man without a past” (Herskovits 1990[1941]:1-2)

Within a Boasian tradition, Herskovits was looking beyond racial categories to trajectories of experience and change resulting from migration, forced migration in the case of Africans in the Americas. Herskovits was also interested in how African cultures had influenced European “white” culture in the Americas.

In arguing that people of African descent living in the “New World” had a “reputable past” and “contributed to American culture as we know it today,” Herskovits had two goals: simultaneously to challenge racial prejudice and to understand the process of acculturation in what he termed the “laboratory” of the New World contact history (1990[1941]:30). Herskovits disproves each of the five mythical arguments by employing historical and ethnographic sources contrary to these erroneous assumptions.

Rather than an ahistorical category of “Negro,” Herskovits sought to locate geographic and cultural lineages of African Americans. Herskovits argued that the Western coast of Africa was the origin of the majority of the enslaved Africans brought to the Americas and therefore provides the best cultural region for seeking

sources of culture retained as “Africanisms” in the Americas. West African viewpoints of “disregard[ing] outer form while retaining inner values” (1990[1941]: 298) enabled Africans and their descendants to maintain African values while incorporating and transforming European systems.⁴ African heritage was rich, durable and tenacious and Africans and their descendants in the Americas did not acquiesce to slavery as demonstrated by a long history of resistance and revolt against slavery, on slave ships and within the Americas.⁵ I will return to Boas and Herskovits later when discussing William S. Willis, Jr.’s (1999[1969]) critique of Anthropology as a tool of white imperialism and oppression.

Although a diachronic dimension of African American history is incorporated into Herskovits’ *Myth of the Negro Past* (see synopsis above) and cultural change and transformation is discussed as “acculturation,” there is no such dimension discussed when providing detail on West African cultures. The Ashanti, Dahomey, Yoruba and Congolese remain within an ethnographic present, “pure” and timeless cultural forms, traceable within the changing “laboratory” of the Americas. This objectifying stance demonstrates Herskovits’ analysis as constrained by the racist and chauvinistic American viewpoints of his time. Furthermore, Herskovits supports the

⁴ Herskovits demonstrates this view through examples of African retentions and syncretism in religious life. Hoodoo of the Carolinas, Voodoo of New Orleans, Vodun of Haiti as and Shouting Baptists are examples of combinations of European and African religions. Similarity in possession and “motor habits” are discussed in detail.

⁵ Biological determinism and studies of race-crossing are mentioned but discouraged due to “methodological difficulties” (Herskovits 1942:14,15, 126). Throughout the chapters of “The Myth of the Negro Past,” Herskovits provides examples of values, behaviors and institutions that he traces to West African origin. However, the final chapters of this work are dedicated to demonstrating Africanisms in the secular and religious practices as well as in art and literature of the African Diaspora.

myth he seeks to dispel (and reinforces his white, intellectual authority) by not foregrounding the established African American intellectual tradition of critique and resistance to the myth of a people without history.

Herskovits briefly mentions Carter Woodson and W.E.B. Du Bois, he characterizes their work as “serious attempts” (1990[1941]:2). Otherwise, he appears to rely largely on sources about the Diaspora rather than sources from scholars within the Diaspora. When quoting Frederick Douglass, Herskovits only uses “ethnographic” examples as support for his arguments rather than Douglass’ criticism and analysis. Herskovits states, “A people that denies its past cannot escape being prey to doubt of its value today and of its potentialities for the future” (Herskovits 1942).

“To *give* the Negro an appreciation of his past is to *endow* him with the confidence in his own position in this country and in the world which he must have, and which he can best attain when he has available a foundation of scientific fact concerning the ancestral cultures of Africa and the survivals of Africanism in the New World” [Herskovits 1990[1941]:32, emphasis mine]

Herskovits is employing standards of rigorous science espoused by Boas in order to combat the scientific racist assertions. However, he omits the intellectual heritage that would preclude him from being the one “to give the Negro an appreciation of his past.” He also places himself and science in the position of giving “the Negro an appreciation of his past” which reflects Blakey’s (1990) analysis of Euro-centric portrayals of history in which European Americans are always the intellectuals and donors to American ethnicities of non-European descent.

Alain Locke’s definition of the “New Negro” was published in 1925, 16 years prior to Herskovits’, and holds many of the same tenets of Herskovits’ arguments against the

“Myth of the Negro Past” including that African Americans contributed to American culture, despite having been considered “more of a myth than a man” (Locke 2000[1925]:192). Locke is an example of an African American scholar who primarily characterized African American “contributions” according to essentialist ideas similar to the “gifts” discussed by Drake (see above). For example, Locke claims, “It must be increasingly recognized that the Negro has already made very substantial contributions, not only in his folk-art, music especially...but in larger, though humbler and less acknowledged ways” (Locke 2000[1925]:194). Locke’s argument, however, calls for equality and is critical of the objectification where “the Negro has been more of a formula than a human being – something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be ‘kept down,’ or ‘in his place’ or ‘helped up,’ to be worried with or worried over” (Locke 2000[1925]:192). This criticism is applicable to Herskovits’ statement that studies of the African Diaspora for understanding acculturation processes could be likened to a “laboratory.” Locke calls for a “New Negro” who “now becomes a conscious contributor...and active participant in American civilization” (Locke 2000[1925]:194).⁶

The tension between combating scientific racism and Herskovits’ own inheritance of this ideological past is demonstrated by his assertion that his research was a gift to African descendants in the Americas. He thereby denies the Diasporan intellectual heritage and principles already developed and existing. Herskovits succumbed, in

⁶ Herskovits seeks “to give the Negro an appreciation of his past to endow him with the confidence in his own position in this country and in the world which he must have” through the validation of “science.” The racist framework evident within Herskovits’ writings and omissions bring to question the “position” in the U.S. and the world that Herskovits envisioned Africans and their descendants having?

this sense, to the myth that he sought to dispel. Revelations of racism among “antiracist” scholars, such as Malinowski’s field entries, should not be shocking or surprising, according to William S. Willis, Jr. (1999[1969]), if anthropology is viewed within the context of the discipline’s imperialist and racist intellectual and political history. “Malinowski’s secret diary showed that scientific antiracism can coexist with vicious color antipathies and suggests that color prejudice is more prevalent than white anthropologists admit” (1999[1969]:140). Willis predicts that “manuscripts of other dead white anthropologists and life histories of the few black anthropologists will reveal additional evidence,” for “white anthropologists are members of racist societies, and color prejudice and discrimination must be incorporated into any history of anthropology (Willis 1999[1969]:140, see also Hsu 1979 on Malinowski and Euro-centrism in anthropology). Indeed, Willis’ predictions have born true in the case of the Herskovits’ field notes. The most explicit beneficiaries of Boas’ 1911 study were those he referred to as “Hebrews,” whose head shapes appeared to adapt to the Anglo-American norm (Blakey, pers. comm).

Price and Price (2003) critique M. Herskovits’ fieldwork notes from Suriname to to show “how U.S. racism – as well as the 1920s New York liberals’ romance with things black – shaped the discourse” in Afro-American Studies as a discipline (2003:3).

It would be foolish to maintain that Afro-American Anthropology, or Afro-American Studies, was born as the result of a near-immaculate conception in the Suriname bush. U.S. pioneers such as W.E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, Cubans such as Fernando Ortiz, and Haitians such as Jean Price-Mars – all of whom Herskovits corresponded with and whose work he knew – had been carving out chunks in this area of investigation for some time (as had Brazilian

scholars whose work MJH came to know only later)” (Price and Price 2003:77).

While acknowledging several of the Diasporan predecessors of Herskovits, Price and Price (2003) call into question the “roots of a discipline” by revealing the Herskovits’ faulty and misrepresented fieldwork in Suriname. However, their argument that the “root of roots, or the start of Afro-American Anthropology” was flawed though profoundly influential ultimately remains disconnected from the work of Diasporan scholars.

The Herskovitsian genealogical imperative with its search for African roots gained a second life soon after MJH’s death in 1963, but from largely independent sources. In the wake of the Civil Rights movement, ideas that valorized Blackness and Africanity – which had long been an undercurrent in U.S. identity politics (Du Bois, Garveyism, the New Negro Movement of the Harlem Renaissance) – blossomed as never before...from Harvard to the streets of Watts, Black was Beautiful and roots were in. There is no doubt that the staying power, within the academy and out, of Herskovits’ diasporic vision, and its revitalization during the past several decades, has as much to do with ongoing identity politics as with its originality or truth. But hasn’t that always been the case, certainly in such ideologically charged fields as African American (or other ethnic or feminist) studies? (Price and Price 2003:85-86)

The discussion of Herskovits’ legacy and “vision,” though critical, maintains the centrality of Herskovits within these passages. The “root of roots” is misplaced with Herskovits rather than the “originality” and “truth” of the “root of roots” never having been with a “white” anthropologist, but generated from and grounded in the African Diasporan scholarship acknowledged by the authors. To relegate the “staying power” and the intellectual history of Du Bois, Garveyism and the New Negro Movement to undercurrents of U.S. identity politics is to continue to misplace the focus on Herskovits, in spite of the evidence being revealed – as though the “staying power” were a political spin pivoted on a faulty premise. Exposing the flaws of the

Herskovits' fieldwork questions Melville Herskovits' search for and identification of African retentions within the Americas. The authors' critique of Herskovits is made most relevant, not in the exposure and criticism of Herskovits as founder of a discipline, but within the context of theoretical politics and positioning. The Mintz and Price model of creolization (1992[1976]) is buttressed by examples of the rigorous fieldwork of the Prices in Suriname in contrast to that of Herskovits'. Price and Price (2003) only acknowledge "ideologically charged" power relationships within ethnically marked fields of anthropology. Whether explicitly or implicitly, are not all fields of anthropology ideologically charged and practiced within matrices of power relationships?

Willis S. Willis, Jr. (1999[1969]) critiques antiracism within anthropology, particularly as practiced by white anthropologists within this tradition, demonstrating the influence of racist ideologies. This influence has resulted in what might appear to be contradictions, but instead, demonstrates the pervasiveness of racism within "whiteness," enacted across academic disciplines. Willis (1999[1969]) identifies a tendency for anthropologists to use people of color as scientific objects demonstrating scientific and cultural "facts" that ultimately serve to promote white positions of privilege. Willis criticizes Boasian anthropologists as extorting people of color and Herskovits' use of the Diaspora as a "laboratory" in particular. "Hence," Willis states, "Du Bois described the black man as the 'football of anthropology' (Willis 1999[1969]:126). Willis refers to "scientific antiracism" as a misnomer, because anthropologists of European descent were socialized, themselves, with racist ideologies that were manifested in their "antiracist" works

(see also Hsu 1979). Boas' (1911) work argues against the validity of craniometrics and toward an analysis of the plasticity of human biology in response to cultural practice by demonstrating the affect of cultural practices on human cranial morphology. However, Willis points out that Boas "consistently entertained" racist arguments regarding the relationships between cranial capacity and mental abilities and that populations of African descent would not produce "men of highest genius as in other races" (Boas quoted in Willis 1999[1969]:138).

Despite efforts and scholarship aimed at dismantling racism, "white" anthropologists have been entangled in the racist ideology they criticize. While scholars from the African Diaspora have also been influenced by ideas of race in their scholarly pursuits, their positionality vis a vis "race" has historically been made more explicit. Research questions and directions aim toward social justice within the African Diaspora, a tradition of understanding the social implications of scholarly work (Drake 1980; Blakey 2001).

Trends in U.S. Anthropology and Race, WWI to the present

After World War I, ideas of "primitive" and "civilized" were still in mode, however Drake (1980) describes white Americans as desiring the "exotic" and the "uninhabited," and in search of African American music such as jazz and blues and "folk art." These exoticized elements of African American life were positively viewed by European Americans within the frame of reference that these were the "gifts" for which African Americans had an innate affinity. Prior to World War II, "internal

debates within the United States created an important liberal foundation for anti-racist science.....and would be used to frame public policy in the hands of the Civil Rights and Human Rights Movements afterward” (Blakey 1999:34).

WWII was, however, historically significant to U.S. developments of the idea of race. The human rights violations committed under Nazi programs caused a shift in studies of racial difference and inferiority. As Mullings (2005) points out, analysis of U.S. attempts “to project itself as the international leader in freedom and individual rights” fail to acknowledge “the critical role of the anticolonial, black liberation, and antiapartheid social movements in transforming the global racial domain” (2005:674). Mullings cites Holt (2002) and Winant (2001) as exceptions that, “specifically attribute a major role in the global shift or ‘break’ in the old worldwide racial system to the challenges posed by these Diasporan social movements” (Mullings 2005:674).

UNESCO statements on race between 1950 – 1967 challenged the scientific veracity and viability of race for explaining human variability - however, the three racial categories of Caucasoid, Negroid and Mongoloid were still employed, though qualified as not being concrete (Montagu 1942, 1951; Blakey 1999). More recent research of Frank Livingstone (1962) regarding blood type distribution and the correlation between adaptation and particular traits, rather than geographic boundaries artificially carved out to create racial boundaries, furthered the understanding of “race” as socially constructed (Blakey 1999). Though innate capabilities in terms of IQ and inheritance are still discussed as real and measurable (see a critique of Hernstein and Murray, in *Current Anthropology* 1996 37 (1):S143-

S181), anti-racist research on heritability continue to dispute these claims as justification for privilege (Lewontin 1984; Marks 1995, Blakey 1987, 1999; Alland 2002). Since the 1990s, Blakey argues, “Race is essentially a means of defining ethnic and social status of groups as biological entities” and “since the Second World War, this association has often been indirect, despite the rejection of racial biological determinism” (1999:39).

Race and racism had been largely ignored in the anthropological literature after WWII until the publication of *Race* edited by Gregory and Sanjek in 1994. Mullings says this work, “represented an important milestone in renewing anthropologists’ attention to the study of racism” (Mullings 2005:670).⁷ In this volume, Blakey’s “Passing the Buck: Naturalism and Individualism as Anthropological Expressions of Euro-American Denial” provides a sketch of anthropology’s role in maintaining racist social inequality through “American” ideals of individualism and nature that persist today. Blakey characterizes the pattern of explaining inequity through “individualist over social, cultural, and political explanations” as generated from “longstanding Euro-American conservative beliefs that nature and individuals – not social institutions – are ultimately responsible for a society’s social ills” (Blakey 1994: 270). Drawing on these faulty premises, conclusions are drawn that social inequity “cannot or should not be solved by public policy initiatives requiring economic redistribution. No dominant societal group or exploitative social, political, or economic structures are at fault...Justice and individual liberty are believed to prevail within a natural order that is sometimes unkind” (Blakey 1994:270).

⁷ See also, Blakey 1987, 1990, 1991 as examples of anthropological publications explicitly critical of racism.

The myth of meritocracy as a national narrative is sustained through analysis at the level of individuals while that of the nation's diversity is focused at the group level. The nation's story of progress also justifies claims to privilege for those who hold desired positions in society (primarily white elites) and for the nation in relationship to global inequity.

Naturalism and individualism give plausibility to the idea of a just and free meritocracy in which no one oppresses, despite the obvious inequity about us. They have served to legitimize the United States in terms of the revolutionary principles upon which it was founded, and they provide a convenient protection for individual egos whose identities are rooted in those values (Blakey 1994: 279-280)

Blakey provides examples of "modernization studies" measuring the effects of stress where the analysis remains focused on individual choice as though everyone within society (Brazilian in this instance) has equal access to all lifestyles (Blakey 1994:279). Focusing on the individual in explaining national problems sustains national myths of equality and a homogenizing of national identity toward a middle class white ideal that is not available to all members of society. Yet the explanation of inequity is placed with individual choice as though "life-style choice (social mobility) is at the discretion of individuals in a modern society" disavowing the existence of structural barriers of racism and class (1987:279). Within the discipline of anthropology, a failure to recognize and identify systemic racism continues.

Mullings (2005) addresses a continuing trend of multiculturalism as a focus in anthropology by posing the question, "to what extent will emphasis on culture and representation overshadow demands for resources?" (2005:684). Citing Hale's 2002 study in Guatemala, Mullings states, "state-endorsed discourses of multiculturalism

support the politics of recognition, while sidetracking movements that simultaneously contest representation and distribution” (2005:684). A privileged focus on diversity over equality of access to resources and white privilege is a shared problem of the U.S. and Brazil.

The Idea of Race and Anthropology in Brazil

The idea of race in Brazil became significant through relationships between Europe and Brazil – particularly as the monarchy was waning, abolitionists were gaining strength, and the Republic was founded in 1889. An ideological shift began in the middle of the nineteenth century. Brazilian intellectuals subscribed to a “Romanticism” that was strengthened when ties with Portugal were broken in 1822. Within this context, everything “Brazilian” was that which was considered most natural (Skidmore 1998[1993]).

...the Indian became a symbol of Brazilian national aspirations. He was transformed into a literary prototype having little connection with his actual role in Brazilian history. Like the Indian of James Fenimore Cooper, the Indian of Brazilian Romanticism was a sentimental literary symbol who offered no threat to the comfort of his readers” (Skidmore 1998[1993]:7).

This romantic view portrays Brazil as abundant in natural splendor, and enslaved Africans as “the ‘heroic slave,’ the ‘suffering slave,’ or the ‘beautiful mulatta.’”

However, “the free man of color, who existed at every level of Brazilian society, was conspicuously ignored” in the Romantic narrative (Skidmore 1998[1993]:7).

Naturalists visiting Brazil, returned to Europe discussing racial mixture. Louis Agassiz described Brazil as proof that there should be no racial mixture.

Let any one who doubts the evil of the mixture of the races, and is inclined, from a mistaken philanthropy, to break down all barriers between them, come to Brazil. He cannot deny the deterioration consequent upon an amalgamation of races, more widespread here than in any other country in the world, and which is rapidly effacing the best qualities of the white man, the Negro, and the Indian, leaving a mongrel nondescript type, deficient in physical and mental energy. (Agassiz 1868 quoted in Schwarcz 1999[1993]).

Agassiz, a major proponent of polygeny,⁸ was a Swiss naturalist who immigrated to the U.S. in the middle of the nineteenth century, adding clout and prestige to the study of natural history within the U.S. (Gould 1996 [1991]: 74-75). Count de Gobineau, after visiting Rio de Janeiro in 1865, stated, “We’re dealing with a totally mulatto population, corrupt of flesh, empty of spirit, and frightfully ugly” (Schwarcz 1999[1993]:5). Gobineau, who argued that the success of a civilization was proportionate to the amount of “Aryan” blood within the population, published his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Race* in 1855.

Gobineau’s arguments re-emerged in the U.S. during the twentieth century after being translated during the First World War. Madison Grant employed de Gobineau’s arguments in his 1916 publication *The Passing of the Great Race* (Marks 1995:66-67; Fluehr-Lobban 2000). Antènir Firmin, a Haitian intellectual and member of the European scholarly elite, published a critique of anthropology in *The Equality of the Human Races* (2002[1885]), exposing the faulty premises of inequality being promoted by European contemporaries, particularly de Gobineau. In contrast to de

⁸ Polygeny is the theory of multiple human origins that Frederick Douglass (1854) argued against, stating that it was being employed by scientists to justify slavery and social inequity rather than explaining human origins.

Gobineau's work, Firmin's publication became obsolete in French (at least in France, though not in Haiti [Blakey, personal communication]) until his text was "rediscovered" largely due to the efforts of anthropologist Fluehr-Lobban who worked to have the French edition translated by Asselin Charles and republished in English and French (Firmin 2002[1885];2000). Though de Gobineau's writings had long been dismissed as pseudoscientific and racist, his work remained accessible, through translations in multiple languages. Despite the critique of a few scholars, such as Douglass (1854) and Firmin (1885), the intellectual dialogue between Europe and the Americas fostered development of racist and biodeterministic ideas of relationships between history, human biology and race, in tandem with each other.

The Paraguayan war from 1865 – 1870 required Brazil to request aid from Uruguay and Argentina, although Paraguay was smaller than Brazil and not nearly as wealthy. The inability of the country to respond to Paraguay's attacks created anxiety that Brazil was not "modern." Furthermore, the lack of free men for the armed forces required opening the military to enslaved men who were then freed. The armed forces became largely anti-slavery and lent military backing to the newly developed Republican Party of Brazil, weakening support for the emperor, Pedro II (Skidmore 1998[1993]).

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a group of student intellectuals who became enamored with positivism and evolutionary principles gathered in Recife. While the members of the "Recife school" were not alone, they were a championing group seeking a new image for Brazil based in European models of science and

objectivity. Shortly after the Recife School, a group called the “Positivist Association” was founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1876. Skidmore claims that positivism supplied elites with an ideology justifying “modernization” without “social mobility.” However, the continuation of the institution of slavery “made Brazil a shameful anachronism in the modern world” (Skidmore 1998[1993]:18). Abolitionist arguments took on social Darwinian tones. In the abolitionist manifesto of 1880, Joaquim Nabuco stated,

If a race is able to develop in a latitude only by making another race work to support it then that race has not yet attempted to acclimatize...If abolition should mean suicide, then humanity would be rendered a service by those incapable of surviving on their own. At least they would have the courage to leave to the stronger, heartier and braver, the incomparable heritage of a land that they could not cultivate and where they could not survive” (Nabuco in Skidmore 1998[1993]:22).

After several incremental measures toward ending enslaved labor, abolition was achieved in 1888, one year before Brazil established itself as a Republic. A social program was envisioned to “evolve” the Brazilian population, with whitening as the ultimate ideal. A proposal was made to increase European immigration to meet labor needs and to “speed up the ‘whitening’ process.” Arguments against non-white immigration included claims based on the “anthropological truth” that mixture with other “races” would result in degeneracy (Skidmore 1998[1993]:25) an argument which paralleled that of the U.S. Johnson Act in 1926.

Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (1999[1993]) argues for greater contextualization of the idea of race as it emerged in Brazil during the nineteenth century. Schwarcz (1999[1993]) traces institutional development in Brazil and the expansion of professional centers and academies within the framework of a constant negotiation between Brazil, Europe and the United States.

As a curious paradox of the time, liberalism and racism were embodied in two primary theoretical models that, although they were contradictory, enjoyed equal levels of acceptance in Brazil. The first one was based on the idea of individual rights and responsibilities. The second withdrew attention from the individual to focus on the achievement of the group, viewed biologically (Schwarcz 1999[1993]: 11).

According to Uday Mehta (1997), the humanity of the individual, as defined within liberal thought, was key to exclusionary practices that would appear to contradict liberal theory. These paradoxical tenets are often implemented in the postcolonial, national contexts of former British colonies, such as the U.S.

Brazilian elites employed racial ideologies to envision the future identity of Brazil and build the institutions of education, law and health as the organs to realize these visions. "In ethnological museums, historical institutes, and schools of law and medicine, the discussion of race assumed a pivotal role" (Schwarcz 1999[1993]:70). European and American ideas were applied as they fit a Brazilian vision, and discarded where they did not (Schwarcz 1999[1993]). "Mongrelization" was a term used to stigmatize and denigrate "racial mixture" (Blakey 1999). However, Brazilian intellectuals combined a social Darwinist perspective with evolutionary and monogenist models in ways that justified social inequality while molding a vision for Brazil's future (Schwarcz 1999[1993]). A "new" Brazilian race could be achieved by celebrating mixture, while implementing eugenic programs that focused on social and mental hygiene and improvement of "environment" geared toward a white ideal of behavior and biology.

Cultivating the ideal Brazilian

The idea of race in Brazil, had a concerted effect on anthropological inquiry, and incorporated contemporary anthropological methods within institutions, including schools. The research of Jerry Dávila (2003) demonstrates the pervasiveness of these racially and anthropologically motivated social programs in Rio de Janeiro between the years 1917 and 1945. Brazil's most prominent anthropologist, Edgar Roquette Pinto, also the director of the National Museum of Anthropology, argued that Brazilians of African descent and mixed African and European descent were "deficient" but explained disparity as a reflection of environment. Dávila quotes an opening passage from Gilberto Freyre's (1946) *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* in which Freyre "watched Brazilian sailors – 'mulattoes and cafusos'" and reflects, "I ought to have had some one tell me then what Roquette Pinto had told the Aryanizers of the Brazilian Eugenics Conference in 1929: that these individuals whom I looked upon as representative of Brazil were not simply mulattoes or cafusos but sickly ones" (Freyre in Dávila 2003:9; see also Santos 2012). Freyre credits Franz Boas for "admitting the possibility that eugenics may be able to eliminate the undesirable elements of society," saying that it "reminds us that eugenic selection should concern itself with suppressing the conditions responsible for the creation of poverty-stricken proletarians, sickly and ill-nourished" (Dávila 2003:9). This application of a Boasian notion of plasticity, married with a racist denigration of African ancestry as pathological, inspired a eugenic solution of whitening that focused on environment.

Dávila (2003) explains that Boasian principles informed the particularity of Brazilian eugenics. Explicit acknowledgement that African ancestry was considered “inferior” combined with a simultaneous acknowledgement that environment shaped biology and, therefore offered a solution for the Brazilian population. “Soft” eugenics (prenatal and neonatal care, public health and hygiene, mental health and cultural fitness) was favored, as opposed to “hard” eugenics (genocide, sterilization). Public schools were one of the central sites for implementing eugenics in Brazil beginning in the early 1900s. The anthropologist Pinto, created a color grade system where the categories were white skin, brown skin, black skin, by which he would measure the “progress of the physical whitening of the Brazilian population through the dilution of the racially mixed” (Dávila 2003:18). Santos (2012) argues that Pinto was a “universalist” who developed theories (and policies) on human plasticity and the complex interactions between culture, environment, and biology which were independent of Boas and distinctly Brazilian. Pinto viewed science and anthropology as the “guardian angels” of the Brazilian people and the key to unlocking Brazil’s potential as a nation.

Members of the São Paulo Eugenics Society included Pinto as an anthropologist, the sociologist Fernando de Azevedo, and Afrânio Peixoto. Pinto and Peixoto also served in the Mental Hygiene League. How, Dávila (2003) asks, did the idea of Brazil as a racial democracy emerge alongside these eugenic practices? “The trick that allowed both Brazilians and foreigners to have accepted this idea” he explains, “lies in the way the practice of eugenics submerged the management of racial

hierarchy within social scientific language that deracialized and depoliticized the image of Brazilian society” (Dávila 2003:27). The *raça brasileira* (Brazilian race) was a “common ethnicity that all Brazilians would belong to” and “teachers taught students that being a part of the *raça brasileira* was key to citizenship and success. In practice, this meant behavioral whitening: that is, discarding African and Indigenous cultural practices” (Dávila 2003:26). This was a nationalist effort that joined the poor and the elite in making Brazil a modern nation of the new Brazilian Man, an ideal described as “white and Mediterranean” (Dávila 2003:22). This national ideal could be achieved through individual effort. A widespread parable circulated by the Eugenics Society of São Paulo told of “Jeca Tatú” who was “cured of degeneracy by a traveling doctor, whereupon he was able to transform his farm through hard work and become happy and wealthy and travel the world” (Dávila 2003:29). A moralistic slogan was that “Jeca wasn’t born that way, he became so” (Dávila 2003:29).

Progress, within the Rio de Janeiro school system, was measured through anthropometrics and intelligence testing. The creator of the Institute for Educational Research, Anísio Teixeira, was educated in New York at Columbia Teachers College in the late 1920s and early 30s. The tests were to measure the level of hygienic fitness, however, they “had the effect of separating white students from students of color and wealthy students from poor students” with the explanation that it simply reflected poor environment that needed to be improved. Methods of selection and assessment of progress reinforced whiteness as an ideal; results were defended as effects of quality environments rather than connected to race, while simultaneously

measuring non-white biology and behavior as pathology (Dávila 2003:35). The plasticity of biology and culture and the promise of social change provided within the Boasian model (particularly as Willis 1999[1969] discusses this model) enabled Brazilian elites to envision a redemptive narrative and social program for a nation that was criticized by European and American scientists as an example of the degenerate effects of racial mixture.⁹ The majority of research on Brazilian race relations for the UNESCO study, which included the research of Edgar Roquette Pinto and Arthur Ramos, was conducted in the cities where these eugenics policies were piloted – because these cities were viewed as the “sites of Brazil’s future and emerging society.”

Anthropological Studies of Race in Brazil: WWII to Present

Gilberto Freyre’s (1946) canonic work on Brazilian society, *The Masters and the Slaves*, centers on the history of Brazil’s European, African and Indigenous heritage, to argue that Brazil is a racial democracy where mixture is celebrated. Within the context of institutional and social confluence of eugenics movements, this celebration of mixture is understood to be within a program of “whitening” the population (Skidmore 1998[1993]). Romantic tributes to Brazil’s three “mythic races” essentialize African, Indigenous and European heritages as reducible to movements, games and foods that represent “pure” peoples in the past but are now only memories within the new and mixed Brazilian society (see Trouillot’s 1998 discussion of historical silencing through tribute). This stress on

⁹ Santos (2012) argues that Pinto, along with other Brazilian anthropologists, introduced theories and practices on plasticity independent of Boas.

racially mixed peoples' expressive culture to the exclusion of intellectual, political, and economic contributions to the nation thus parallels the U.S. pattern.

Marvin Harris (1964) argues that the U.S. hypo-descent rule contrasts with Brazil's flexible racial categories. Harris' study of census data over time showed shifting identification throughout a person's lifetime. Harris argues that race in Brazil is fluid and contextual. One hundred individuals were asked to classify nine photographs and responded with 40 "racial types."

In Brazil "passing" is accomplished by achieving economic success or high educational status. Brazilians say 'Money whitens,' meaning that the richer a dark man gets the lighter will be the racial category to which he will be assigned by his friends, relatives and business associates. Similarly, light-skinned individuals who rank extremely low in terms of educational and occupational criteria are frequently regarded as actually being darker in color than they really are. It is this interplay between color and other diagnostics of rank which renders the Brazilian census material on race so dubious. Among the 'whites' there are many 'brown' persons who because of their superior economic standing are locally classified as 'white.' On the other hand, among the 'blacks,' there are many persons who are in reality 'brown' but whose extremely low educational and occupational status displaces them into the 'black' category.

This means in effect that there are no subjectively meaningful Brazilian social groups based exclusively upon racial criteria (Harris 1964:59)

Harris demonstrates the need for careful differentiation between descriptive categories that may have been informed by ideas of race but do not represent conceptualization of a multitude of races, per se.

While Harris (1964) does not confirm the racial democracy theory, he does claim that in Brazil there is prejudice but not discrimination. Discussing the influence of

Freyre's claims to Brazil's racial "paradise," on Brazilians and North American scholarship of Brazil, Harris states:

Blanket statements asserting that "Brazil has no racial prejudice" became popular among Brazilian diplomats and other official and semi-official spokesmen who shared Gilberto Freyre's belief...Even Donald Pierson, the first North American to make a detailed study of Brazilian race relations, was somewhat carried away by his enthusiasm for Bahian inter-racial democracy, and tended to underestimate the amount of racial prejudice which actually existed, and which every Brazilian knows full well exists, except when talking to United States citizens (Harris 1964:60).

However, Harris goes on to make a distinction between prejudice and acts of discrimination.

Most Brazilians abstractly regard Negroes as innately inferior in intelligence, honesty and dependability. Negroid physical features are universally (even by "Negroes" themselves) believed to be less desirable and less beautiful than Caucasoid features...On the whole, there is an ideal racial ranking gradient, in which whites occupy the favorable extreme, Negroes the unfavorable extreme and mulattoes the various intermediate positions.

But these ideological phenomena do not seriously affect actual behavior...Racial prejudice in Brazil, in other words, is not accompanied by systematic racial segregation and discrimination. The reason for this paradox should be clear: Despite the "ideal" stereotypes, there is no "actual" status-role for the Negro as a Negro, for the white as a white, or for the mulatto as a mulatto. There are no racial groups (Harris 1964:60-61).

More recent ethnographies documenting the denigration of African ancestry in contemporary Brazil continue to confirm Harris's identifications of ranked values assigned to "racial types," which he terms "ideological phenomena." However, Robin Sheriff's (2001) ethnographic work in Rio de Janeiro during the 1990s demonstrates that Brazilians express greater polarity in discussions of "race" versus discussions of appearance, where a myriad of descriptors are employed. Livio Sansone (2003) illustrates temporal fluctuation among descriptive identifiers preferred from one

generation to the next, and change in the meaning of each descriptor over time. I seek to understand the way these messages are learned in combination with (or distinct from) historical narratives of the nation and, by extension, selves.

Ethnographies that explicitly focus on race and racism, also document continued patterns of socio-economic inequity and systematic, daily acts of discrimination through hiring practices, police harassment, and violence which Brazilians of African descent experience. Donna Goldstein's (2003) ethnographic work in Rio de Janeiro analyzes the daily mechanisms by which Afro-Brazilian women negotiate racism. While not every person attributed their socio-economic status or accounts of discrimination to racism versus classism, there were explicit discussions of discrimination in terms of racism (Twine 2001[1998]; Sheriff 2001; Goldstein 2003; see also Scheper-Hughes 1992). Slippage between race and class terminology is also commonplace in the neo-liberal U.S., where the economic language of class fits neatly into meritocratic explanations of poverty as individual lack of will to work (or work hard enough) to progress to the middle class.

R.L. Segato (1998) discusses the difficulty in understanding the dialogue between the U.S. and Brazil regarding race and racism and argues that understanding national formation as key. Segato, posits notions of diversity within scholarship as both "inert" and "dead" premises for "liberal multiculturalism" (siting Homi Bhabha 1994) as well as attempts to understand diversity as critical of "status quo notions of multiculturalism" (siting Peter McLaren 1994). Segato states, "the main point of my argument here...is not merely to pinpoint the pitfalls of racial politics in the United

States, but rather to emphasize the significance of the specific racial politics and 'formation of diversity'...within national contexts as the outcome of particular national histories" (1998:135). The study of "racisms," for Segato, requires historically and ethnically specific investigations to understand how "specific modalities of exclusion and ethnic conceptions are deeply related" in the U.S. and Brazil (1998:135). Segato describes the "differences" in literature on race between Brazil and the U.S., characterizing Brazilian racial constructions as reliant "on consent" in contrast with the U.S. construction which "follows the compulsory rule of descent" (Segato 1998:136). In Brazil, one's phenotype is most salient, whereas in the U.S., "race is linked to origin" (Segato 1998:196). Segato argues that Brazilians create and maintain "ambiguity" while the U.S. seeks fixity (Segato 1998:197), consistent with the U.S. legacy of hypo-descent.

Segato (1998) stresses the fluidity of color and the importance of interpersonal context. "In Brazil, color is open to interpretation" (Segato 1998:136, citing Maggie 1991, Sansone 1996, Viveiros de Castro Cabalcanti 1996:19). "Discrimination" in Brazil "is never expressed as racism of contingents and enacted as aggression between belligerent groups, as in the United States, but always assumes the form of virulent interpersonal aggression" (Segato 1996:136). Furthermore, whiteness is constructed differently in Brazil:

...while the Anglo-Saxon white is distinctly white in racial and genealogical terms and racial mixture will inescapably signify exclusion from that category, the Brazilian white is 'polluted' and insecure....For a variety of reasons involving either biological or cultural 'contamination,' no Brazilian white is ever fully, undoubtedly white (Segato 1998:136).

Understanding the difference between Brazilian and U.S. national myths is key to “not merely doing comparative ethnography but” also for “efficacious strategies for contestation” (Segato 1998:137). In the U.S., Segato claims, “from top to bottom, the North American ethnic paradigm is based on separation under the umbrella of a common, color-blind myth of shared effort and meritocratic reward” (Segato 1998:137). However, in Brazil:

the ethnic paradigm is based on encompassing the other, inclusion is its strong motif, and the myth here is the color-blind myth of an interrelating people. I call the color-blind myth a unified field of belief, a hegemonic ideology or system of values, where everyone in a given society, independent of that person’s position, may find expression (Segato 1998:137).

Segato acknowledges the “existence of a virulent racist attitude and feeling in Brazil against people of black color” and seeks “to contribute to the formulation of an adequate politics to fight racism in Brazil” through comparison and understanding of the “peculiar processes that lie behind the Brazilian form of racism” (1998:148). While an “adequate politics” is called for, there is within this focus on “peculiarity” a seeming remnant of cultural relativism that could claim racism only exists at the individual level of relationships, while not existing systemically. The U.S. is more fluid and contextual in discriminatory and racist practices that Segato’s characterization suggests, and rarely are racist actions openly expressed as such; however, part of the myth in the U.S. lies in placing overt racism as an extreme element that is not part of every-day life (see Daniels 1997; Blakey 1994).¹⁰

¹⁰ Although not well studied, I suggest that whiteness is tenuous in the U.S. as well, and ‘non-Anglo’ features can be suspect in terms of questioning descent. Racial constructions in the U.S. may be more contextually dependent than has been recognized in literature comparing the U.S. and Brazil. See comments by Dave Schmidt in Chapter 9 as an example.

Segato's (1998) review article raises questions on how to understand difference between the U.S. and Brazil, recognizing both shared and divergent histories and national narratives. Whiteness, whether differently constructed, remains the "cultural" or behavioral normative ideal and socio-economic disparity is experienced most prevalently among people of African descent in both the U.S. and Brazil.

Anthropology and Race as a Diasporic Dialogue

The idea of race, in the U.S. and Brazil, is a concept that has been used in varying scientific contexts to justify social inequality. While the concept of race emerged earlier in the U.S than in Brazil, intellectuals in both countries exchanged ideas with each other and Europe, applying racial ideology within nationalistically particular agendas. In both the U.S. and Brazil, scientific methods were rallied to explain social inequality. However, in the American context, for many mainstream anthropologists and social scientists, science served to justify inequity as natural and innate, while in the Brazilian context, science was a solution used to harness the plasticity of human biology. However, within both contexts, the elites of European descent that held the ideal position of whiteness have benefited from racist ideologies and social programs, though differently configured.

Ant enor Firmin's (1885) *The Equality of the Races* is, according to Fluehr-Lobban 2000; see Firmin 2002[1885]), the first systematic anthropological analysis. Fluehr-Lobban (2000) recognizes with irony that this seminal work of Firmin's recognized the interconnectedness between the false concept of race and the burgeoning discipline of anthropology and was made obscure by the same racist valuation of knowledge. Firmin is an excellent example of the dialogue on race and social justice

that has been maintained by African Diasporan scholars, critical of contemporary truths that justified social injustice and violations of human rights. Historical, political and sociological studies are much more numerous than the anthropological studies on race relations within U.S. and Brazil. However, as Mullings' 2005 review of anthropology and race attests, the development of the idea of race, the discipline of anthropology, and nation building have shared and interpenetrating histories that include and emerged from colonial histories of violence. Understanding these shared histories provides a window for understanding how inequity is maintained by dynamic and fluid ideologies such as race.

Racial projects as they appear in different parts of the world are constructed, in part, from tools and symbols already existing within local cultural repertoires as well as from new encounters and conflicts. As states make race, they do so from beliefs, symbols, practices, and conflicts, transmitted from the past yet interpreted in new ways (Mullings 2005:672).

Blakey's description of national myths of meritocracy may be applicable to the relationship between the U.S. and Brazil and to understanding a shared denial of racism through national narratives relegating inequity to individual responsibility.

Individualism, as a major tendency of thought within U.S. society, denies the pervasiveness of its racism, and the impact of discrimination on African-American and other oppressed communities. In its modernization guise, individual analysis in the physical and biomedical anthropology of Third World societies reduces international and national systemic forces to the good and bad choices of individuals (Blakey 1994).

Reconstitution of biodeterministic premises expressed in new and yet familiar ways continue to justify social hierarchy and white/elite privilege. The pervasiveness of these ideas, in all of their particular forms, lends credence to the idea of inequity vis a vis race as 'natural.' The developments of racist ideology and anthropology within

the United States and Brazil has never been in isolation, but in constant exchange. Ideas of race in the U.S. and Brazil emerged and live within international and transnational relationships. Understanding these shared histories may be crucial to dismantling the ideological underpinnings that continue to persist and maintain inequity and privilege. Rather than opposing models, I view these ideas as being in constant dialogue. The present study demonstrates the ways history, narratives and representations of the past are part of this dialogue.

The Historically Situated Self

Historically, anthropological studies of identity have been concerned with continuity and distinction within and between ethnic communities that form identifiable cultural identities (Sökefeld 1999). Cartesian notions of a continuous ego informed Eurocentric analytical foci on what Erik H. Erikson (1980) called “‘selfsameness’” and how “‘essential characteristics’” were shared in social contexts, attuning anthropological inquiry toward fixity, shared sameness within cultures, and difference between cultures (Sökefeld 1999:417 quoting Erikson 1980:109).

Irving Goffman’s (1968,1969) work on identity employs a dramaturgical approach to understanding “‘presentation of self’” as contextually constructed, fluid, and performed states of being. ‘Who we are’ is a contextual interplay between where we are, with whom, and for whom we care to present a particular facet of our many available selves. This is helpful in understanding the continuous construction and nuance of ‘identity,’ toward avoiding essentialistic notions of a singular, fixed self. However,

Simon Clarke (2008) notes that Goffman's work does not engage with understanding one's "own sense of being," but instead focuses on "marks and signs that distinguish us from others" (Clarke 2008:513). Goffman's (1968) definition of social identity includes the interplay between societal norms and imposed identities that are negotiated within social interactions; a sociological perspective on the role of biography in social life (see Mills 2000[1959]). Personal identity incorporates past experiences that inform how people signify their 'selves' to others. However, Clarke notes that Goffman does not theorize one's "own sense of being" or "our subjective sense of who we are and how we exist in the world" (Clarke 2008:513). Goffman's (1968) 'ego identity' solely serves as a point of departure, an area that he does not address in depth; questions relating to "how the self is created" or what orients or inspires the performances of self in social interactions, are not interrogated (Clarke 2008:513).

Pierre Bourdieu's (2002[1972]) conceptualization of *habitus* specifically attends to what informs social action. Bourdieu understands action and social realities to be created within contextualized totalities, where *habitus* is "the product of history - dispositions of the past that inform the present and generate the future" (Bourdieu 2002[1972]:82). *Habitus* functions through a "matrix of perception, appreciations, and actions" (Bourdieu 2002[1972]:82). *Habitus*, then, can be applied to understanding the ways a sense of self informs action and includes references to the past, which I would argue includes narratives of the past as "history" that are taught and inform "perception" of the relationships between a personal past (biography) and historical pasts. Peter Wade (1999) seeks to break down artificial compartments of

analytical experiences, to understand how action, power, and meaning are simultaneously symbolic and material - creating, maintaining, and transforming cultural identities.

Michel Foucault's ([1988[1961], 1994[1963], 1995[1975], 1990[1976], 1990[1984]) influence on identity studies is situated primarily in relationships of power and normalized knowledge production through social institutions that generate discourse on sanctioned and unsanctioned modes of being, legitimizing surveillance and mechanisms of control (see Clarke 2008; Stoler 2002; Stoler 1995; McClintock 1995). Identities are generated by knowledge about people and difference (Clarke 2008, Sökefeld 1999) and the manipulation of that knowledge socializes an internalized sense of self objectification, self surveillance, the ever present "gaze" (see Foucault 1994[1963], 1995[1975]; Clarke 2008). W.E.B. Du Bois (1994[1903]) spoke to this learned negotiation of ascribed and self determined senses of being in society within his theoretical characterization of African American experiences as requiring "double vision" where self is experienced as "double consciousness."

Discussions of identity constructions and acquisition in Brazil and the United States must attend to power relationships and the colonial and national legacies of slavery and racism. Stuart Hall's (1990) theoretical attention to cultural identity and representation focuses on individual positionality rather than any "fixed" essence of continuity of self or constructions of difference; cultural identities are "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being,'" an interplay of the past, present, and future,

“subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (225). Hall’s discussion of Jacques Derrida’s theories on representation, difference/ differance, and constructions of meaning, comes with a critique of subsequent applications of Derrida’s theories toward identity that have “reappropriated” Derrida’s work “into a celebration of formal ‘playfulness’, which evacuates them of their political meaning” (1990:229). Identity, as a process, never occurs outside of political relationships of power. Although cultural identities, for Hall (1990), have histories and are connected to the meaning made from personal connections to the past, he does not discuss this relationship beyond the abstract position of the past and its representations vis a vis positioned identities.

Hall recognizes how colonial representations that silence African history and heritage in the Caribbean distort perceptions of self. While the postcolonial critique has been characterized as a rediscovery and reclaiming of the past (Gandhi 1998; Nandy 1983; Fanon 2004[1961]), responding to Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* (2005[1961])

Hall questions:

Is it only a matter of unearthing that which the experience buried and overlaid, bringing to light the hidden continuities it suppressed? Or is a quite different practice entailed - not the rediscovery but the *production* of identity. Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of the past? (Hall 1990: 224)

Hall (1990), in keeping with postcolonial theorists, orients his understanding of identity and a colonial past with the “traumatic character of ‘the colonial experience’” (1990:225). However, Hall is clear in saying that part of the colonial trauma includes “the ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation” (1990:225). This did not

occur in a benign or unintentional context of cultural contact, but “the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation” (Hall 1990:225). He describes this normalizing process as a muting of the African presence within Caribbean societies. Though Hall says an African presence is pervasive in every aspect of daily life and the physicality of Caribbean peoples, where the African presence remains silent and unspoken, the European presence “is endlessly speaking - and endlessly speaking *us*,” generating an imposed representation of identity for African descended Caribbean peoples (Hall 1990:232-233). Drawing on Frantz Fanon (2008[1952]), Hall (1990) points to the Eurocentric, hegemonic relationships that socialize a colonized sense of self in non-white peoples. Citing Edward Said’s (2003[1978]) exposition of these relationships by analyzing power and productions of academic knowledge, Hall claims that colonizers “had the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as ‘Other’” (Hall 1990:225), a colonizing of self subjectivity. Fanon (2004[1961]) and Hall (1990) are concerned with the formation of nations and identities after liberation from colonial powers, within post-colonial contexts. As Fanon warns (2004[1961]), new nations and elites can emerge employing the hegemonic tools of the colonizers to create and maintain hierarchy and exploitative relationships, recreating many of the realities from which colonial subjects sought to break free. Both theorists draw on a Diasporan experience of African descendants in the Americas, including their own, to make their arguments.

For this research, I have approached identity as fluid, lived, and constructed, but have sought to understand people’s “own sense of being” as Clarke (2008:513) phrases this dimension of personhood. I have also sought to understand personal

perceptions of power, knowledge, representation, and the idea of race in the process of “becoming” as well as “being” on the levels of personal, local/ regional, and national identities.

Learning Historical Identity

I am interested in understanding how people in the Richmond and Rio have learned to see themselves in relationship to particular pasts during their life experiences and how these lessons have influenced perceptions of self, state, and nation.

Franz Fanon recounts how learning history was a process of learning and internalizing racist ideologies and perceptions of self, region, nation and “Other”:

The black schoolboy in the Antilles, who in his lessons is forever talking about “our ancestors, the Gauls,” identifies himself with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages – an all-white truth. There is identification – that is, the young Negro subjectively adopts a white man’s attitude...Little by little, one can observe in the young Antillean the formation and crystallization of an attitude and a way of thinking and seeing that are essentially white. When in school, he has to read stories of savages told by white men, he always thinks of the Senegalese. As a schoolboy, I had many occasions to spend whole hours talking about the supposed customs of the savage Senegalese. In what was said there was a lack of awareness that was at the very least paradoxical. Because the Antillean does not think of himself as a black man; he thinks of himself as an Antillean. The Negro lives in Africa. Subjectively, intellectually, the Antillean conducts himself like a white man. But he is a Negro. That he will learn once he goes to Europe; and when he hears Negroes mentioned he will recognize that the word includes himself as well as the Senegalese. What are we to conclude on this matter? (Fanon 2008[1952]:148)

Within Fanon's (2008[1952]) recollections, essentialized characterizations based on ethnicity and race follow patterns identified by Blakey (1990); Europeans and their descendants are donors of civilization and truth, which they give to the "savage" recipients of Africa and African descendants. Fanon (2008[1952]) learned to recognize and disdain the "negro" before he learned to see himself as "negro." How do people growing up in the United States and Brazil learn to see themselves in connection to particular pasts and cultures that "contribute" to National stories?

As discussed above, national identities in the Americas include histories of colonialism and slavery, historic contexts in which the idea of race emerged and was used to justify exploitation of peoples and their bodies, labor and lands (Blakey 1987; 1990; 1999; Skidmore 1998[1993]; Smedley and Smedley 2012; Baker 1998; Moraña et al. 2008). The stories of "contributions" made by Indigenous American, African, and European peoples and cultures to forming the nation become moments of identity production, as part of the process of always 'becoming.' The telling of these stories occur through formal education programs, family education, monuments and historic sites.

Stanley J. Tambiah poses that a simultaneous process of "particularizing and standardizing" is a characteristic feature of the colonial legacy (Tambiah 1989:341). Homogenization and differentiation, as Tambiah and Brackette Williams (2001) argue, are part of the nation building project and the postcolonial experience. According to Williams' study of Guyanese identities, "history becomes a siren that simultaneously calls them [Guyanese], on the one hand, to construct and maintain

distinctive groups, while, on the other, it encourages them...to dissolve those same identities into a homogeneous national identity” (Williams, 1991:xiii). “Personal identities and conceptions of self-worth are enmeshed with group identities which are themselves historically constituted dialectical reflections” (Williams, 1991:11).

Williams (1991) views history as a distinctive point of orientation in identity production within Guyana’s nation building project. Williams argues that nation-building articulates with identity-building in a process by which Guyanese “not only construct themselves as citizens of a new state seeking a place in the international order of nation-states, they also construct themselves variously as members of races, classes, and ethnic groups” (1991:xiii).

Williams (1991) provides a framework for understanding identity acquisition in terms of historical orientation and the ways ethnic identity is an historicized identity. Guyanese conceive of particular contributions from the African, East Indian and Indigenous ethnic groups as providing specific components of Guyanese culture that are marked ethnically and valued hierarchically. These valuations of ethnic differences and national contributions are considered to derive from “innate intellectual and physical capabilities of the racial groups that contributed the ethnic cultures” (Williams 1991:171). Historically situated identity “continues to provide the criteria that shape [Guyanese] expectations about individual potential to achieve middle- and upper-class positions” (177). William’s (1991) study illustrates how narratives of a colonial past include biodeterministic ideas of race that are intricately interconnected with identity and ethnicity to inform perceptions of present and future

action and potential. These perceptions are extrapolated to socio-economic viability that influence material expectations within the lives of Guyanese people.

Williams (1991) discusses Guyanese perceptions of ethnic contributions as manifest within “cultural products” such as food and religion. Components of this discussion are present in Gilberto Freyre’s (1956[1946]) classic argument for understanding Brazilian society in terms of a racial democracy. A multi-racial Brazilian identity, according to Freyre (1956[1946]), is made evident by the cultural contributions of ethnically marked products and traditions that are “European,” “African,” and “American Indian” in origin. Freyre’s (1956[1946]) identification of certain types of games as retentions of the Indigenous cultural contribution to Brazilian society points to means by which children’s play and the identification of particular play roles with a particular past may be analyzed. How these cultural contributions are valued and how the value is conveyed and learned contextually is of equal importance, as Williams’ work demonstrates.

In United States and Brazil, personal identities are historically situated with particular pasts that are learned as children and continue to be re-formed, and/or maintained through ongoing positionings of self in dialogues with representations of the past. Formal schooling perpetuates narratives supporting a racist and hierarchical vision of the past, where historical progress was driven by the actions of European elites and their descendants in the Americas. How do the stories of Indigenous and African members of multicultural nations in the Americas fit within the formative narratives that include multicultural “contributions”? How do the histories of slavery, genocide,

and oppression become reconciled within narratives of nations that claim egalitarian ideals? Do these narratives perpetuate the relationships described by Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005)? Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005) have demonstrated the ways ethnicity, race, and history are intertwined in museum representations and the construction of national identities. As Wade (1999) argues, “meaning” and “politics” are only artificially separated in anthropological studies. Humans enact and construct meaning within contexts of power relationships. As should become evident in the following discussion and chapters of this dissertation, representations of the past, telling histories as narratives, protesting historic distortions, are all examples of actions toward making meaning that informs identity.

Constructing Nation, Constructing Self

Historic sites are simultaneously sites of production for national narratives and identity (Epperson 1999; Trouillot 1995; Williams 1991; Blakey 1990). However, building on the works of scholars such as Fanon 2008[1952], Hall 1990, Blakey 1990, and Williams 1991, I argue that identity has historical dimension in how people see themselves, and are taught to see themselves in relationship to particular pasts. This research seeks to understand and explicate the relationships between history, identity and ideas of race.

While Brazil and the U.S. have been employed in comparative research projects investigating race, I will not be using the U.S. as a model against which I study the ways Brazil is different (see discussions in Segato 1998; Bairros 1996 on Hanchard

1994, Hanchard 1994; Degler 1971, Harris 1964). Instead, I seek to recognize and understand “historic specificities” (Hall on Gramsci 1996:439, Holt 2000) as well as the shared roles of Brazil and the U.S. within the Atlantic slave trade, the shared and divergent intellectual histories (see above) and the dialogue that occurred as ideas of race emerged in Europe and the Americas (Smedley and Smedley 2012, Graham 1990; Schwarcz 1999[1993]; Santos 2012). Blakey (1990) demonstrates the socio-political implications of “depictions of the past,” in shaping the nation and self:

It is often difficult to separate cause from effect, past from present, real from reified. Catering to an ideology shaped by stereotypical Eurocentric notions of identity, such depictions alike create and reflect current biases.

Social and political behaviors are influenced by these notions of self and other, of racial rank and role, and the expectations they engender...As long as Euro-Americans manifest such limited and self-centered understanding, their relations with other Americans will remain incongruous and conflict-ridden. The very meaning of self derives from how we understand and relate to others. The racism that continues to distort Euro-American understanding of others... simultaneously distorts their views of themselves (Blakey 1990:45).

Critiquing social inequality, I explore how these shared and divergent histories are made meaningful through actions and discourse on history, identity and social justice. National identities and local identities, as personal identities and notions of self, are relational and contain the histories of these relationships.

The New York African Burial Ground, Richmond, and Rio de Janeiro

For activists in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, the New York African Burial Ground has served as a model and example of the power of the descendant community’s voice and concerted community action. Academically, the New York African Burial

Ground (NYABG) project offers a model for publicly engaged research design and implementation, interdisciplinary research, and collaborations with descendant communities to effect self-determined preservation and representations of their history via historical sites (Blakey and Rankin Hill 2009; Medford 2009; Perry et al. 2009). Human remains unearthed in 1991 during construction of the federal General Services Administration building attest to the history of slavery in New York, a history that was in conflict with a national myth of “slavery” as bounded within the southern region of the nation. The remains of Africans who lived and died in New York City evince the role of enslaved labor in building the economy of New York and the nation. Slavery was a national institution, not a southern institution, and the skeletons of Africans interred there bear proof that the experience of slavery in New York was no more benign than in the south (Blakey and Rankin-Hill 2009; Barrett and Blakey 2011; Barrett 2014, in press).

The histories of slavery, racism, and resistance in the past and present were in conflict with Euro-American national myths. “Resistance is evidence of the abuse of one’s humanity. The establishment and defense of the cemetery...has constituted such an assertion of humanity from the seventeenth century up to the present moment” (Blakey 1998:57). The African American descendant community demanded dignity in the excavation, preservation, research and return of their ancestors. “This three hundred year-long humane struggle of the cemetery’s community represents a struggle for human rights” and “constitutes a continuing assertion of human identity against those who would belittle or belie that status for reasons of economic expediency” (Blakey 1998:55). African Americans “would not

allow themselves to be defined or to have their ancestry constructed by archaeologists and physical anthropologists who were openly taking them through the 'racist power relations routine' (Blakey 1997:143).

In October of 2003, the remains of the over 400 individuals were reinterred. The "Rites of Ancestral Return" ceremonies were held in downtown Manhattan. In this place where Africans asserted their humanity by burying their loved ones in dignity, where human rights violations were/are part of "business as usual," the spaces where their descendants fought and succeeded in telling the history of Africans in New York and in the United States, became a place of commemorating this history and returning ancestral remains to sacred ground created over 300 years ago. Downtown Manhattan was transformed as "business as usual" was interrupted. People in suits and ties stopped and stood up from their workspace to watch from windows as the procession of thousands of African descendants proceeded from the waters edge, where many of their ancestors first entered New York, to the place of their final resting.

Like museums, monuments and cemeteries are objects and spaces that can be observed as acted upon, constructed, and reconstructed by people in the process of 'becoming.' Cemeteries for the enslaved, those forged as sacred space by contemporary Africans and their descendants, as well as those created by enslavers as acts of desecration, remain as monuments to the humanity of the enslaved, testaments to their lives, and to racist contestation of their humanity. The remains of Africans within the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos in Rio provide physical evidence of

the slave trade in Rio, bringing history and the lives and deaths of Africans into a tangible domain that empowers Afro-Brazilians seeking control over the representation of their history and their ancestors in Brazil. The Richmond African Burial Ground has been reclaimed as a space for honoring African Ancestors who were not honored in their burials. The history of slavery represented by the Burial Ground in Richmond recontextualizes historical monuments to the city's "Confederate History." In contrast to a romantic vision, the cemetery brings into focus the relationship of the burial ground to the history of the Civil War in the confederate claim to economic rights for continuing slavery. The cemeteries in Rio de Janeiro and Richmond received minimal support from local governments and only when it was politically and/or economically efficacious to do so. The lack of governmental support for public recognition and memorialization has demonstrated to contemporary communities that the history of slavery is less desirable as public history than the history of, for example, the confederacy, or the Imperial family. Perhaps the histories of slavery and resistance remain too pertinent to the story of present social injustice and are thereby threatening and need to be managed by governmental organs. Within both burial sites, spaces of dishonor and human rights violations are being transformed by descendants and community activists into Sacred Spaces of honor and remembrance. Community actions are reclaiming the positions of honor that should have been afforded those interred, keeping the ancestors alive in contemporary memory (see Connerton 1989 on commemorations and social memory).¹¹ In so doing, descendant communities seek to transform who

¹¹ Within the context of public memories of slavery, slaveholders, and the enslaved, Araujo defines memory as "a property allowing individuals and groups to bring past experiences and events to the present" which (citing Paul Ricoeur), is "mediated by narrative" and, therefore, "always selective" (2012:7).

they are in current society, transforming as well the identities of “whites” and the nation.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into four sections that discuss multiple modes of representation and resonance surrounding sites and memorials depicting slavery and resistance in the U.S. and Brazil. They should be viewed as relational, in dialogue with one another, and analytically incremental. In the first section, (comprised of Chapters 1 and 2) I address how I came to learn of each cemetery site, providing an historical overview of the sites and socio-political actions surrounding each cemetery site. Section two (comprised of Chapters 3 - 7) addresses representations of slavery and resistance to slavery in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro. Historiographic modes of narrating the stories of Gabriel and Zumbi are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. Monuments and public imagery that signify the pasts of slavery and resistance are analyzed in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapters 7 and 8 the significance of these historic representations are presented through ethnographic interviews with residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro.¹² In Section 4 (Chapters 9 and 10) I continue to draw on ethnographic interviews to understand how learning the history of slavery in Richmond and Rio, are meaningful to constructions of self, and the relevance of this process to historic sites such as the Cemitério dos Pretos

¹² Actual names of residents are used where preferred, pseudonyms and anonymity are used where requested. Two individuals preferred both options at different times, so I honor their requests at the times they provided interviews. Therefore, two participants may appear as four, using combinations of actual name identification, pseudonyms, and anonymity.

Novos and the Richmond African Burial Ground. A concluding discussion is offered in Chapter 11.

Section I: Historical Overview

I enter a discussion of my “arrival” to this project with unease, remembering earlier anthropological readings, where a “white” anthropologist recounts his arrival to an “othered” world that he seeks to study and explain to a primarily white audience (for classic examples, see Pritchard 1969[1940]; Malinowski 1961[1922]). Critical revisits to these documents reveal the racist and Euro-centric positions from which early anthropologists operated and interpreted, reflecting the history of anthropology as a discipline (Hsu 1979). Anthropological attempts toward reflexivity recognize the anthropologist (indeed all scientists and researchers) as social actors who influence and alter their research contexts and, inevitably, representation through the narration of a research product (Clifford and Marcus 1986). While this has been a useful discussion, utilizing this awareness toward a critical methodology and product, rather than creating an indulgent, albeit more visible, centrality of the researcher is a tension that continues to be discomfiting to me - perhaps that is productive.

As a European American woman, I seek to position myself, critically, in relationship to the research in which I am engaged. This present study focuses on the history and meaning of two cemetery sites dating to the periods of slavery in the United States and Brazil, located in two cities of historic significance to the Atlantic and domestic trades in human captives: Richmond (Virginia) and Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro). As narrator of this research, I privilege the voices of members of the African descended community who have taught me the significance of these sites to their lives, their histories, their cultures, their identities, and their futures within the

United States and Brazil. I have also learned from European descendants in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, how history and historic sites are/ are not significant to their understanding of self and their place within their state and nation. I have learned that the articulation of heritage, lineage, and history to self, is also patterned by one's socio-economic position and access to privilege. The way I interpret and the way I am interpreted as a white Richmond woman and/or a white American woman, has certainly influenced this research project and the product that I now present. My hope is that I may incorporate these interpretations into a critical analysis.

I employ Burtell Ollman's (1993) exposition of Marxian dialectics as a method for understanding the intertwined process of social relations throughout time and space. I want to know how the dynamic social processes of the past are embodied in the histories told and not told, the historic sites marked and unmarked. How do present social relations make these pasts and past sites meaningful in ways that connect past and present as process? Ollman views the work of Karl Marx as seeking to explicate "capitalist society, its origins, and probable future" (1993:1). Ollman (1993) expounds on dialectical relationships toward the use of dialectics as a method, not only for understanding Marx's arguments, but also toward a larger application that incorporates change and historical process in social analysis. Ollman (1993) defines dialectics as "a way of thinking that brings into focus the full range of changes and interactions that occur in the world" (1993:10). Dialectical analyses enable scholars to enlarge our understanding of "history and systemic connections...by expanding our notion of anything to include as aspects of what it is, both the process by which it

has become that and the broader interactive context in which it is found. Only then does the study of anything involve one immediately with the study of its history and encompassing system” (Ollman 1993:11). Ollman’s application of dialectics encourages understanding of historic narratives and sites as beyond “something that has a history and has external connections with other things” but within the “notions of ‘process’ which contains its history and possible futures, and ‘relation’”(Ollman 1993:11). It is toward this dialectic understanding of the relationship between past and present, and between my self and the research, that I will enter into a discussion of the history of the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and how I came to know of the significance of these sites to Richmond and Rio residents.

Chapter I: The Richmond African Burial Ground

Late seventeenth century - 2004

I attended a program for the unveiling of a Gabriel Historical Highway Marker in Richmond, Virginia on 10 October, 2004. The marker acknowledges the execution of Gabriel, the leader of a thwarted insurrection. The marker also notes a nearby "Burial Ground for Negroes." I, and a fellow graduate student (Shannon Mahoney) who had been working for Michael Blakey as junior researchers on the New York African Burial Ground project learned about the program through Dr. Blakey, who was presenting. The program, produced by the Richmond Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality, consisted of presentations by noted scholars and community activists speaking on: the history of slavery in Richmond and in Virginia; Gabriel's Rebellion; the rediscovery of the "Burial Ground for Negroes" in the documentary record; the New York African Burial Ground and the significance of cemeteries to African American history; and the struggle to reclaim the Burial Ground. One of the presenters was Dr. Haskel Bingham, the great grandson of Gabriel and historian of Gabriel and his descendants.

At that time, preliminary research for my dissertation had led me to investigating the role of history in identity acquisition. Ethnographic readings on Brazil raised questions for me regarding how Brazilians expressed their identities by referring to connections and disconnections with the Indigenous, African, and European heritages of Brazil's colonial history. I began to ask how people in multicultural nations, such as Brazil and the United States, learn to see themselves in relationship

with particular historical narratives as part of personal, regional and national narratives. I had travelled to Rio de Janeiro in 2003 to begin learning Portuguese and had begun to formulate my dissertation questions based on conversations with residents of Rio. I had not intended to study my home city, state and country at that time.

The 2004 Gabriel program was followed by a procession from downtown Richmond, to the newly placed historical marker at the Burial Ground site. Walking in the procession, I must confess that I did not know where the Burial Ground was located. I had vaguely imagined that it was “somewhere” in Richmond, but never knew the exact location. I had not been taught about the history of slavery in Richmond prior to entering University. I did not take courses on Virginia history as an undergraduate at Virginia Commonwealth University. I knew that Richmond had been the capitol of the Confederacy and was connected to the history of slavery in Virginia. However, *where* this “history” took place, where the enslavers and the enslaved lived and breathed, was distant in my mental landscape. I learned this dissociation as a white girl growing up in Richmond, Virginia.

When the procession stopped soon after passing the Medical College of Virginia, where I was born, I experienced a moment of dissonance. I was able to look up the street a few blocks to see where I lived. I had been working on the New York African Burial Ground Project while living on the same street, a few blocks from what would later be reclaimed as Richmond’s African Burial Ground, without knowing. I immediately thought of the ethnographic work of France Winddance Twine

(2001[1998]) who interviewed Afro-Brazilians living on a former coffee plantation, many of whom were descendants of enslaved laborers who had worked on that very plantation. When asking about the history of slavery in that area, residents stated that it happened “far away,” such as in the Northeast of Brazil, or emphasized that distance in terms of time (Twine 2001[1998]:111-118). I recognized that, similar to the Brazilians Twine interviewed, I had placed a spacio-temporal distance in my mind that located the history of slavery “somewhere over there” but not “here” where I live.

From that evening’s events, I began to attend meetings of the Defender’s and became a member of the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, led by Ana Edwards. I learned from Ms. Edwards, a California-born descendant of two women who were sold from Richmond’s Shockoe Bottom slave market. Ms. Edward’s experiences with telling Gabriel’s story to young African Americans in Richmond shifted my research focus to include Gabriel, the Burial Ground and the African descended community’s demand to exercise their right to author their history and determine the representations of their past. Young African Americans, upon hearing the story of Gabriel’s Rebellion, would comment to Ms. Edwards that they had never learned about Gabriel and that they were inspired by the fact that Gabriel had fought against social injustices, as they themselves were still fighting against social injustice.

A recognition of my learned interpretation of my home city’s social and historical landscape, the silencing of Gabriel’s revolt within the history taught to school aged youth, and the significance of that history to ongoing struggles for social justice

shifted my understanding of history's role in identity acquisition. I have learned from residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro how reclaiming the obscured past - through narratives of resistance, through marking unmarked landscapes, and through commemoration - is a powerful act of representing identity, and fighting oppression. Rolandah Cleopatrah, a Richmond born activist and leader in the reclamation of the Burial Ground, has stated that the process of reclaiming Richmond's African Burial Ground has been part of her definition of an identity component of reparations. Cleopatrah characterizes this process as "repairing ourselves to liberate ourselves" because "we are still living the exploitation."¹³ Narratives and representations of the past have served to legitimize colonial expansion, national sovereignty, elite privilege and powers. The reclaiming of historical narratives and historic sites that represent the history of oppression and resistance during the colonial and nation building projects partly exposes those claims to privilege and power as illegitimate. The "repairing," to use Cleopatrah's word, is also to return an historical identity to those whose history was omitted in disguising those claims.

Ana Edward's involvement in leading activism surrounding the history of Gabriel and reclaiming the Burial Ground began after a lecture given by Audrey Smedley at Virginia Commonwealth University, sponsored by the African American Studies Department. Dr. Smedley discussed the role of Gabriel's Rebellion as pivotal in crystallizing the racial justification for white superiority and the inferiority of non-white peoples, specifically African descended people. Gabriel's revolt, planned for August

¹³ Cleopatrah, Rolandah. African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee Meeting, February 2, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

30, would have been the largest slave revolt in North America, had the revolt plans not been divulged and thus thwarted (Egerton 1993). Gabriel and his fellow revolutionaries planned to bring an end to slavery. The tenets of the American and French revolutions based on liberty and equality highlighted the hypocrisy of slavery in the Americas. According to what Ana learned, Gabriel's Rebellion of 1800 was a threat that Jefferson, soon to become U.S. president, took seriously (see Dubois and Geggus 2006). In considering the demise of slavery, the position of formerly enslaved peoples was of urgent consideration, as was the implications of increased numbers of African descended citizens for the racial identity and constitution of the United States. From Dr. Smedley's lecture, Ms. Edwards became interested in the history of Gabriel and Gabriel's rebellion.¹⁴

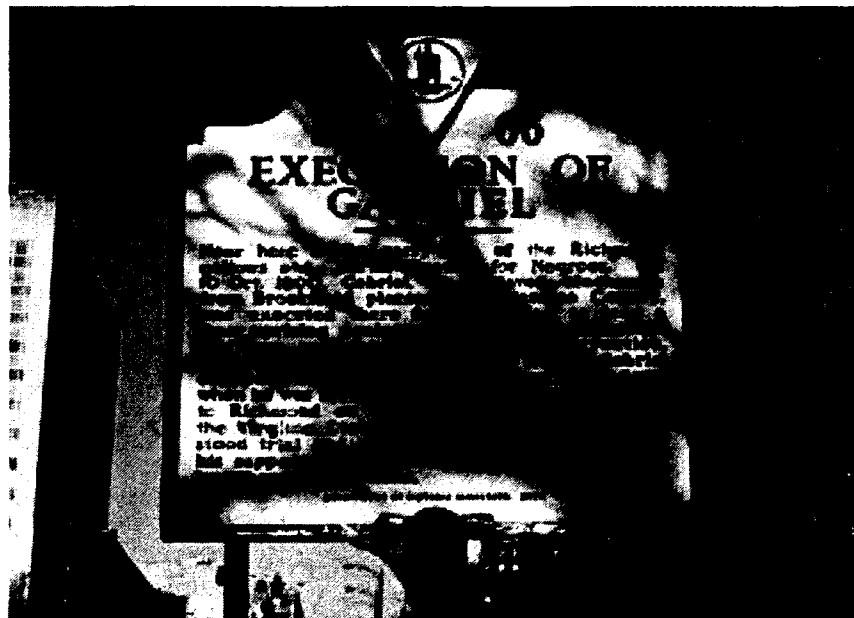


Figure 1.1: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Historic Site Marker for the Execution of Gabriel at the “Burial Ground for Negroes” site. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

¹⁴ Edwards, Ana. September 19, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

Edwards, approximately a year after attending the Smedley lecture, learned about the Burial Ground, specifically, by attending a Juneteenth celebration produced by Omilade Janine Bell of Elegba Folklore Society in 2002.¹⁵ Every Juneteenth since 1996, Ms. Bell has organized a freedom celebration that culminates in a torch lit procession through the “Richmond Slave Trail,” a Commission on which she serves as Co-Chair. The path allows people to retrace the steps of enslaved Africans who disembarked in Richmond at the Manchester docks and were marched to the slave markets and auction houses in Shockoe Bottom. Elegba Folklore Society refers to this historic journey as the “Trail of Enslaved Africans.”

As part of the 2002 Juneteenth program, local historian Elizabeth Cann Kambourian presented her research on the “Burial Ground for Negroes” that she had discovered while doing archival research on the history of a home her family had purchased in 1974, with a title search providing information back to 1745. In the 1980s, Kambourian researched the property to find that it had once been part of the larger Quincy Plantation. Kambourian knew that her neighborhood included the location of a historic slave revolt, and, through her research, learned that one of the revolutionaries, George Smith, whom she describes as “a conjurer” had lived and

¹⁵ Elegba Folklore Society is described on their website www.efsinc.org as “a year-round, lively celebration of African and African American culture. Enjoy art and imports in our cultural center. Sway with our performance company in the warmth and feel of an African village. Awaken YOUR spirit! Or, participate in a guided heritage tour along the trail of enslaved Africans and of other notable sites. The Capital City Kwanzaa Festival, Down Home Family Reunion, a Celebration of African American Folk Life, and Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration are events that have delighted audiences for 20 years. The Society offers the best in African Diasporic cultural experiences, promoting an understanding of the present by valuing the past.”

worked where she now lived.¹⁶ Her interest in the Gabriel Rebellion led her to research the documentary record further, learning that Gabriel and his fellow revolutionaries were executed on October 10, 1800, on a site referred to as the “Burial Ground for Negroes” on Richard Young’s 1809/1810 map. By overlaying surveys with the historic maps, Ms. Kambourian identified the contemporary location of the Burial Ground as 1554 East Broad Street. From the 1970s, this site had been used as a parking lot, primarily for students at the Medical College of Virginia Commonwealth University (then the Medical College of Virginia). Ms. Kambourian has stated that she was met with a lack of interest in her research throughout the 1990s.¹⁷ She identifies two events that changed this: she gave a lecture at the Virginia Museum of Black History and Culture and the Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality began to reference her research.¹⁸

The 2002 Juneteenth celebration was the first year that the Juneteenth program ended the procession through the Trail of Enslaved Africans at the Burial Ground site. For Edwards, the Burial Ground site is significant to the history of African Americans in Richmond as, not only, one of the oldest municipal burial grounds for African Americans, but also due to the way the Burial Ground had been hidden from public acknowledgement for so long. Edwards stated,

its loss as a site, to the black community, represents...a lack of the community’s ability to control the destiny of... it’s own cultural resources, its own community heritage. It was no longer going to be a place where black people could go...and lay flowers. They could not

¹⁶ Arcun, Aram. December 2, 2011. From Armenian History to Black-American History: Elizabeth Cann Kambourian. In *Mirror-Spectator*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

go back to this site and say...my so-and-so was buried here. So that was, I would think, a significant loss to at least a generation or two of people in the City of Richmond. And, that it deserved to be raised, in terms of the site itself and that it deserved to become a matter of public discourse, in order for the community to determine – well, now that we know that it's here, what do we think should become of it? And, I think that's been the driving force – is that they should have the right to make that determination at this point. Because, they were specifically not allowed to have that determination earlier.¹⁹

Edward's, with the Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality, hosted the first annual Gabriel Forum in 2003, and has continued to host public forums, town hall meetings, and commemorative events every year on October 10. Between 2003 and 2004, a petition was generated and money was raised to sponsor erecting a historic marker from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR), which was unveiled at the 2004 annual Gabriel forum.

The "Burial Ground for Negroes" was, however, a contested site long before Elizabeth Kambourian's documentary find brought the site back into public focus. On December 21, 1810, Christopher McPherson, a free man of color, made an appeal to the Committee for Courts of Justice of the Assembly of Virginia, about "*a very great grievance indeed*" (McPherson 2003[1855]:21). Mr. McPherson first noted that a petition by the free people of color for a "new and eligible burying ground" made in June of the same year had not been addressed, nor had the petitioners received a response. McPherson emphasizes the urgency of the matter in that various signers of the original petition and others not represented on the petition, had since passed away, "and were buried in that disgusting old burying ground." The burial ground to which McPherson is referring, is noted as the "Burial Ground for Negroes" on a map

¹⁹ Edwards, Ana. Interview, September 10, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

of Richmond created by Richard Young in late 1809 or early 1810.²⁰ McPherson goes further in describing the contemporary state of the burial ground:

I had an inspection, the other day, made of the present burying ground. It lies directly east of the Baptist meeting house, uninclosed, very much confined as to space, under a steep hill, on the margin of Shockoe Creek, where every heavy rain commits ravages upon some one grave or another, and some coffins have already been washed away into the current of Shockoe stream, and in a very few years the major part of them will no doubt be washed down into the current of James river; added to this, many graves are on private property adjoining, liable to be taken up and thrown away, whenever the ground is wanted by its owners, (this is owing, either to confined space, or want of knowledge of what was public ground;) and furthermore, we may add the humiliating circumstance, that this is the very express *gallows ground where malefactors are interred*. I ruminated on this ghastly scene; and now, thought I, were I in a barbarous land, and such a sight like this was to present itself to my view, I should exclaim to myself, these are a poor, ignorant people. The blessing even of a solitary ray of gospel light has never shone upon them, neither has civilization, nor the age of reason, made any approaches towards their savage habitations (McPherson 2003[1855]: 21).

McPherson appeals to the inhumanity in the treatment of the deceased; in the improper provisions provided for honorable burial; in the Burial Ground's location and lack of adequate space; and in the context of the burial ground's socio-spatial relationship with the city gallows, where criminals were hung and then interred.

McPherson is outraged by a widow's disinterment by city officials from a grave on her own property for reburial at the aforementioned Burial Ground. McPherson states that despite the city officials' "perfect knowledge of the situation of this offensive place, the rulers of the city had taken up out of her grave, last spring, a woman, a poor widow, the second day after she was buried, *in her own bona fide ground on an eminence*, and carried down to this mock of a grave yard. Shocking to

²⁰ The original map contains notations that the map of the city plan was created in 1809 or early 1810. Library of Virginia, accession number 09-1282-02.

humanity!” McPherson goes on to relay a conversation with an Assembly member who tried to assuage McPherson, apparently during the inspection of the burial ground:

And even whilst all this was staring him in the face, one of the honorable members of the common hall, undertook to reason with me, and said that the present yard might be extended, and that the gallows might be moved a little further off, and that the poor house ground contemplated for the new burying ground, was too valuable for the purpose, (when at the very self same time, it was bought for that express, and other purposes.) I replied to him, that the free people of color in Richmond, never would, by any means, consent to be buried in that wasting gallows ground (McPherson 2003[1855]: 21-22).

The official demonstrates the economic motivations refraining the city from providing an alternative burial ground. McPherson makes his claims as a free man and does not refer to the use of the Burial Ground by enslaved peoples in Richmond. Almost four years later, the city announced the creation of new burial grounds in 1816, adjacent to the Poor House, including one for enslaved African Americans and one for free African Americans (Stevenson 2008:3).

Though the documentary record is not conclusive, preliminary research by the Virginia Historical Society (Ruggles 2009) show that the “Burial Ground for Negroes” as noted on Young’s 1809/1810 map, was a Commons area used by enslaved Africans working on the plantations of William Byrd I and his successors, from the late seventeenth century (Ruggles 2009:6).

William Byrd I, of London, established himself quickly upon his arrival to Virginia. Byrd traded with Native Americans, importing rum, and becoming involved in the Atlantic trade in human captives, supplying enslaved African laborers to Virginia planters. In 1673, England granted Byrd land near the Falls on both sides of the

James (Ruggles 2009:5). In 1676 Byrd had the James River Fort at the Falls. In 1697, the British Parliament declared that private owners of ships could engage in the slave trade directly, no longer bounding the English trade within the Royal African Company (Byrd and Wright 1945: 379). Byrd took advantage of this opportunity and bought slave ships that he used to transport enslaved Africans directly from Africa into Virginia (Byrd and Wright 1945: 379; Ruggles 2009).

Byrd's involvement in the Atlantic trade in human captives, has been illuminated by his writings on proceedings following the French seizure of one of his slave ships, the "William and Jane," accused of illegally trading human captives at Portudal, near Goree, on the West Coast of Africa. The French Senegal Company claimed exclusive rights to trade within the territory between Cape Verde and the River Gambo, which included the slave ports Portudal, Goree and Joal. While William Byrd II used his legal training to draft petitions for his father, the outcome of the petition is not known (Byrd and Wright 1945:380-381). We do know, however, that Byrd I, after his arrival in Virginia, employed enslaved African labor.

In Byrd's award of Virginia land, he committed to populate and develop the land granted to him, and he included enslaved Africans among the people numbered within his original obligations (Ruggles 2009:6). A map, dating between 1710 - 1730, within the Byrd estate's book of titles includes "Shoccoe Creek," around which several of the Byrd plantations were located (Ruggles 2009:5). The earliest known reference to these plantations as the "Shoccos," is found in Hening's *Statutes at Large* in 1730 (Hening 1969[1823]). Another reference is made to the Shoccos by William Byrd II in 1732 where he lists a mill, a trading post and a boat landing.

However, Byrd's earlier development of the Shocco's plantations is evident in his establishment of a storehouse in 1712 (Ruggles (2009:5)).

The Byrds' plantations included the land now known to hold the Burial Ground referred to by Young (1809/1810) as the "Burial Ground for Negroes." The employment of enslaved labor by William Byrd I in the latter half of the seventeenth century, his involvement in the trade in enslaved Africans through British traders and later as a direct trader, and the continued use of enslaved labor by his son and Richmond's founder, William Byrd II, demonstrates an African presence on the Byrd plantations which date to the 1670s. Jeffrey Ruggles (2009:6) argues that enslaved Africans working on Byrd's land would have needed places to bury their dead, though when those needs would first have arisen is difficult to say. The Middle Passage wreaked havoc on the lives of Africans forced to migrate to the Americas. So that, while Ruggles (2009:6) estimates that Africans on the Byrd estates may have used the space of the Burial Ground by the 1700s, an earlier use of the Burial Ground is plausible due to the poor health of newly arrived Africans and the condition of slavery's concomitant toll on the health and lives.

Ruggles (2009:6) sites a 1661 Act of the Virginia Assembly regarding the burial of servants, requiring three or four spaces to be allocated for such use. The Act seeks to prevent the hidden burial of servants who had been murdered and the apparent practice of discarding servants' bodies, described as the "barbarous custome of exposing the corps of the dead (by marking their graves in comon and unfenced places) to the prey of hoggs and other vermine" (Henings 1969[1823]: 53). In 1680, the Virginia Assembly passed Act X stating the following:

Whereas the frequent meeting of considerable numbers of negroe slaves under pretence of feasts and burials is judged of dangerous consequence; for prevention thereof for the future...it shall not be lawfull for any negroe or other slave to carry or arme himselfe with any club, staffe, gunn, sword or any other weapon of defence or offence, nor to goe or depart from of his masters ground without a certificate from his master, mistris or overseer and such permission not to be granted but upon perticuler and necessary occasions....And it is further enacted by the authority aforesaid that if any negroe or other slave shall presume to lift up his hand in opposition against any christian, shall for every such offence, upon due prooffe made thereof by the oath of the party before the magistrate, have and receive thirty lashes on his bare back well laid on. And it is hereby further enacted by the authority aforesaid that if any negroe or other slave shall absent himself from his masters service and lye hid and lurking in obscure places, committing injuries to the inhabitants, and shall resist any person or persons that shalby any lawfull authority by employed to apprehend and take the said negroe, that then in case of such resistance, it shalbe lawfull for such person or persons to kill the said negroe or slave soe lying out and resisting, and that this will be once every six months published at the respective county courts and parish churches within this colony (Hening vol. 1969[1823] vol.2: 479 - 480).

Ruggles (2009:6) applies this Act to his analysis on the Burial Ground's history and location by noting the opening sentence referring to "the frequent meeting of considerable numbers of negroe slaves under pretence of feasts and burials is judged of dangerous consequence" (Hening 1969[1823] quoted in Ruggles 2009:6) indicating as he states, "gatherings of blacks for special events were not uncommon" (Ruggles 2009:6). However, Ruggles goes no further in discussing how the Act demonstrates that burial grounds used by Africans to inter their loved ones posed a threat associated with revolt and acts of resistance. This threat to European colonials necessitated legal restriction of movement for the enslaved, forbidding the bearing of arms (for offense *or* defense), and forbidding any form of resistance or marronage, at risk of being beaten or killed. This legislation was passed as Byrd I was developing his plantation estates in what would become the city of Richmond.

Ruggles (2009:6) asserts that the aforementioned Acts of Assembly in 1661 and 1680, referring to burials of servants and the congregation of the enslaved for the purpose of burials suggest that the Shocco plantations would have had a designated area for burying the deceased. Ruggles states that, upon the establishment of the town of Richmond in 1742,²¹

the land between Shockoe Creek, the town border on the west, and the first street, today's 17th Street, was designated as Town Commons. The Public Market evolved in this space and the "Cage," the lock-up, was also put there. The Burial Ground was on the opposite side of the creek from the commons, outside the original town limits, but facilities near it suggest that its vicinity also became commons (municipal records that might confirm it are lacking. In 1809 not only was the cemetery there but also the powder magazine and the gallows (Ruggles 2009:6).

Furthermore, Ruggles argues that McPherson's 1810 reference to the Burial Ground as "public ground" (McPherson 2003[1855]:21 quoted in Ruggles 2009:6)

²¹William Byrd II enlisted Major William Mayo in 1737 to lay a grid for the town Byrd would name "Richmond," which was officially established in 1742 and made the capitol of Virginia in 1780. Though referred to as the "city" of Richmond, the official designation as a city was not made until 1842 (Salmon and Campbell 1994: 193).



Figure 1.2: March 29, 2005 Protest in response to rally organized by Progress Yes! Richmond. Photo used with the permission of the Virginia Defender.

further suggests that the Burial Ground had become part of the Commons. A parallel might be drawn with the colony of New York. The Commons was a space where the non-elite, both free and enslaved, held gatherings, social events and protested in revolt. A segment of the Commons was used by enslaved Africans in New York as a sacred space where their loved ones were interred. Between the 1690 and 1796, an estimated 15,000 people Africans were buried in the New York African Burial Ground Perry et al. 2009), now a U.S. national monument (Epperson 1996; Epperson 1999; Medford 2009; Blakey 2008,2010).

The Acts of Assembly highlighted by Ruggles (2009), combined with McPherson's (2003[1855]) observations and Ruggle's (2009) assessment that the Burial Ground was likely established by the "Shoccos" community, raises the question as to who

began the burial of African and African descended peoples at the Burial Ground? The Acts of Assembly's attempt in 1661 to prevent the "barbarous custome" (Hening 1969[1823]:53) of discarding the bodies of servants may indicate that the Burial Ground was a space designated for the interment of servants and slaves by their "masters." This does not preclude the space from having been originally established or later appropriated as sacred space by Africans to bury their dead themselves. However, we do see that by 1810, the Burial Ground is not considered sacred by McPherson, but a place where dishonor and disrespect were enacted upon the deceased of African descent, both free and enslaved, despite objections.

The documentary "rediscovery" of the Burial Ground by Elizabeth Cann Kambourian brought the Burial Ground back into public discourse. Richmond's African American, descendant community has reclaimed the Burial Ground as sacred space, where those who were not honored in the past are being honored by their descendants today. The descendant community of Richmond disavowed the racial label, "Burial Ground for Negroes," derived from a racist history. As did the African American descendant community of New York, the Richmond descendant community chose to name the Burial Ground in the same manner their ancestors chose to name their contemporary institutions in the Americas, as African (Blakey 2009; Medford 2009). The descendant community continues to demand their right to lead the public discussion regarding the future of the African Burial Ground and the modes by which it will be commemorated and honored. However, the journey from the 2004 unveiling of a historical marker for Gabriel, citing his death on the nearby "Burial Ground for Negroes," to the May 2011 ceremony to remove the asphalt from Richmond African Burial Ground, has been a dialectical process. The Richmond African Burial Ground

embodies “both the process by which it has become that and the broader interactive context in which it is found” (Ollman 1993:11). The marginality of the space and the marginalization of those interred in the Burial Ground are connected to the continued action for social justice for living African descendants in Richmond, and reclaiming honor for those interred. I have followed this process by participating in meetings, events and protests, organized primarily by the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project and the Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality (the Defenders).

Reclaiming Richmond’s African Burial Ground: 2004 - 2011

Increased interest in the Burial Ground after the Gabriel Marker unveiling included the founding of the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project (Sacred Ground), as a project of the Defender’s. However, not all members of Sacred Ground were members of the Defenders, myself included. A vision for researching and understanding the Burial Ground’s significance for Richmond, the state, the nation and the Diaspora was discussed during these meetings. Marked and unmarked sacred grounds existed throughout the state, the nation and the Diaspora. Sacred Ground operated with an Advisory Council that included: Janine Bell, founder and Artistic Director of Elegba Folklore Society; Phil Schwarz, Professor of History (now emeritus) at Virginia Commonwealth University; Michael L. Blakey, NEH Professor of Anthropology at the College of William and Mary and Director of the Institute for Historical Biology; Elizabeth Cann Kambourian, historian and author; Elvatrice Parker Belsches, historian and author. The annual Gabriel forums were organized

and produced by Sacred Ground under the leadership of Ana Edwards and with the support of the members of the Defenders.

In 2005, Global Development Partners Inc. proposed a \$330 million plan to develop the historic Shockoe Bottom area of Richmond, which included building a baseball stadium and housing complexes. Proposals to build a baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom were met with protests based on the destruction of Shockoe Bottom's historic footprint and historic sites, as well as structural problems due to annual flooding concerns (Shockoe Bottom is a low elevated area that frequently floods). A meeting between members of the Sacred Ground, the Defenders, and representatives from Global Development Partners Inc. took place on February 21, 2005. Edwards reported that, "Mr. Lauterbach spoke first, and talked repeatedly about how he respected our passion, that he was 'a history buff' too, and saw no reason not to include the "slavery thing" in their thinking as they move forward."²² Lauterbach stated that history was important to him and that plaques could be instilled at historic sites in the area surrounding the baseball stadium and housing developments. A "Market Village" housing complex was one example planned for the historic district including where enslaved Africans were sold. Ana Edwards led the discussion on the significance of the historic sites to the African descendant community, emphasizing that honoring these sites would require more than plaques. Sacred Ground and the Defenders refused the offer of money proffered by Global Development, Inc. and continued to protest the development plans.

²² Edwards, Ana. Informal Draft Report to Meeting Attendees, Ana Edwards, Tiamba Wilkerson, Phil Wilayto, and Autumn Barrett.

Global Development Partners launched a campaign that marketed their proposal as "Progress Yes! Richmond." A rally was hosted by "Progress Yes! Richmond" on 29 March, 2005 at Richmond's historic Farmer's Market on 17th Street. A counter protest was organized by the Defenders and Sacred Ground and was joined by the Richmond chapter of the New Black Panther Party. The protesters met at the Gabriel Marker, 1554 East Broad Street, holding signs that said, "No Stadium in Shockoe Bottom, Defend Richmond's Black History" with a banner heading "Self Determination at Home and Abroad." A media release by Sacred Ground and the Defenders provided the following quote from Ana Edwards:

"Shockoe Bottom is Sacred Ground," said Ana Edwards, chair of the Defenders, Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project and a descendant of two people sold out of Shockoe Bottom in the 1840s. "It is where thousands of enslaved Africans were sold into lives of brutal exploitation. It is the wrong place for a commercial sports stadium.

"Instead," Edwards said, "this site should be recognized for its historical importance to the African-American community and properly developed as a center for historical research, education and reflection. Such a center would draw visitors from around the country and the world and could provide real economic benefits for the city's African-American community as well as the Greater Richmond area as a whole.

"Join us Tuesday as we say: No Stadium in Shockoe Bottom! Reclaim this Sacred Ground!"

The Richmond Defender reported 60 protesters joined together with banners that read "No Stadium in Shockoe Bottom! Defend Richmond's Black History!"²³ The Richmond Times Dispatch reported that 50 protesters "crashed a pro-ballpark rally at the 17th Street Farmers' Market" but were "drowned out" by a local church band who

²³ Wilayto, Phil. Protest Exposes Lack of Support for 'Progress Richmond. The Richmond Defender, Volume 1. No. 3. April 2005: 6.

elevated their volume to compensate for the protesters.²⁴ Having participated in this protest, I can attest to the band members escalating their volume as we protested across from the Farmer's Market. However, what the reporter did not include was that members of the New Black Panther Party in Richmond, who had joined the protesters, marched over to the band, at which point the members quickly ceased playing and packed up their instruments. The Progress Richmond rally crowd began to diminish over the ensuing 30 to 45 minutes. The Richmond Defender report this protest as a pivotal turning point due to media coverage of the protest raising questions regarding Shockoe Bottom as an inappropriate location for a baseball stadium.

In April, 2005 a request was circulated by Sacred Ground and the Defenders, asking supporters to voice their opposition to the Mayor and City Council. The Mayor was the former Virginia Governor, Douglas L. Wilder, the first African American elected as Governor in the United States. The language of the template statement provided to community members for submission continue to claim the whole of Shockoe Bottom as sacred:

This was once the site of one of the largest slave-trading areas in the United States. It was here that, in the decades before the end of the Civil War, thousands of enslaved Africans were sold into lives of brutal exploitation. This is Sacred Ground that must not be further desecrated for commercial profit.

As in Ana Edward's earlier press release before the March 29 counter protest, the Defenders' statement demands "proper reclaiming and memorializing" that includes

²⁴ Akin, Paige. 2005. Protests Drowned Out at Rally for Ballpark: Group in Favor of Bottom Stadium Pumps up the Jams when Faced with Adversaries. Richmond Times Dispatch, March 30, 2005: B-1.

“a museum that tells the history of Virginia’s key role in the slave trade,” an African American genealogy center “where descendants of enslaved Africans can research family histories.”²⁵ The Defenders called for Shockoe Bottom’s history to be honored as “a place of reverence, of learning, of education and reflection.”²⁶ Trajectories of economic inequity in privilege, wealth and access to resources were explicitly connected with the legacy of slavery:

this project - to be paid for by the corporations, institutions, families and individuals whose present-day fortunes can be traced to the exploitation of slave labor - should be developed in a way that directly benefits the Black community today. This means job training for good jobs with decent wages, academic credits for participation in ongoing educational projects and tax revenue set-asides for community development and university scholarships.²⁷

However, the Defenders reminded City officials that profit could be gained from developing the City’s full historic heritage, stating that, if the aforementioned guidelines were followed, “such a center...would quickly become a destination for people of African descent and others from all over the world. In addition to being a proud and noble achievement, it could be an economic engine for the entire Greater Richmond area.”²⁸

In October of 2005, the annual Gabriel Symposium was titled “Sacred Ground: Sites of Significance/ Stories of Significance and Reclamation.” A panel of scholars, a

²⁵ Defenders for Freedom Justice and Equality Petition. April, 27, 2005. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁶ Defenders for Freedom Justice and Equality Petition. April, 27, 2005. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁷ Defenders for Freedom Justice and Equality Petition. April, 27, 2005. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁸ Defenders for Freedom Justice and Equality Petition. April, 27, 2005. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

museum specialist and activists presented the significance of African and African American sacred space in historical and contemporary contexts. Ana Edwards presented a proposed plan for developing Shockoe Bottom toward honoring the lives of the enslaved who were bought, sold and worked in Shockoe Bottom. In conjunction with the Gabriel Symposium, a Spoken Word Slam in opposition to the development plans for Shockoe Bottom was held at Tropical Soul Cafe, located on 2nd street in Jackson Ward. Jackson Ward is a historic neighborhood that became known as “Black Wall Street” after the Civil War, due to the successful African American entrepreneurs who lived and/or owned business in Jackson Ward, including Maggie L. Walker and John Mitchell, Jr.

Ms Edward’s presentation at the 2005 Gabriel Symposium was also to be presented the following day, October 10, before Mayor Wilder’s Shockoe Advisory Committee, Chaired by Michael Pratt. Mayor Wilder created the Shockoe Advisory Committee earlier in 2005 to review the proposals for developing Shockoe Bottom and Shockoe Slip. However, Ana Edwards was notified on October 10, that the meeting scheduled for that day was cancelled because Edwards had made public that she would be presenting to the Committee. The Defenders sent out a media release outlining the cancelation and the reasons provided. The release also noted that Ms. Edwards’ actions followed the precedent set by the Shockoe Advisory Committee in making the presentation provided by Timothy Kessler of Global Development Partners open to the public and the press.²⁹ Ultimately, though portions of the development plan were carried forward (a housing complex called “Market Village” was created by

²⁹ Defenders for Freedom Justice and Equality Press Release, October 10, 2005. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

converting existing 17th street buildings into residential units), the baseball stadium was not built, and Richmond's Shockoe Bottom and Shockoe Slip sites remained intact for the time being, if not commemorated.

Ana Edwards, in her role as Chair of Sacred Ground, contacted VCU on March 1, 2006, regarding the Master Plan for the University extending to the year 2020.³⁰ The plan included the parking lot on the Burial Ground as site of interest. On March 16, 2006, a VCU representative responded to Ms. Edwards, stating, "We are aware of the historical significance of a small part of the property and therefore there are no plans to construct a building -- just to continue to use the site as a parking area."³¹ Also in 2006, the Richmond Defender newspaper prepared for the upcoming 2007 commemorations of the 200th anniversary of Robert E. Lee's birthday, and the 400th anniversary of Jamestown's founding. "Meanwhile," said Phil Wilayto, editor of the Richmond Defender, "the city and state governments continue to ignore the existence of Richmond's abandoned 'Burial Ground for Negroes.'"³² Viewing the pending commemorative periods as providing opportunities for an "onslaught of revisionist history," the Defender editor, Phil Wilayto announced plans to produce articles on "Virginia's real history: the constant peoples' struggles against slavery, Jim Crow and continuing racial discrimination; the genocide of Native peoples, the

³⁰ I was absent in Richmond for several months in 2006, 2008, and 2009 while in Rio de Janeiro for field research on the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos. I remained in contact with the Defenders via email conversations, was included on pertinent email interactions, and received all reports generated by Sacred Ground Historic Reclamation Project and the Defenders.

³¹ Edwards-Lepley e-mail communications, March 1 and March 16, 2006.

³² Wilayto, Phil. Email report on the Richmond Defender. September 30, 2006.

oppression of women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community; the struggles for union rights and against war.”³³

In 2007, a Reconciliation Statue was unveiled in Shockoe Bottom. The Richmond Reconciliation Statue was the third among three identical statues erected in Benin, England and the United States. Mathieu Kerekou, the President of the Republic of Benin in 1999, to an international audience assembled for the Benin hosted “Leadership Reconciliation Conference,” announced an official apology for his nation’s role in the Atlantic trade in human captives. The ambassador of Benin travelled to cities throughout the United States to convey this apology toward reconciliation (news articles), making his visit to Richmond in 2000.

Benin as a nation, Liverpool, England and Richmond, Virginia formed a “sister cities” alliance in recognizing the role slavery and the slave trade played in creating wealth for their cities and nations. A symbolic Reconciliation Triangle was established, not based on direct trade routes, but a triangle of shared history and a desire for reconciliation. Three Reconciliation statues, by Stephen Broadbent of England, were erected in Cotonou (Benin), Liverpool (England), and Richmond (United States). Benin took the lead in announcing an official apology and in creating the Reconciliation Project. Liverpool followed by releasing an official apology for slavery in 1999. When a resolution to apologize for slavery was proposed in Virginia, Delegate Frank Hargrove responded that, “black citizens should get over it” saying further that no one in the Virginia General Assembly had anything to do with slavery.

³³ Wilayto, Phil. Email report on the Richmond Defender. September 30, 2006.

Hargrove provided this controversial commentary on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.³⁴ Despite this controversy, Virginia unanimously passed the resolution, proclaiming “profound regret” in February of 2007, one month before the unveiling of the Richmond Reconciliation Statue. In August of the same year, Governor Tim Kaine responded to an NAACP request by granting an “informal” and “symbolic” pardon of Gabriel for his role in leading the slave rebellion of 1800³⁵ (see Chapter 1).

Still serving as a parking lot for medical students, the Burial Ground site was purchased by Virginia Commonwealth University for \$3 million dollars in February of 2008. An anonymous group learned about the purchase of the site by VCU by questioning surveyors who were preparing for “improvements” to be made to the parking lot. The group planned a protest and rally for June 2, 2008. When Ana Edwards saw the announcement and engaged the anonymous group, the group stated they,

hoped to stay anonymous in an effort to see if people would rally around an idea instead of a group. We know that we could have joined your call to action and appreciate all that you’ve done, but we felt that our action may benefit, both the burial grounds [sic] and SGHRP [Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project] as an autonomous cell.³⁶

³⁴ Hargrove quoted in article by Colbert I. King. In Virginia, More to ‘Get Over’ Than Slavery. Washington Post Company. Saturday, January 2007; A23. Accessed May 17, 2012.

³⁵ Gov. ‘pardons’ Gabriel’s Rebellion slave. USA Today. August 31, 2007. The Associated Press. Accessed March 9, 2012. See also: Lazarus, Jeremy M. (Richmond Free Press) After 207 Years VA Gov Pardons Freedom Fighter Gabriel Prosser. Posted in It’s About Time: Black Panther Party Legacy & Alumni, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Announcements/Virginia_pardons_Gabriel_Prosser.html Accessed Saturday, March 17, 2012.; Ebrahim, Ruth. Virginia State NAACP Conference requests pardon of Gabriel. The Caroline Progress. <http://www.co.caroline.va.us/gabirelpardon.html> Accessed March 17, 2012.

³⁶ Edwards, Ana. Email communication with Anonymous Group. May 27, 2008. Permission Granted by Ana Edwards.

Meetings were held for collaborative preparations and a the protest was held on June 2 calling for VCU to “Stop Paving Over Richmond’s Black History.” Shanna Merola, an art student who created a photography exhibit of the Richmond African Burial Ground (exhibited at the Valentine Richmond History Center) and Kenneth Yates, a Richmond activist later identified themselves as the lead organizers.

During the monthly Slave Trail Commission meeting held on June 5, the Commission announced that they had recently met with City officials, VCU officials, as well as the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The Commission reported that all three of the VCU officials claimed to be unaware of the historical significance of the parking lot site and agreed to suspend alterations pending the investigations of the STC and the VDHR (Edwards pers. com. June 5, 2008). This report contradicts the 2006 Edwards-Lepley communication where VCU acknowledged knowing of the historical significance of the Burial Ground site, stating the Universities intention to continue using it as a parking lot (see above).³⁷

Ms. Edwards, in the June 5, 2008 Slave Trail Commission meeting, strongly emphasized the need for transparency, “and that the Slave Trail Commission take hold of this opportunity to follow the model of New York's African Burial Ground and engage the community in the discussions - getting the community's recommendations on reclamation, archaeology and memorializing of the site.”³⁸ An offer by VCU to set aside a small 55 X 110 square foot portion of the parking lot on

³⁷ Edwards-Lepley e-mail communications, March 1 and March 16, 2006.

³⁸ Edwards, Ana. Email report June 5, 2008.

the western boundary, was announced at this Slave Trail Commission Meeting.³⁹ According to media coverage, VCU would continue to keep the parking lot temporarily closed to prepare for site alterations, but “bowing to community



Figure 1.3: Gabriel Commemoration, October 10, 2007. The original banner used in the 2004 commemorative unveiling of the historic marker is being displayed. Photo taken by Phil Wilayto, editor of the Richmond Defender newspaper.

pressure,” decided to postpone repaving until further research on the location and boundaries of the site could be conducted by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and members of the Slave Trail Commission.⁴⁰ An annual commemoration of Gabriel was held on October 10, 2007. Those who wished to,

³⁹ Edwards, Ana. Personal communication, 2012.

⁴⁰ Jones, Will. Protesters criticize plan to pave burial site. Richmond Times Dispatch. June 2, 2008. http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/jun/02/-rtd_2008_06_02_0209-ar-132078/ Accessed March 18, 2012.

proceeded to the Burial Ground site to participate in a libations ceremony performed by Maat Free.

Ana Edwards remembers this period of time to be a significant shift in the reclamation struggle. On June 3, 2008, the day after the collaborative protest, completion of the second phase of archaeological investigations into the Lumpkin's Jail site was celebrated. Ana remembers that one by one, six, seven, eight people" in the audience "stood up and said, 'this is not right'" protesting the continued use of the Burial Ground as a parking lot to the City and State officials who were present (Edwards in Utsey 2010). Continuing the increased momentum, activists met to strategize in maintaining the community awareness surrounding the Burial Ground, for example, the upcoming Mayoral debate was attended by several activists to ask the candidates where they stood on the Burial Ground's reclamation and commemoration. Presentations were prepared for Juneteenth celebrations which would culminate at the Burial Ground. Throughout the month of June, activists held daily vigils at the Burial Ground.

Governor Tim Kaine was preparing to unveil a Civil Rights monument on Virginia's Capitol Square on July 21, 2008. Sacred Ground and the Defenders foregrounded the disjunction between the upcoming state funded commemorations of Virginia African American Civil Rights activism, while State and City officials continued to ignore the voice of contemporary African Americans demanding the right to honor their ancestors. On June 15, 2008, Sacred Ground made a broad "call to action" for community members to send letters and voice protest to VCU President Eugene

Trani; Tim Kaine, Governor of Virginia; Delores McQuinn, City Council Woman and Chair of the Slave Trail Commission; and state legislator Viola Baskerville.

Petitioners were asked to “reclaim this sacred ground” by demanding: “1) no reopening of the parking lot. 2) no ‘upgrading’ of the parking lot. 3) No division of the site into a parking lot and a small memorial area. 4) Reclaim the entire site and - in consultation with Richmond’s Black community - devise a plan to properly memorialize the Burial Ground.”⁴¹ Keeping the Burial Ground struggle active within community dialogue, on July 27, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL) hosted a Richmond African Burial Ground Symposium at the Nubian Village Academy in Richmond where a panel of speakers presented on the Burial Ground, including: Ana Edwards (Sacred Ground), Janine Bell (Elegba Folklore Society), Jonathan Davis (3rd district City Hall candidate for election) and Dr. Ayaba Bey (Universal Truth Ministries).

VDHR took the lead in providing VCU an assessment regarding the location and boundaries of the Burial Ground, on July 14, 2008, Christopher Stevenson of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources presented to state, city and VCU officials, his findings held within the “Burial Ground for Negroes, Richmond, Virginia: Validation and Assessment” report (Stevenson 008). Stevenson (2008) consulted media sources, maps, the Interstate 95 (I-95) construction plans, as well as four individuals who had independent archival or research knowledge regarding the burial ground. Core samples from eastern portions of the parking lot indicated that 8 to 9 feet of fill had been added to the historic context, thus suggesting the historic strata

⁴¹ Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Website: <http://www.defendersfje.org/id59.html>. Last accessed November 9, 2013.

as intact. In the 1950s, Interstate 95 was constructed adjacent to the parking lot site purchased by VCU. The I-95 construction plans also indicated that 6 to 10 feet of fill had been added to, without intruding upon the underlying strata. Using georeferencing to overlay historic maps onto contemporary aerial pictures of the landscape in question, Dr. Stevenson's concluded that only a small portion of the parking lot site owned by VCU included the historic Burial Ground while the majority lay under Interstate I-95 constructed in the 1950s (2008). Stevenson states that the

approximate location for the Burial Ground for Negroes...lies near the intersection of Broad St. and 15th Street in the Shockoe Bottom area..Because the Burial Ground boundaries were not physically marked on the historic maps dating to 1810, uncertainty still remains as to the exact size and location. The center of the Burial Ground and the gallows are located with a reasonable degree of certainty under I-95. However, it is possible that the site is not completely buried by the interstate if the limits of the Burial Ground are defined by the area covered by the map text "Burial Ground for Negroes" written on the 1810 Young map. If so, then the Burial Ground would extend into the VCU parking lot by a distance of roughly 50 feet" (Stevenson 2008:6).

Stevenson's (2008) provided confirmation for VCU that the 55 X 110 square feet set aside for memorial purposes sufficiently enclosed the portions of the Burial Ground extending into the parking lot site.

On July 25, 2008, a Joint Statement was made by the Slave Trail Commission and Virginia Commonwealth University the results of Stevenson's (2008) report.⁴² In August. VCU, VDHR and the Slave Trail Commission officially announced the donation by VCU of a 50 foot strip of the lot (worth \$350,000 and \$25,000 in annual

⁴² Joint Statement by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission and Virginia Commonwealth University. July 25, 2008. Contacts: Pamela DiSalvo Lepley and Councilwoman Delores L. McQuinn. Virginia Commonwealth University VCU News Center. http://www.news.vcu.edu/news/Joint_Statement_by_the_Richmond_Slave_Trail_Commission_and_Virginia_2 Accessed March 18, 2012.

revenue from the 59 parking spaces being ceded) for memorialization.⁴³ Delores McQuinn, Chair of the Slave Trail Commission said that VCU's donation was "commendable."⁴⁴ Kathleen Kilpatrick, Director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources stated that "We have been able to compile sufficiently conclusive evidence of the location of the historic Richmond Burial Ground for Negroes. We now have a commitment and a fair and reasonable approach that will help the community come together and do what is right by those people who lie nearby."⁴⁵ Will Jones reported that "the Slave Trail Commission plans to seek public input this fall on how the site should be memorialized. McQuinn said the process could include three meetings, beginning next month and wrapping up in mid-November."⁴⁶

⁴³ Joint Statement by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission and Virginia Commonwealth University. July 25, 2008. Contacts: Pamela DiSalvo Lepley and Councilwoman Delores L. McQuinn. Virginia Commonwealth University VCU News Center. http://www.news.vcu.edu/news/Joint_Statement_by_the_Richmond_Slave_Trail_Commission_and_Virginia_2 Accessed March 18, 2012.; Jones, Will. VCU to give up part of lot for slave memorial. August 29, 2008. Richmond Times Dispatch. http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/aug/29/-rtd_2008_08_29_0116-ar-125019/ Accessed March 18, 2012.

⁴⁴ Jones, Will. VCU to give up part of lot for slave memorial. August 29, 2008. Richmond Times Dispatch. http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/aug/29/-rtd_2008_08_29_0116-ar-125019/ Accessed March 18, 2012.

⁴⁵ Kilpatrick quoted by Jones, Will. VCU to give up part of lot for slave memorial. August 29, 2008. Richmond Times Dispatch. http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/aug/29/-rtd_2008_08_29_0116-ar-125019/ Accessed March 18, 2012.

⁴⁶ Jones, Will. VCU to give up part of lot for slave memorial. August 29, 2008. Richmond Times Dispatch. http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/aug/29/-rtd_2008_08_29_0116-ar-125019/ Accessed March 18, 2012.

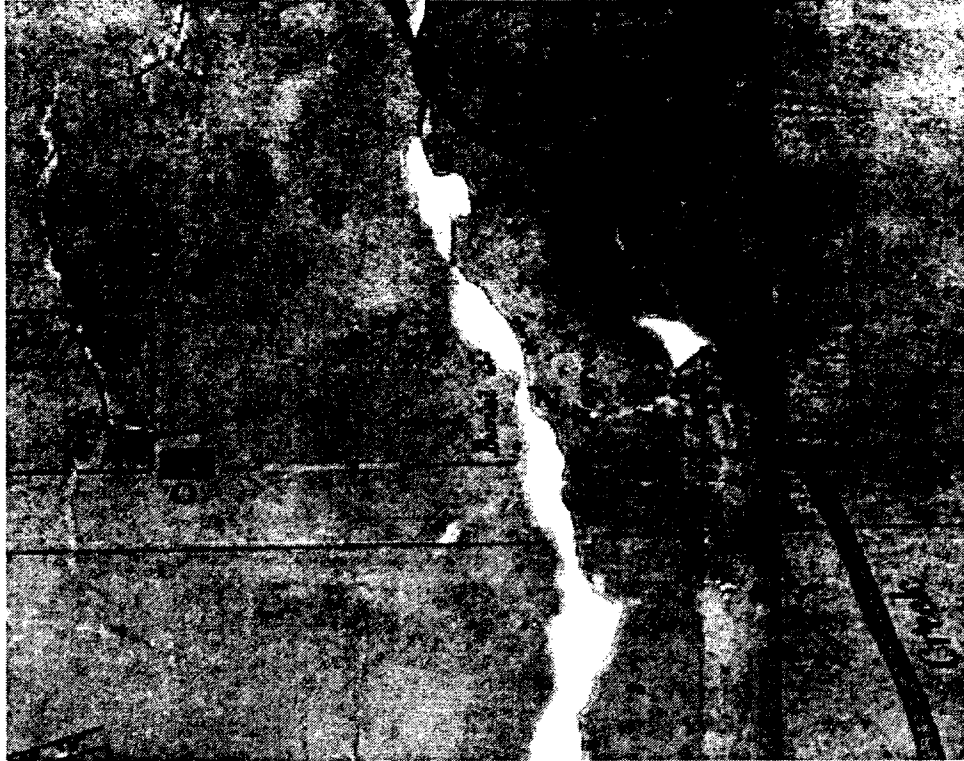


Figure 1.4: Map Detail of the “Burial Ground for Negroes” from Richard Young’s 1809/1810 Map. Courtesy of the Library of Virginia (09-1282-02). O = Baptist meeting house; N = Gallows; M = Magazine

Stevenson’s conclusion, nor his analysis, take into consideration Christopher McPherson’s observations in 1810, the same year the Young 1809/1810 map was produced, that the Burial Ground “lies directly east of the Baptist meeting house, uninclosed, very much confined as to space, under a steep hill, on the margin of Shockoe Creek, where every heavy rain commits ravages upon some one grave or another” (McPherson 2003[1855]:21). McPherson’s description of the Burial Ground being full and the boundary markers he provides would imply that graves were located near the Baptist meeting house (O in Figure 1.4) up to and close to the margins of Shockoe Creek, suggesting a boundary further than Young’s writing of the name “Burial Ground for Negroes.” Stevenson’s report asserts that the written label “Burial Ground for Negroes” is the area under which the Burial Ground was confined.

Though Shockoe Creek has been rerouted, the proximity in time between McPherson's observation and Young's map recordation, makes this a crucial primary document, though not discussed by Stevenson (2008).

The Institute for Historical Biology (IHB) issued a review of Stevenson (2008) on September 20, 2008. The authors, Blakey and Turner (2008) concluded that Stevenson (2008) provides "evidence of an intact historic surface" and "evidence of VCU parking lot encroachment over the cemetery" that is "substantial" (Blakey and Turner 2008:2). However, Blakey and Turner (2008) argue that the "evidence of the boundaries and extent of the cemetery is insubstantial and potentially misleading. The report itself acknowledges that the cemetery boundaries are unknown, yet constructs a model of boundaries that is unjustifiably small" (Blakey and Turner 2008:2). The authors critique the reliance on the size of the "Burial Ground for Negroes" label in georeferencing the estimated size and location of the Burial Ground contemporarily. Blakey and Turner (2008) examine the relationship between the boundaries of other locations and the inscription of the label on Young's 1809/1810 map "reveal the habits of the cartographer" where "one can easily see that those boundaries always extend well beyond the space occupied by the inscriptions of place names and owner's names" (Blakey and Turner 2008:2). Therefore, the IHB, claims that the VDHR report fails to demonstrate the boundaries or the relationship between the Burial Ground and contemporary contexts.

In contrast, Blakey and Turner (2008) argue that the label may be interpreted as the center of the Burial Ground, and offers two alternative methods to interpreting the

potential boundaries of the Burial Ground based on map evidence alone, with both alternatives placing the majority of the VCU parking lot atop the historic Burial Ground. Finally, the authors argue that the oral and documentary sources employed by VDHR do not enable adequate determination of the Burial Ground boundaries as they relate to VCU's parking lot property. However, "the distribution of remaining burials can be accurately determined by archaeological methods [emphasis in the original]" and indeed is the "only reliable means" for such determination (Blakey and Turner 2008:3). Blakey and Turner recommend limited test excavation to the point of the original historic surface, where experts in burial traditions in the African Diaspora would need to analyze "any offerings, adornments, markers, or memorials that had been placed on the surface of the graves" (Blakey and Turner 2008:4,6). Furthermore, Blakey and Turner (2008) recommend forming an agreement with the descendant community prior to any testing and analysis, to determine how the descendant community would like excavators and analysts to proceed, should human remains be encountered (p. 6). Of note, Blakey and Turner's recommendations do not involve disturbing the graves, but simply testing the presence of interments to determine the boundaries of the Burial Ground within the VCU parking lot property. This recommendation is, as the authors argue, "routine" archaeological technique for determining the boundaries of a site for which documentary records do not suffice (Blakey and Turner 2008:4). The IHB report was sent to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, The Slave Trail Commission and the Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality. VDHR Director, Kathleen Kilpatrick later claimed she never saw the report, so a second copy was sent by the IHB, to her attention.

A public forum was called by the Slave Trail Commission on September 23, 2008 to discuss the Burial Ground. Dr. Michael Blakey was invited to participate on the panel, alongside Kathleen Kilpatrick. Dr. Blakey, however, was contacted the day before by the Slave Trail Commission Co-Chair, Omilade Janine Bell, indicating that the forum was not going forward.⁴⁷ Blakey emailed Ana Edwards to let her know the event was cancelled. Ms. Edwards followed up with the Slave Trail Commission and spoke with Sam Patteson, who informed her that the forum had not been cancelled but, “he said that Delores [McQuinn], or someone had talked to Janine Bell about letting him [Blakey] know that he should come to a subsequent meeting and not this meeting.”⁴⁸ This was not the message conveyed to Blakey, who did not go because he thought it was cancelled. The Richmond Times Dispatch reported, “The author of the report questioning the boundaries of a burial ground for slaves covered by a Virginia Commonwealth University-owned parking lot did not attend a forum on how the site should be memorialized.”⁴⁹ Indeed, the Slave Trail Commission has a reputation for announcing an incorrect meeting place, changing meeting dates and/or canceling their monthly meetings with little notice, making public attendance and participation difficult.⁵⁰ The September 23 public forum was not cancelled and went

⁴⁷ Blakey-Bell email correspondence, September 17 - 22, 2008. Permissions granted by Dr. Michael Blakey.

⁴⁸ Edwards, Ana. Interview, October 22, 2008. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

⁴⁹ Farmer, Robin. ‘Let’s Respect’ site for buried slaves: About 30 attend forum addressing Richmond graves. Richmond Times Dispatch, September 24, 2008. Pg B-3.

⁵⁰ An example of this is noted in my field notes from a Slave Trail Commission Meeting on July 1, 2010 where the wrong place name had been published in the announcement. I had previously gone to the meeting place provided in the announcement only to find a locked door. However, I heard of such frustrations on multiple occasions from community members.

forward with Delores McQuinn and Kathleen Kilpatrick speaking to the reports and the Burial Ground.

During the discussion period, one African American man in the audience referred to the treatment of the Burial Ground as “desecration” and disrespect.⁵¹ Broadly, there was an audience consensus that the Burial Ground should cease being used as a parking lot until testing can be conducted to determine if human remains are beneath the surface.⁵² Ana Edwards stated that Ms. Kilpatrick was “livid” that Ana had not advised her of Dr. Blakey’s report beforehand, saying that the report brought into question her integrity as an archaeologist. Delores McQuinn was concerned that the agreement with VCU was jeopardized by the Blakey and Turner (2008) report.

Dr. Blakey presented on the Blakey and Turner (2008) report at the “6th Annual Commemoration of ‘Gabriel’s Rebellion’ and the ‘Burial Ground for Negroes’” hosted by the Defenders and Sacred Ground at Asbury Methodist Church in the Churchill neighborhood of Richmond. Speaking to the reclamation efforts of the descendant community, Deiyah Rasheed told a Washington Post reporter, “We want all of it....It is sacred to me as a black woman. My ancestors were buried there. They were the ones who built Richmond. They were the nurses. They were the maids. They were the field croppers. They deserve some honor and respect.”⁵³

⁵¹ Although I was in Rio de Janeiro conducting fieldwork at the time of the IHB report composition and this public forum, Dr. Utsey graciously allowed me to view his film footage of the September 23 public forum. Ana Edwards also provided me with a report of the proceedings.

⁵² Edwards, Ana. Edwards-Barrett communication, September 25, 2008.

⁵³ Gold, Maria. 2008 Slaves' History Buried in Asphalt. The Washington Post, October 27, 2008.

Similar comments were provided by Duron Chavis, who expressed that the Burial Ground site would already be “a nice grassy area” if someone connected to a European American notable, such as “George Washington’s mother” were believed to buried there.⁵⁴ Phil Wilayto said, “That land does not belong to Virginia Commonwealth University. It belongs to the black community of this city and this country.”⁵⁵ A group of community members met to continue work to reclaim the Burial Ground space, serving as an entity independent of the Defenders and Sacred Ground. On October 23, 2008, the group chose to name itself the Committee to Rescue Richmond's Black History and Antiquities (CRRBHA). Meanwhile, developers were, once again, proposing a baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom and were again thwarted.



Figure 1.5: Dr. Michael Blakey presenting on the IHB response to the VDHR assessment of the Richmond African Burial Ground site. October 10, 2008,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

annual Gabriel Commemoration, Asbury Methodist Church. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

On November 6, 2008, Chief Kundumuah IV of Princes Town, Ghana and his delegation visited the Richmond African Burial Ground to perform and “Atonement and Reconciliation Ceremony.” The Chief’s Linguist,⁵⁶ Kaku Alude, stated that while the day is “supposed to be full of joy,” because of the circumstances under which those interred were buried, “we cannot call it a day of joy, but a day of sorrow...for the people buried here, most of them are buried here not for their own evil doings, but the evil acts of some people...”⁵⁷

Alude went on to say that, traditionally, women “would be wailing - the whole place would be full of...tears.” Furthermore, an animal would have been sacrificed, but Virginia state laws prohibited this part of the ceremony. In a separate interview with

⁵⁶ I attended and digitally recorded the ceremony on November 6, 2008. However, the full name of Chief Kundumuah, the official title of Kaku Alude and an interview with Alude by Dr. Shawn Utsey (Utsey 2010) were used in conjunction with my transcription. The wind levels were very high that day and portions were inaudible. I provide notation at points where Utsey (2010) were relied upon.

⁵⁷ Transcription of November 6, 2008 ceremony, by Autumn Barrett, November 6, 2008. A draft was shared with Ana Edwards, Patty Parks, and Grace Turner, for further clarification of any inaudible or sections that were difficult to hear due to wind levels.



Figure 1.6: Ana Edwards (left) on November 6, 2008, with Chief Nana Ndama Kundumuah IV and his delegation from Princes Town, Ghana at an “Atonement and Reconciliation Ceremony” held at the Richmond African Burial Ground. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Dr. Utsey, Alude said that the sacrifice would have served to “transfer the pain and agony that the fallen heroes went through” to the animal (Alude in Utsey 2010).

Instead, the ceremony was conducted with a calabash filled with water. The water served as “a tangible expression of life, love, peace, hope, and unity for all African Americans. Finally, this symbol will foster the true prosperity: good health, good spiritual and physical development, of the American and African, the ancestral hope.”

Alude said that the “water that is going to be poured is going to bring all the loved ones who are buried here together.”⁵⁸ After the ceremony, continuing to speak on behalf of the Chief, Alude spoke to life after death, saying “when one dies...the soul or the spirit’s form lives on. All that we are doing today, I am sure that, it’s been so long, yet our brothers and sisters are still watching on.”⁵⁹ Alude stressed that the

⁵⁸ Transcription of November 6, 2008 ceremony, by Autumn Barrett.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Burial Ground site needed to be preserved and not used as a parking lot, for “you must uphold and hold the heritage...you have.” To let development continue would risk this, “step by step, you know, the whole place will be taken and there will be no history, there will be nothing for us. We need to preserve *all* this, so we are adding our voice, as coming from so far, and we are touched.”⁶⁰ Alude went further to say, “as Africans, as Americans, as blacks, we *do not* play with...our culture. Because culture is for the totality of Man. What you are is your culture. And if you allow a certain part or a certain portion to go, than we are *no* more.”⁶¹ The Burial Ground serves as a place to always come back to, knowing that this space “is where our brothers, and mother, and the heroes” are there.⁶²

In 2009, Delores McQuinn was elected member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Delegate McQuinn continued in her role as the Chair of the Sacred Ground Committee, despite the position’s historic relationship with the 6th district City Councilperson. Academics within Richmond based historical institutions continued to contribute to the dialogue on existing evidence of the the location of Richmond African Burial Ground. Jeffrey Ruggles, curator of prints and photographs at the Virginia Historical Society (VHS) presented his research (see discussion above of Ruggles 2009) at a conference hosted by the VHS on February 28, 2009. The Lumpkin’s Jail site, as the premiere initiative of the Slave Trail Commission, gained

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Clarified by comparing with Utsey 2010.

⁶² Transcription of November 6, 2008 ceremony, by Autumn Barrett.

national attention by being featured in the Smithsonian Magazine.⁶³ Despite the increased attention of national media and academics, in August 2009 Virginia Commonwealth University proceeded to repave the Burial Ground (see Figure 1.7). On August 4, a protest and press conference were held at the Burial Ground site. The protest banner read “VCU Stop Repaving Richmond’s Burial Ground for Negroes” (see Figure 1.8). Salim Khalfani, the Executive Director of the NAACP Virginia Chapter led a press conference (see Figure 1.9) where he discussed Richmond as the capitol of the Confederacy and home to one of the largest markets in the United States where enslaved Africans were bought and sold. “Now,” Khalfani said, “without regard to the sacredness of the Africans buried here, and others, VCU is paving the site to utilize it for parking. No sane or rational people will allow this to happen.”⁶⁴ Khalfani locates VCU’s decision to repave the Burial Ground within an ongoing and systemic assault on the United States against the humanity of African descended people in the United States, referring to the broad spectrum of oppression and violence experienced by African Americans. Representatives from the VCU student chapter of the NAACP, the Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project, the Defenders, and Dr. Utsey of VCU were joined by community members in voicing opposition to VCU’s actions and the continued disregard of the descendant community’s demand to have the site evaluated and commemorated.

⁶³ Tucker, Abigail. 2009 Digging up the Past at a Richmond Jail: The excavation of a notorious jail recalls Virginia’s leading role in the slave trade. In *Smithsonian Magazine*, Vol. October 2009. Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution.

⁶⁴ Khalfani, Salim. August 4, 2008 Press Conference. Richmond, Virginia. United States.



Figure 1.7: Richmond African Burial Ground in the process of being repaved by VCU on August 4, 2009. Photo by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 1.8: Protest against Repaving the Richmond African Burial Ground Site by VCU on August 4, 2009. Photo by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 1.9: Press Conference led by King Salim Khalfani, Executive Director of the NAACP Virginia Chapter, Protesting the Repaving of the Richmond African Burial Ground Site by VCU. Photo by Autumn Barrett, August 4, 2009.

Petitions and letters were sent to VCU President Rao. Donald Gehring, on behalf of President Rao, responded to one resident by stating that VCU was moving forward based on the Joint Statement released in 2008 (see above), the report issued by Dr. Stevenson of the VDHR, and the belief that the Slave Trail Commission was moving forward in learning how the community wanted to memorialize the small donated strip of land. The resident was provided a link to the 2008 Joint Statement.⁶⁵

The 6th District Councilwoman Ellen F. Robertson held a public meeting on September 12, 2009, to discuss development of the Shockoe Bottom district.

Councilman Robertson and Peter H. Chapman, Richmond Deputy Chief

⁶⁵ Duke-Gehring Correspondence. September 2, 2009. Correspondence sent to me and to Ana Edwards by Reverend Margaret Duke, author of the letter to which Dr. Rao's office responded.

Administrative Officer for Economic and Community Development outlined a need for “pride in history” and the incorporation of African American history into the story told in Shockoe Bottom, a story of significance beyond the City and State, but for the whole Nation. The Councilwoman asked if there were any “newer homeowners” that would like to share their thoughts. Although I had lived in Church Hill as a homeowner for approximately 10 years at the time, I raised my hand to ask how the current economic plan was being coordinated with the Slave Trail Commission and what place the burial ground had in these plans and if the desires of the descendant community for the Burial Ground would be honored. Welliver stepped forward, representing the Slave Trail Commission, to say that “perception is not reality,” explaining that the Commission was working to memorialize the portion of the site “we think” is the Burial Ground. Welliver also stated that the land was currently under private ownership, but that VCU had offered to sell the land for the purchasing price. I asked if a plans were included in the current economic development proposal to purchase the site from VCU, make it public, and commission archaeological testing so that the boundaries of the Burial Ground could be known. I was told that it was unknown at this time if these initiatives would be funded.⁶⁶

The seventh annual “Commemoration of Gabriel’s Rebellion and the ‘Burial Ground for Negroes’” was promoted as “A Day to Reclaim Shockoe Bottom” where the forum presentations focused on academic and artistic productions focused on the Richmond African Burial Ground. Among the presenters, Dr. Shawn Utsey’s previewed his upcoming documentary film “Meet Me in the Bottom,” which was

⁶⁶ Barrett, Autumn. Notes from Public Meeting of the “Gateway 6th District Meeting: Topic is Shockoe Bottom Land Study,” September 12, 2009.

released in 2010, winning the Virginia Independent Film Festival “Best Documentary” and “Audience Choice Award.” Utsey documents the history of the Richmond African Burial Ground and the descendant community’s fight to have the site recognized (Utsey 2010).

July 1, 2010, a court hearing of the Writ of Mandamus suit filed by Sa’ad El-Amin, a former 6th District City Councilman and Chair of the Slave Trail Commission against the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and Kathleen Kilpatrick. Mr. El-Amin, using an affidavit by Dr. Michael Blakey, requested the judge to order VDHR to conduct a non-invasive archaeological testing of the Burial Ground site to determine the boundaries. He argued that failure to do so such testing is in breach of the department's charge to identify, verify, and preserve the State’s historic resources. The judge ordered in favor of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and Kathleen Kilpatrick and the VDHR was not mandated to conduct testing. In a Sacred Ground report on the proceedings, Ana Edwards ended by saying “Remember, the true call here is for the respect that is overdue for a peoples' ancestral (and present) burial sites, the descendant community's right to know what can be known about its history, and the right of that community to decide what to do about this Sacred Ground.”⁶⁷ The 2010 Gabriel commemoration served as an update on Utsey’s (2010) documentary film and the efforts to reclaim the Burial Ground, and most urgently, to cease the use of the site as a parking lot. From this “Town Hall Meeting,” a new iteration of the previous CRRBHA was formed, called the African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee (ABGCOC). On November 18,

⁶⁷ Edwards, Ana. Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project Report. July 7, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

2010 a “die-in” protest was conducted by VCU Students for a Democratic Society to voice their opposition to VCU’s use of the Burial Ground site as a parking lot, calling the site “the Ellis Island for slaves.”⁶⁸ Students marched silently in a procession from the African American Studies Department to the Schaffer Court area of VCU Campus, poured “libations for ancestors and future children” and laid down in silent protest. During the “die-in,” some of the protesters passed out informational material explaining the students’ actions.⁶⁹

The Richmond African Burial Ground site remained in use by VCU as a parking lot into 2011. On April 6, 2011, the African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee sent a letter to Delegate Delores McQuinn requesting clarification on “the next steps” the Commission was taking to memorialize the Burial Ground. Of primary concern for the ABGCOC, was:

- 1) When will the VCU parking lot that now sits on the site of the Burial Ground be closed?
- 2) When will the parking lot asphalt be removed?
- 3) What plans does the Slave Trail Commission now have for this site?

Furthermore, the ABCOC requested information on the contracts and distribution of monies generated from development plans related to the Burial Ground site, stating

We strongly believe that any development of this site should first benefit the community descended from those who were buried there. A great debt of unpaid wages is due the enslaved Africans whose labor built this city, and it is only fitting that whatever financial benefits flow from reclaiming the site should first go to those whose ancestors were denied payment for their labor.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Students for a Democratic Society. November 19, 2010. <http://sdsvcu.wordpress.com/2010/11/19/african-burial-ground-die-in/> accessed March 18, 2012.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Members of Richmond’s African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee. Letter to Delegate Delores McQuinn and the Richmond Slave Trail Commission. April 6, 2011.

The ABGCOC The transparency of Slave Trail Commission operations and the methods by which membership was chosen and maintained was also addressed as a third issue in the letter. The continued use of the Burial Ground site as a parking lot prompted protests during the April 10 unveiling of the new Slave Trail Markers where language on the Burial Ground sign stated there had once been a parking lot on the site, while asphalt remained and the cars were still parking. Approximately 80 people gathered at the Burial Ground and then proceeded to the Lumpkin's Jail site where the unveiling events were to begin (see Figure 1.10 and 1.11). Feedback from African American residents supporting a protest of civil disobedience led nine individuals to



Figure 1.10: Protesters proceed from the Richmond African Burial Ground to the Lumpkin's Jail Site to Protest at the Slave Trail Commission's Marker Unveiling Ceremony, April 10, 2011. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 1.11: A sign made by protester Maurice Robinson demonstrating the relationship between the history of slavery and current social and economic oppression. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

protest the continued use of the Burial Ground as a parking lot on April 12, 2011.

Rolandah Cleopatrah, Tiamba Wilkerson, Phil Wilayto, Donnell Brantley, Ana

Edwards, and myself were joined by three other individuals to protest along Broad

street in front of the Gabriel historic marker, holding signs saying, "VCU: Every day you wait, you desecrate! Close the parking lot!" Four of us, who had agreed to

engage in civil disobedience, stood in front of the entrance to the parking lot, where

buses and cars entered. Quickly, VCU police arrived and rerouted traffic to

alternative, adjacent and nearby lots with no resulting traffic back ups. The parking

lot remained closed from just after 7 AM to 9 AM. When approached by officers, we

informed the officers that we would leave at 9 AM. The VCU police began to arrest

us right around 9 AM. The protest further demonstrated that the parking lot was

primarily a convenience and profit making entity for VCU. The four arrested protesters, in a statement drafted on April 12, stated:

...it's true that great progress has been made, in part symbolized by the recent long-overdue recognition of sites important to both Richmond's Black history and U.S. history in general. But right in downtown Richmond, a stone's throw away from the Capitol, a Virginia state institution still shows a fundamental disrespect for the city's Black community, its ancestors and its history. Despite the fact that the Burial Ground it is now officially recognized by both the City and state, Richmond's oldest municipal cemetery for enslaved Africans and people of African descent is still being used as a parking lot.

This is simply unacceptable.

April 12 marked the beginning of the American Civil War 150 years prior. The protesters chose this date as a statement regarding the present day manifestations of racism that cannot simply be placed in the past but need to be addressed and rectified in the present. The Defenders continued to distribute leaflets calling on people to demand VCU to close the parking lot. On May 4, 2011, Richmond Mayor Dwight Jones announced that the VCU Parking lot would be closing. This decision came after the Governor of Virginia, Bob McDonnell, agreed to purchase the Burial Ground property and donate it to the City under the purview of the Richmond Slave Trail Commission. Three companies, J.E. Liesfield Contractor, Inc., Dwight Sned Construction Company, and Ty's Hauling and Paving, Inc. donated their services to remove the asphalt and gravel from the Burial Ground site. A gift estimated at \$123,000. VCU was not required to pay for any part of this process and recuperated all monies paid in purchasing the site, a site they used to earn money from students and faculty paying to park.

On May 21, 2011 the VCU parking lot was permanently closed. On May 24, a ceremony was held to commemorate the removal of the asphalt from the Burial Ground. King Khalfani and Sa'ad El-Amin held protest signs saying, "Get Your Asphalt Off of US" and "Dr. Rao Go Home, Asphalt Go!" The programming was begun by a Christian prayer, followed by the pouring of libations by Omilade Janine Bell of Elegba Folklore Society, in a the style of the Yoruba tradition. Dignitaries such as Mayor Dwight Jones, Delores McQuinn, and President Rao were present. The Mayor said, "We are here today to begin beautifying this land that it might be appropriately memorialized, that we might remember the stony road over which we have come." Mayor Jones made an inclusive effort to thank those "who got us here today" including the NAACP, King Khalfani and Sa'ad El-Amin (protesting as he spoke), Ana Edwards, and the Slave Trail Commission. He said, "I even want to



Figure 1.12: The Asphalt is Removed from the Richmond African Burial Ground. May 24, 2011. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 1.13: Omilade Janine Bell Pouring Libations Over the Newly Removed Asphalt. May 24, 2011. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 1.14: Removal of the Asphalt from the Richmond African Burial Ground, May 24, 2012. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

acknowledge the people who protested and got arrested.” The Mayor thanked the Governor and City Council as well as President Rao for moving the date closure date up by two months. Paying reverence to the Africans interred in the Burial Ground, the Mayor said, “our ancestors are the ones who made Richmond what Richmond is today.” Then, the asphalt removal began, block by block, pried up by the attendees. An Imam led the Muslim participants in a prayer as the asphalt continued to be torn up.



Figure 1.15: Ana Edwards Reflecting, Holding a Piece of Asphalt from the Richmond African Burial Ground. May 24, 2011. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

A trial of the four protesters was held on May 25, 2011. Charges were withdrawn because there was not enough evidence that the protesters encroached upon VCU

property. The small roadway leading to the entrance is, technically, public property, where public protests can occur. Donnell Brantley released a statement after the court decision, continuing to request that VCU contribute financially to the memorializations of the site. To date, this has not occurred.

The Richmond African Burial Ground continues to be a green space for reflection and a community gathering space for activism toward social justice. As of October 2013, community activists are in the process of protesting and petitioning Mayor Jones as he has publicly announced that he is considering the most recent proposals to install a baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom. The fight continues.



Figure 1.16: A Message Spray Painted on a Wall at the Richmond African Burial Ground. May 25, 2012. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 1.17: October 10, 2011. Preparation for a community gathering for the Annual Gabriel Commemoration. This was the first year of commemoration after the parking lot was removed.

Chapter 2: The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos

In 2005, I traveled to the city of Rio de Janeiro to conduct pre-dissertation research and fieldwork. I was able to begin observing how the histories of slavery and revolt against slavery were represented and discussed in a city that served as Brazil's largest port of entry for enslaved African's in the nineteenth century (Karasch 1987). As importantly, I was able to discuss my research interests with Rio residents, learning which aspects were resonant (or not).

While reading ethnographic studies in the state and city of Rio, I noticed that ideas of race, heritage, family history, national identity and personal capabilities were interwoven in dialogues (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Sheriff 2001; Winddance Twine 2001[1998]). I became interested in how people learned to see themselves in relationship to particular narratives of the past, throughout their lifetime. I anticipated that dialogues about history and historical sites and representations of the past would provide insight into these potential connections.

During the first few days of my 2005 research trip, I saw a flyer advertising an Afro-Brazilian History tour in the city. Among the highlighted sites a historic cemetery was listed. During the tour, I was taken to the Nossa Senhora do Rosario and São Benedito dos Homens Pretos Church and the Museu do Negro, both located

the Pretos Novos Institute for Research and Memory (IPN), where I arranged to return to speak with the Director of Research, Antonio Carlos Rodrigues.

In 1996, Mercedes and Petrúcio Anjos were renovating their home in Gamboa. Human remains were discovered beneath the foundation of the house during construction. Originally thought to be a clandestine mass grave connected to contemporary criminal activity, the site was evaluated by local officials and a team of archaeologists who determined that the Anjos' house was located on the historic site, the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos*. Historians knew of the cemetery based on the documentary record, however the exact location of the cemetery had become unknown due to modifications of the Port district involving expansion of the coastline.

According to Mercedes and Petrúcio, they halted work on their home and remained with test units in their house for about a year, waiting for the promised return of the archaeological team from the Brazilian Archaeological Institution, which did not happen. At that time, no osteological analysis results had been reported due to the death of the principal investigator, Lilia Machado. The Anjos family purchased the two properties adjacent to their house and created an exhibit space where lectures are held and an adjoining cultural space, where art exhibits and events celebrating African and Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage take place. In 2006 Mercedes was not optimistic that she would receive official (local, state, or national) support to preserve the cemetery site or for education of the history of slavery in Rio. The Anjos' relied on donations, community volunteers, and their personal resources to maintain the IPN. Mercedes, stated that she fought to have the site recognized

because the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos represents “resistance” through telling a history that “people don’t want that they want to forget.”⁷¹

Upon my return to the IPN, I met Antonio Carlos Rodriguez, the Director of Research, who took me through the IPN spaces. Antonio described himself as an activist for Afro-Brazilian rights who came from a family of activists. We entered the exhibit space, comprised of towers with color photocopies and prints of Jean-Baptiste Debret’s nineteenth century sketches of Rio’s slave market, early photos of osteological remains, and material artifacts associated with the first excavations. The edges of most of the copies were curled. Water stains tracked through the images, due to missing tiles and leaks in the roof above.

⁷¹ Anjos, Ana de la Merced Guimarães. Interview, January 28, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

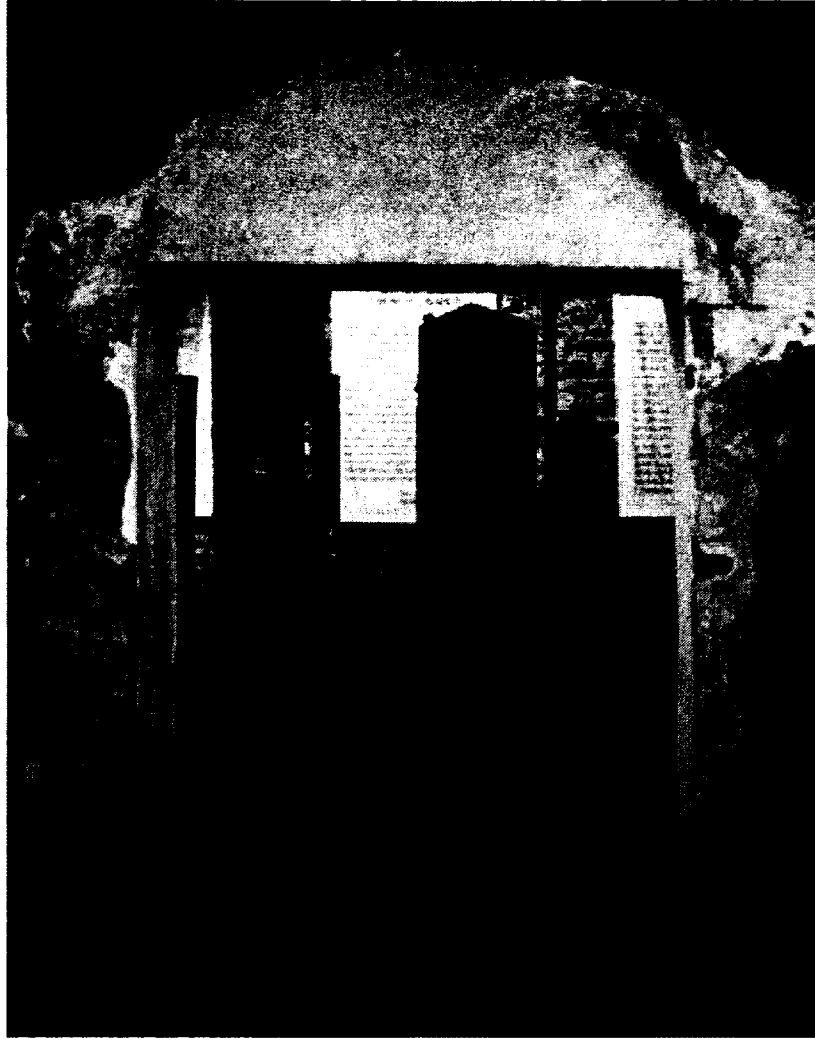


Figure 2.2: Doorway Looking Into the Exhibit Space of the Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos in July 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

As we moved through the exhibits Mr. Rodriguez discussed the history of the site, interspersing questions regarding my knowledge of various researchers, such as Mary Karasch and Ivan Van Sertima. On one of the exhibit towers in the back, I saw a black and white photocopy of a sign on a chain link fence. The photo looked familiar, but I could not identify the photo in my mind. As we moved closer to the tower, Antonio Carlos continued to assess my knowledge by asking if I knew of the New York African Burial Ground (NYABG). The image now in view was an older

photo of the NYABG excavation site with an identifying sign on the chain link fence enclosure. I shared that my dissertation advisor was the Scientific Director for the NYABG project, Dr. Michael Blakey, and that I had been able to work as a junior researcher on the project. The NYABG served as an inspiration for community mobilization in reclaiming their ancestors and the history represented by the cemetery.



Figure 2.3: A 1779 Map of the Port District of Rio de Janeiro. (Cardoso et al. 1987:20)



Figure 2.4: “Disembarkment” an 1835 Image of Africans Entering Rio’s Ports⁷²

Antonio Carlos then invited me to walk through Gamboa and where he took me to the sites of Rio’s trade in human captives. We walked down Avenida Barão de Tefé, and Rua Sacadura Cabral, where captive Africans were brought into Rio and sold in the Valongo markets. Antonio Carlos pointed to a small monument, explaining that in 1843 Princess Teresa Cristina de Bourbon of Naples, soon to wed the Emperor Pedro II, was to arrive in Rio through this port. The royal family and elites of Rio de Janeiro did not want her to see the ugliness of the slave trade. The site was covered over and the monument was erected in her honor. In 2006, the grassy square remained, as did the monument to the Empress. We visited where the nearby Valongo slave market had existed, also a lush, green space in 2006.

⁷² Débarquement by Johan Moritz Rugendas In *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Brésil*. 1835. Coleção Biblioteca Nacional. Reprinted in Pinheiro and Rabha 2004:19.



Figure 2.5: Enslaved African Children Being Sold on Valongo Street.⁷³

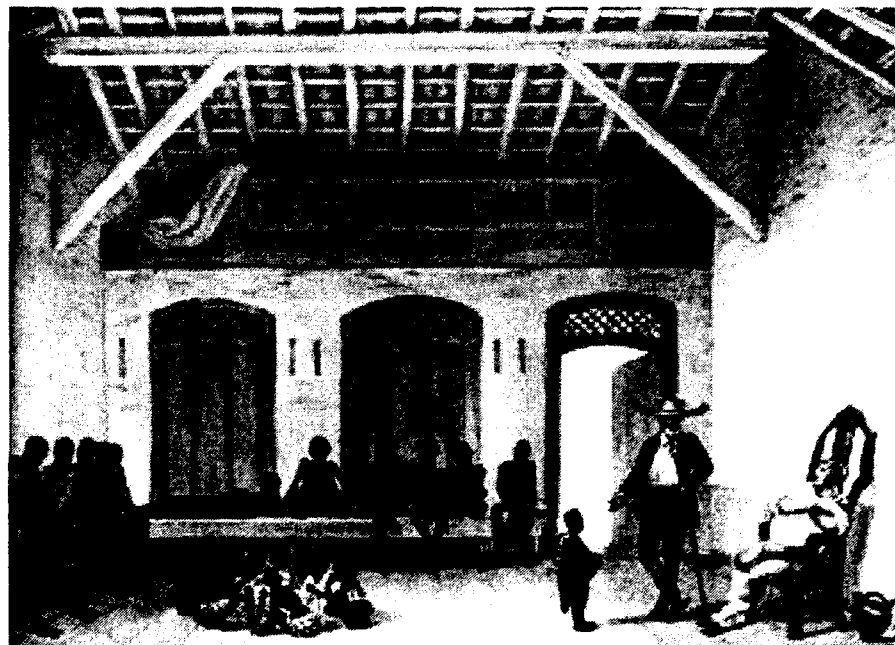


Figure 2.6: Debret's 1820-1830 Depiction of the Valongo Market in Rio de Janeiro.⁷⁴

⁷³ Earle, Augustus. 1824. "Slave market at Rio de Janeiro" Reprinted in Cardoso et al. 1987:41.

⁷⁴ Debret, Jean-Baptiste. "Loge [sic] da Rua do Valongo, 1820-1830. Reprinted in Debret et al. 2012[2001]:68 and Debret et al. 2003:140.



Figure 2.7: A Monument to the Arrival of the New Empress, the Cais da Imperatriz. August 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 2.8: Cais da Imperatriz in August 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

At the Pedra do Sal (formerly known as the Pedra da Prainha), steep stairs were chiseled into the sides of a hilly rock leading into the slave marketing district. Enslaved Africans carried newly delivered salt up the stairs from the docks below (see Figure 2.9). Pedra do Sal is now known as a space with a rich samba history, where sambistas continue to gather weekly, playing for full crowds that sit atop the sloping sides of the Pedra.



Figure 2.9: Pedra da Prainha, 1817 by Thomas Ender. Note the Sketched Laborers with Axial Loaded Bundles Bringing Cargo up from the Docked Ships. Today, the Pedra do Sal.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ender, Thomas. 1817. A View from the Pedra da Prainha. Reprinted in Cardoso et al. 1987:32.



Figure 2.10: Pedra do Sal (formerly Pedra da Prainha) in August 2006), photo taken from a similar vantage point depicted in Figure 2.8, 1817. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

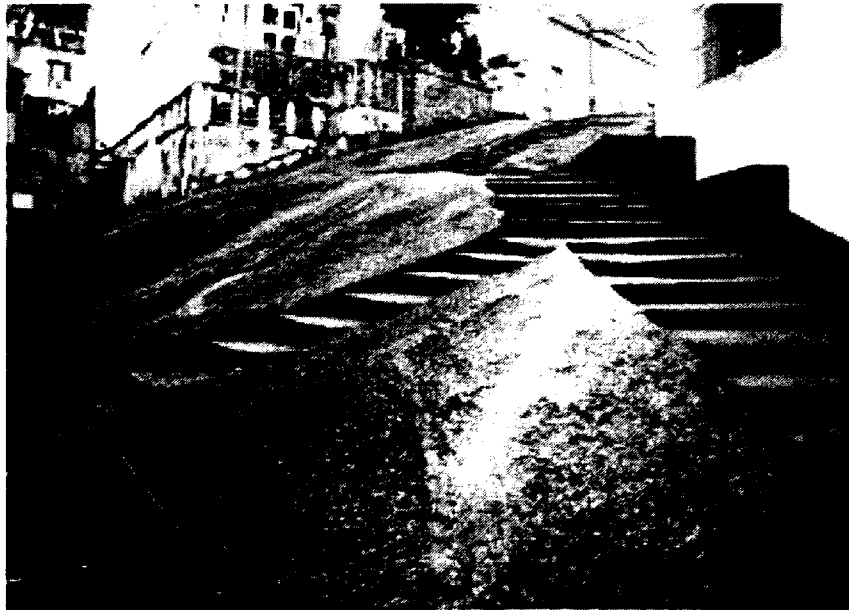


Figure 2.11: Pedra do Sal from Below. August 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

This was my introduction to the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the history the contemporary *bairros* of Gamboa and Saúde, and to the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro. Since then, I have had the honor to continue to learn from Antonio Carlos Rodrigues and from a team of researchers, activists, and residents who have worked hard and fought to tell the story of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos; they have built an Institution that teaches the history of Africans in Rio de Janeiro, celebrates Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage as a form of *resgate*, rescue and reclamation.

Rio de Janeiro and the Trade in Human Captives

In the nineteenth century, the horrors of Rio's trade in human captives both repelled and attracted visitors to Rio de Janeiro. As Mary Karasch (1987) notes, many of the contemporary observations of the Rio slave trade were recorded by foreign visitors "who made it part of the tourist circuit of the nineteenth century" (37). Indeed, the Port District and the history of slavery have become, again, sites for tourist consumption of the history of slavery in Rio (see Chapter 6). Below is a brief sketch of the history of slavery in the city of Rio de Janeiro, focusing on the relationship between the slave trade and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos.

The present city of Rio de Janeiro, formerly a Tupinambás settlement (De Abreu 1997:12), was established as a trading post by the French and then the Portuguese in the mid sixteenth century. Enslaved labor became a fundamental component of the economy and social fabric of Rio de Janeiro, with the mid-nineteenth century as the most intensive period. Rio de Janeiro held an enslaved population of

approximately 80,000, the largest urban enslaved population in the Americas (Karasch 1987). During the fifty year span between 1800 and 1850, one million enslaved Africans from the West Central and Eastern regions of the continent entered Brazil through the ports of Rio de Janeiro. Portugal's royal family transferred the royal court to Rio de Janeiro in 1808, due to Napoleon's encroaching armies. The demand for enslaved labour starkly increased following this transformation of the colonial city into a transplanted metropolitan center (Karasch 1987; Carvalho in Pereira 2007). In 1807, the population of Rio de Janeiro included less than 10,000 enslaved peoples. This number increased to twenty-one thousand by 1822 and again to forty-five thousand in 1828 (Carvalho in Pereira 2007). Though the enslaved African population of Rio de Janeiro greatly increased, many enslaved Africans who were imported into Rio de Janeiro would be sold and taken to plantations throughout the state or sent to work in states such as Minas Gerais and São Paulo (Karasch 1987).

Enslaved Africans who survived the ship's journey to Rio often arrived seriously ill or dying. A feeding house and a place for preparing the enslaved to look healthy for sale were located near the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos (Cardoso et al. 1987). Those who died before being sold in the slave markets, were discarded in the Cemetery for *Pretos Novos*, or "New Blacks" indicating the deceased's African natal origin and recent arrival prior to death. Originally, the Rio de Janeiro slave trade was located in the city's center and, beginning in 1729, the Santa Rita church was charged with disposing of the corpses of the *Pretos Novos* who died (Coarcy 1965; Pereira 2007). The small square designated by the Santa Rita church for burials

was quickly overwhelmed by bodies. The sights of the slave market and the odor of rotting corpses, piled high and often burned because there was no room in the burial grounds next to the church, affronted royal officials and local residents. The deceased would be laid at the steps of the church for disposal. According to Cardoso and colleagues (1987), enslaved Africans reportedly feigned death to be delivered to the church and later escape. Due to the numerous complaints from residents, and the viceroy's desire to develop the Port District further, the Marquis do Lavradio moved the slave market and the cemetery from the city's center to Valongo in 1772 (Cardoso et al. 1987). The Valongo market and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos remained active until 1830, when the slave trade was legally abolished in Brazil (Coarcy 1965; Pereira 2007). Between 1824 and 1830, six thousand Africans were buried at the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, with over two thousand burials in 1830 alone (Pereira 2007). The historic plaque installed at the site estimates as many as 20,000 people were interred at the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos.

Pereira (2007) argues that the proximity of the slave market and holding pens to the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos would have provided living Africans awaiting sale a horrific view of the manner in which those who perished were being buried. This, Pereira (2007) explains, would have been a particularly traumatic and torturous and experience; acts of violence committed by enslavers against the dead and the living. The majority of enslaved Africans forced to migrate to Rio in the nineteenth century came from Central Africa, which increased as a source for enslaved labor during the first half of the nineteenth century (Carvalho in Pereira 2007). Specifically, enslaved Africans interred in the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos were recorded as leaving the

their home continent as captives from final points in Cabinda, Rio Zaire, Angola, Abriz, Luanda, Benguela, Mozambique, Inhamba-ne, Guilna-me, Guiné, and Mina (Peireira 2007). Enslavers desecrated the dead, discarding their bodies in mass graves, “à flor da terra” (thrown on the earth’s surface), naked, and wrapped in a mat. Such disrespect severely violated the indigenous and Christian burial traditions that existed in Central Africa during this time (Pereira 2007). While the atrocities committed by enslavers against the living and the dead were crimes against their humanity, Pereira (2007) argues that for enslaved Africans who had been baptized Catholic in their homeland, they would have been profoundly distressed by the lack of care and absence of ritual afforded the dead. For those who followed the indigenous religious traditions, death was not an individual experience but a communal moment where a member of the living joined the ancestral members of the community. Without proper burial or proper ritual, this transition does not occur and the deceased is unable to join the ancestors, becoming as Carvalho describes “off-course, a person without a place, permanently plaguing their living relatives” (Carvalho in preface of Pereira 2007). This is the cultural violence that was enacted on the living “*Pretos Novos*” as they watched the bodies of the dead discarded and left to rot, thrown in mass ditches. These newly arrived captives would have been concerned for deceased souls of their relatives, for the wellbeing of their ancestors, the wellbeing of their communities at home, as well as for themselves as they faced the horrific reality of enslavement, in need of ancestral support and guidance.

Remembering the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos 1996 - 2012

After the unearthing of remains beneath the Anjos' household in 1996, the Anjos family and Rio community members contributed to creating and maintaining the Instituto dos Pretos Novos de Pesquisa e Memória (IPN). However, according to Mercedes Guimarães dos Anjos, this was an event that did not result in local, state, or national support for the preservation and memorialization of the site. Funding came much later and began very meagerly, covering electricity and a portion of basic supplies, such as toilet paper for the public restroom.



Figure 2.12: IPN Classroom, July 2006. A bust of Zumbi dos Palmares is on the right. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Mercedes and Petrócio began receiving people into their home in 1996. After the Institute spaces were purchased by the Anjos (#34 Rua Pedro Ernesto was purchased in May of 2005 and #32 in June 2005), classes, workshops, lectures, and art exhibits on a broad range of topics related to the Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage were hosted at the IPN. In 2006, I attended a class at the IPN on the Yoruba Worldview, taught by Marcelo dos Santos Monteiro, who served as a Director of Culture for the IPN. I also attended an event held in the exhibit space focusing on the feminine divine, where the feminine orixá (orixá are Yoruba deities who are sometimes referred to as the oldest among honored ancestors) were presented by women dressed in clothing that signified each orixá and performed each orixa's signature dance. A broader performance of expressions of the feminine by men followed, with a panel of judges who awarded a prize to the best performer. The local Filhos de Gandhi⁷⁶ held a mass at the IPN in April 2006 (see Figure 2.13). Numerous artists have exhibited their works at the IPN, focusing on various aspects



Figure 2.13: Ceremonial cleansing of the entranceway at the IPN. April 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

⁷⁶ Provide a brief history of Filhos de Gandhi



Figure 2.14: Coração das Meninas at the IPN, December 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 2.15: Coração das Meninas at the IPN, December 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

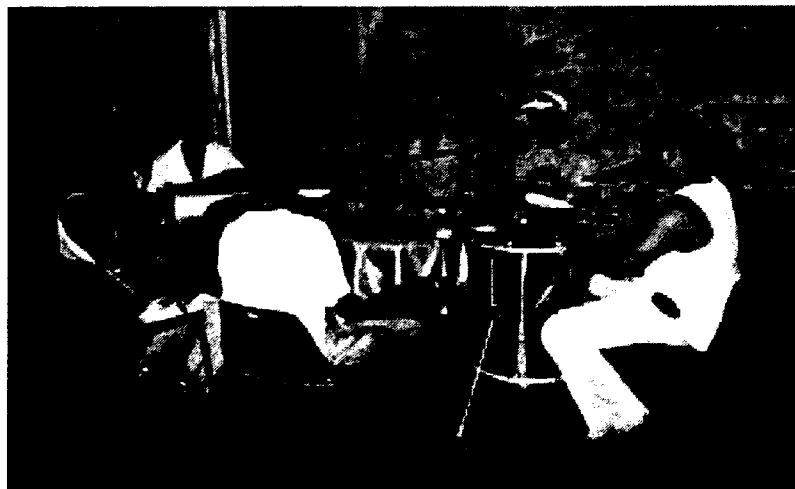


Figure 2.16: The Bohemias playing Samba de Roda at the IPN. January 2009. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

of Afro-Brazilian religions, history and life. I had the pleasure of attending exhibit openings for “Tia” Lucia dos Santos and Geleia in 2006 and 2008; the works of both artists remain permanently in the gallery.

The IPN has served as a place for community members to meet and discuss their work, or to discuss broader community issues, such as health problems. I attended meetings of local *artistas plásticas* as well as a meeting to discuss the health risk of Denge fever in the region, and ways to prevent the spread of Denge. Revitalization of a Carnival *bloco*, the *Coração das Meninas* occurred in 2009 through community collaborations that included the IPN. The IPN also served as a meeting space for this initiative.



Figure 2.17: Lucia dos Santos with a group of youth. October 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Groups of school children and college students were brought to the IPN for field trips and workshops. Researchers, such as myself, have been welcomed by the IPN to conduct scholarly studies of the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* that have included historical, anthropological, and archaeological research. When I was first introduced to the IPN by Antonio Carlos in 2006, he told me of Cristina dos Santos had recently conducted interviews in the neighborhood as part of her pos-graduação thesis regarding the potential of the development of tourism related to the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* site. Julio César Medeiros da Silva Pereira was conducting archival research for his Master's thesis on the *Cemitério* (Peraira 2007). Reinaldo Bernardes Tavares conducted archaeological excavations to determine the boundaries of the cemetery, offering lectures and public workshops where school-aged children and adults could experience the archaeological process while learning about the site (see Tavares 2012).

In 2008, the IPN received government funding for computers and office materials. However, in 2009, the IPN was designated by the State as a *Ponto de Cultura do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*, and was provided funding to conduct public courses, workshops, lectures, forums, art exhibits, commemorative and book launching events - all related to the history, culture and heritage of Afro-Brazilians and in accordance with the Brazilian Law 10.639. Law 10.639 was enacted by President Lula in 2003, requiring African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture be included in all elementary and middle school curricula. This designation is for three years beginning in 2010 and continuing through 2012. The IPN defines their target

audience as “students, researchers, professors/ teachers, the local community, as well as national and international tourists.⁷⁷ However, the IPN reported in 2009 that, despite public recognition of the site, the staffing needs and operating costs related to the IPN were being met solely through contributions made by the Anjos family, by volunteers and from “diverse segments of civil society and from the academic community who identify with the ideals of promoting Brazil’s racial and social equality” who work together to find solutions for these social problems.⁷⁸ The IPN collaborated with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Museu Nacional’s graduate program in archaeology to determine the boundaries of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos. Tavares’ (2012) research and excavations to determine the site’s boundaries and spacial layout served the IPN’s stated goals to make visible that which had become invisible, to “remove the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos from physical invisibility” by marking the physical “contours” and physical dimensions of the cemetery.

⁷⁷ Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos. 2009. Relatório de Atividades da Instituição. Provided by Ana Maria de la Merced Gonzalez Graña Guimarães dos Anjos July 7, 2012.

⁷⁸ Ibid.



Figure 2.18: Annual celebration of Zumbi dos Palmares at the IPN. November 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

In the early years of the IPN, the Institute held tribute events to Zumbi at the IPN site. In 2008, I was able to attend this IPN tribute, which included an ecumenical prayer and a lecture and discussion session led by Julio César Medeiros da Silva Pereira on the question of racial quotas in Brazil. Musical and dance groups performed throughout the day and into the night (see Figure 2.18). At one point I heard raised voices as two young men struggled and pushed into a crowd that quickly made way. A young man playing the part of an escaped slave was being pursued by another young man playing the enslaver. The enslaver captured the runaway and tied him to a post before “beating” him (see Figure 2.19). In 2008 the IPN staff also participated in the larger City



Figure 2.19: Performance of an enslaver capturing and beating an enslaved man. Annual Zumbi dos Palmares Commemoration, November 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

celebrations of Zumbi dos Palmares on November 20th, Rio's Black Consciousness Day (made a national holiday in 2011). Processions, music, and public speakers filled the day. Events were held at the Zumbi dos Palmares monument in Praça Onze. A tented, temporary exhibit presented the history of the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* and the archaeological investigations and the documentary "Tribute to the Pretos Novos" was shown. The dramatic re-enactment of the capture and beating of a re-enslaved runaway was also performed at the IPN tent location. The IPN's participation in the International Cachaça Fair of 2008 and 2009 included a focus on the history of the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* as well as the history of slavery in sugarcane mills.⁷⁹ The IPN has received recognition for their community and public

⁷⁹ Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos. 2009. *Relatório de Atividades da Instituição*. Provided by Ana Maria de la Merced Gonzalez Graña Guimarães dos Anjos July 7, 2012.

services in the form of awards, plaques, and trophies. For example in 2010, the IPN received the Rodrigo Melo Franco award by IPHAN, in the category of Protection of Natural and Archaeological Patrimony.⁸⁰ Significant renovations have been conducted at the IPN and Mercedes actively works to create public education opportunities. During the visit of Dr. Lima Filho and Dr. Blakey, Ms. Anjos said, “We are bringing the University to the People.”⁸¹

The IPN and Academia: Proprietary Tensions

The relationship between the privately owned Brazilian Archaeological Institute (IAB) and the Anjos family is strained due to the slight they felt by having excavation units remain open in their house for almost a year waiting for the research to be completed. This tension was increased when the remains remained at the IAB and Mercedes was told she could not bring them to the IPN. In conversations with Mercedes, she felt she had the right to house the human remains because she owned the property on which they were found. Conversations such as this, crystalized the complex ideas of who “owns” the history of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, and the material remains of the Africans who were interred. I made my stance clear to Mercedes that she could not own the human remains and that the Afro-descended community should decide how the remains are handled and or analyzed. This tension emerged occasionally during interviews with residents and

⁸⁰ Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos. 2010. Relatório de Atividades da Instituição. Provided by Ana Maria de la Merced Gonzalez Graña Guimarães dos Anjos July 7, 2012.

⁸¹ Anjos, Mercedes Guimarães. Comments made during presentation of the IPN to Manuel Ferreira Lima Filho, Michael Blakey and Autumn Barrett. June 28, 2012.

activists, though on the whole Rio residents were very supportive of the work that Mercedes and Petrúcio Anjos have done to memorialize the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* (see Chapter 8).

While in Brazil in 2008, I was encouraged by Professor Manuel Ferreira Lima Filho to meet with Sheila Mendonça, an anthropology professor from the Catholic University of Brazil in Goiás. I met Professor Filho while he was a visiting researcher at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in 2007. Dr. Mendonça is an anthropologist at Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (FioCruz) who was, at that time, preparing to re-analyze the human remains recovered from the early excavations of the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos*. Knowing of my ethnographic research regarding the *Cemitério* and the osteological work I conducted as a junior researcher under Dr. Michael Blakey on the New York African Burial Ground Project, Dr. Lima Filho suggested I meet and speak with Professor Mendonça. I arranged a time with Dr. Mendonça who described that she was working under the directorship of another researcher who had received a grant to study the cemetery site and that an osteological reassessment was part of the project. She then said that she thought I already knew the Director of the grant project, Dr. Ricardo Ventura dos Santos. Indeed, at the urging of my advisor, Dr. Blakey, I met with Dr. Santos in 2006 when conducting pre-dissertation research and described my developing ideas for research. Dr. Blakey had sent an e-mail briefly introducing me to Dr. Santos, which resulted in a brief e-mail exchange and arranging to meet in person. When I described my research saying that I was interested as “how people identify themselves with a particular past or history - and by extension, how these histories are taught, discussed and represented -

particularly the histories of slavery and resistance.”⁸² I had learned of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, had visited the site and noticed the prominence of Zumbi within the site. Once we met in person and I shared that I wanted to focus my research on the significance of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos to residents of Rio de Janeiro. Dr. Santos said that he thought the cemetery was likely to hold no significance to residents.⁸³ Given this initial disinterest in the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, I was somewhat surprised to learn in 2009 that Dr. Santos was now leading an initiative to research the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos*. However, since meeting Dr. Santos in 2006, a city-wide initiative has grown, foregrounding historical aspects of the Zona Portuária, capitalizing on the “richness” of the region’s history. This impetus has increased as Rio de Janeiro prepares to host the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016. However, as some Rio residents have expressed, a question remains as to who controls the exhibition and interpretation of history, for whom is the story being told, and who benefits (see Chapter 6).

I was invited by Dr. Mendonça to visit the Brazilian Archaeological Institute (IAB), the private institution that conducted the original archaeological investigations at the IPN and curated the remains removed during those excavations. The original osteological analysis was conducted by Lilia Machado, who unfortunately died before completing her research. Dr. Santos accompanied our tour of the IAB facilities

⁸² Barrett-Santos Communications. January 19, 2006.

⁸³ Dr. Santos also said that he was not interested in my research project nor was he interested in reading any of my developing research on the project. He suggested that I might be interested in working with him on his current research on intellectual trends in scholarship.

where some of the remains from the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, primarily dentition, were brought out for our viewing.

During the tour of the IAB facilities, I learned that youth in the surrounding neighborhoods helped with archaeological projects at the Institute. I asked Dr. Mendonça if there would be community participation in the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos research project. Dr. Santos, who had been seated and reading a book until this point, put the book down, with emphasis, and said, “this has nothing to do with Michael Blakey/ isso não tem nada de ver com o Michael Blakey.” Dr. Mendonça simply replied that there were no plans to include community members in the project.

Dr. Mendonça began to discuss the need to do further excavations at the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos site, beneath the Anjos’ house. I was confused because the need was being discussed as though permission to do so had been granted. Given that Mercedes and Petrúcio conveyed that they waited for about a year for IAB archaeologists to return with test units remaining open in their home, (after a year, they covered them and proceeded with renovations), this seemed unlikely. I asked if the owner of the house wanted these further excavations and she said she was sure the owner would give permission. I asked if she had visited the site and she said no. I explained that there was already an Institute established for visitors, with a classroom, exhibits, and a gallery and offered to coordinate a visit and meeting with the IPN team.

As we were preparing to leave, Dr. Santos approached me and asked if the New York African Burial Ground (NYABG) was part of my dissertation research. I told him that when I first visited the Institute there was an exhibit with a picture of and information on the NYABG. I shared I was interested in the role of the NYABG as a model and inspiration for descendant communities. Dr. Santos responded by asking me if the IPN already knew about the New York African Burial Ground. I explained that Antonio Carlos Rodriguez, the Director of Research, had researched the NYABG site and had asked me if I knew of the site when we first met.

This interaction at IAB demonstrates the ongoing contentious debate over the extent to which scholars, particularly anthropologists, have an obligation to engage descendant communities, and community members more generally, in their academic research. This debate emerged with great force and affect around the New York African Burial Ground Project. My association with the NYABG and Michael Blakey, as well as my question, brought this tension to the forefront. Lima Filho invited Michael Blakey to present in Goiânia, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo in 2012, specifically to encourage scholarly dialogue on community engagement.

After my visit to IAB, I spoke with Ms. Anjos, who agreed to meet with Dr. Mendonça. The meeting occurred on February 6, 2009 and was attended by representatives of the IPN, FioCruz, IAB, and myself. Dr. Santos did not join the meeting. There were general introductions to the Institute and I also introduced Dr. Mendonça to the José Bonifácio Cultural Center nearby. In the meeting, Mercedes raised the issue of the location of the remains taken from the site during the original excavations. As

mentioned above, Mercedes had expressed in previous conversations that she felt the remains should be housed at the IPN and that she had the right to determine the location of the remains because the remains were discovered on her property. My response to Mercedes had been that the African descended community should decide what happens to the remains. Sheila's response to Mercedes was that no one can claim ownership of the remains. However, it had been clear that, if not ownership, custodial and proprietary rights had been exercised by IAB who provided access to researchers of the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz). An agreement to stay in contact and possibly work together was reached during the meeting, but when I followed up during a brief visit in April of 2010, Mercedes said that there had been no further meetings and that nothing had progressed in terms of a collaboration. However, Dr. Della Cook (of the University of Illinois, where Santos received his Ph.D.) conducted the osteological analysis with Dr. Santos and Dr. Mendonça's team, and presented her findings at the IPN. In a coauthored publication on strontium isotope analysis in dentition (Bastos et al. 2011), whose authorship includes (among others) Bastos, Mendonça, Santos, and Cook, includes Mercedes Guimarães dos Anjos and Júlio César Medeiros da Silva Pereira within the Acknowledgments.

Exposing the Erasures of the Past, Erasing the Present?

In 2012 I was provided funding by the College of William and Mary to visit the recent excavations of the Valongo Wharf, the entrance point of over a million enslaved Africans into Brazil. I was interested in understanding if or how the news media

announcements of this “discovery” had influenced discourse surrounding the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* and of the Port District that served as the center for slave trading in the nineteenth century. How had this newfound attention and these new resources being allocated to “discovering” this story anew affected the IPN? Due to an invitation from Dr. Lima Filho, who was in Rio with Dr. Blakey to give presentations at the UFRJ-Museu Nacional, I was able to visit, briefly, the site during the final stages of the excavation project. The memorial steps were being constructed, creating a place for reflection where visitors could see the Monument to the Empress, the layers that had been lain over the Valongo site to create a pristine



Figure 2.20: Manuel Ferreira Lima Filho, Tânia Andrade Lima, Michael Blakey, Marcos André Torres de Souza (from left to right). Tânia Andrade Lima and Marcos André Torres de Souza are presenting artifacts from the Valongo excavation to Michael Blakey and Manuel Ferreira Lima Filho. June 29, 2012. Photo taken by Andrea Jundi Morgado, archaeologist and project photographer.

entrance for her highness, the original stone quay and street beneath. As I am looking at the site, I am told that the “Museum of the Future” will be constructed just

opposite. I was acutely aware of being in a moment of artificial rupture between past and present. An exposure of Valongo's past as a slave market, by the archaeology team of Dr. Tania Andrade Lima, an exposure of the layers used to cover that contemporary reality for Imperial consumption, employment of this exposure to create a reflective gaze into a past long gone, while looking to the promise embodied in a juxtapositioned Museum of the Future. While the Cais da Imperatriz was constructed in preparation for the Emperor's new bride, the contemporary transformations are taking place in preparation for another arrival, the tourists and visitors who will come for the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016. How is the anticipated arrival of foreign tourists reshaping a poor district, described as "neglected" by one resident,⁸⁴ for palatable consumption? How is history commodified as a consumable product? Are marked histories essentialized as consumable products, as are "cultural" products such as food and dance?

⁸⁴ Machado, Carlos. Interview, July 8, 2006. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.



Figure 2.21: Cais da Imperatriz in August 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

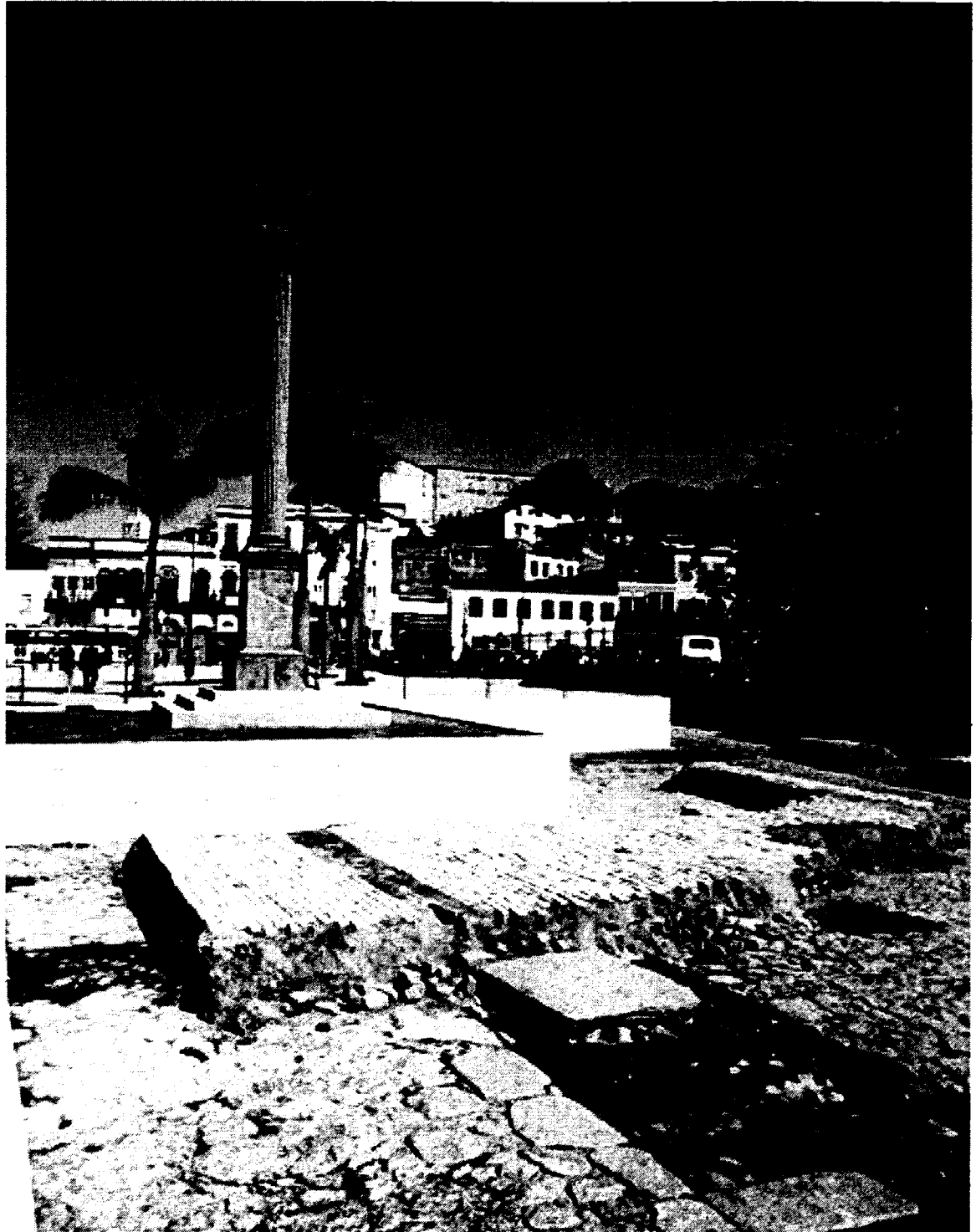


Figure 2.22: Cais do Valongo archaeological site, July 2012, showing the quay where enslaved Africans entered Rio until the site was covered up in preparation for the new Empress in 1843. The monument constructed in honor of the Empress remains (to the left). Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 2.23: A 2011 rendition of the Museum of the Future scheduled to open in Rio de Janeiro, 2014.⁸⁵



Figure 2.24: The entrance wall to the Cais do Valongo Visitor Center explaining the plans for development within the Porto Maravilha project. The “my” rotates display in different languages. July 2012.

⁸⁵ Santander Annual Report, 2011, page 123.



Figure 2.25: Inside the Valongo Visitor Center, July 2012, where the walls and display tables are interactive and multi-lingual, with Portuguese and English being the most prominently rotated. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

In the few weeks I was in Rio during June and July of 2012, it was clear that transformation of the city and the Port District was taking place at a rapid pace. The Valongo excavation and memorial site was being completed when I first visited, and already had a modular information center, complete with a café and small sitting area when I returned a week later. The walls and display tables were interactive and multi-lingual, with English and Portuguese being the most prominent languages. The external walls of the small center were constantly changing, with messages that read “My Marvelous Port,” a play on the coined phrase for Rio as the “Marvelous City.” Upon entry into the center, the first wall a visitor faces is a wall that says “My

Marvelous Port” scrolling through multiple languages. A touch screen allows visitors to chose their preferred language, font and style to customize the projected “My Port.” The commodification of the Valongo Cais as part of the Porto Maravilha project was a very salient presence for me. Customizing the “my” allows every visitor to claim ownership through this consumptive performance. I spoke with one of the Visitor Center who said that many of the residents had been visiting because they are worried their houses are going to be removed in the process of the executing the development projects. He said that their fears are alleviated when they see the plans and are reassured that they will not be displaced.⁸⁶ I spoke with a visitor who lives in Botafogo, who said he thinks the development and the history are “very interesting” and a “great thing.” He had known about some of the sites, including Valongo and had heard about the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, but had never visited the site. He also said he was impressed by the technology of the center.⁸⁷ A woman visiting from Matto Grosso said that she thinks the development projects are good, if the government does what they say they are going to do. Her only concern was that people may end up being displaced. She said this happens a lot, that renovations are undertaken, but the residents do not benefit, but end up being displaced.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Barrett, Autumn. Valongo Visitor Center, Staff. Man. Informal interview, July 11, 2012. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

⁸⁷ Barrett, Autumn. Valongo Visitor Center, Visitor. Man. Informal interview, July 12, 2012. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

⁸⁸ Barrett, Autumn. Valongo Visitor Center, Visitor. Woman. Informal interview, July 11, 2012. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

During this my brief field research in 2012, I noticed that the Morro da Providência looked different. I was told that it had been made completely safe, and that the houses there were being sold at much higher prices. I heard that many families were being forced out by the increase in rental prices. For as long as I had been studying in Brazil, the Morro da Providência was a space that was considered one of the most dangerous and difficult to live in. While showing me Gamboa, Antonio Carlos stopped me as I was taking a picture of the Cemitério dos Ingleses because the frame included portions of the Morro. Antonio Carlos said that the traffickers watch with binoculars to be sure no one is trying to gather information on them and they might suspect that I was doing just that if I pointed my camera in that direction. In the past I used to see, on a nightly basis, families huddled together to sleep under downtown office building awnings. There were no families this time. I saw very few “street children” downtown or in Copacabana, which was also unusual. My inquiries were met with responses that the City was being cleaned up, the traffickers have been removed, and the homeless were sent to institutions “over there.” I must have registered alarm on my face, because I was also told on more than one occasion that these institutions are now being surveilled and the violence that used to occur has been ended. I was assured that Rio was now 98% safe. Indeed, I noticed much less fear being expressed among middle and upper class residents in comparison with past years.

While grocery shopping in the U.S. three months later, my husband noticed a National Geographic article titled “Remaking Rio.”⁸⁹ The author, Regalado, quotes

⁸⁹ Regalado, Antonio. Remaking Rio In National Geographic. October 2012:86-89.

one resident of a “favela” as saying, “We are guinea pigs” referring to the ‘clean up’ initiatives the government began in 2008. Referencing testing of these plans within the Santa Marta neighborhood, Regalado notes that improvements were made in 700 houses in 2008, preparing for the larger scale implementation occurring now. In an interview with Antonio Carlos, he mentioned an experimental renovation that had recently occurred in the Morro da Providência. Antonio Carlos said that 700 houses were refurbished with french tiles, “really *bonitinho*, but there are 25,000 people who live there. Why not make cute houses with french tiles for 25,000 residents? Just for 700? Just to experiment?”⁹⁰ Perhaps this was part of the same process that was put into full effect in Morro da Providência in 2012.

Activists in the *Movimento do Negro* were in negotiations with City officials to promise a long-term commitment to maintaining the sites that are now being preserved and interpreted, beyond the tourism rush of the World Cup and the Olympics. In July of 2012, no promise had been forthcoming.⁹¹ The question remains who will benefit from the “uncovering” of Rio’s history of slavery? There is distrust that the Rio de Janeiro elites are using the history of slavery to market Rio for tourists visiting the upcoming games. What will happen once the games are over? This is the question that Regalado heard from residents of Rio’s refurbished poor neighborhoods. This was a question that Penha Santos and Mercedes Guimarães dos Anjos worried about for the IPN and for the Valongo site. The IPN has certainly been transformed (see Figures 2.26 and 2.27) by the recognition and

⁹⁰ Rodrigues, Antonio Carlos. Interview. January 27, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

⁹¹ Santos, Penha. Informal Interview, July 10, 2012. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

resources that have been provided, although with no future security of maintenance. Are these government initiatives part of an historic peep show for foreign tourists? A true engagement with the history of slavery? A struggle over who will control the past and self-determined representations? Victories won by activists who have been fighting to have these histories represented in the landscape? I believe that these processes are all of the above and, no doubt, more.

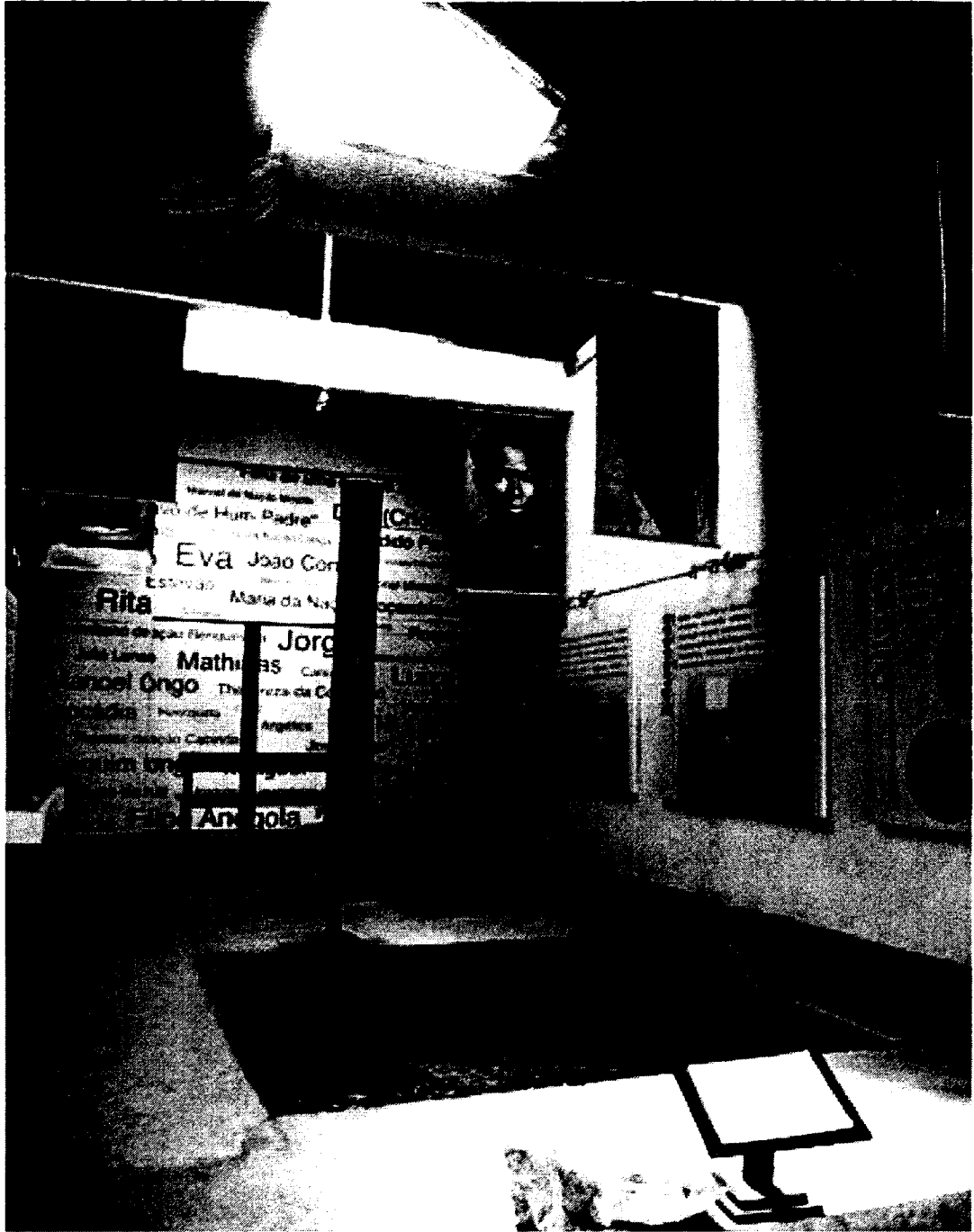


Figure 2.26: The Renovated Space of the Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos in July 2012. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

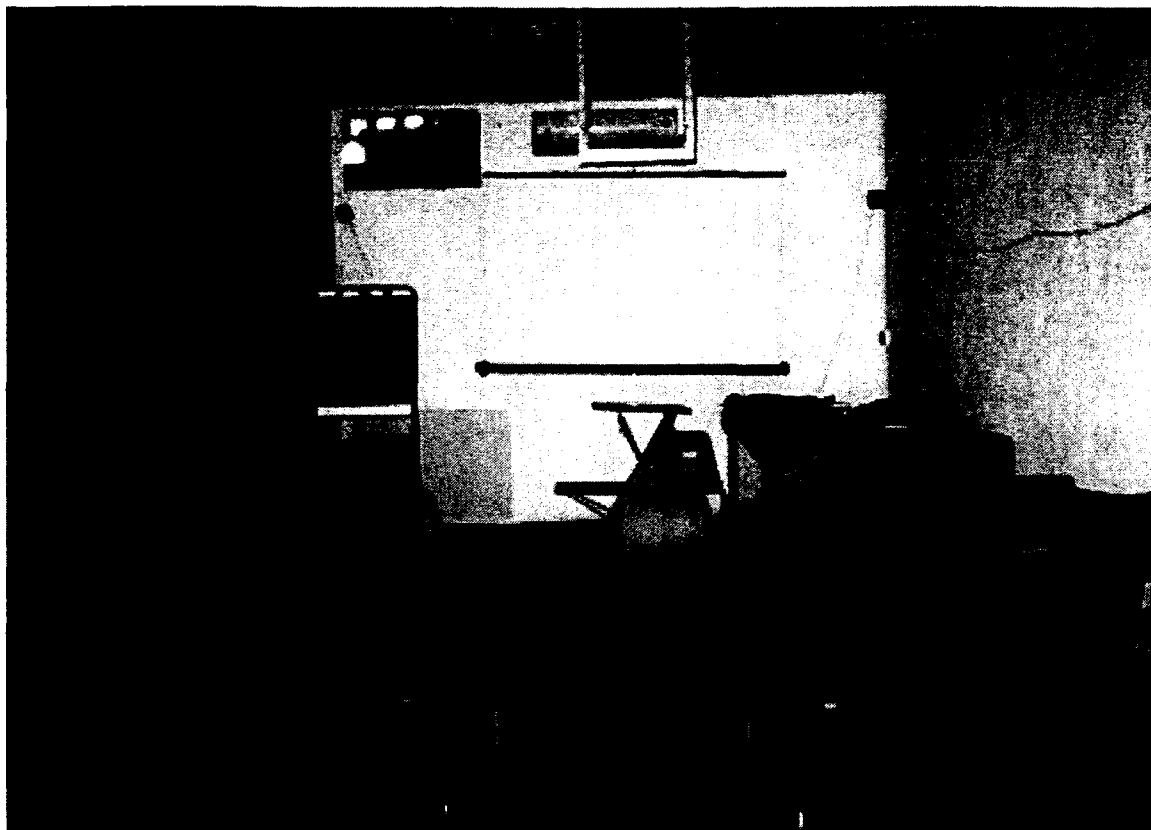


Figure 2.27: The Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos renovated classroom, July 2012. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Section II: Remembering African Revolutionaries, Historiographic Representations

The Richmond African Burial Ground was the site where enslaved and free Africans and African Americans were interred, often against their will. The marginality of the space was further compounded by the presence of the town gallows where criminals and the criminalized were executed. Upon this site Gabriel and several of his fellow revolutionaries were hung for their actions to end the institution of slavery; inspired by the Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution, these men lived the mantra that was to be their banner "Death or Liberty," unlike Patrick Henry whose charge never cost him his life.⁹² Annually, Gabriel is commemorated for his leadership of what would have been the largest slave revolt in North America, had it not been betrayed.

In Rio de Janeiro, Zumbi dos Palmares is a quintessential signifier of the history of Afro-Brazilian resistance against slavery. The *Movimento Negro*, which was so strong in the City of Rio de Janeiro, is part of the longer trajectory of Afro-Brazilian struggles for equality and social justice and takes on the iconic image of Zumbi to symbolize these connections between the past and the present. The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos featured Zumbi representations in sculptures and a banner and Zumbi commemorations were held annually at the Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória. The

⁹² I contrast Gabriel's call for "Death or Liberty" with Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death" speech to focus on the ways these stories have been presented through two historic sites located on the same street in Richmond, within blocks away from one another. According to Dr. Haskell S. Bingham, Gabriel's primary inspiration to use "Death or Liberty" came from Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

struggle to reclaim the history of slavery and resistance is part of the struggle for equal rights, the right to know one's past, one's heritage, one's history and culture. Zumbi dos Palmares, the leader of the most successful quilombo in Brazilian history, ruled and died in Alagoas, a state in Northeast Brazil. His memory and his legacy are kept alive in community members' fight to represent the full histories of Rio de Janeiro through the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos.

This section provides an historical sketch of the lives and legacies of Gabriel in the United States, and Zumbi dos Palmares in Brazil.

Chapter 3: The Story of Gabriel's Revolt

"Many of the ugly pages of American history have been obscured and forgotten...America owes a debt of justice which it has only begun to pay. If it loses the will to finish or slackens in its determination, history will recall its crimes and the country that would be great will lack the most indispensable element of greatness -- justice" (King 1967:10).

Herbert Aptheker, in a preface to his 1969 edition of *American Negro Slave Revolts*, contrasts the 1831 U.S. southern media reports lauding "Polish rebels" who rose up against an oppressive Tsarist regime as "sons of the noble," while later in that same year the enslaved who revolted with Nat Turner in Virginia were deemed "banditti, bloodthirsty wolves and deluded wretches" (1969:1). Aptheker asks, "How shall one explain this extraordinary shift except to observe that now the rebels were at home...and that now the rebels were not white, but black?" (1969:1). The justification of slavery through racist and white supremacist ideologies that asserted the inhumanity of the enslaved, also enabled enslavers to feel, not only vindicated as slaveholders, but "absolutely philanthropic while exercising their slaveholding 'responsibilities' - and enjoying the benefits" (Aptheker 1969:2). He goes on to say: "Central to this mythology was the idea that colored peoples did not detest or resent enslavement; particularly black peoples, it was held, delighted in their chains" (Aptheker 1969:2). To uphold this "myth" and the attendant justifications for slavery and elite exploitation of human labor and lives through slavery, "discontent and rebelliousness were held to be altogether rare and exceptional" (Aptheker 1969:2). He cites examples of "apologists" historiographic works such as Ulrich Bonnell Phillips' *American Negro Slavery* (1918). He characterizes Phillip's work as the "bible of white supremacy in the area of history" complementing contemporary

scholars in disciplines such as anatomy and psychology whose works demonstrated the same racist positions and products (Aptheker 1969:2). The documentary evidence, he says,

made crystal clear to anyone who views black men and women as human beings that American Negro slavery was a monstrously cruel system of exploitation and that its victims despised it and sought every possible way to oppose it. Most meant also, of course, to live through it, and survival is a form of struggle. But everything - from songs, to tales, from heroes to villains, from religion to music to action - shows that the central idea and the never absent dream was to end slavery, to be free (Aptheker 1969:2-3).

Rather than passive or infantilized victims, Africans and African Americans had always fought against the institution of slavery in a myriad of ways. In 1969, Aptheker claimed that “the present generation of such men and women now shaking the very foundations of racism in the United States are the inheritors and continuers of a great tradition of militancy” (Aptheker 1969:5). This ongoing legacy is a threat to elite and state positions of power. As Aptheker’s critique suggests, historiographic distortions and silencing of resistance to slavery represented the enslaved within a racist framework that legitimized past and present inequity.

Nicholls (2012) claims that Gabriel’s story “received little attention” for almost 100 years after Gabriel’s plan for revolt was uncovered and his life taken. Nicholls chronicles the emergence of Virginia’s archival documents related to Gabriel’s rebellion, beginning in 1890. As Trouillot (1995) demonstrates, the creation of archives is imbued with contemporary and past power negotiations. William Price Palmer, a Richmond native and active leading member of the Virginia Historical Society since 1857, Palmer was central to making Virginia’s early archives (Nicholls

2012). He employed these early records within the same year they were state papers were published, to relay the history of slavery in Virginia. As part of a serial publication in the *Richmond Times*, Gabriel's story was featured in his column between December 21, 1890 and January 11, 1891 (Nicholls 2012). Why would the story of slavery as a focal point emerge at this time? Richmond's Monument Avenue had just been constructed to honor and celebrate Confederate leaders, during a period when southern European Americans in Richmond were made optimistic by a boom industrial wealth, made possible through the exploitation of Richmond laborers (see Chapter 5). The hope for realizing the claim "the South shall rise again" must have seemed promising to Richmond "white" elites. Perhaps Palmer's column resonated with a desire to re-member the previously disarticulated collections of Virginia's state documents on slavery to tell a story of how things used to be, through the vehicle of a daily newspaper.

Palmer's representation of slave rebellions focused on the myths addressed by Aptheker (1969) and convey racist and biodeterministic ideologies: "the negro is by nature docile and affectionate, but at the same time easily moved by passion. His dormant emotions, once aroused, no restraint of reason or morals stands between him and the executing of his will" (Palmer quoted in Nicholls 2012). An increase in the number of enslaved laborers, in Palmer's retrospective analysis, served to directly increase the threat of revolt, as did governmental laxity and "indulgence." Palmer focused on Gabriel's rebellion as one such example of "unworthy stupor" and "want of vigilance at the seat of government" (Palmer quoted in Nicholls 2012). Virginia elites were once again making money from exploited labor sources,

including Richmond's African American population. Perhaps these stories served as a simultaneous naturalizing narrative of "white" privilege and entitlement, the inferiority of blacks, and warning on how to maintain power and control. Gabriel, however, was presented through Palmers racist and restricted lens as incapable of being able to devise the conspiracy independently, and must have gotten his ideas from 'foreign' influences, such as slaveholders who fled Saint Domingue during the Haitian Revolution (Nicholls 2012).

The following discussion sketches the story of Gabriel presented through the documentary record while also noting the contemporary fear, dissonance, and denial that Gabriel's conspiracy evoked in contemporary European American elites in Virginia and the Nation. This discussion draws largely on Egerton (1993), incorporating aspects of analysis provided by Sidbury (1997) and Nicholls (2012). For an excellent reference on the primary documents related to Gabriel, see *Gabriel's Conspiracy* by Phillip Schwarz (2012).

Gabriel was born in Henrico County, Virginia to enslaved parents in the auspicious year of 1776 - the same year Thomas Prosser, Jr. was born to the man who held Gabriel and his parents enslaved. Gabriel and Thomas, as many children of the enslavers and the enslaved, likely played together while growing up (Egerton 1993:19-20). Gabriel was taught to read and write, an uncommon and valuable skill among the enslaved. Thomas Prosser Jr. and Absalom Johnson were the first two men that Gabriel planned to kill after the launch of a multi-county conspiracy involving approximately 500 enslaved men who aimed to end the institution of

slavery, and gain independence and equality for enslaved laborers. The documentary record indicates the scope of their plan included Virginia, the United States, and the Atlantic world (Egerton 1993).

As a young boy, Gabriel was chosen by his enslavers to be educated in his father's trade as a blacksmith rather than work in the fields. Enslaved children of artisans were often assigned by enslavers to follow in their parents' trade. Gabriel gained access to resources and mobility experienced by few enslaved rural workers due to his skill and strength, combined with a growing flexibility surrounding the practice of enslavers hiring out enslaved, skilled artisans and laborers. Gabriel worked alongside free blacks and whites, as well as fellow enslaved laborers also working for hire. He travelled throughout the city of Richmond and into surrounding counties to fulfill contracts. He was able to negotiate his wages and choose for whom he worked. After the work day concluded, Gabriel joined his coworkers at local taverns where the high-pitched politics of the day was abuzz. Local newspapers were read aloud, providing for public discussion among Virginia's working classes, enslaved and free (Egerton 1993).

Douglas R. Egerton (1993) argues that Gabriel was born in a "Revolutionary storm." The ideologies of liberty, freedom, equality, and the inalienable rights in man that defined the rhetoric of the United States' war for independence and the French Revolution, were foundational to the formulation of Gabriel's plan. Patrick Henry's 1775 speech delivered at the Virginia Convention held in Richmond's St. John's Church, where he is reported to have demanded "give me Liberty, or give me Death,"

was famous throughout Virginia (Egerton 1993:40). The Haitian revolution rocked the slave-holding Atlantic world, beginning in 1789 when the enslaved in the French colony of Saint-Domingue fought and won freedom and independence. While Gabriel and many of his fellow soldiers would not live to see the ultimate declaration of the independent nation of Haiti in 1804, the Virginia newspapers reported the ongoing events as the revolution unfolded. By 1793, Toussaint L'Overture had assumed command from the deceased Boukman and controlled most of the island of Hispaniola. In 1794 France declared an end to slavery in the French colonies as a negotiation tactic to appeal to L'Overture (Egerton 1993; Dubois and Geggus 2006; see also James 1989 and Fick 1990). By the time Gabriel began to concretize his strategy and recruit in 1800, the successes of the revolution were salient among the enslaved and the enslavers of Virginia (Egerton 1993; Dubois and Geggus 2006).

As Michel-Trouillot (1995) argues, the idea of revolt among the enslaved was “unthinkable” for most whites in slaveholding societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁹³ The adroit military strategy of African and African descended leaders, such as Boukman and L'Overture in the Haitian Revolution, caused dissonance and a need for whites to locate the strategic genius among their racial fellows to demonstrate that the black, enslaved populace was being used as a pawn in European and European American political maneuverings. However, ongoing reports of the Haitian Revolution's successes and the influx of slaveholding refugees

⁹³ Demonstrating Trouillot's (1995) point, William Price Palmer, a Richmond native and one of the earliest narrators of Gabriel's Rebellion, wrote a column on Gabriel's Revolt in the *Richmond Times* beginning in 1890. Palmer stated that extant documents provided evidence that “the negro mind in the South had, for an indefinite period been acted upon by some outside means. The plans adopted, the plausible reasons given why the scheme would succeed, and the provisions made against a possible failure could not have originated in the brain either of Gabriel or any of his followers” (Palmer quoted in Nicholls 2012:4).

from Saint-Domingue into Virginia was testament to the danger and reality of the revolution. By 1795, approximately twelve thousand enslaved laborers had accompanied slaveholding refugees into the United States (Egerton 1993). Many whites recognized the danger that such numbers of enslaved peoples who lived through a successful revolt might have on the enslaved population in their states and began to ban the importation of enslaved peoples from Saint-Domingue. Virginia, however, did not enact such regulations and, therefore, became home to many former French colonists and enslaved laborers from Saint-Domingue (Egerton 1993:47). James Monroe, in 1802, wrote of his concerns that recent events in Saint-Domingue “must produce an effect on all the people of colour in this and the states south of us, more especially our slaves, and it is our duty to be on our guard to prevent any mischief resulting from it” (Egerton 1993:47). Monroe’s fears may have been compounded by the recent discovery of Gabriel’s conspiracy in 1800. Thomas Jefferson, in 1797, voiced concerns for the growing threat of insurrection among the enslaved populations and feared that if measures were not taken to end slavery in the United States, then slaveholders and elites “shall be the murderers of our own children” (Jefferson in Dubois and Geggus 2006:160). After Gabriel’s Rebellion, Jefferson began thinking of ways to expatriate free African Americans to relocate outside of the United States (Dubois and Geggus 2006).

As Egerton points out, when the *gens de couleur* demanded the rights of full “men” proclaimed by the French Revolution, political divisions between Saint-Domingue elites served as an opportune moment for Boukman to launch the Haitian Revolution. Similarly, a split between Federalists and Republicans in the newly formed United

States, and their allegiances abroad with Britain or France, were integral to the political discussions and divisions among American elites and would influence Gabriel's strategy for ending slavery by calling on those whom he believed to express a shared interest in freedom and labor equity: the French (in Virginia and abroad), the Methodists, poor whites - to join the enslaved in ending the institution of slavery. Nicholls (2012) argues that political divisions between France and the United States may have been seen as opportune by Gabriel and his revolutionaries. However, the extent to which any involvement of the French or other whites are based primarily on two testimonials during the trials, and that most of the revolutionaries saw their efforts specifically targeted against "white people" without exception (Nicholls 2012).⁹⁴

In 1799, Gabriel was charged along with his brother, Solomon, and an enslaved man from a neighboring plantation, Jupiter, for stealing a pig from Absalom Johnson. While Solomon's charges were dismissed, Jupiter received 39 lashes at the public whipping post. On October 7, Gabriel, in addition to pig stealing, was also charged with "maiming" Johnson during an altercation over the pig, injuring Johnson's ear. A crime of this type, committed by an enslaved black man against a free white man, would normally have cost Gabriel his life. However, a 1792 statute allowed for slaves faced with a death penalty (for the first time) to be reprieved if they could recite a verse from the bible. Gabriel was able to do so and, instead, was publicly

⁹⁴ In an interview with Dr. Haskell S. Bingham, the great great grandson of Gabriel and the Bingham family historian, Dr. Bingham emphasized that Gabriel's plans did not include indiscriminate killing of white men, women, and children. He planned to kill only men and women who were slaveholders and those who would not join him in ending slavery once the revolt began. No children were to be killed. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

branded on his hand. Johnson, however, brought Gabriel back before the court less than a month later, claiming that his Gabriel threatened his safety and his life. This accusation resulted in Gabriel's incarceration and a fine of \$1000 was paid by the young Thomas Prosser, who had recently taken over the Brookfield estate from his deceased father. The bond included that Prosser must attest that Gabriel would remain "of good behavior and keep the peace towards all the good people" for one year (Egerton 1993:32).

Egerton (1993) argues that these events, as assaults on his humanity, provided a turning point for Gabriel that prompted him to formulate and implement his plan for revolt. From the documentary evidence, primarily from testimonies during the trial proceedings, it appears that Gabriel began to devise his plan in the spring of 1800 and then began to recruit and designate leaders to recruit further in the city of Richmond and the surrounding counties. The majority of men who volunteered to join Gabriel, or were persuaded to do so through the recruit process, were enslaved skilled artisans who were hired out, and most of the central leadership was comprised of literate men. Several of the revolutionaries were free black men, and two French men were reported in confessions by name: Charles Quersey and Alexander Beddenhurst (Egerton 1993). Quersey was described as a Frenchman who had remained in Virginia after taking part in the 1781 siege of Yorktown under General Rochambeau. He was also an abolitionist, whom Solomon said often advocated "to rise and kill the white people" claiming that "he would help them & Shew them how to fight" (quoted in Egerton 1993:43). The involvement of whites,

including Quersey and Beddenhurst, is not clear from the documentary record (Sidbury 1997) and is questioned by Nicholls (2012).

Gabriel's plan, originally divulged to Solomon (his brother) and Ben (also enslaved by Prosser) included gathering recruits from Henrico, Hanover, and Caroline at the Brook Bridge in the middle of the night. Weapons were being collected, including guns, knives, and swords. New swords were created by the blacksmiths out of longer scythes used to harvest wheat. One hundred men would stand guard at the bridge, while Gabriel would lead one hundred more to Gregory's Tavern where arms were held that would be collected. Fifty men would proceed to Rockett's Landing where warehouses would be burned as a diversion intended to draw a crowd of townspeople. Mayo's Bridge was to be taken over by the soldiers while they waited for revolutionaries arriving from surrounding counties. A second group would proceed to the new penitentiary still under construction, where a powder magazine was held. Gabriel would lead the third group on to the Capitol building in Richmond, under a banner that proclaimed "Death or Liberty," to take hold of the state's repository of weapons. The elderly guard and keeper of the Capitol keys, Robert Cowley, was a free black among the reported supporters, who promised to allow Gabriel access to the armory on that night. After the weapons were collected, Governor Monroe would then be taken captive from the nearby Governor's Mansion in hopes of negotiating with him to end slavery and create greater labor equality. (Egerton 1993:50-51).

The revolutionaries felt secure that the Governor's capture and the number of anticipated dead and hostages would necessitate acquiescence to their demands. Gabriel listed Thomas Prosser, Absalom Johnson among the first to be killed, and enlisted to take on this responsibility. At some point, William Mosby was also listed among the first slaveholders to be killed during the revolt. However, Gabriel ordered that no harm should come to anyone who was a Quaker, a Methodist, or French due to "their being friendly to liberty" (Egerton 1993:49). He also ordered that poor white women who held no slaves were not be harmed. Egerton (1993) views class solidarity as evident in Gabriel's identification of the merchant class, rather than whites, in general, as his distinct enemies for their abuses of power in exploiting the labor of poor whites, and free and enslaved blacks. Gabriel expected that poor whites would join, and continue to join in, once the revolution was underway (Egerton 1993: 49 - 66). In a meeting held on August 10, Gabriel also announced that he had "hands enough to execute the project" and that in addition to the reported 500 recruits thus far, "their brothers and sisters from other countries" were expected to join their cause (quoted in Egerton 1993: 65-66). Gabriel mentioned the two Frenchmen who had joined. There were, among the French who settled in Virginia, those who envisioned a broader Atlantic scope for revolution. Perhaps Gabriel shared this vision and hoped for the support among international networks.

Recruiting of the approximate 500 men had taken place while working alongside fellow artisans, as well as after the work day ended on Saturdays and during Sunday gatherings on nearby farms and plantations. Men who were able to travel, did so in look for people they could trust as potential recruits, both free and enslaved.

Opportunities were taken where gatherings could be held to coordinate logistics. The aforementioned August 10 meeting occurred after a funeral service for an enslaved child. At this meeting, the final date was decided upon as August 30. Jack Ditcher challenged Gabriel for the role of leader. A vote was held and Gabriel was voted in as General. A final count was taken and those who wished to continue forward were asked to stand and provide their name or their mark on a piece of paper (Egerton 1993: 64-66). A final meeting was held on August 21 where passes were given out to those who would travel to inform the participants in surrounding counties of the August 30 final plans. Jacob, a ferrier, was one of the watermen who carried information to the southern counties. A report was given to Gilbert that Beddenhurst had been very active in Norfolk (Egerton 1993:66-67). Recruiters and participants chose to refer to the plot as "the business," a term that had emerged and circulated the Atlantic as a specific reference to revolution (Egerton 1993:55). Records indicate recruits included volunteers who heard about the plot and those who were recruited by sworn participants. Having been approached by Woolfolk, King is reported to have said "I was never so glad to hear anything in my life" and that "I am ready to join them at any moment. I could slay the white people like sheep" (quoted in Egerton 1993:57). Not all attendees of gatherings committed to join the effort, and some people voiced their concerns, threatening to reveal the plot to whites. Two such dissenters made this threat at the August 21 meeting, but were quickly surrounded and informed that they would lose their their lives should they choose to do reveal the plot (Egerton 1993:67). Revolutionaries who pledged to fight on August 30 would come from localities that included Norfolk, Petersburg, Caroline,

Louisa, Albermarle, Charlottesville, Hanover, Manchester, Gloucester, Gouchland, Henrico and Richmond.⁹⁵

On August 30, a torrential storm flooded waterways and washed away bridges and roads, making the trek to meet at the Brook Bridge impossible for many (Egerton 1993; Nichols 2012). Among those who were able to meet, a decision was made to postpone the plan until the following night, a Sunday, when the travel of blacks in groups would be seen by whites as usual visitation with family and friends. However, the storm and loss of communication allowed fear of discovery to weigh on several of the participants. Pharaoh, a fairly new recruit, was unlike most of the enlisted revolutionaries because he had lived much of his life, including early childhood, working for the Sheppard family on Meadow Farm. This lifelong relationship and proximity to his enslavers meant he likely held closer ties to his slaveholders than did many of the other recruits. Pharaoh confided in Tom, an enslaved man with whom none of the revolutionaries had confided information regarding the plot because he was so well trusted by the Sheppards that he was left in charge of the family farm when they travelled. Tom and Pharaoh reported the plot, identifying Gabriel as the leader and informed Mosby Sheppard that Thomas Prosser, Absalom Johnson, and William Mosby were the first white slaveholders scheduled to be put to death. No corroborating evidence was immediately found by the small group of men that Mosby

⁹⁵ Among the men named in the extant testimonies and confessions, the following have been recorded: Gabriel, Solomon, Ben, Michael, Charles, Charles Quersey, Alexander Beddenhurst, Ben Woolfolk, Jack Ditcher, Patrick, Jacob, Lewis, Gilbert, Billey, Will (who was the first to begin making blades from scythes), Lucas, Thomas Jordan Martin, King, Bob, Matt Scott, Robert Cowley, Reuben Byrd, Jesse Byrd, Sancho, Jacob Blandum, John Pidgeon, Peter, John Scott, Jacob (the skipper), John, Frank, Thornton, George, Scipio, Jack Gabriel, Ben, John, John Fells, Sam Byrd, Jr., Sam Byrd, Sr., Watt, George Smith, Laddis, Charles, Billey, Peter, Sam Graham, William, Randolph, Daniel, Pharaoh, and an unnamed black mail carrier who agreed to carry messages between the revolutionaries (Egerton 1993).

alerted so they went back home. An enslaved woman approached Mosby upon his return to the farm and informed him of the revolt, and that the plot had been delayed by one day. She stated that the insurrection included several hundred men from several counties. An enslaved man in Petersburg also informed his enslaver, reporting that the conspirators included two white men. Governor Monroe was alerted by mid-day on August 31. Though he had dismissed vague rumors of a revolt plot earlier in the year, this time he quickly had the arms stored in the Capitol building moved to the penitentiary. Monroe began to exhaust the state's discretionary funds by activating the militia (Egerton 1993:70-74).

Though, initially, Gabriel and Jack Ditcher escaped before being apprehended, trials for those immediately apprehended were swiftly held in the oyer and terminer courts, set up especially for trials of the enslaved accused of crimes. During this time, confessions and testimonials were elicited from participants to help convict and prosecute those on trial. Lists had been compiled by the lead recruiters, in order to maintain organized and crucial contact among all participants. The extant lists were confiscated and ordered to be sent to Governor James Monroe. Despite numerous requests for these documents, none were turned over to the courts and the documents were never discovered in Monroe's administrative archives (Egerton 1993). Egerton (1993) argues that the implication of French involvement in the conspiracy was troublesome to the Democratic-Republican (anti-Federalist) governor who was identified as a francophile with close political associations with France.

At the trials, several enslaved revolutionaries voiced their convictions, foregrounding the hypocrisy of the newly independent slaveholding United States. “I beg as a favour, that I may be immediately led to execution. I know that you have pre-determined to shed my blood, why then all this mockery of a trial?” asked one man as he was put on trial (Egerton 1993:81-82). Another man stated, “I have nothing more to offer than what General Washington would have had to offer, had he been taken by the British and put to trial...I have adventured my life in endeavoring to obtain the liberty of my countrymen, and am a willing sacrifice in their cause” (observer John Randolph quoted in Egerton 1993:102).

On September 23, Gabriel’s location was betrayed and he was captured in Norfolk. Gabriel said that he would “confess to no one else” except Governor James Monroe, who never provided him an audience (Egerton 1993:107). During his trial on October 6, Gabriel was sentenced to death by hanging the following day. However, Gabriel requested to hang with “his brothers” who were scheduled to die on October 10. Gabriel was granted this extension, but was the only man taken to die at the City Gallows located at 15th and Broad. Instead, Samuel Graham and William were sent to be hung at an alternative execution site, a tree at the crossroads near Four Mile Creek, that had been designated after complaints by “Ladies” living near the City Gallows that the executions should be carried out elsewhere (Egerton 1993:92, 110). Tom, George Smith, Sam Byrd, Jr. and Gilbert were hung at the square outside of a tavern owned by Thomas Prosser (Egerton 1993:110). Jack Ditcher, upon learning that Gabriel had been apprehended, walked into the city of Richmond and turned himself in. Jacob, the skipper, was taken

captive near Norfolk, and was reported to have committed suicide during transport to the prison (Egerton 1993: 110). Altogether, twenty-six men were hung for their role in planning the revolt. In addition to those named above, the following men paid their lives for seeking liberty and the end of slavery: Solomon and Martin (Gabriel's brothers), John, Will, Isaac, Michael/Mike, Ned/Nat, Billey, Charles, Frank, John, Sawney, James, Peter, Jupiter, Sam, Isham, Isaac, Laddis, Michael, Ben, Jack Gabriel and Peter.

Gabriel and Peter were the last to be hung among those convicted. Hangings were halted, partially due to Jefferson's admonition to Monroe regarding the "strong sentiment that there has been hanging enough," warning that "other states and the world at large will forever condemn us if we indulge a principle of revenge" (Egerton 1993:93). John Randolph, an observer of the trials and slaveholder from Roanoke expressed his concerns at the increasing number of death sentences. Egerton claims that Jefferson and Randolph were "like most slaveholders" in that they "preferred seeing a few slaves writhing on the gibbet to having their plantation world turned upside down. But as men who harbored serious doubts about their peculiar institution, they were unnerved by the thought of dozens of men dying for the crime of yearning to be free" (Egerton 1993:93; See also Dubois and Geggus 2006:162).

Another reason may also lie in the vast expense the revolt was costing the financially struggling state. For every man hung, the state paid compensation to the person's enslaver. The militia costs were continuing to rise. Most of the revolutionaries were skilled artisans, warranting the highest compensation, totaling \$8,899.91 paid to

slaveholders (Egerton 1993:111). On October 13, the Boston Gazette reported that due to the “immense numbers who are implicated in the plot” the hangings had to end because the state could not afford to continue paying for compensation and continuing to execute all participants would “produce the annihilation” of enslaved laborers in Virginia (quoted in Egerton 1993:112). For those who received a pardon from the Governor, sparing them from execution, they awaited transport outside of the state, and possibly the country. Included among those who were sent out of state, away from their families were: Jack Gabriel, John Fells, Ben, Lewis, Ned, Watt, and Jack Ditcher. The state received compensation for these men, which allowed them to recuperate some of the amounts paid out in death compensations (Egerton 1993:112-113).

The press attempted to keep fears from rising in the first days after the conspiracy was discovered. For example, the Virginia Gazette stated that the plot was “shallow and had the attempt even been made to carry into execution, but little resistance would have been required” (quoted in Egerton 1993: 76). Jefferson also made such contradictory statements, writing about actions that needed to be taken out of fear caused by Gabriel’s Revolt, while also claiming the revolt was “easily suppressed” (Dubois and Geggus 2006:162). However, as the details of the conspiracy and the extensive reach of the networks among the participants became known, coverage of the plot and the trials increasingly included white fears in speculating the outcome should there have been no discovery. “Few urban whites...harbored doubts that the rising would have been a success - or at least would have led to enormous bloodshed on both sides,” claims Egerton (1993:77).

James Callender, a political prisoner for his writings against Hamilton, wrote to Thomas Jefferson that the conspiracy “could hardly have failed of success” (quoted in Egerton 1993:77). Randolph claimed that the revolt would have been successful, had it not been “frustrated only by a heavy fall of rain” (quoted by Egerton 1993: 77).

Remembering Gabriel

A Family Legacy: “It’s come down that way.”

The public history of Gabriel’s revolt became muted in contemporary Richmond and Henrico, until community members revived the story by seeking to commemorate the places where planning took place and where Gabriel and his fellow revolutionaries paid with their lives, fighting for liberty. However, Gabriel’s descendant, Dr. Haskell Bingham, has spent his childhood and adult life keeping and building oral and written archives of his great, great grandfather’s life. As a child, he was chosen to inherit the role of Bingham family historian, a role, he says, was held by “my father before me, and his father before him.”⁹⁶ The Bingham family had a long tradition of designating a family historian. As a child, Dr. Bingham began accompanying his father on visits to family members’ homes where records were shared and the family archive expanded.⁹⁷ Dr. Bingham tells Gabriel’s story as nested within his longer family history, a history that he can trace to 1683 in Southern Africa. Dr. Bingham’s narrative of Gabriel interweaves biographies of Bingham ancestors with the histories of the United States, where Gabriel is part of a long line of freedom fighters.

⁹⁶ Bingham, Haskell S. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The story of Bingham descendants in the Americas, begins with Mdalela, the son of Chief Zulu and his wife Mkabiya, of the Nguni peoples in present day Natal, South Africa.⁹⁸ Mdalela was captured during interethnic conflict and sold to the British slaver, Edward Holden. Holden brought Mdalela to the colony of Virginia where he was sold to Robert “King” Carter in 1719 to work on Carter’s Virginia plantations. Dr. Bingham says, “Bingham is a British name, not given by a slaveholder and not a slaveholder’s name.”⁹⁹ Mdalela’s composure and demeanor impressed a British man aboard the *Greyhound* ship, who began to call Mdalela “John Bingham” because, as he noted in the ship’s log, “I was prompted by his regal stature that reminded me of a prominent free black in England” by that name.¹⁰⁰ Mdalela kept the name John Bingham, establishing the Bingham family lineage in the Americas. However, in plantation records, he is recorded only by his first name as enslavers did not recognize surnames among the enslaved. The histories of John Bingham and his descendants tell the stories of the English colonies turned nation and the fight for liberty, freedom, and equality among African descendants in the Americas.¹⁰¹

Dr. Bingham says, “my ancestry line didn’t like to be whipped, and I can understand that, because I could never be a slave,” as he recounts the numerous ways in which his Bingham ancestors resisted slavery by engaging in revolts and marronage. Gabriel’s father, Stephen, was a master stone mason and blacksmith, as well as a New Light minister who preached freedom as a right for all, “If white folks could rebel

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

to obtain their freedom and liberty, then slaves could do the same.”¹⁰² Fear that Stephen Bingham would continue to proselytize revolutionary unrest led his enslavers to whip him publicly before separating him from his family. Stephen Bingham was sold to Paul Thilman in Hanover County, Virginia and his family was sold to Thomas Prosser in Henrico County, Virginia. Stephen Bingham was transferred to a plantation even further away from his family after taking part in a 1769 revolt. During the American War of Independence, Stephen expressed support for the opportunities this conflict afforded the enslaved “by encouraging slaves to run away, join the British army and fight for their freedom and liberty.”¹⁰³ In 1783, Gabriel’s father was captured while visiting his family, “dragged from their cabin and hanged for treason.”¹⁰⁴

Dr. Bingham recounts the execution of Stephen Bingham as integral to forming Gabriel’s vision and his future resolve to end slavery.¹⁰⁵ Playing with Thomas Prosser’s son during his early childhood also shaped how Gabriel saw himself, “that Prosser was no different than he and he was no different than Prosser.”¹⁰⁶ However, when Gabriel became 10 years old, “it was time for Gabriel to be a slave and it was time for Thomas Henry to learn to be a slaveholder.”¹⁰⁷ Gabriel was inspired by

¹⁰² Bingham, Haskell S. “The Seeds of John Bingham are Dispersed Across America” Bingham family papers. Provided during an interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Bingham, Haskell S. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Toussaint L'Ouverture, and drew his inspiration to march into Richmond under a banner "Death or Liberty" from L'Ouverture. During his trial, Gabriel compared himself to General George Washington in the American War of Independence against the British, making clear the hypocrisy of a newly formed nation founded on ideals of liberty and justice while maintaining slavery and executing those who would fight for freedom. Dr. Bingham says that Gabriel "chose to die with dignity," and though he "acknowledged that he was leader" he provided no names for the prosecutors.¹⁰⁸

Gabriel was executed by being hung on the gallows located on "The Burial Ground for Negroes." The final destiny of Gabriel's remains is unknown. The handling of Gabriel's body, after his execution, was carried out "very secretly."¹⁰⁹ Dr. Bingham has interviewed descendants of Gabriel's contemporaries. He says, "some older folks who have a knowledge of what happened then say Gabriel's body was given to a group of doctors and scientists and they took out his brain and it was weighed against a white person's brain, because they didn't think he had brains enough" to be the author and leader of such an excellent strategy.¹¹⁰ A controversy emerged among Virginia officials, "there was an uproar about having Gabriel buried in Virginia. One group of people in Richmond didn't want him buried in Richmond, another didn't want him buried in Virginia and suggested that his body be shipped...to Haiti" so that his remains would rest with Toussaint L'Ouverture.¹¹¹ A burial in Richmond or the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

state of Virginia might “inspire people to revolt” and so by keeping the location of Gabriel’s remains hidden, white Virginians attempted to create a void, where no memorial ground could be visited to pay honor to the executed leader.¹¹²

Gabriel’s wife, Nancy, was among many women who attended meetings and were actively involved in the conspiracy, though Dr. Bingham says Nancy had the clearest role as a Lieutenant. “Sometimes it was women who lifted the firearms from a slaveholder,” to be stored with other weapons in preparation for the revolt.¹¹³

Though some Bingham family members were executed, many, including Nancy and her unborn son, were sold further south to states such as Mississippi and Kentucky after the conspiracy was revealed.

Dr. Bingham and several of his family members were very active in the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. He recognizes this as a continued legacy of resistance in his family, “it’s come down that way.”¹¹⁴ Dr. Bingham’s parents, his family members, and his ancestors modeled fearless resistance against racism and oppression. His parents recognized that white racists and members of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) were afraid of blacks, using violence and threats to terrorize African Americans. Dr. Bingham’s father taught his son not to fear the KKK but to stand up to racists. Dr. Bingham remembers that his father and two friends attended a public KKK meeting where lessons were being given on how to tie knots in nooses. Dr. Bingham said the white KKK members “didn’t say anything to them” and left them alone. Dr. Bingham

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

shared multiple encounters with racist law enforcers who used their positions to illegally apprehend, threaten, and physically harm him. During one such encounter where Dr. Bingham's life was being threatened, the officer said he would shoot Dr. Bingham if he ever saw him in his county again. Dr. Bingham's response was, "If you ever see me again, you start shooting, because if I ever see you, I'll shoot back." The officer said, "I tell you, boy, where'd you learn to be like that?" to which Dr. Bingham said, "I've been like that, it's in my blood."¹¹⁵

The legacy of Gabriel's resistance is celebrated by the Bingham family as a characteristic of their family lineage that was passed on to Gabriel by his ancestors and still lives on in the 4,000 known descendants of John Bingham who live in the United States and the Diaspora today. Dr. Bingham's daughter, Pamela Bingham, has been designated as the next generation family historian.¹¹⁶ For Pamela, the strong presence of her family's history and legacy was "normal."¹¹⁷ She didn't realize that most African Americans didn't have such records and knowledge of their family until she saw the 1979 television mini-series, "Roots." Pamela Bingham and her father have begun training Dr. Bingham's young grandson (Pamela's nephew), Jonathan Samuel Xavier Bingham. Jonathan will follow Pamela in researching and archiving the Bingham family history. During the Bingham family reunions, a theatrical production, "Ancestral Voices," is presented. John Bingham, his children and his

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Dr. Bingham moved from Mississippi to Virginia where he and his wife, Dr. Robbie Bingham, raised their family. Accepting the position of Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost for Virginia State University facilitated Dr. Bingham's research on the Bingham family history in Virginia.

¹¹⁷ Bingham, Pamela. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

grandchildren are honored through portrayals performed by their descendants. A play called “Gabriel’s Rebellion” is presented for the children, who also participate in art and essay contests with themes related to their family history. As young Jonathan Bingham wrote in his welcome letter for the 2013 reunion, “I am so proud that my grandfather researched our family’s history and is teaching me what it means to be a ‘Bingham’...He began instilling my African heritage in me very early on. I am proud of this heritage we all share.” He closes his welcoming comments by saying, “I am ZULU. I am BINGHAM. I am PROUD.”¹¹⁸

In a 2005 address to Mary Washington University, Dr. Bingham said of Gabriel, “Every school child should know his story. There should be a statue of him in Virginia’s Capitol Square. Cities, libraries, schools, bridges, streets should be named after him.” In 2013, Dr. Bingham emphasized his desire for Gabriel’s memory to be honored through accurate renditions of his story. His main concern is that, “whatever is dispensed, is true.”¹¹⁹ Yvonne Walker, also a descendant of Gabriel, said that a monument should be built recognizing her ancestor, citing the monuments that exist for “Jefferson Davis and all of them on Monument Avenue.”¹²⁰ Walker’s connection

¹¹⁸ “The Bingham Family Reunion ‘From Then To Now,’ Reunion keepsake booklet from July 4th-7th 2013 held in Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia. A copy of this book was provided to me by Dr. Haskell S. Bingham and Pamela Bingham during an interview on October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

¹¹⁹ Bingham, Haskell S. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States.

¹²⁰ Walker, Yvonne, quoted by Chris Dovi “VCU’s Slave Lot: In the wake of Lumpkin’s Jail dig, attention turns to the university-owned slave burial ground next door. Style Weekly. January 7, 2009. <http://www.styleweekly.com/richmond/vcuts-slave-lot/Content?oid=1375537> Last accessed November 17, 2013.

to the site is quite personal. “When I pass by there, I think ‘Wow, this is me,’” she says, “It actually gives you a sense of history.”¹²¹

Community Commemorations

There are no statues, or grand monuments to Gabriel at this time, but members of the African American community have led multiple efforts throughout Richmond and Henrico to mark the landscape with his revolutionary story and memory. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources historical marker currently standing on the edge of Broad Street (see Figure 3.1), bordering the Burial Ground, was erected because of a petition to the Department of Historic Resources, started by Ana Edwards and the Defenders for Freedom Justice and Equality in 2004. Community members contributed the money to pay for the sign. A plaque telling a brief history of the planned revolt and activities is now located in the area where much of the strategic planning occurred, just outside of Richmond in Henrico County. In 2004, Gabriel Freedom Park was established in the Highland Park neighborhood of Richmond. In 2010, a monument was unveiled.¹²²

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Two Virginia Department of Historic Resources markers titled “Gabriel’s Rebellion” were erected in 1997 and 2002 in nearby Henrico County at the Brookfield Plantation site (E-102) and Littlepage’s bridge (E-115). Littlepage’s bridge was a site where Ben Woolfolk recruited new enlistees. These markers were brought to my attention by the Pamela Bingham. Interview, October 25, 2013. Petersburg, Virginia. United States. See also Arnold (2007) *A Guidebook to Virginia’s Historical Markers* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press).



Figure 3.1: Virginia Historical Marker erected in October 2004, Richmond, VA

The Historical Marker is titled “Execution of Gabriel” and tells a brief story of the planned revolt and final execution of Gabriel and his fellow conspirators. The marker mentions the nearby location of the gallows where Gabriel was executed, also the location of the “Burial Ground for Negroes.” I will discuss the use and commemoration of this site by community members and public officials in Chapter 5.

In 1997, Henrico County Supervisor Frank Thornton¹²³ proposed a plaque near Young’s Spring, one of the meeting places where Gabriel’s conspiracy was discussed among participants. The resulting plaque, titled “Gabriel’s Rebellion: A Failed Insurrection” is one of two plaques for the Spring Park site. The plaque for

¹²³ Thornton, Frank. Comments at Annual Gabriel Forum and Commemoration, October 10, 2008. Confirmed by correspondence from Henrico County, October 30, 2013. Referenced in Interview with Ana Edwards, October 22, 2008, Richmond, Virginia. United States.

Gabriel's Rebellion provides a map of key locations noted within the brief narrative of Gabriel's rebellion, which include: 1) Young's Spring 2) Brookfield Plantation, where Gabriel lived 3) Brook Bridge, the meeting place set for August 30, 1800 4) Mayo's Bridge, to be secured by one of the three groups of insurgents 5) Rocketts, the site for a planned distraction by setting fire to warehouses 6) the state Capitol 7) Meadow Farm, where Tom and Pharaoh betrayed the plot 8) the Penitentiary where Gabriel was imprisoned 9) the Henrico Courthouse where Gabriel was tried 10) and the gallows where Gabriel was executed on October 10, 1800. The second plaque is titled "Spring Park: Healing Waters" and begins by saying that the adjacent area was once owned by the Williamson family who were the enslavers of Lewis, one of the revolutionaries who, after the conspiracy was revealed, attempted to keep the plot going by organizing to free those who had been imprisoned. Lewis was caught, tried, found guilty and was one of the convicted participants who were spared their lives and was sold out of Virginia instead.

In August 2005, Trudy Woodson and Ann Young shared with Ana Edwards of The Richmond Defender their story of victory in creating a Gabriel Freedom Park in their Highland Park neighborhood.¹²⁴ Woodson and Young shared the transformations they had witnessed in their neighborhood. Ana Edwards reported, "When Trudy Woodson and Ann Young talk about their neighborhood, there is a little anger mixed with sadness about the impact of alcoholism, drug addiction and increased crime. Feelings of community pride and mutual responsibility seem to

¹²⁴ Edwards. Ana. The Women behind Gabriel Freedom Park. The Richmond Defender. Vol. 1, No. 7. August 2005:2.

have faded away in favor of hopelessness and indifference.”¹²⁵ Where neighbors had once enjoyed sitting on their porches and spending time together without fear, now, Young says, “you just have to be aware of gunshots.”¹²⁶ Woodson and Young became determined to reclaim their neighborhood, to make it once again “a neighborhood to be proud of.”¹²⁷ When Sa’ad El-Amin had been the 6th district Councilman, he proposed a resolution honoring Gabriel as a “patriot and freedom fighter.”¹²⁸ According to Edwards, this inspired Woodson and Young who felt that Gabriel’s story, “of fierce commitment in the face of possible odds was just the inspiration they wanted the park to provide.”¹²⁹ Woodson and Young wanted to transform a small piece of land that had gone “neglected” for some time into a community park to inspire pride.¹³⁰ In 2004, the 6th district represented by Ellen Robertson, was able to purchase a small space of with their discretionary funds to allocate a park in Gabriel’s honor.

The park, is located in the northeast area of Richmond in a triangular section of Highland Park neighborhood. In 2010, a monumental plaque was unveiled (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3) that states:

Gabriel Freedom Park is named to Honor a 24 year old enslaved African, who fought to free his people from bondage. Further, this park bears Gabriel’s name to honor the people of Highland Park, and to remind us all of our ability to rise above injustice and reclaim our

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Young quoted by Edwards.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

lives from economic and social oppression. The spirit of Gabriel (1776-1800) serves as a beacon for every generation of Richmond's youth.



Figure 3.2: Gabriel Freedom Park, Richmond, VA. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

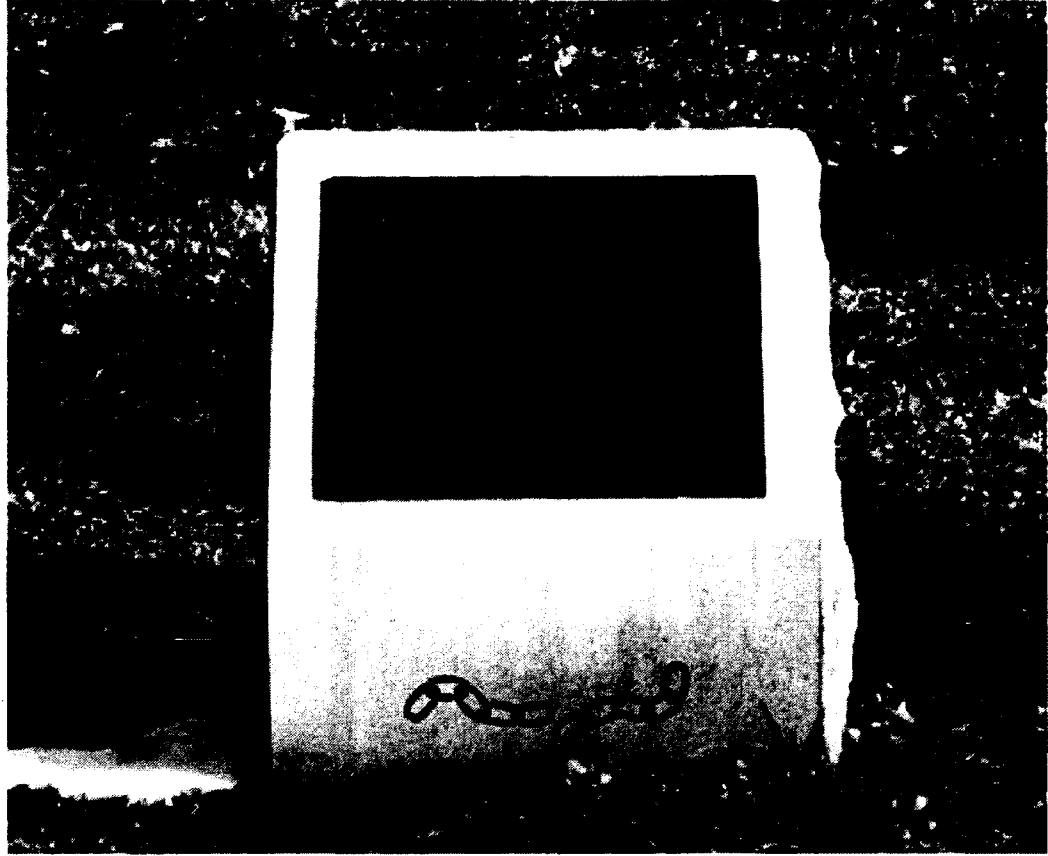


Figure 3.3: Monument to Gabriel at the Gabriel Freedom Park in Highland Park Neighborhood, Richmond, Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Annually, on October 10, Gabriel is remembered by Richmond community members who gather together at the Burial Ground. The Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality have hosted the annual Gabriel commemorations since 2003, organizing symposia of speakers, ending the evening in a procession to the Burial Ground, a pouring of libations, and paying respect to those who came before. Recently, the commemorations have included gatherings at the Burial Ground as the main event and the Defenders have taken less of a primary roll in organizing. The Burial Ground, has become a living memorial to Gabriel and those who were interred, yet not honored in their burial. Weekly vigils take place on Sundays at the Burial Ground, beginning at 4 PM.

An annual Ancestor Day is held in the latter part of October, founded by Richmond resident and activist, Monica Esparza. She says that her “passion” for establishing and continuing the Annual Ancestor day is attributed to the “mission of Image Church-Renewal of Life Project: to preserve land for spiritual communion, and to nurture the intergenerational fabric of communities. This is where my interest in the burial ground begins and will most likely end for me.”¹³¹ A “Candlelight Vigil for Trayvon, Reginald Latson, Oscar Grant, Sean Bell, and Countless Unknown Others” was organized by Tiamba Wilkerson of the Defenders on March 22, drawing approximately 200 people who convened to pay respect and call for justice in the trial of Trayvon Martin’s murderer.¹³² The rally included an “open mike” platform where people spoke on the social justice required to keep young black boys safe and hold the justice system accountable. The blatant lack of value placed on the lives of African Americans was discussed as a past and a present crisis. Speakers drew on the history of the site - related to Gabriel and the Burial Ground - to enunciate the historical trajectory of oppression and constant resistance, and actions needed to realize full freedom and equality within the United States. For Esparza, the

¹³¹ Esparza, Monica. Esparza-Barrett correspondence October 25, 2013 and email interview February 4, 2013.

¹³² On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17 year old African American boy, was shot and killed by George Zimmerman, described as a “white and hispanic” man who viewed Martin as a threatening presence in his Florida neighborhood. Zimmerman was a neighborhood watch volunteer. Though authorities told him not to act, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin, who was in possession of no weapons and was simply on his bicycle. 911 recordings reveal that Zimmerman shot once, pleas and cries from Martin are heard, Zimmerman shot again and the cries end. Zimmerman claimed self-defense and was ultimately acquitted of the crime. Florida’s “Stand Your Ground” laws were instrumental in this verdict. Social commentary on the racism and social injustice evinced by this case are ongoing. See the New York Times archives for news coverage of this case: http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/m/trayvon_martin/ Last accessed October 29 2013.

community held the power to transform the Burial Ground into sacred space for the descendant community using it as a place for meetings that honor the ancestors, keeping the living and the dead connected. The visit from the Ghanaian Chief Kundumuah and the vigil for Trayvon Martin was used as an examples.¹³³

Self-determined Representations of Gabriel

The history of Gabriel has largely gone untaught in Richmond area schools and many young students still don't know who he is or what he did. The normative narrative of Richmond's past as part of the Virginian and "American" past omits and/or mutes resistance to slavery by Africans and their descendants in Richmond and in the Americas, more broadly. This selective construction of the past serves to convey skewed perspectives of the relationships of power in the past and present.

European Americans are taught to see themselves as the unmarked and normative standard of American-ness (Frankenberg 1994). As the following sections in this dissertation should demonstrate, power is presented as naturally held and exercised by Europeans and European Americans. Within commemorative activities and school lessons around slavery, examples of abuse of power by Europeans and European Americans are presented as unfortunate lessons that are a product of the past and passé thinking that "people" have progressed away from, often at the behest of "progressive" European and European Americans figures who are foregrounded. Abstract institutions discussed in the passive tense, or exemplary

¹³³ African Burial Ground Community Organization Committee meeting April 1, 2012. Notes taken by Autumn Barrett.

individuals who are not representative of the norm, serve as the sole “faces” of the enslavers who perpetrated the institution.

African American history is largely compartmentalized within the history of slavery, ignoring the long trajectory of historical and cultural legacies before, during and after the Atlantic trade in human captives patterned migrations throughout the Americas. Histories of African wealth, ingenuity, technological expertise are ignored, or offered as individual instances outside of the norm. Within the context of enslavement within the United States, African American resistance to slavery is largely silenced. Such histories contradict the “naturalized” power differential presented in a Euro-centric view of the Nation’s past and “World” history. The constant and multi-faceted history of African American resistance to slavery exposes the tenuousness of the power dynamics, as anything but “natural.” Gabriel’s story in the past is a threat to white and elite power in the present. As upcoming sections will present, residents of Richmond have shared how young people connect with Gabriel’s fight for social justice and his story tells them to continue to fight, continue a fight that has not ceased since the oppression of slavery began.

Plaques and commemorations that are self-determined by the descendant community of Richmond make these connections between the past oppressions of slavery and the present conditions of racial disparity. The sites of resistance in the past are spaces to meet and remember, to meet and organize for a better future, to inspire African American youth with the stories of strength and courage exemplified by African American figures like Gabriel.

Chapter 4: The Story of Zumbi dos Palmares

Upon entering the Instituto dos Pretos Novos in Rio de Janeiro in 2006, the walls featured large banners: one featuring a song “Zumbi” by Jorge Ben as (see Figure 4.1). The lyrics list African ethnic groups “Angola, Congo, Benguela, Monjolo, Cabinda, Mina, Quiloa, Rebolo” countering the racial and homogenizing term “negro” used later in the context of the experiences of the enslaved. The lyrics go on to say:

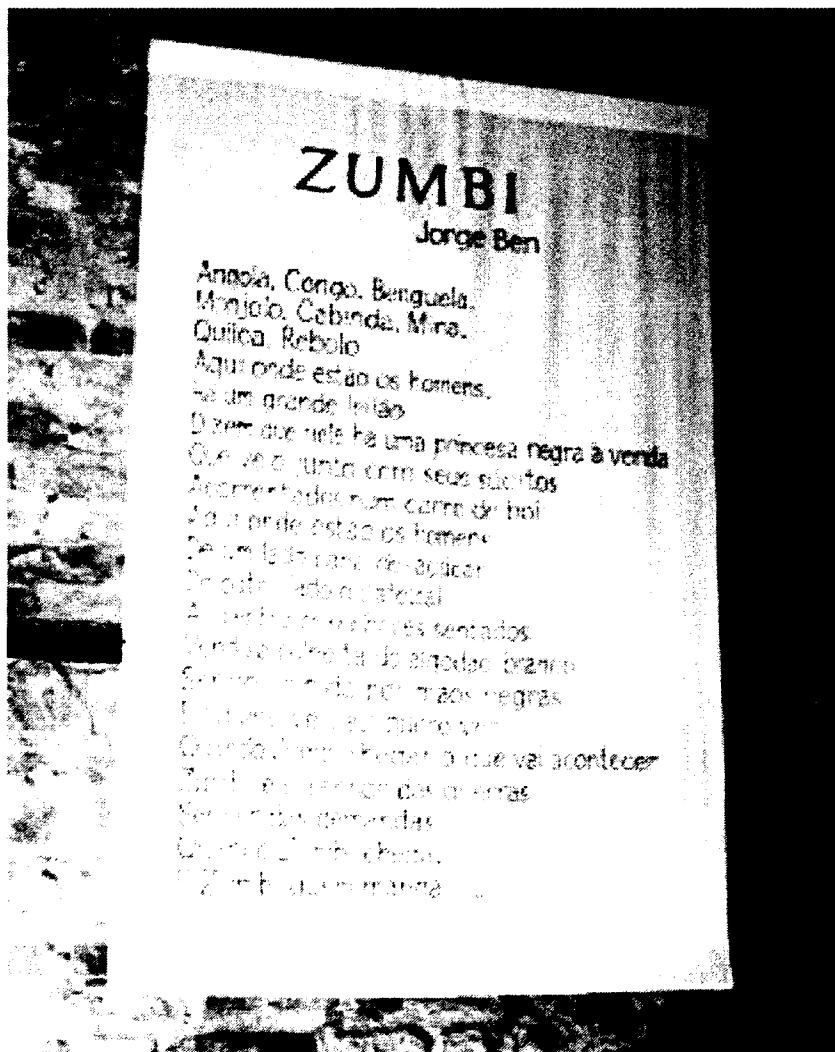


Figure 4.1: Banner on the wall of IPN exhibit space, “Zumbi” by Jorge Ben. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, January 17, 2006.

Here, where the men are
There is a huge auction
They say that in [this auction] there is a black princess for sale
Who came together with her subjects/ Chained in an ox cart
Here, where there are men
On one side sugarcane
On the other side a coffee plantation
At the center the Masters are seated
Selling the harvest of white cotton
Being harvested by black hands
I want to see, I want to see
What's going to happen when Zumbi arrives
Zumbi is the Lord of wars
Lord of demands
It is Zumbi who commands

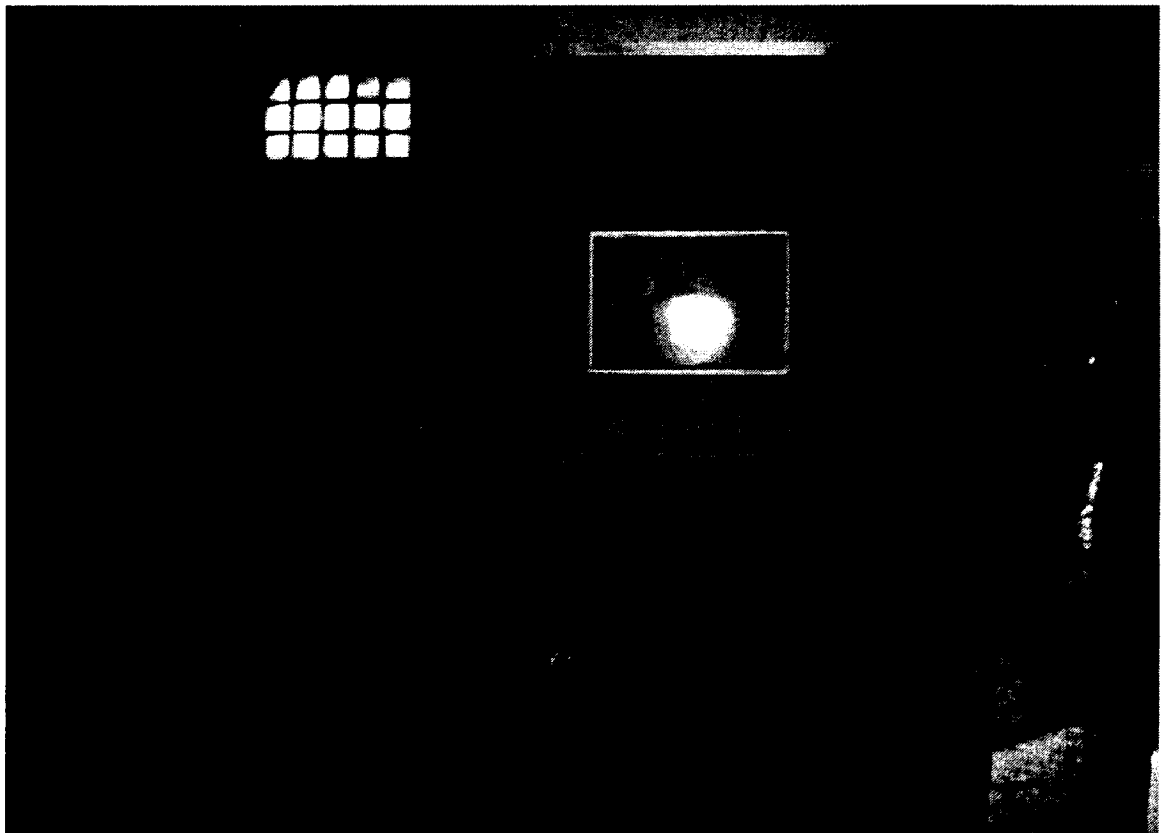


Figure 4.2: Zumbi sculpture (foreground, far right) in the IPN classroom, photo taken by Autumn Barrett January 17, 2006.

A sculptural interpretation of Zumbi were prominent in the classroom and art gallery spaces (see Figure 4.2). Zumbi was the last leader of Palmares, the largest and longest surviving community of self-liberated Africans and their freeborn descendants located in Alagoas, in the northeast region of colonial Brazil.

Every 20th of November, Rio de Janeiro celebrates “Black Consciousness Day,” which emerged as a state holiday in 1988 in response to the centennial celebrations of Princess Isabel and the Golden Law where May 13 was the focal point. Black rights activists contested this and began to celebrate Zumbi on the day of his death, or transition to the ancestral community in 1695 (Winant 1999). November 20th, as Black Consciousness Day, became a national holiday in November 2011. While Zumbi was featured year round in the IPN space, anniversary tributes to Zumbi have been held at the IPN, and in recent years, the IPN has participated in the November 20 events that take place at the Zumbi monument at Praça Onze.

This chapter will provide a brief historical discussion of Zumbi and Palmares, the political significance that Zumbi came to symbolize in the *movimento negro* (black movement) in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the twentieth century, and the meaning of Zumbi for contemporary Rio residents and activists fighting to make visible the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro through the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos.

Zumbi dos Palmares

In Brazil, as throughout the Atlantic World, Africans resisted slavery on a daily basis. Flight, or *marronage*, was one of the most frequent ways that enslaved Africans and their descendants freed themselves in Brazil. Self-liberated Africans formed communities referred to as *mocambos* (Ambundo meaning hideaway), *ladeiras* (Portuguese meaning slopes), *magotes* (Portuguese meaning heaps), or *quilombos* (an Mbundu war for warrior initiation societies) (Schwartz 1996[1992]). One Jesuit priest, in 1619, described these enclaved communities and their ongoing initiatives against enslavers, toward liberating more enslaved laborers:

this people has the custom of fleeing to the woods and joining in hideouts where they live by attacks on the settlers, stealing livestock and ruining crops and cane fields which results in much damage and many losses beyond that of loosing [sic] their daily labor. And many of these (escapees) live for many years in the forest never returning and living in these mocambos which are places or villages that they have made deep in the forest. And from here they set out to make their assaults, robbing and stealing and often killing many, and in these attacks they seek to carry off their male and female relatives to live with them..." (quoted in Schwartz 1996[1992]:105).

During a 1692 attack on one *mocambo* in southern Bahia, the battle cry against the Portuguese invaders was: "Death to the whites and long live liberty" (quoted in Schwartz 1996[1992]:108). Stuart B. Schwartz (1996[1992]) argues that maroon communities in colonial Brazil were "revolutionary" in their attack on the slave system, rather than communities solely focused on maintaining the freedom of their members. In the case of Bahia, Schwartz (1996[1992]) states that *mocambos* "represented an expression of social protest" serving as a precedent for later forms of social resistance such as *cangaço*, a form of "social banditry" that took place in the

postcolonial context, where marginalized bands of people would conduct raids for resources (103-109).

While one early eighteenth century standard used by colonial officials to identify quilombos for the purpose of extinguishing them, stipulated that a quilombo consisted of at least four blacks with houses, many of the mocambo and quilombo communities included hundreds of members. The largest quilombo, Palmares, toward the end of the seventeenth century, reached estimates of twenty thousand members. References to the quilombo communities of Palmares emerge in the documentary record circa 1605 (Funari and Carvalho 2005). Palmares was established in the late sixteenth century or the first few years of the seventeenth century (Allen 2001; Schwartz 1996[1992]; Carneiro 1947), was well known by 1612 (Funari and Carvalho 2005), and was impenetrable against ongoing attacks from the Dutch and Portuguese, until 1694. Relying on the limited existing documentary records, Schwartz characterizes Palmares as a “neo-African kingdom” comprised of many *mocambos* united to form the larger *quilombo* (1996[1992]).

The Palmares kingdom or the Republic of Palmares (see Allen 2001) reflected the multiple African ethnicities of its members by employing a combination of several African models for social and political organization, “although like most fugitive communities it combined these with aspects of European culture and specifically local adaptations” (1996[1992]:122). The original Palmares community was founded by forty Africans who escaped their captivity on plantations in the Porto Calvo area in the contemporary state of Alagoas (see Figure 4.3); while early historians identified

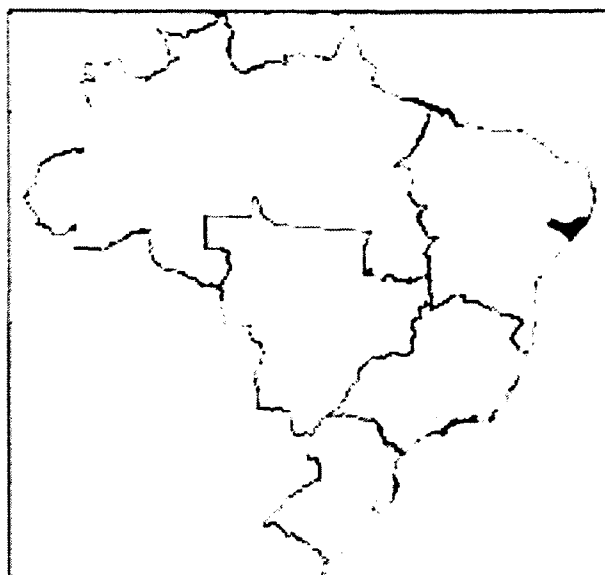


Figure 4.3: Contemporary state of Alagoas, Brazil.

these founders as Guinean (Allen 2001) subsequent arguments have ensued regarding the misidentification of African ethnicities by contemporary Europeans who often used ethnic identities associated with slave ports of exit rather than the individual's self identification (Allen 2001; Schwartz 1996). From the European chroniclers' descriptions, a king ruled the whole quilombo with leaders of ten smaller mocambos within the quilombo (Allen 2001; Schwartz 1996[1992]).

Contemporary witness accounts suggest that elections were held, it is unclear if leaders were elected or appointed through kinship since Ganga Zumba's mother and brother were leaders under him and he was succeeded by Zumbi, his nephew (Schwartz 1996[1992]:123-124; Allen 2001). A combination of agriculture, manufacturing of materials and weapons, trade, and raids supplied Palmares with subsistence resources (Schwartz 1996[1992]; Allen 2001). Raids were also used to bring women into Palmares, as well as enslaved laborers. Fugitives who came to

Palmares seeking freedom entered as free persons, however, those who entered through raids were enslaved (Schwartz 1996[1992]:124). The system of slavery, appears to have been closer to various forms of slavery within West and West Central Africa, where servitude was not a lifetime status, nor in perpetuity, but a temporary form of bonded service after which a person could enter into the larger society as a free and full member (Kopytoff and Miers (1977); Miller (1977)).

Palmares members who entered as a result of a raid were required to serve until they participated in a raid and brought in new members (Allen 2001; Carneiro 1947). Discussions as to the appropriateness of the term “slavery” to describe this system has suggested that this form of tentative servitude tested the loyalty of newcomers who did not come of their own volition, and increased Palmares’ population (Allen 2001).

The Dutch launched three attacks against Palmares between 1605 and 1654, when the Portuguese regained control of the northeast of Brazil. The Portuguese determined to destroy the threat of Palmares, continued by attacking Palmares between 1654 and into the 1680s (Schwartz 1996[1992]:123). Overall, about seventeen attacks were made on Palmares, by the Dutch and Portuguese combined (Allen 2001). Despite the lack of success on the part of the Portuguese, the continuous onslaughts led Palmares’ highest leader, Ganga Zumba, to offer a treaty to the Portuguese, promising Palmares’ allegiance to Portugal and the return of any new runaways if Portugal would officially recognize Palmares as free (Schwartz 1996[1992]). This 1680 treaty included the movement of at least some of Palmares’ residents to a portion of land designated by the Portuguese in the valley of Cucaú

(Allen 2001). However, the Portuguese violated the contract and internal conflict within Palmares ensued, leading to a split of leadership and allegiances. Ganga Zumba was overthrown soon after (and by most accounts also killed) by his nephew Zumbi, who continued throughout the 1680s to lead the fight against the Portuguese, in defense of Palmares (Schwartz 1996[1992]; Allen 2001).

Palmares remained successful against attacks through the expert use of “guerrilla warfare” tactics as well as maintaining multiple levels of defense surrounding the compounds of the quilombo, including walls, palisades, series of camouflaged pits, traps, false passages and secret entrance/ exit paths (Schwartz 1996[1992]:123-124; Allen 2001). Furthermore, Palmares had spies within the surrounding communities and an effective collaborative network with colonial informants (Allen 2001). On many occasions, where a quilombo had been penetrated, the attackers would find the quilombo vacant. The inhabitants waited until they were safe to return and would rebuild their communities, which had been burnt down by the invaders (Allen 2001). However, in 1692, the Portuguese contracted indigenous soldiers and mercenaries who had helped to expand Portuguese territories in Bahia and were adept at navigating the interior terrain, as well as capturing fugitive enslaved laborers (Schwartz 1996[1992]). The expertise of the Indigenous mercenaries enabled the Portuguese to slowly erode the defenses of Palmares over the course of two years. Indeed, as Schwartz (1996[1992]) notes, the only successful expeditions against *mocambos* and *quilombos* by the colonials in Brazil included hired indigenous troops.

Palmares was finally penetrated in February 1694. Five hundred Palmarinos were taken prisoner, two hundred were reported killed and two hundred more committed suicide (Schwartz 1996). Rocha Pitta reported that Zumbi was among those who committed suicide by jumping off of a cliff that bordered Palmares (Allen 2001). However, Ennes (1938) includes an account by Caetano e Melo that reported 500 Palmares members were killed, “among them a valiant Black who was their general” (quoted in Allen 2001). Other interpretations include that Zumbi was wounded and escaped, attempted to build up Palmares forces again, but was ultimately captured and beheaded, his head paraded on a stick “as a message to any who would follow his example” (Ennes quoted in Allen 2001; see Schwartz 1996). Although Palmares as it existed under Ganga Zumba and Zumbi ended in 1694, documentary evidence dating up to 1746 report that enslaved laborers continued to liberate themselves and find refuge at the site of Palmares where new communities were being formed (Schwartz 1996[1992]:124).

Schwartz (1996[1992]) argues that the term *quilombo* is essential to investigating and understanding the foundation and structure of Palmares as based on an Angolan model. While there is evidence that Palmares was “multicultural” in membership and in practice, including various African, Indigenous, European and “creole” ethnicities, Schwartz (1996[1992]) argues that the organization and purpose of Palmares was derived from an Angolan political and military formation that emerged within the context Portuguese invasions of the Ndongo kingdom in the late sixteenth century (called Angola by the Portuguese) and attacks from “marauding warriors from central Africa” causing large scale dislocations of peoples and

communities (125). The Imbangala or Yaka emerged as dislocated warriors who banded together and moved into contemporary Angola, bringing with them a new form of political and social organization. The Imbangala/ Yaka were communities of war and of warriors, raiding for supplies and moving into territories and where they established their polities through a process of integrating multiple ethnicities. Conflict existed between the Imbangala and the Portuguese, though there were periods of collaboration as well. During the early seventeenth century (1611-1619), some Imbangala (called Jaga by the Portuguese) leaders served as protectors of the Portuguese and others entered into the slave trade by providing captives sold at Luanda (Schwartz 1996[1992]:126).

According to contemporary observers, the Imbangala social organization was not organized around familial kinship, for, “reportedly, they killed the babies born to their women, but integrated adopted children into their ranks so that over time they came to be a composite force of large numbers of people of various ethnic backgrounds united by an organized military structure” (Schwartz 1996[1992]:126). Contemporary historians have qualified these observations by noting that women could leave the Imbangala *ki-lombo* to have children, but familial relationships were not the basis of social membership in the *ki-lombo* (Schwartz 1996[1992]). The Imbangala *ki-lombo* refused to recognize ancestry or familial lines as legitimate social bonds. The Imbangala *ki-lombos* incited fear, and were reported to be cannibals and practitioners of human sacrifice, with warriors protected by a mixture that included human fat, called *magi a samba* applied to their bodies before battle (Schwartz 1996[1992]).

Prior to the Imbangala adoption, *ki-lombo* was an Mbundu “initiation society” for young men training to be warriors. The Imbangala, who migrated into Mbundu territory in the early 1600s, incorporated the *ki-lombo* into their practices. Schwartz (1996[1992]) argues that the Imbangala modification of the Mbundu *ki-lombo* provided unity and solidarity in the absence of shared ancestral and kinship ties:

Torn from ancestral lands and gods, sharing no common lineage, living by conquest...the Imbangala needed an institution that provided cohesion to the disparate ethnic elements comprising their bands. The *ki-lombo*, a military society to which any man by training and initiation could belong, served that purpose. Designed for war, this institution created a powerful warrior cult by incorporating large numbers of strangers who lacked a common ancestry (Schwartz 1996[1992]:126-127).

The Imbangala were a people who emerged out of conflict and drew strength from their disparate origins. The central role of ancestors in daily lives of their descendants, was shared among many ethnicities in West and Central Africa. Within the *ki-lombo*, the *nganga a nzumbi*, served as the intercessor between the communities of the living and the dead. This suggests that Ganga Zumba of Palmares (and perhaps, Zumbi) was a title and that his leadership position included spiritual responsibilities (Schwartz 1996[1992]). Among the Imbangala, leaders were elected and, as mentioned before, contemporary observers of Palmares witnessed election proceedings. António de Oliveira Cadornega, historian of seventeenth century Angola, argues that the term *quilombo* came to be used in reference to the Imbangala (Jaga) and to a particular type of political organization or kingdom that was influenced by the Imbangala (Schwartz 1996[1992] drawing on Cadornega 1940).

In Brazil, the capital of Palmares was referred to as “Angola Jaga” or “little Angola” by its members (Allen 2001; Schwartz 1996[1992]). The close association between Palmares and Angola was shared by Brazilian colonials in the Salvador legislature who, in 1672, referred to the “oppression we all suffer from the gentiles of Angola who live in Palmares,” gentiles being a term used to mean savage or barbaric (quoted in Schwartz 1996[1992]:125). The term *quilombo*, in colonial Brazil, particularly in the latter part of the seventeenth century, was used primarily to mean communities of self-liberated Africans and African descendants, though these communities included individuals representing various ethnicities, including Indigenous and European. Indigenous communities also accepted escaped enslaved Africans, and were perceived as a threat by colonial officials who feared being overturned (Schwartz 1996[1992]). Inter-class and ethnic cooperation were represented in the quilombo compositions of Africans and *criolos* [African descendants born in Brazil], Indigenous, Europeans, enslaved and free blacks who lived within the *quilombos* (Schwartz 1996[1992]). Allen’s (2001) reassessment of the primary documentation available on Palmares provides little evidence of the broad range of ethnic and social diversity that is often celebrated in Palmares. The only evidence Allen found was that “seven Indians were captured during one of the raids, and white women were supposedly captured from the plantations” (44). Regardless of the extent of ethnic diversity in Palmares, cross class and ethnic collaborations existed in the networks of trade in goods and information between *quilombolos* and members of the colonial and indigenous communities, which severely threatened elite colonial power (Schwartz 1996[1992]; Allen 2001).

Schwartz (1996[1992]) employs a military and social history of the emergence of Angolan ki-lombos to argue that mocambos and quilombos were created by African and African descendants as free communities, but had a revolutionary aspect in their resistance to slavery as an institution in colonial Brazil. The interest of freedom for the individuals was a primary goal. However, the possibility of *quilombos* in Brazil, generally, and Palmares in particular, having roots in the Iimbangala ki-lombo as a socio-military model created for the survival of disparate peoples displaced by colonialism and civil war is provocative, particularly given the symbolic resonance of Palmares and Zumbi for contemporary Brazilians. Palmares, and by extension, Zumbi have come to represent a broad trajectory of resistance against social injustice and inequity within Brazil (Schwartz 1996[1992]; Allen 2001; Hanchard 1999). Allen (2001) states, that Palmares, as a “symbol of resistance in the ongoing fight for equal rights...is often heard in the dialogue of political parties also serving as reference for activism in a wide range of social issues such as rights for women, homosexuals, the working class, and, most saliently, Afro-Brazilians” (6).

The political significance of Zumbi dos Palmares for the Black Movement in Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro

The history of the Zumbi dos Palmares monument in the City of Rio de Janeiro

In 1986, a monument was erected to Zumbi in Rio de Janeiro, unveiled six days before the gubernatorial election near *Praça Onze*, which lies on the edge of the larger port area that became known as “little Africa” (Cardoso et al. 1987). According

to Ana Lucia Araújo, Zumbi is the first monument created in memory of slavery in Brazil and the timing of the unveiling is significant, for the Zumbi monument “cannot be dissociated from the electoral strategies of governor Leonel Brizola and his political party” (2010:256). Roberto Conduru offers an analysis of imagery choices for the Zumbi monument, asking if it is “a tribute to blackness or a symbol of European domination over Africa?” (2007:62).¹³⁴ Conduru (2007) explores these imagery choices by looking at who the decision makers were, and the history and contexts in which choices were made. João Filgueiras Lima is the architect credited with the design of the monument. However, according to Conduru (2007) the design choices were driven by anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, then Vice Governor of Rio de Janeiro under Leonel Brizola. Ribeiro, as the Secretary of Culture (Soares 1999), spearheaded the creation of an “urban-architectural complex” to commemorate blackness, consisting of the Zumbi monument, the Sambadrome and the Tia Ciata School, a school that employed unorthodox pedagogical methods to teach impoverished children (Conduru 2007:64).

¹³⁴ Translations of Conduru (2007) from Portuguese to English are my own.



Figure 4.4: Zumbi dos Palmares, Rio de Janeiro. Photograph taken by Autumn Barrett 2006.

While Ribeiro could have, as Conduru (2007) points out, opened a competition requesting design submissions for the image of Zumbi, he chose an existing image based on the bronze sculpture of an *Ifé Oni*, or king, dating between the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, held as part of the collections of the British Museum. While this style of artistic expression, using existing images to create new works of art, was popular among artists in the 1980s (Conduru 2007), the resulting design also embodies the history of racism and colonialism involving Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The *Ifé Oni* sculpture was controversial upon entry into European

collections. According to the British Museum, the *Oni* sculpture was part of a collection of sculptures found during 1938 construction activities in Wunmonije Compound in Ifé, Nigeria. The British Museum subsequently purchased the collection, which became a controversial topic among European art historians who praised the symmetry and realistic depictions, could not believe that people of the Kingdom of Benin could have produced such works of art. Skeptics mused over the sculptures' possible Roman origins, perhaps created by a renaissance Italian or other European artist (Conduru 2007).

The British acquisition of the Ifé sculptures cannot be separated from the British colonial practices in Nigeria in the late nineteenth century that resulted in the “pillaging” of cultural patrimony now displayed in the British Museum and around the world (Conduru 2007). Colonial intervention and monopolizing of trade in Nigerian raw materials such as palm oil, was justified by descriptions of the cultures within their colonial holdings (Conduru 2007). Conduru characterizes the British descriptions of Ifé as “an irrational society, cruel and bloody, founded by a degenerate people, with primitive and savage practices, in need of civilizing” (2007:65). The intricate designs and complicated sculpture techniques of the Ifé collection did not fit with the British characterizations of the contemporary and past West African cultures and peoples. Once the origin of the sculptures became indubitably confirmed as West African, they were presented as “relics of a superior and earlier civilization who had sustained influence from Europeans through the presence of the Portuguese in the region, since the fourteenth century, or influenced by the Egyptians” (Conduru 2007:66).

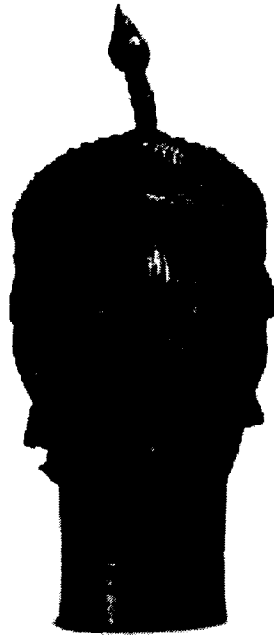


Figure 4.5: Image of the Ifé *Oni*, Kingdom of Benin. Reprinted with permission from © The Trustees of the British Museum.

When Western public recognition emerged confirming the origins of craftsmanship and provenance as the Kingdom of Benin, the sculptures were presented as “proof of the decadence of the Benin people” who were in need of British civilizing interventions. “Like the friezes of the Greek Parthenon, that were also appropriated through English polemics and incorporated into the collections of the British Museum, these African sculptures received pejorative denominations, that restricted their meaning” (Conduru 2007:66). An example of this is seen in the use of the moniker “Elgin marbles” to refer to Greek friezes, summarize the works by their material composition, referencing Lord Elgin the “looter” who acquired the pieces and sold them to the British Museum (Conduru 2007). The sculptures from the Benin Kingdom receive similarly reductive labels, such as “Bronzes of Benin.” These titles

left the Greek friezes and the Benin sculptures as pieces “dissociated from their original symbolic function” and the contexts within which the British acquired the items. The pieces are transformed into collective “signifiers of English civilization, a ‘symbol of national pride among the British’” and “trophies, special relics” representing the broad range of places and peoples conquered during the British “civilizing mission” of colonialism (Conduru 2007: 66).

In the transformation of the Ifé Oni into Rio’s monument to Zumbi, the staked head of the king rests upon a pyramid pedestal providing many layers of interpretation. For Conduru (2007), the monument’s reference to Egypt through the pyramid can signify the opposition of Western appropriation of Egypt, connecting the great civilization of Egypt to the many great civilizations of Africa (see also Douglass 1854; Firmin 2002[1885] and Du Bois (2007[1947]) for a discussion of Western appropriation of Egypt). The Egyptian imagery can also evoke the European presumption of the inability of the Benin Kingdom to produce the original bronze sculptures, and therefore must have been influenced by Egypt if not by Europe (Conduru 2007).

Allen (2001), employing Maestri (1997), provides a synopsis of the ways in which the history of Zumbi and Palmares have been narrated by historians, reflecting the scholars’ socio-political, cultural and historical contexts. From Sebastião da Rocha Pitta (1983[1730]), a contemporary of Palmares, to historians of the twentieth century (Allen refers to Ennes 1938; Freitas 1954; Handelsmann 1987; Varnhagen 1978), Allen states that the narratives produced share a particular “vision of the place of Palmares in colonial society” where “the destruction of Palmares was necessary for

the continued development of Brazil” and various anti-quilombo factions were valorized for their role in Palmares’ defeat (Allen 2001:49).

Anxieties over the racial composition of Brazil within the context of emerging scientific racism turned historians’ attention to the place of Africa in Brazil’s history and national formation. Through this lens, quilombos were studied as “laboratories” for understanding the recreation and/or preservation of Africa by Africans in colonial Brazil (Allen 2001: 50). Nina Rodrigues provided “the first ‘scientific’ and anthropological analysis” of the history of Palmares, referring to Palmares as “Black Troy,” which Allen argues “reflected the upper class’ need to understand and make sense of a post-abolitionist Brazil” inclusive of an explanation of racial hierarchies that originated in Brazil’s colonial history (Allen 2001:50). Rodrigues analyzed the history of Palmares in terms of achievements and limitations reflecting an inherent racial essence of blacks. Palmares is posited as “the greatest threat to the civilization of the future Brazilian people...resistant to progress and inaccessible to civilization”; here Rodrigues evokes Haiti in warning of the peril that “a victorious Palmares would have planted in the heart of Brazil” (Rodrigues quoted in Allen 2001). During the second half of the twentieth century, leftist historians reassessed the history of Palmares toward Marxist interpretations that were in critical dialogue with the *Estado Novo* government under Getúlio Vargas between 1937 and 1945, and the later period of Brazil’s military dictatorship between 1964 and 1985 (Allen 2001). Palmares became a model for contemporary Brazil, with historians highlighting social equality, an electoral and merit-based hierarchy, communal

distribution of resources, and a multiethnic population within the Palmares' narrative (Allen 2001; Skidmore 1999).

The *movimento negro* (black movement) began to emerge toward the mid twentieth century, centered in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Hanchard 1994; see also Allen 2001). Abdias do Nascimento was a founder of Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN), which promoted the culture and heritage of Africa and African descendants in Brazil. Activists during this fascist period in Brazil's history had to "couch their language and their praxis" within purely cultural pursuits in order to pass censorship of the Vargas regime (Nascimento and Nascimento 1992 quoted in Allen 2001:179). TEN was criticized in the *O Globo* newspaper in 1945 as a "Palmarist group trying to create an artificial problem in Brazil" (Nascimento and Nascimento 1992:28 quoted in Allen 2001). As Allen (2001) points out, Palmares had not, at this time, become a symbol of Brazilianness and reflected a contemporary application of historians' trend toward narrating Palmares as a negative faction that had to be extinguished by the Portuguese. The pejorative use of the term "Palmarist" to describe TEN places this organ of the *movimento negro* as an external threat, particularly marked as African. The "artificial" aspect of the critique refers to discussions of race and racism as inherently un-Brazilian and originating from countries such as the United States (Allen 2001). Abdias do Nascimento's later activist scholarship was in correspondence with the leftist trend in historiography, looking to Palmares as an African model for contemporary social and political organization, called *Quilombismo* (Nascimento 1980). Nascimento critiques Euro-centric "falsities, distortions and negations that Europeans for so long have

been weaving around Africa...Black Brazilian memory is only a part and particle in this gigantic project of reconstruction of a larger past to which all Afro-Brazilians are connected" (1980:143).

Located on Presidente Getúlio Vargas highway, Rio's Zumbi dos Palmares monument design draws on imagery that incorporates a potentially pan-African symbolic reference to Egypt, and a very specific ethnic association with the Yoruba culture. Conduru (2007) discusses the Yoruba significance of the *Oni* as a deity king, the son of Odùduwà and founder/ first ruler of Ifé, and an alternative interpretation of the *Ifé* sculpture as representing Olocum, father of Yemanjá and the orixá of the seas. While the significance of the Yoruba culture to African descendants in Brazil, specifically, and to Brazilians more broadly, might make an Ifé deity king resonant as a symbol honoring blackness, this ethnic representation also conflicts with what is known about the ethnic origin of at least the title of Zumbi and the organization of Palmares (see discussion of Allen 2001 and Schwartz 1996 above). Conduru (2007) claims that Zumbi was not only transformed in terms of his ethnicity, but was elevated from a warrior to a king. This, however, is inaccurate, given Zumbi's role as the king of Palmares, having assumed this position upon the death of Ganga Zumba in 1680. While the choice of the *Oni* for Zumbi may have been in homage to Zumbi's status as king, the ethnic affiliation does not appear to have been a consideration, per se. Indeed, Zumbi is to represent *negritude* generally. For Mariza Soares, the visage on Zumbi's monument "substitutes the individuality of the hero for the generality of the race" (Soares quoted in Conduru 2007:65).

Soares' comments support Michael Hanchard's (1994) claims that within the context of the *movimento negro* of the 1960s and 1970s, celebration of African heritage, in contradistinction to "Western" cultural affiliation, often involved foregrounding aspects of West African culture as symbols of *negritude* (Hanchard 1994). A "culturalist" focus emerged positioning "an originary return to African 'roots' as the basis of any political or cultural practice...Negritude operated as a cornerstone for the edifice of *negro* definition (Hanchard 1994:120-121, emphasis in the original). The limitations of a "culturalist" approach were being criticized by participants in the *movimento negro* and activist scholars in the 1970s and 1980s as fetishizing a stagnant "essence" of blackness that served to support conservative social relationships rather than fomenting change toward social justice (Hanchard 1994). As one such critic stated "the reverence of cultural values stops being conservative attitudes when culture becomes something dynamic, and a truthful cultural practice is necessarily creative and transformative. PEOPLE DO NOT WORSHIP CULTURE, THEY PRODUCE IT" (quoted in Hanchard 1994:121, emphasis in the original). Conduru's (2007) article demonstrates the complex multivalency of Rio's Zumbi monument. Erected one year after the end of Brazil's oppressive military regime, appears to celebrate "blackness" in Brazil through the lens of culturalism, which no longer served (and arguably never did) the needs of black activists in Brazil. For whom was this monument erected and whose vision does the design represent?

One less ambiguous component of the monument is the stake upon which Zumbi's head rests. Black Consciousness Day is celebrated on the day of Zumbi's death - which can be interpreted as the day Zumbi transitioned from this world into the

community of his ancestors. The date could also be seen as a celebration of the Portuguese execution of Zumbi. The stake imagery of Rio's Zumbi evokes the specific historic narrative of Zumbi's decapitation by the Portuguese in 1695 and the subsequent public display of his staked head to serve as a warning against further resistance - an attempt to maintain Portuguese social control. Conduru (2007) contrasts Rio's Zumbi monument with the image of Zumbi created by artist Antônio Parreiras in 1927 (see Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6: Portrait of Zumbi by Antônio Parreiras, 1927.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Parreiras, Antônio. Zumbi. Original housed at the Museu Antônio Parreiras, Ingá Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ant%C3%B4nio_Parreiras_-_Zumbi.jpg Last accessed November 17, 2013.

For Conduru (2007), Zumbi of Parreiras' vision is alive, proud, and ready to fight, in contrast with the Zumbi of Ribeiro, who is "already captured, decapitated and dead. He is an annihilated enemy, who no longer constitutes a threat" (Conduru 2007:66). Furthermore, he poses the question of whether the reduction of Zumbi to a decapitated head for public display is not the same tactic used by Zumbi's portuguese executioners as a way of disproving the belief commonly held at the end of the seventeenth century, that Zumbi was immortal (Conduru 2007:66). Conduru (2007) responds to his question by saying that "In this sense, Zumbi of *Praça Onze* would also be a trophy, or better, a double trophy, connected to the European domination over African people in general, and the enslavement of blacks in Brazil by the Portuguese in particular" (66-67).

Expressions of anxiety among elites emerged over the Black Soul movement in Brazil in the 1970s (of which Black Rio was a part). Black Soul and Black Rio were receiving government censure toward the end of the decade. Black Rio was criticized in the public media by Rio's secretary of tourism as "a commercial movement with a racist philosophy," threatening "a socio-cultural problem" (quoted in Hanchard 1994:114). Furthermore, the movement was deemed by critics as inauthentic. According to Hanchard (1994), this criticism was levied because, unlike Samba, Black Soul "was independent of white elite definitions of both national 'Brazilianness' and Afro-Brazilian cultural practice, as well as resistant to appropriations by white elites" (Hanchard 1994:114). Pamphleting and organizing did occur at Black Soul events, which Hanchard (1994) identifies as the central threat to white elites. "Black Soul was the harbinger of a protest movement by Afro-

Brazilians” that was not based on national allegiance and contested the faltering myth of Brazil’s racial democracy (115). Gilberto Freyre, celebrated creator of the concept of Brazil’s racial democracy critiqued Black Soul in 1977, in an article titled “Attention Brazilians” (run in Brazil’s oldest daily newspaper, *O Diario de Pernambuco*) where he characterized the Black Soul movement as an invasion of the United States (Hanchard 1994). Freyre states:

“Perhaps my eyes are deceiving me? Or did I really read that the United States will be arriving in Brazil...Americans of color...why?...to convince, Brazilians, also of color, that their dances and their ‘Afro-Brazilian’ songs would have to be of ‘melancholy’ and ‘revolt’? If what I have read is true, it is once more an attempt to introduce into a Brazil that is growing fully, fraternally brown (*moreno*) - what appears to cause jealousy in nations that are also bi or tri-racial - the myth of negritude, not of Senghor’s type, of the just valorization of black or African values, but that which brings at times that “class struggle” as an instrument of civil war, not of the lucid Marx the sociologist, but that other: the inspirator of militant marxism with its provocation of hatred....Brazil needs to be ready for work being done against it, not only of Soviet imperialism...but of the United States as well” (from quote in Hanchard 1994:115)

Hanchard (1994) states that, according to Freyre, “Negritude is mythical when emphasis is placed on militancy, protest, and not on the valorization of African culture” (115).

I suggest that the elite anxieties identified in Hanchard’s (1994) analysis of the *movimento negro* are embodied in Darcy Ribeiro’s rendition of Zumbi - a project that began implementation in the early 1980s, a few years after Freyre’s critique of Black Soul. The monument: a proclaimed celebration of negritude, presented through the imagery of a Yoruba king on a pyramid, staked to emphasize a departure from the original *Oni* sculpture and the celebration of Zumbi’s day of death. Negritude is

celebrated through a transcultural and transhistoric representation of Zumbi that relegates him to “myth,” celebrating a form of negritude that supports rather than challenges the status quo. Of note, on Rio’s monument to Zumbi, there is no plaque that states any version of the historic narrative of Zumbi or Palmares. Antonio Carlos Rodrigues expressed a desire to have the history of Zumbi engraved on the sides of the pyramids. Only “Zumbi dos Palmares” is etched into the pyramid and a plaque provides the inaugural date: November 20, 1986. In 2012 a new plaque was added, marking the restoration activities that have taken place and various peoples involved. This adds to the abstraction of Zumbi as a mythical symbol rather than concretely “real” in the Eurocentric positivist sense. However, when I shared Conduru’s (2007) article with Antonio Carlos, his response was, “the origin of Zumbi nor the fact that Darcy Ribeiro suggested the monument doesn’t affect us, this monument was placed there with our approval...”¹³⁶

According to Allen (2001), by the late 1990s Zumbi had become a national symbol for Brazilians, in general, rather than an Afro-Brazilian symbol. Outside of Brazil, however, Zumbi continued to be associated specifically with Afro-Brazilian identity. President Cardoso of Brazil declared Zumbi a national hero on 20 November 1995, on the 300th anniversary of Zumbi’s execution. Zumbi as a “multivocal symbol” may serve to reconcile conflict surrounding the narratives of Zumbi and Zumbi’s meaning in the present (see Allen’s 2001 discussion of Kertzer 1988). Allen’s argument that the Estado Novo under Vargas “‘whitened’ samba to diffuse ‘dangerous’ discourse and obtained a new element for national identity” is seen in similar appropriations of

¹³⁶ Rodrigues-Barrett correspondence, March 5, 2013.

“feijoada, samba, and copoeira” that “in becoming national and multivocal icons, have also become less Black in the process. Extending this reasoning to the particular case of Palmares it appears that Zumbi, as a multivocal symbol, has also been whitened” (Allen 2001:189). Social injustice is, in this way, abstracted out to an unfortunate problem experienced by many factions of Brazilian society and, therefore, does not require an analysis of race or racism as such.



Figure 4.7: Photo showing racist slurs “invaders, damned monkeys, out African bastards” spray painted onto the Zumbi monument, June 2011.¹³⁷

Ongoing and frequent vandalism of Rio’s 690 monuments has necessitated installation of cameras. Surveillance of the Zumbi monument was installed for Black

¹³⁷ Photo published without photographer credit in the following: Editor, Vândalos picham monumento a Zumbi com fases racistas. *O Politizador do Brasil*. June 06, 2011. <http://opolitizador.com.br/?p=14275> Last accessed November 10, 2013.; Ultraje racista contra Zumbi e a luta negra e popular. *Diário Liberdade*. June 14, 2011. <http://www.diarioliberalidade.org/brasil/antifascismo-e-anti-racismo/16646-ultraje-racista-contra-zumbi-e-a-luta-negra-e-popular-.html> Accessed October 29, 2013.

A similar photo taken by Alessandro Costa was published in Vândalos picham suástica e dizeres racistas no Monumento de Zumbi dos Palmares. *O Dia* June 5, 2011. <http://odia.ig.com.br/porta/rio/v%C3%A2ndalos-picham-su%C3%A1stica-e-dizeres-racistas-no-monumento-de-zumbi-dos-palmares-1.27410> Accessed October 29, 2013. The Costa photo appears in Silva, Wilson H. Ultraje racista contra Zumbi e a luta negra e popular. *Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado*. June 13, 2011. <http://www.pstu.org.br/node/16474> Last accessed November 10, 2013.

Consciousness Day 2011, because the monument is cited as a frequent target (Fernandes 30 November 2011, *O Dia*), with a June 2011 incident including racial slurs and nazi symbolism (see Figure 4.7). These recent and ongoing actions suggest the limits of Zumbi's multivocality in reconciling contemporary conflict over Zumbi's meaning in the past and present. What does Zumbi mean to residents of Rio de Janeiro and why is Zumbi dos Palmares significant to the recognition and interpretation of the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos*?

“Zumbi Doesn't Deserve This”

The November 20, 2008 celebrations of Zumbi dos Palmares and Black Consciousness Day in downtown Rio de Janeiro's Praça Onze included public speakers, musical groups, dancing, Capoeira, and processions (See Figures X, X, X, and X). Several people commented that the crowd was smaller than usual. The low turnout was attributed to President Lula's visit to attend the nearby unveiling ceremony for a new monument commemorating João Cândido Felisberto located in Praça Quinze. Penha Santos shook her head saying, “Zumbi doesn't deserve this.”¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Santos, Penha. Informal Interview, November 20, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.



Figure 4.8: Filhos de Gandhi performing at the Rio de Janeiro celebrations of Black Consciousness Day and Zumbi dos Palmares. November 20, 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 4.9: A Capoeira demonstration. November 20, 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 4.10: Girls dance team led by Seu Renato Branco. November 20, 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

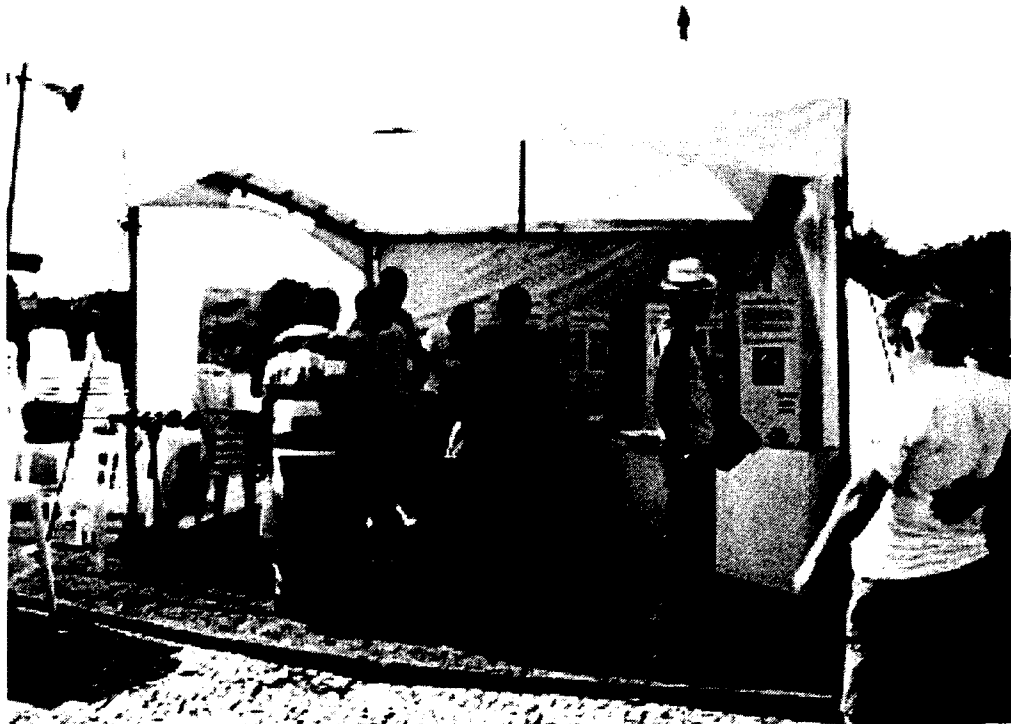


Figure 4.11: The IPN temporary exhibit at the November 20, 2008 commemorations of Zumbi dos Palmares.



Figure 4.12: Whipping post for reenactment of an enslaver re-capturing a runaway enslaved man. The IPN tented exhibit is to the left. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 4.13: João Cândido Felisberto, 1880 - 1969. Leader of the “Marine’s Revolt.” Monument was unveiled on November 20, 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

João Cândido was a marine who led the “Marine’s Revolt” between December 22-28, 1910, fighting against the poor working conditions and the continued exercise of corporal punishment, though it had been outlawed by the Golden Law (which abolished slavery) in 1888. His plaque says that he became known as the “Black Admiral.” While visiting this monument with Alder Augusto Silva, an elderly man came up to us and said that as a Marine, he was upset that the monument was making João Cândido memory about race. As a Marine, he said, everyone was the same, race was not a factor and João Cândido was remembered for what he did for Marine’s. He said that no one referred to him by his race.

Celebrations of the expanding list of governmentally recognized heroes of African descent are at risk of conflating ‘all things black’ into one day. The celebration of Black Consciousness Day on the day Zumbi transitioned puts the central focus of Zumbi’s commemoration in competition with recognizing all Afro-Brazilian heroes. As Neia Daniel expresses, Afro-Brazilian history has been compartmentalized into two days: May 13 (abolition day) and November 20¹³⁹ (see Chapter 10).

¹³⁹ Daniel, Neia. Interview, February 3, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

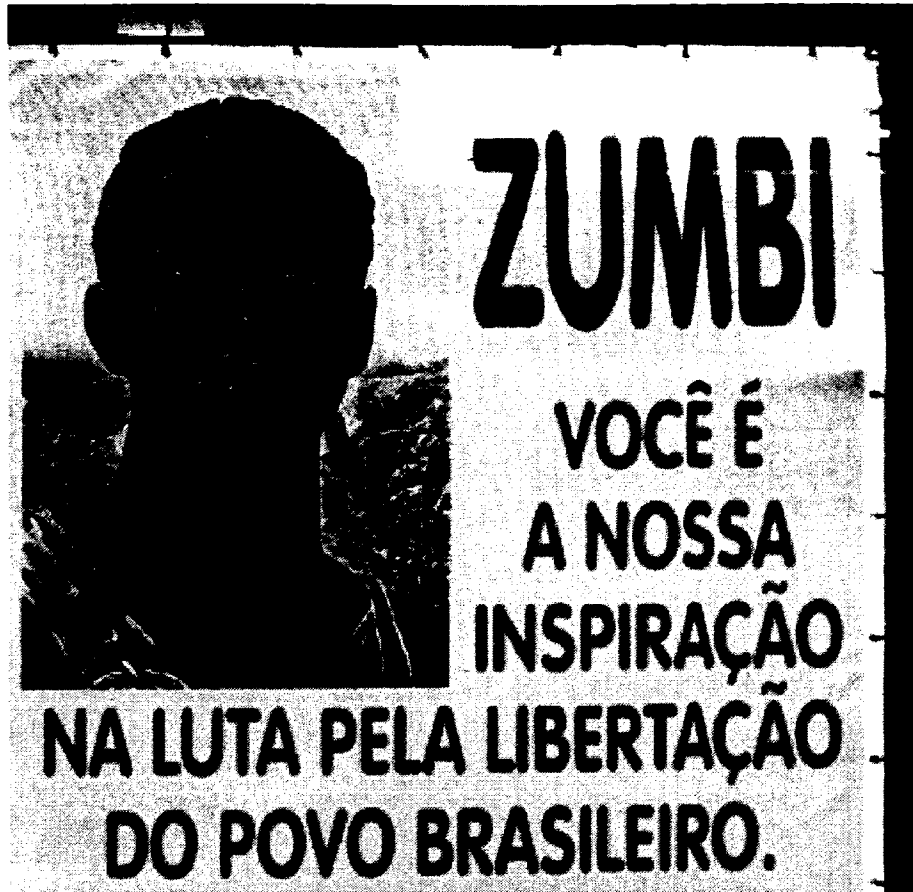


Figure 4.14: An image of Zumbi that says “Zumbi, you are our inspiration in the fight for the liberation of the Brazilian people.” November 20, 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Zumbi dos Palmares may be moving toward more of a polemicized significance again. Zumbi’s image is used in messages related to broad forms of resistance, such as the image circulated on November 20, 2008 (see Figure 4.14), referring to Zumbi as an inspiration for all liberation movements in Brazil. In December of 2008, in the Morro do Pinto, a newspaper article was posted publicly, denouncing racial discrimination of workers. Zumbi was featured prominently (see Figure 4.15) and the article speaks to the continued existence of racism, despite slavery having ended 120 years ago. The article states “the fight continues.”¹⁴⁰ In my interviews, most

¹⁴⁰ December 9, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

people associated Zumbi as being personally significant to Afro-Brazilians, specifically and not more broadly as Allen (2001) found (see Chapter 8). As more Afro-Brazilian heroes, leaders, and historical figures are commemorated

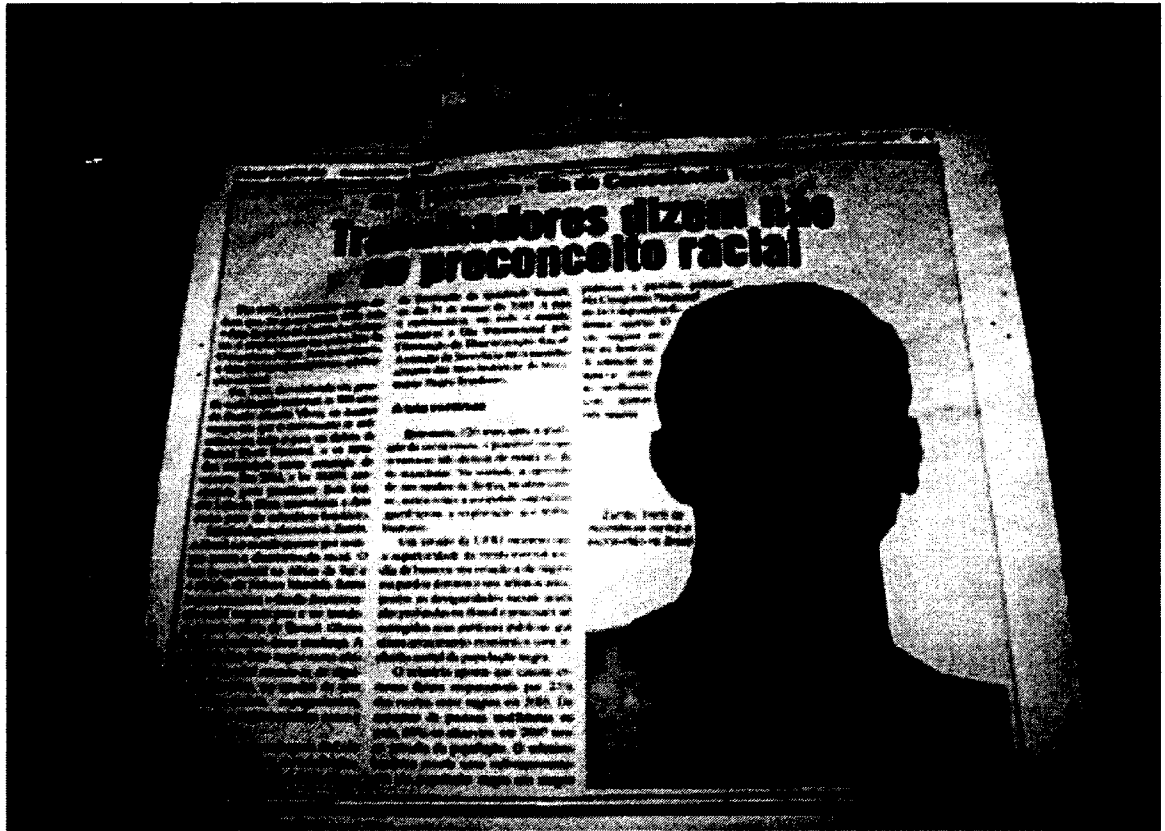


Figure 4.15: Zumbi dos Palmares featured in an article posted outside of a house in Morro do Pinto titled, “Workers say no to racial prejudice.” December 2008. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett November 22, 2008. Permission to take the photo provided by the resident. Note: A resident helped to hold a corner that had folded down, as I took the photo.

and acknowledged, will they become part of Brazilian History or an ancillary and ethnically marked addition that becomes relegated to particular days of remembrance? Mullings (2005) sees the United States and Brazil as following interesting paths that intertwine their respective trajectories of celebrating diversity

and polarizing racial politics. Are we seeing this process in the personal meanings articulated/ disarticulated in relation to Zumbi?

Section III: Power and Redemption: Representations of Slavery, Rebel Heroes, and Liberators in Richmond and Rio

Introduction

“Narratives” of the past are constructed within museums telling local, regional and national histories in ways that connect individual groups of people, places and objects to a larger story. The cultural work produced by museums includes teaching subjectivities (Blakey 1990; Santos 2005). The lens through which the stories, objects, people and places are interpreted includes a vision of the socio-cultural, economic, and political relationships of the past and the present.

Dell Upton’s (1988) work discusses of the complexities in understanding social relationships through the ways humans of the past modified their landscapes.

Upton’s (1988) research draws attention to considering the way meaning is subjectively created as people move through their environs. How does marking landscapes as historically meaningful socialize those who move through them?

Monuments, memorials, and marked historic sites punctuate the places and spaces we move through? How is their cultural work revealed through conflict surrounding them?

Within this section I draw on the museum analyses of Blakey (1990), Santos (2005) to look at representations of the past in the “landscapes” of contemporary Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, focusing primarily on representations of slavery and resistance to slavery. The meaning of the Richmond African Burial Ground, The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Gabriel and Zumbi, are discussed in following chapters.

I argue that the relationships identified in Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005) are also conveyed through the “public history” representations of slavery and resistance in Richmond and Rio. Where slavery is represented, resistance is often absent or overshadowed by a focus on the dehumanization of enslaved Africans and their descendants. Further, the enslavers as perpetrators are largely part of a background that relegates atrocities to “slavery” as an institution rather than the acts of people who were primarily European and their descendants. I will draw on interviews and public meetings to discuss how these articulations and disarticulations are resonant within discussions of history and identity among residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro. Within this discussion, I continue to question the contexts within which these sites of memory emerged, how, for whom, by whom, and to what end?

I begin this section with histories of prominent monuments and visual memorials within Richmond and Rio de Janeiro. I then move to discussions of the meaning of these histories and representations of the past for residents in each city. I discussed the significance of sites, histories, and historical figures with residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro. I chose to foreground the voices and identities of the individuals who shared their perspectives with me. One challenge for me, as an author presenting narratives from residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, is to do so without muting the authorial voices of those who taught me what I now present. I recognize that my voice, as author and analyst, is not prominent in places. This is deliberate, to maintain vivid clarity among the voices that inform this dialogue and

dialectic. Some participants chose to use their names, others did not.¹⁴¹ Several of the residents are also featured in the Section IV on the relationships of these histories and sites to self and identity. You will notice discrepancies between the way I refer to individuals in Richmond and in Rio. I have found that, in Brazil, first names are preferred to references using only someone's last name. I try to honor that in my writing style on chapters pertaining to conversations with Rio residents.

¹⁴¹ Actual names of residents are used where this preference was expressed. Pseudonyms and anonymity are used where requested. Two individuals preferred both options at different times, so I honor their requests at the times they provided interviews. Therefore, two participants may appear as four, using combinations of actual name identification, pseudonyms, and anonymity.

Chapter 5: Power and Redemption: Representations of Slavery, Rebel Heroes, and Liberators in Richmond

Having been the Capitol of the Confederacy, Richmond's monumental landscape is largely dominated by the memory of the "U.S. Civil War," i.e. the Confederacy. However, since the early 1990s, significant additions have occurred toward representing African American history in Richmond through sites associated with the history of slavery; many of these initiatives originated from the African American community. Although I have discussed several of these initiatives within Chapter 1, I return to this discussion by providing a history of one of the most salient monuments to "history" in Richmond: Monument Avenue, where honor is given to Confederate Civil War soldiers through looming statues on a wide green space running approximately 5 miles. On either side of this avenue are large homes inhabiting the most expensive residential real estate in Richmond. The Confederate white men honored on Monument Avenue are not overtly commemorated as part of the history of slavery in Richmond. Indeed, artificially rupturing the Civil War from the history of slavery in the United States served to divorce the Confederate cause from the southern right to enslave, legitimating the honor provided to Confederate leaders and, by extension, their adherents, supporters and Confederate descendants.

Monument Avenue

Monument Avenue is an extension of Franklin Street, which leads to, and ends at the State Capitol. Monument Avenue has the unique designation as a National Historic Landmark as of 1997; the significance stated by the National Park Service as “the nation’s only grand residential boulevard with monuments of its scale surviving almost unaltered to the present day”¹⁴² The following historic sketch demonstrates the economic development and celebration of wealth connected with the creation of the Avenue and the erection of the Confederate memorials:

Monument Avenue was proposed in 1887 both to provide an appropriate setting for a major memorial to Robert E. Lee, and to encourage residential development west of downtown Richmond. The broad tree-lined avenue with its double roadway inspired prominent Richmonders to erect mansions that catalog early twentieth-century architectural styles. The houses were, in turn, matched by a series of monumental public sculptures that commemorate other heroes of the Confederacy.¹⁴³

The Avenue was inaugurated in 1890 with the unveiling of a 60 foot monument of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, an event attended by 100,000 people (Leib 2002). In 1907, monuments to Jefferson Davis (see Figures X and X) and J.E.B. Stuart were erected, followed by ‘Stonewall’ Jackson (1919) and Matthew Fontaine Maury (1929).

¹⁴² National Park Service: Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary, Monument Avenue Historic District. <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/richmond/MonumentAveHD.html> Last accessed October 29, 2013.

¹⁴³ National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Program, Monument Avenue Historic District. <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=-1209891467&ResourceType=District> Last accessed October 29, 2013.



Figure 5.1: Unveiling ceremony for the Jefferson Monument June 3, 1907 on his birth date 99 years prior.¹⁴⁴

The Lee monument, was one of the first among many monuments to be erected in the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as white southerners celebrated a retrospective commemoration of the Civil War as the “Lost Cause.” The ‘Lost Cause’ movement refers to the southern white “effort to script the history of the South in the Civil War as a chivalrous and gallant society that entered the war to defend home and honor” (Leib 2002:292). John Mitchell, Jr., a Richmond African American activist, journalist, and business owner, declaimed the unveiling of the Lee monument as bestowing “a legacy of treason and blood” and protested the use of City funds in the memorialization of Lee (Leib 2002:292).

Richmond, Virginia became a white “Mecca of the Lost Cause” where Monument Avenue “was the sacred road to it” (Wilson in Leib 2002:286). The Lee monument

¹⁴⁴ Reprinted in Salmon and Salmon (2007:104).

towered, not only as a tribute to white southern honor, but symbolically ushered in the vision for a New South, where whites would 'rise again' in prosperity owing to a southern U.S. industrial boom of the late 1800s; this racially exclusive vision corresponded with Jim Crow laws that enforced segregation and white racist oppression of blacks in the South (Leib 2002).

Richmond was not only the center of the 'Lost Cause' movement and memory, but also the southern industrial surge (Leib 2002). In this way, Monument Avenue may be seen as a tribute to the institution that first built the nation's wealth, white southern wealth, at a time when white families began to surge in wealth again through exploitation of labor within the industrial context. While the wealth of the United States was built through enslaved labor, post Civil War national memory bounded that "backward" institution as "southern." This artificial bounding promoted a northern "emancipatory narrative," distancing the North from its history of slavery and thus redeeming a Northern heart of the nation from such a history. The 'Lost Cause' movement served to redeem elite southerners from having the stain of slavery on their honor, while rebuilding white elite wealth and power.

The African American Olympian and human rights activist, Arthur Ashe commented on what Monument Avenue meant to him growing up in 1950s segregated Richmond. Referring to First Baptist Church, consisting of a predominantly white congregation, he said the church's location on Monument Avenue "confirmed its domination and its strict racial identity by its presence on Richmond's Monument Avenue, the avenue of Confederate heroes" (Ashe quoted in Leib 2002:293)

A Monument Avenue residential address signified exclusivity, white southern privilege and wealth. In the 1960s, 'white flight' threatened this image and white control within the City of Richmond, as the demography shifted to an African American majority. As an attempt to attract whites to the City, a proposed "refurbishing" of Monument Avenue. This plan, including the erection of seven additional Confederate statues, was proposed in 1965, though the statues were not realized (Leib 2002). African American political officials were elected to the positions of Mayor and the Richmond City Council became majority African American for the first time in 1977. As an outgoing measure to secure Monument Avenue's place in Richmond, the majority white City Council transferred the Lee Monument to the state, out of fear that an African American majority City Council would demolish the statue (Leib 2002). An "integration" of Monument Avenue was proposed by African American City Councilman Chuck Richardson who, in 1991, suggested monuments of Civil Rights leaders be included on Monument Avenue as a way of transforming the avenue's exclusive white southern elite identification; though this never came to fruition, a resolution was passed by Richmond City Council in 1992 declaring Monument Avenue "was not the exclusive domain of Confederate Heroes" (quoted in Leib 2002:293). An independent attempt to make this statement by a person variously considered a "street artist" or a vandal, who bolted plaques honoring Civil Rights activists to the Confederate monuments in 2011 (see Chapter 9). They were promptly removed.

In 1995, controversy over the placement of a statue honoring human rights activist and acclaimed athlete, Arthur Ashe, on Monument Avenue revealed the deep contest over the City's historic identity as it was represented through Monument Avenue (see Leib 2002). Currently, the National Park Service summarizes the significance of erecting Ashe's monument on Monument Avenue with the following statement: "In the late twentieth-century, a statue honoring native Richmonder Arthur Ashe, noted black tennis player, was added to the group, and stands as a testament to the city's having outgrown the past."¹⁴⁵ Here Arthur Ashe's monument is meant to redeem Monument Avenue from an outmoded, politically incorrect past of hailing southern Confederates. Lost in this statement is the significance of Ashe's life work and the activism through which he chose to define himself. For Ashe, his athletic prowess provided him the opportunities to work for social justice and human rights in the U.S. and South Africa (Leib 2002). Ashe is essentialized as a symbol of social progress, where his blackness allows Monument Avenue to remain largely as a white romantic tribute to southern slavery and Ashe's lifelong work challenging the legacies of racism and inequity are obscured by singular reference to his athletic career. However, from the National perspective, Ashe's presence reconciles a "past" that needed to be outgrown as a symbolic integration, while obscuring his activism mutes a narrative that challenges the legacies of the south's slaveholding past in the present. The desire for Richmond as a City to move "forward" by "healing" racial divisions was salient in the early 1990s, and it was within this context that the

¹⁴⁵ National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Program, Monument Avenue Historic District. <http://tps.cr.nps.gov/nhl/detail.cfm?ResourceId=-1209891467&ResourceType=District> Last accessed October 29, 2013.

Richmond Unity Walk was organized (1994) and the Unity Walk Commission was established, later to become the Richmond Slave Trail Commission in 1998.

The Richmond City Council's Slave Trail Commission

The Slave Trail Commission was created in 1998 by a resolution introduced to the Richmond City Council by Sa'ad El-Amin, then City Councilman for the sixth district. The resolution established the Commission to continue the work of the Richmond Unity Walk Commission. The Unity Walk Commission was created in 1994 "as a permanent national educational resource" and "as a contribution to the healing of Richmond's racial history."¹⁴⁶ Within the resolution establishing the Slave Trail Commission, the sites and events associated with the Commission were established as: a memorial constructed in 1994 at the Manchester Docks "to honor those Africans who died on slave ships and those who landed here as slaves and helped to build the City and the nation"; Lumpkin's Jail site, "the former slave holding pen, which became the original site of Virginia Union University" for African Americans; an annual "Night Walk Along the Slave Trail" during Juneteenth commemorations.¹⁴⁷ Subsequent references to the Trail by Mr. El-Amin has employed the language preferred by many among the Richmond African descended community, "Trail of Enslaved Africans" (see Figure 5.2). The Trail of Enslaved Africans was seen as a vehicle for racial reconciliation in that it "promoted the building of bridges and initiated a process of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation for all the people of

¹⁴⁶ El-Amin, Sa'ad. 2012. The Richmond Slave Trail Commission: A Self Inflicted Wound. A position paper sent to the Richmond City Council and media and circulated by the African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee March 26, 2012. Richmond, Virginia.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

the metropolitan area of Richmond and has provided a meaningful step in the quest for constructive race relations in this City and Nation.”¹⁴⁸ From the inception of the Commission, the stories of Africans in Richmond were developed and told through these sites, toward a goal of racial healing. This Commission has marked the African and African American presence on the Richmond landscape, within the context of slavery. While the aforementioned Monument Avenue tributes to Confederate soldiers were monuments to the history of slavery, they were not marked as such. Richmond’s role in the trade in human captives was largely left invisible prior to the Slave Trail Commission’s work.

In 2003, Delores McQuinn assumed the role as Chair of the Slave Trail Commission in her position as sixth district City Councilwoman and later as State Delegate. She currently maintains this position and the following discussion of the memorial sites have been developed under her Chairship. The Slave Trail Commission has been criticized by Sa’ad El-Amin and community members for excluding public participation in the decision making process and for failing to follow Commission regulations in appointing positions and in observing limit terms.¹⁴⁹

Currently, in 2013, the key sites developed and commemorated under the purview of the Slave Trail Commission include: the “Slave” Trail, inclusive of Manchester Docks, Lumpkin’s Jail, and the Richmond African Burial Ground; the Reconciliation Triangle and memorial; the Winfree Cottage, the last extant “slave” cottage in Richmond. Resonant throughout the development and commemoration of these sites has been

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

the desire to heal and reconcile racial tensions. The following provides a brief description of each component, with discussion of the inaugural event for the Reconciliation Statue and a public forum for the proposed United States National Slavery Museum. How is the story of African and African American resistance articulated/ disarticulated within these sites? What is the cultural work of interpreting historic sites associated with slavery toward racial reconciliation? Is social justice addressed within these processes? If so, where?

The Trail of Enslaved Africans

The Trail of Enslaved Africans, retraces the steps of enslaved Africans entering Richmond at Manchester Docks, where men, women and children were then marched into the City to holding pens in preparation for sale. Originally initiated through the Richmond Unity Walk in 1994, the commemorative trail became known as the "Slave Trail" under the Slave Trail Commission. Temporary signage was installed by the state of Virginia in 1994, but an unveiling of the final 17 commemorative markers occurred in April 2011. I participated in protests during this unveiling, standing with Richmond residents who opposed the celebration of the markers and commemorations while the Richmond African Burial Ground was still in use as a parking lot. Indeed the signage already placed that history in the past, even as the asphalt parking lot remained as a legacy of continued dehumanization.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the African descended community of Richmond has largely preferred the term "Trail of Enslaved Africans. In 2013 Ms. Maat Free,

Guardian of Ancestral Remembrance and Founding Curator of the Beloved Unseen posted the following message at the TEDxRVA Convention:

Stop saying SLAVE TRAIL. And don't call my ancestors slaves. They were captives and enslaved Africans. You can only call someone a slave if and when they stop fighting and I am still here with my fist in the air so that energy of self determination will live on FOREVER.

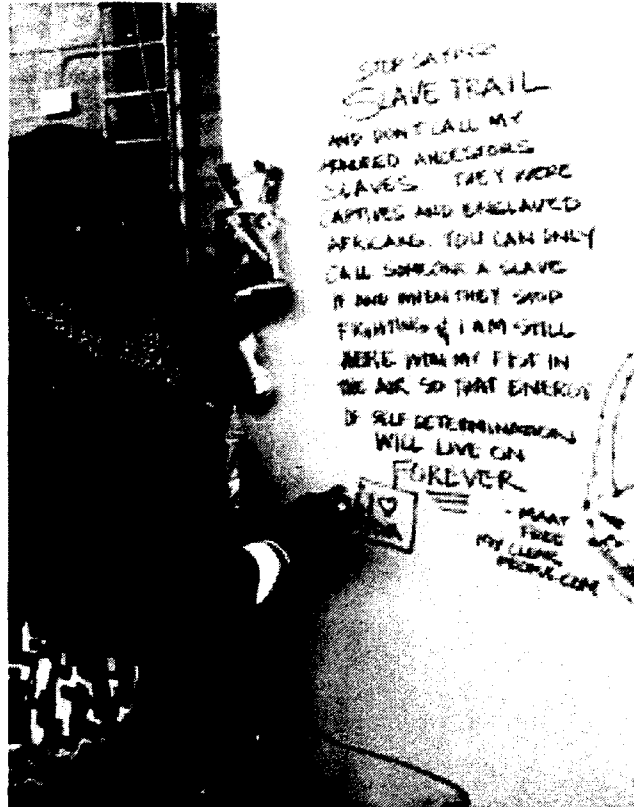


Figure 5.2: Maat Free writing on the graffiti board at the TEDxRVA Convention on March 22, 2013. Photo taken by Duron Chavis. Permissions provided by Maat Free.

The Richmond Reconciliation Statue



Figure 5.3: Unveiling ceremony for the Richmond Reconciliation Statue, March 30, 2007. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

In 2007, a Reconciliation Statue was unveiled in Richmond's Shockoe Bottom. The Richmond Reconciliation Statue was the third installation among three identical statues erected in Benin, England and the United States (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of this history). Cotonou, Benin, Liverpool, England and Richmond, Virginia formed a "sister cities" alliance, recognizing the role slavery and the slave trade played in creating wealth for their cities and nations. A symbolic Reconciliation

Triangle was established, not based on direct trade routes, but a triangle of shared history and a desire for reconciliation. Three Reconciliation statues, by Stephen Broadbent of England, were erected in Cotonou (Benin), Liverpool (England), and Richmond (United States). Benin took the lead in announcing an official apology and in creating the Reconciliation Project. Liverpool followed by releasing an official apology for slavery in 1999 and a statement of “profound regret” was issued by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2007.

The statue design, however, was not commissioned for the Reconciliation project in particular. Originally, the statue was created by Broadbent, the artist, as “a personal response to a broken relationship” and was chosen as part of a tri-city reconciliation project “in response to the sectarian troubles of Northern Ireland, involving teenagers and their community from three cities connected by a common history” with iron monuments erected in Liverpool, Belfast, and Glasgow.¹⁵⁰ An attendee of the Reconciliation Conference in Benin (see Chapter 1) was a former member of the Liverpool City Council, who took a copy of his city’s apology for slavery to the conference and gifted a copy of a small model of Broadbent’s sculpture to the president of Benin. The president was inspired to create a garden of Reconciliation where a larger bronze version of the statue would be erected. A second Reconciliation Project in relationship to the Atlantic trade in human captives was born as a tripartite sister cities initiative between Cotonou, Liverpool and Richmond. Bronze copies of the statue were created for Cotonou and Richmond, modified with relief imagery on the lower portion (see Figure 5.4). However, no separate

¹⁵⁰ Broadbent, Stephen. Personal communication with Autumn Barrett March 18, 2012.

monument was created in Liverpool. The “sister” monument that exists in Liverpool is the iron monument erected for the religious reconciliation project. Broadbent stated that the Liverpool sculpture was not modified with the relief imagery included in the Cotonou and Richmond monuments as “it did not seem appropriate to alter the Iron sculptures that connected also to a different story” and that he “did not want this work to be seen in any way as a memorial to those enslaved.”¹⁵¹ Broadbent believes that, “an appropriate memorial still needs to be worked out for the City” stating, “the legacy of the slave trade [is] still evident in the racial discrimination of [L]iverpool’s black population.”¹⁵²

Richmond’s Reconciliation statue is located in a “gateway” entrance to the city, where cars exiting Interstate 95 may pass by upon their entrance into downtown Richmond and Shockoe Bottom. The Reconciliation statue sits in green space, appropriated by the Slave Trail Commission, but was originally “left over” land next to a parking deck constructed in 2006.¹⁵³ Diagonally across the street is the City owned parking lot where the Lumpkin’s Jail site is located. The Richmond African Burial Ground and Gabriel’s Execution historical marker are one block northeast of the statue. The sculpture is bounded to the east by the train station and to the south by a strip club. The statue is an abstract image of two people embracing (see Figure 5.4). One observer related to me that the statue was, perhaps, not the best

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Welliver, Jeannie. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

representation for racial reconciliation because it looked like two lovers in an embrace.



Figure 5.4: Reconciliation Statue Unveiling Ceremony March 30 2007: Richmond, Virginia - note the protestor with the sign "Put Ya Money Where Your Mouth Is" on the right.

During the unveiling, participants gathered to hear speakers such as Governor Tim McKaine and Reverend Delores McQuinn (Chair of the Slave Trail Commission) speak to the significance of the monument. While Kim Johnson, Diversity Manager for The Culture Company of Liverpool, England, spoke to the need for ongoing social justice, most of the speeches focused on forgiveness and reconciliation. The most personal connections to these processes were made by Reverend Delores McQuinn, Chair of the Slave Trail Commission. She said that she "will have to extend words of forgiveness" that are more than "words from my lips, but from my heart, from the

depths of my soul” (McQuinn 30 March 2007). Toward this end, Reverend McQuinn shared a story that she claimed was not unique to her but an experience that she has heard “over and over again from people of African descent as they also attempt to search their history” (McQuinn 30 March 2007). McQuinn’s story was passed from her grandfather to her father to her: in Hanover County Virginia, where her father grew up, the descendant of the enslavers of her ancestors still lived on the plantation where her ancestors worked. McQuinn’s grandfather approached the enslaver’s descendant in the 1920s and requested to see the documents about her ancestors, “information that would validate who they were and where they came from” (McQuinn 30 March 2007). “Before their eyes” McQuinn says, “the owner lit a match to the information as they stood there.”¹⁵⁴ McQuinn states that this story “had me in bondage” and “haunted me for years and years. And, I think even more so as I search for my own history and I realize that I continually run up against a brick wall.”¹⁵⁵ For McQuinn, reconciliation required forgiveness of whites:

...today, I want to stand here, this day of Reconciliation, and on behalf of my ancestors that I never knew from the Motherland of Africa, I stand her to say, ‘I forgive you.’ On behalf of my great grandfather, who I am still researching - I want to find out who he is, I stand to say ‘I forgive.’ On behalf of my grandfather, Winston Jordan,¹⁵⁶ who lived to tell the story, I forgive. And on behalf of my father, Obediah Jordan, who died seven years ago, still carrying the scars of the past, I forgive. This day is truly about reconciliation; acknowledging the pain of the past; Remembering all of those whose lives were shattered by the institutions of slavery and racism, but also it’s about living in the present, where we can make an impact on the world as it is now, and

¹⁵⁴ McQuinn, Delores. Speech, March 30, 2007. The International Unveiling Ceremony of the Reconciliation Statue and Memorial Plaza. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ I contacted Delegate McQuinn’s office February 22, 2013 to confirm her ancestor’s name, but received no response. I believe that I recorded the name correctly based on the McQuinn’s speech.

we are bound to secure through our work, a better world and a brighter future for our children. Today is about generations yet to come, and let's all be reminded that it is our obligation to change the world - through forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation, that generations to come will not know the pain of so many...¹⁵⁷

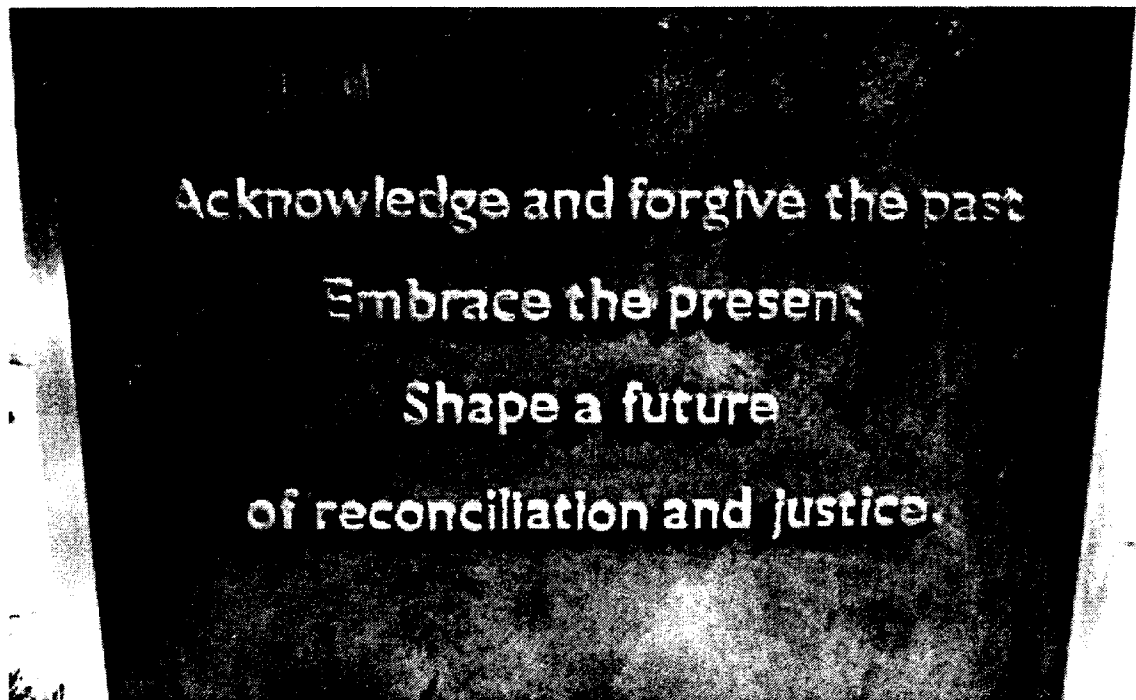


Figure 5.5: Detail: Reconciliation Statue, Richmond, Virginia.

Details on the role of Richmond in the trade in human captives were provided by William J. Pantele, President of the Richmond City Council, in discussing the institution of slavery: "some 500 thousand human beings, in bondage, were brought to Richmond to be sold and worked."¹⁵⁸ For Pantele, the statue's location was "thus appropriate" and served to "commemorate and acknowledge" the "selling and

¹⁵⁷ McQuinn, Delores. Speech, March 30, 2007. The International Unveiling Ceremony of the Reconciliation Statue and Memorial Plaza. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

¹⁵⁸ Pantele, William J. Speech, March 30, 2007. The International Unveiling Ceremony of the Reconciliation Statue and Memorial Plaza. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

dealing in human lives.”¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, the “Richmond Slavery Reconciliation Statue” served “in understanding man’s inhumanity, and pledging that such will *never* happen again, we as *one* people move forward to heal the wounds of the past.”¹⁶⁰ The impact of slavery was summarized as having affected “the harmony and family of so many millions of lives” which “should serve as a reminder that we all have the capacity for wrongness, that requires high diligence today, and in the future, to do right.”¹⁶¹ Pantele called for participants to “move forward together in honesty, understanding and as partners, God Bless.”¹⁶²

The stress of personal connections between Richmond’s slave trading and slave holding past was located within African American history and experience, specifically. Whereas, responsibility for the atrocities of slavery that were alluded to or spoken of were largely abstracted out to the “institution” of slavery or the city, state, and nation’s role, or even more broadly as “humanity.” The legacy of profit and privilege for descendants of enslavers and whites, in general, were not made personal by white presenters. Reverend McQuinn’s speech made personal connections between the institution of slavery, the enslavers and their descendants, and generations of her family. Her search and the search of her father and grandfather for their ancestors’ identities were linked to her own identity. She did not stand and speak forgiveness as one individual, but as a representative of generations of her family lineage. She

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

forgave “whites” for their wrongs, but the same personal apology did not come from European American speakers.

Indeed, considering the racial reconciliation goal to which the commemorative statue aspired, race was largely removed from the discussion of what happened, to whom and by whom. Slavery in Richmond becomes a warning to everyone. African and African American suffering becomes a “reminder that we all have the capacity for wrongness,” and if we *all*, as humans, have this capacity, then these historically particular human rights violations become, perhaps, less salient against the backdrop of a broader human story. I argue that this serves to ameliorate white guilt, while maintaining an abstract face of the perpetrators of human rights crimes suffered by Africans at the hands of European and European American descendants. While, on one hand, the European Enlightenment use of the concept of ‘humanity’ and ‘man’ can be seen as a normative referent to white men, the enslaved are also discussed within the broad story of humanity. The performance of the commemorative ceremony serves to mark the ethnicity of the enslaved with little corresponding discussion to mark the ethnicity of the enslavers.

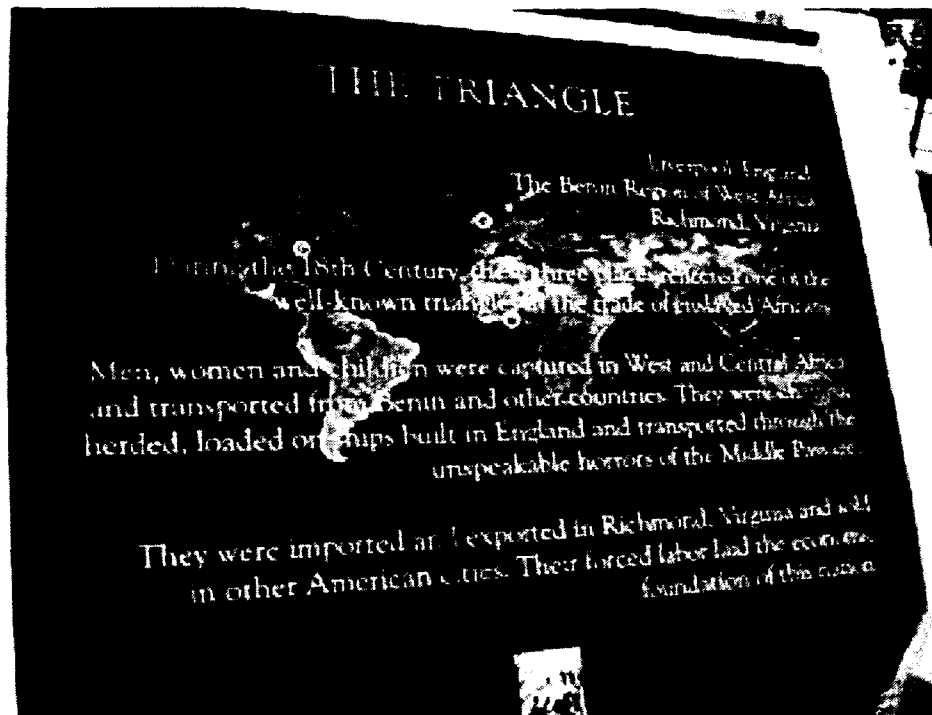


Figure 5.6: Reconciliation Triangle Monument, Richmond, Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

A monumental fountain at the Reconciliation Triangle, poignantly states the contribution of enslaved African labor in creating the wealth of Richmond, the state of Virginia, and the United States. However, the passive voice leaves the perpetrators of slavery obscured by an “institution.” Locating guilt within past institutions, simultaneously divorces the contemporary connections to the legacy of privilege, wealth, and access to resources experienced by contemporary whites while also “whitening” present day institutions that stand in as the organs of apology - the City, the State, the Nation - reinforcing whiteness as normative for the nation and the exclusion of all “others.” Within this there is located a contradictory meaning (see Frankenburg 1994; Blakey 1990; 1991). Certainly, the systemic oppression exercised by whites involved in the slave trade and in the local and national governments that legalized and profited from African and African American lives and labor may be

represented by an “official” apology from these entities. However, it also makes the apology generate from all constituents of those representative bodies, without addressing the racially patterned inequities that remain as legacies of power relations created during the period of American slavery.

The “problem” of racial friction (which requires reconciliation) becomes one of a lack of understanding and a lack of forgiveness. Who, though, bares the burden of understanding and forgiving? It would appear from Richmond’s Reconciliation Statue ceremony that the burden falls more heavily on African Americans. White participants in such a reconciliation ceremony were not challenged to think of their own personal (or even ethnic) connection to the history of slavery. They were only guided to recognize the historic value of the location in which they stood (Shockoe Bottom), to understand the “history” of the past, leaving it in the past, in order to move forward and make “progress.” The connection of slavery in the past to contemporary conditions was limited to the suffering experienced by African Americans and was addressed by speakers through a call to acknowledge this past, in order to forgive and move on to a brighter future. The continuing socio-economic inequity is ignored. Thus, Chavis’ admonition to ‘put ya money where your mouth is’ might easily seem an incongruous utterance for some, while a right and clarifying critique of this episode of Reconciliation for others. The 2007 controversial response of Virginia Senator Frank Hargrove to the proposal of an official state apology for slavery, where he called for blacks to “get over it,” (see Chapter 1) still resonates in the messages of this reconciliation statue and the commemorative events, albeit in a more nuanced and ‘polite’ way. At least, the onus appears to be placed on African

Americans to forgive and move on, now that “the past” has been acknowledged publicly.

While two ceremony attendees with whom I spoke, both African descendants, were critical of the proceedings and the imagery as less than perfect, they also acknowledged that the statue and the memorial space were a significant step.

Duron Chavis, however, circulated among the crowd with a sign that read “Regret Isn’t Enough” and “Put Ya Money Where Your Mouth Is” (See Figures 5.4 and 5.7). Chavis brought attention to the need to go beyond rhetorical forgiveness toward material reconciliation. Chavis was moved to act, he says, “when I heard about the statue being placed there - I thought to myself who in the black community was asked if they wanted a statue of reconciliation?”

The political climate for drawing attention to Richmond’s historical role in the domestic slave trade was well timed, for the Atlantic trade in human captives was ended by Britain and the United States in March 1807 (put into effect in 1808) (Eltis and Richardson 2010; Drescher 2009). The apology from the State of Virginia and the Reconciliation Statue corresponded with the anniversary of “the explosion of the intracontinental trade for which Richmond would be a hub” as Chavis notes.¹⁶³ The statue stood as a deep contradiction of political actions toward proclamations of “profound regret” in the Commonwealth’s official apology, while one block away the Richmond African Burial Ground continued to be desecrated by a State who allowed the Burial Ground to remain in private hands, used for profit as a parking lot for

¹⁶³ Chavis, Duron. Email interview, February 22, 2013.

Virginia Commonwealth University students and staff. In standing alone among a crowd estimated at 5,000,¹⁶⁴ Chavis, a Richmonder of African descent says, “I had never done anything like that by myself before.” That day, he says, “I realized the power of one voice.”¹⁶⁵ He goes on to recall the reactions of the crowd:

I remember the stares - people acting like they didn't see the sign. I remember the black power fists from people way across the street. I mean even the day's speakers had to alter their remarks to address it. It was a truly powerful moment. The oddest irony though was a nondescript older white male, tugged my coat and [said] “hey man I agree with you” while some of the older African Americans who were in attendance were like “Richmond isn't ready for this.”¹⁶⁶

For Chavis, the “issues of slavery had never been reconciled” and holding a sign, alone in a crowd he made visible the fallacy in a ceremonial obscuring of this reality. His actions were “about reparations and restitution”¹⁶⁷ rather than ceremonial forgiveness and reconciliation.

¹⁶⁴ Corcoran, Rob. Day of Reconciliation and Commitment in Richmond, Virginia. Hope in the Cities www.hopeinthecities.org. March 04, 2007. Accessed March 19, 2012 10:55 PM.

¹⁶⁵ Chavis, Duron. Email interview, February 22, 2013.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.



Figure 5.7: Protest at the Reconciliation Statue Unveiling, March 30, 2007. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

How the Reconciliation Project Came to Be

The Reconciliation Project was born from the vision of President Kerekou of Benin after he converted to Christianity.¹⁶⁸ According to Brian Johnson, an African American Virginian who leads the Cooperative Missions Network of the African Dispersion (COMINAD), President Kerekou's conversion brought about the perspective reflected in the Reconciliation Project. "In the same way that God offered forgiveness by presenting His Son, who was offended first'...African-American church leaders want to offer forgiveness to the descendants of their ancestors' captors. Both the president and the pastors hope to effect reconciliation

¹⁶⁸ Wright, Rusty. West Africans to African-Americans: "We Apologize for Slavery." Probe Ministries. http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4223655/k.90ED/West_Africans_to_AfricanAmericans_We_Apologize_for_Slavery.htm Accessed March 15, 2012.

and to provide an example to ease global racial tensions.”¹⁶⁹ Johnson then went on to say that the participation of Africans in the slave trade “made it difficult to just hold the white man responsible.”¹⁷⁰

In the inception of the Reconciliation Project, Christian principles are evoked toward releasing “whites” of responsibility for the slave trade, and by extension, the legacies of slavery throughout the Diaspora. However, although “President Kerekou’s mission has a spiritual flavor motivated by the president’s own recent commitment to Christ,”¹⁷¹ there are economic dimensions to the early Reconciliation Project. As of 1999, Reconciliation events planned for the year 2000 included sailing a ship along “the old slave route from the Canary Islands to Benin and business leaders will host an international business exposition to help stimulate trade.”¹⁷² The triangular trade is being used to establish new economic opportunities among elites, with a platform based on forgiving whites for their role in the Atlantic trade in human captives. This demonstrates the use of the history of slavery by elites to mollify or “reconcile” the discomfort of Europeans and their descendants in Europe and the Americas toward continued inequitable economic opportunity for elites representing multiple

¹⁶⁹ Johnson quoted in Wright, Rusty. West Africans to African-Americans: “We Apologize for Slavery.” Probe Ministries. http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4223655/k.90ED/West_Africans_to_AfricanAmericans_We_Apologize_for_Slavery.htm Accessed March 15, 2012.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Wright, Rusty. West Africans to African-Americans: “We Apologize for Slavery.” Probe Ministries. http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4223655/k.90ED/West_Africans_to_AfricanAmericans_We_Apologize_for_Slavery.htm Accessed March 15, 2012.

¹⁷² Ibid.

ethnicities. Elites would continue to profit from the institution of slavery, as well as the re-presentation of the history of slavery.

Brian Johnson notes that it is difficult for African Americans to acknowledge African cooperation in the slave trade. “This creates some problems of our own psyche. We have to deal with another angle to this and it makes it difficult. It’s not [merely] a black/white thing.”¹⁷³ The problem is extrapolated out to one of humanity: “the problem is in human hearts”¹⁷⁴ for “All have sinned...All of us need to confess our wrong and appeal to [God] for forgiveness.”¹⁷⁵ The values, actions and abstractions conveyed in the Reconciliation Project’s beginnings are contiguous with the inclusion of Richmond as part of a “sister city” relationship within the Reconciliation Project. An economic relationship is part of this Triangle that is based on the apologies for slavery issued by each participating sister city - Cotonou (Benin), Liverpool (England) and Richmond (Virginia). The Slave Trail Commission of Richmond Virginia was the body that spearheaded and led Richmond’s involvement in the initiative and the apology issued from Virginia was to follow the apologies already issued by Benin and Liverpool. The Chair of the Slave Trail Commission, at that time (and presently in

¹⁷³ Johnson quoted in Wright, Rusty. West Africans to African-Americans: “We Apologize for Slavery.” Probe Ministries. http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4223655/k.90ED/West_Africans_to_AfricanAmericans_We_Apologize_for_Slavery.htm Accessed March 15, 2012.

¹⁷⁴ Wright, Rusty. West Africans to African-Americans: “We Apologize for Slavery.” Probe Ministries. http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4223655/k.90ED/West_Africans_to_AfricanAmericans_We_Apologize_for_Slavery.htm Accessed March 15, 2012.

¹⁷⁵ Johnson quoted in Wright, Rusty. West Africans to African-Americans: “We Apologize for Slavery.” Probe Ministries. http://www.probe.org/site/c.fdKEIMNsEoG/b.4223655/k.90ED/West_Africans_to_AfricanAmericans_We_Apologize_for_Slavery.htm Accessed March 15, 2012.

2013) is a Reverend, as were other members of the 2007.¹⁷⁶ Executive Council of the Slave Trail Commission - the body that makes the executive decisions for the Commission. The rest of the members are in advisory positions whose opinions can be overturned by the Executive Council.

Virginia's apology for the Slave Trade followed similar proclamations from the Reconciliation Project cities. The relationships of 1807 were being reinscribed in the Reconciliation Ceremonies of 2007. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) has demonstrated, acts of commemoration foreground particular facets of the past as "history," offering powerful moments for silencing by obscuring the very power relationships, particularly contestation of those relationships, that link past to present. This is done while presumably shining a light on human rights and issues of social justice. In this way, commemorations of "slavery" can serve to reinforce contemporary power hierarchies that emerged within the context of slavery. If the story of the Atlantic trade in human captives is simply a "human" story in which "everyone" is complicit, then contemporary racial inequity need not be addressed as connected to the history of slavery, nor requires "reparations and restitution."¹⁷⁷ Within this context, white privilege, economic fortunes built by white families connected to slavery, as well as wealth built by white enslavers, need not be recognized as connections of the past to the present racial inequalities beyond the broad institutions of the City, State, and Nation. Abstraction of complicity to these

¹⁷⁶ I contacted the Slave Trail Commission to request a list of 2007 Executive Board members, but the staff person emailed me (October 28, 2013) to say he did not have this information and that I would need to ask the Chairperson, Delegate Delores McQuinn. I have submitted this request.

¹⁷⁷ Chavis, Duron. Email interview, February 22, 2013..

broad institutions allude to the possibility of everyone having access to the contemporary wealth, despite the ugly origins from which that wealth came. The legacy of racist social, political, and economic oppression of African Americans of all classes and the economic hardship experienced by poor and working class African Americans are largely covered up, in this telling of history, by addressing “racial tensions” due to lack of human understanding requiring blacks to forgive whites.

Matthew Freeman,¹⁷⁸ a 33 year old European American Richmond resident (also see Chapter 9) worked with Hope for the Cities, where he learned to use dialogue “as a tool for social change,” particularly toward racial reconciliation in the city of Richmond. For Freeman, contemporary issues cannot be addressed by rallying people to “stand in the streets and protest.” Freeman was encouraged by the work being done at Asbury Methodist Church (in the Churchill neighborhood of Richmond), who partnered with Hope in the Cities to facilitate dialogues. He says, “I think that a lot of the issue now is the much harder, personal, relational, kind of work that needs to be done.” He began to see dialogue “as a tool for social change” that brought about “a lot more change happening than...when I was in an activist framework.” Freeman sees “the work of social justice” as “local and particular.” Using a Christian framework, he sees that this locally particular approach includes addressing “the big, historical sin in Richmond” which “was slavery, racism, Jim Crow, Massive Resistance, all of that.” Freeman went further to say,

you can't really talk about any of the - social ills that Richmond faces around inequality in education, or poverty, or anything like that without addressing...the historical legacy that we have, so it seemed to me

¹⁷⁸ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

that, you know, whatever I wanted to do with social justice, I had to do it with - a deep understanding of the issues of race in Richmond.¹⁷⁹

As a staff member on Hope for the Cities, “we always tried to get a diversity of jurisdiction, economics, and race” represented among the dialogue participants. He says that “a lot of the change happened when people start to recognize the other people in the room as human beings - that had, you know, a story and a life, and hopes and dreams that were very real, and they stopped being the stereotyped ‘other’ - and it happened both ways.”¹⁸⁰ Freeman provides two examples of seeing change come about through these dialogues. In one dialogue a European American Civil War re-enactor was participating and was coming to the dialogue after a function at the Robert E. Lee statue where he marched in Confederate uniform. Only the facilitators knew at the beginning of the meeting that the man was a Confederate re-enactor and, Freeman says, “I was, personally happy that it didn’t really come up.”

¹⁸¹He then goes on to tell about a shift in the conversation where this information became central:

We had 5 or 6 black women who had come because they were on the client advisory board for legal aid. So, they were lower income, a couple of them lived in housing projects, not all of them. And they started in the dialogue talking about how we need to talk about responsibility and holding people accountable for the mess that Richmond is in today.

And then a middle class black man who was a business owner, you know, started talking about how he felt like - people just get stuck on the past, and he was kind of dismissing that, and he said that ‘this is the hand we were dealt and we just need to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and do what we need to do to be successful.’ And then he

¹⁷⁹ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

said, he was sitting right next to the Confederate re-enactor, he didn't know that, but he said, 'it's just like the Confederate re-enactors, I mean, I don't understand why people do that, you don't go to Germany and see Nazis re-enacting Jews being put in the oven, so why are people just so stuck on their history?'

And I was facilitating at the moment, and kind of panicked, because, he's just compared the man sitting next to him to a Nazi and, fortunately, I had a co-facilitator who...said, 'I just want to pause right here and talk about what an incredible moment it is for us to have a real diverse group of people in this room, that we can actually learn from each other. And she took it out of the debate framework and said, 'let's use this as an opportunity to learn' and said, 'we actually have somebody here who's a Confederate re-enactor and gave him some space to talk about why.

So, he started talking about, these were his ancestors and he knew that everything that they did and stood for wasn't right, but they were the people who he had come from and he felt like he needed to honor his family....And what ended up happening was the lower income black women in the conversation became allies with him, because they connected on that 'it doesn't matter how much your family messes up, you stand by them.'¹⁸²

This conversation led one of the African American women who lived in a government subsidized community, often referred to as "the projects" who shared a story where she had intervened in a domestic dispute between her neighbors a European American man and woman, where the man was "coming at the wife with a knife." The African American woman said that the husband later came over and thanked her, saying, "I was just out of my mind, I don't know what I was doing, so I want to give you something to say thank you, something that's really important to me."¹⁸³ The man gave his neighbor a Confederate flag. Freeman reports that she said, "at first I was just angry and upset, and didn't know what to do and, you know...then I realized, he wasn't trying to be racist, he was actually thanking me and I don't know what motivated him to think that I would appreciate it, but, you know, he was sincere

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

in his thanks, and so, I decided to, you know, accept it as a gift.”¹⁸⁴ When asked by a fellow participant, the woman said she still has the flag. Freeman said,

it was a moment where both sides seemed to, like, have their eyes opened a little bit to the humanity of the other, which then made progress on some of the other kind of stale mates more possible because we weren’t demonizing each other, and we didn’t see each other as the enemy, but as fellow human beings trying to make a community of people that work.¹⁸⁵

These two vignettes provided by Freeman demonstrate a couple of points: the past may be more contemporarily relevant to African Americans who are living in poverty and see their current socio-economic position as a ramification of the history of labor and life exploitation within the institution of slavery. Middle class and elite African Americans have attained a measure of privilege that allows the past to be separated from the present because they feel they have moved beyond that legacy in some ways. This perspective is expressed by Dieyah Rasheed (see Chapter 9) who asserts that middle class and elite African Americans in Richmond tend to separate themselves from political activism, in general, but particularly anything that has to do with the history of slavery.

The second point is that, while many Richmond residents want to engage with the difficult history of slavery and the attendant current realities of disparity, the messages conveyed around reconciliation moments continue to place the onus on African Americans in Richmond to ‘understand’ and ‘forgive’ European Americans, to ‘understand their perspective.’ I do not see within Freeman’s example where the European American re-enactor came closer to understanding why his re-enactment

¹⁸⁴ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

of the admitted wrongs of his ancestors is offensive to African Americans, or to contemplate why doing so honors their memory.

The Richmond African Burial Ground, in addition to being a site where Africans and African Americans were forcibly buried without respect, was the site where Gabriel and fellow revolutionaries who fought against slavery were executed in 1800. This story of resistance is nested within a legacy of African American resistance embodied by this site. African Americans protested the disrespect shown to their deceased loved ones by European Americans (see the earlier discussion of Christopher McPherson in Chapter 1) and the contemporary descendant community's protests against the use of the Burial Ground as a parking lot. Resistance to the human rights violations challenges a singular focus on the selling and buying of enslaved peoples as the "sin" related to the history of slavery - a sin committed by "blacks" as well as "whites."

The story of African and African American resistance to slavery, however, reveals the daily and ongoing acts perpetrated by Europeans and European Americans in their daily interactions and through their social institutions (slaveholders as well as non-slaveholders) to purposefully violate humanity of Africans and African Americans as "property" that requires them to believe in the absence of humanity in the enslaved. As Michael Blakey (1990, 1991, 2009) has argued, Africans and African Americans incessantly asserted their humanity. Africans and African Americans contested European attempts to dehumanize them. Resistance to slavery was ongoing throughout the Atlantic World, daily, through revolts, poisonings, work delays,

equipment sabotage, suicide, infanticide, (see Moitt 2001; Moitt 1996; Gaspar and Hine 1996; Bush 1990; Aptheker 1969 [1943]; WPA 1969; Schwartz 1996[1992]; Gomes 2006; Dubois and Garrigus 2006; James 2004 [1938]; James 2001[1938];Diouf 2003). Beyond these overt acts of resistance, the enslaved evinced their humanity and “resisted slavery by being themselves” (1991:28). Ferguson (1991) draws on a discussion in Stuckey (1987) regarding how the enslaved, through daily acts of simply being, “unconsciously” and constantly lived their humanity, debunking the white myth of slavery’s justification. These fuller stories of humanity and of resistance are the stories that the African descendant community of Richmond has fought to tell through the Richmond African Burial Ground. Africans in the Americas (as well as the continent) constantly resisted slavery. They did not commit a “sin” of complicity. These are the stories that are omitted in the Reconciliation Statue commemoration and the story that demands “reparations and restitution”¹⁸⁶ in the present.

Lumpkin’s Jail

Lumpkin’s Jail was an infamous holding pen for enslaved prisoners awaiting sale. Due to the torture and horrific treatment of those held captive, the jail was know as “The Devil’s Half Acre.” Robert Lumpkin purchased the property and structures in 1844. Prior to Lumpkin, the two previous owners had been prominent slave traders as well; the first, Bacon Tait, purchasing the land in 1830 and sold to Lewis A. Collier. Collier built many of the structures used by Lumpkin, including the two-story jail house (Laird 2010). Prior to purchasing the jail, Lumpkin’s early years as a trader

¹⁸⁶ Chavis, Duron. Email interview, February 22, 2013.

were spent “[r]oaming over the country, and picking up a husband here, a wife there, a mother in one place, and an alluring maiden in another, he banded them with links into a coffle and sent them to the far southern market” (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856 quoted in Laird 2010:15).

Extant descriptions of Lumpkin’s Jail include the experiences of a man named Robinson. Robinson, enslaved by Lumpkin, was sent as overseer of a group of captive African Americans Lumpkin was sending to New Orleans on the *Creole* (Laird 2010). Nineteen captives on board revolted and took over the ship, demanding that the crew deliver them to Nassau in the British Bahamas where slavery had been fully abolished in 1838 (see Laird 2010). Every enslaved person on the ship was declared free and Robinson returned to Boston, Massachusetts. Though Lumpkin visited Robinson, he did not attempt to reclaim Robinson as property until the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. In disputing Lumpkin’s claims, Robinson provided his attorney with descriptions of the degradation inflicted on the prisoners of Lumpkin’s Jail. He described boys and girls who were sickly being greased to make their skin shine, and slave traders ordering the enslaved on display to strip naked and perform acrobatics to display their physical ability. Girls were probed, and their legs and their breasts molested as other traders sat watching (Laird 2010). Lumpkin and his “low company” of friends would “sleep with the girls, ordering me, at night to bring such a girl or such a girl up to the house, just as they would order out such a horse to ride” (Robinson quoted in Laird 2010:12). Lumpkin used his complex to train blood-hound dogs to assist in capturing runaways by having young boys run through the yard and hide in a tree before the dogs were let loose. This spectacle, as well as

gambling games using human property, were the entertainment activities of men who frequented Lumpkin's complex (Laird 2010). Punishment was grueling for the prisoners waiting for sale, and consisted of techniques that would not inhibit their marketability, such as blistering the buttocks, rupturing the blisters, and pouring a salt solution over the wounds (Laird 2010).

Lumpkin's Jail was not solely a holding pen, but also a place of punishment for infractions such as escape. Anthony Burns (see Figure 5.8) was a young man enslaved in Virginia who escaped in 1854 at the age of twenty one. Burns was captured in Boston and returned to Lumpkin's Jail due to the Fugitive Slave Law. He spent four months in Lumpkin's Jail before he was declared free in 1864. Charles Emory Stevens (1856) chronicled Burn's accounts. Lumpkin is described as a man who "belonged to a class of persons by whose society the slaveholders of the South profess to feel disgraced, but with whose services, nevertheless, they cannot dispense" (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856 quoted in Laird 2010:15).

For Burns, punishment included seclusion within a "room" that was more like a box measuring approximately 6-8 feet on each side, accessible only through a "trap door." Burns' hands and feet were cuffed tightly, cutting off his circulation and wearing away his skin. The shackles also made him unable to remove his clothes to urinate or defecate, nor did he receive help from his captors. His wounds, the filth of his conditions accompanied by insect infestations and rancid food and contaminated water caused Burns to fall very ill. When he first arrived, he was a scandalous topic of discussion and an "object of curiosity" (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856

quoted in Laird 2010:15). During these first weeks he was removed daily from his cell to be paraded for onlookers who called for his death. “These exhibitions... though humiliated, furnished a relief to the solitude of his confinement”; otherwise Burns was vigilantly kept from interacting with other enslaved prisoners for he harbored two contagions: “[t]he taint of freedom was upon him, and infection was dreaded” (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856 quoted in Laird 2010:15).



Figure 5.8: John Andrew’s depiction of Anthony Burns and his story (1855) reprinted in Laird 2010:14.

Burns persisted in his resistance to slavery. When his illness reached heights that alarmed his jailers, he given broth with a spoon and his shackles were removed momentarily for him to eat. Burns used the spoon to wedge a hole out of a small opening in the wood near the trap door. When the door was swung open, it covered the hole. Through this hole, Burns began to converse with other prisoners:

He filled their eager and wondering ears with the story of his escape from bondage, his free and happy life at the North, his capture, and the might effort that it cost the Government to restore him to Virginia. He was their Columbus, telling them of the land, to them unknown, which he had visited; inspiring them with longings to follow in his track; and warning them, out of his own experience of the perils to be avoided (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856 quoted in Laird 2010:17).

Burns was able to establish friends and supporters who helped him send letters to Boston. Mary, an enslaved woman who served as Lumpkin's wife and the mother of his children, showed kindness to Burns by giving him a Bible and a book of hymns. Mary is described as "a 'yellow woman' whom he married as much from necessity as from choice, the white women of the South refusing to connect themselves with professed slave traders" (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856 quoted in Laird 2010:17). Lumpkin's "black concubine" also befriended Burns, creating excuses to be able to talk with him, and "compassion, it is not unlikely, changed into warmer feelings" until Lumpkin overheard words that made him jealous and "took effectual means" to put an end to their exchanges (Stevens biography of Andrew Burns 1856 quoted in Laird 2010:17). Burns was released after four months and won his case for freedom. Unfortunately, he died at the young age of 29.

When Federal Troops marched into Richmond on 3 April 1865, African Americans gathered on Broad Street, just outside of Lumpkin's Jail to celebrate the release of those imprisoned. The inmates, awaiting release, reportedly sang a song praising God and thanking "master Abe" for their freedom (Laird 2010:18). The story of transition from slavery to freedom through Lumpkin's Jail includes a transformation of the "Devil's Half-Acre" to "God's Half-Acre." After Lumpkin died in 1866, Mary inherited his many land holdings in Richmond, Virginia, as well as properties in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Huntsville, Alabama. Reverend Nathaniel Colver came to Richmond on behalf of the National Theological Institute with the charge of creating a school of ministry for recently freed African Americans. Colver says that he faced many obstacles from whites to his proposals for a school, either out of direct opposition or whites fear of "public sentiment" (Rosenberger 1922 quoted in Laird 2010:23). However, he met Mary Lumpkin in the street and she "a member of the First African Baptist Church of Richmond, and...a true Christian" rented Lumpkin's Jail to Colver at a greatly discounted rate (Laird 2010). The Colver Institute, relocated after the student population could not be accommodated by the old jail buildings and became the Richmond Theological Seminary in 1886, ultimately becoming Virginia Union University in 1899, a school for African Americans. This is a powerful story the dehumanizing realities of slavery, ongoing resistance to slavery told through the site of Lumpkin's Jail - a space that was transformed from "the Devil's Half Acre" to "God's Half Acre." What aspects of this story become most salient in public discussion and representations of this site?

Re-presenting Slavery in Richmond

Along with the Reconciliation Triangle, Lumpkin's Jail and the "Slave" Trail are the primary sites developed by the Richmond City Council's Slave Trail Commission to tell the story of slavery in Richmond. Even though Janine Bell, the Co-Chair of the Slave Trail Commission, Sa'ad El-Amin, the former Chair of the Slave Trail Commission (and the founder) and many within Richmond's African descendant community refuse to refer to the trail as the "slave" trail, but as the Trail of Enslaved Africans, the official name of the trail retains the term "slave." Enslaved denotes the condition imposed on captive Africans and their descendants held in bondage; in contrast the term "slave" was used by enslavers to erase the humanity of the enslaved and served to flatten and objectify their lives and identities, perpetuating a stripping of their humanity in representations of the past. "Slave" denotes an intrinsic and limited identity, whereas "enslaved" clarifies the imposed and tenuous condition in which a person in bondage was held by an enslaver. Furthermore, the term enslaved directs one to refer to the imposer of the condition - the enslaver. While this language was crystalized in contemporary activism surrounding the African Burial Ground in New York (Blakey 2009), Frederick Douglass in 1854, argued that social, political and economic oppression shaped the material realities of enslaved laborers in the United States, emphasizing the tentative conditionality of slavery by using the term "enslaved" (Douglass 1854). This struggle over representation - symbolized by the struggle over the word "slavery" vs. "enslaved" is significant to the processes and histories held within each word.

The Trail of Enslaved Africans allows people to retrace the steps of this journey from the docks to the City. The "Slave" Trail and Lumpkin's Jail tell of the atrocities of slavery as an institution, the atrocities and dehumanizing experiences of the enslaved who were marched from the docks to holding pens for sale in auction houses throughout Richmond. Lumpkin's Jail tells of those who were jailed and tortured while enslaved. Lumpkin's Jail also represents the story of a notorious slaveholder who married an enslaved woman. One member of the Executive Council for the Slave Trail Commission, a European American minister and long time advocate for racial reconciliation in Richmond, has referred to the story of Lumpkin's Jail evoking a very romantic imagining of Mary, the wife of Lumpkin, peering out of one of the windows of the jail as a beacon, and a savior of Lumpkin's humanity. There are equally powerful stories of resistance, such as Burn's account and the very need for a special jail to punish those who constantly found ways to liberate themselves by running away. However, in my experience, these resistance stories fall out of the general references and presentations of Lumpkin's Jail. An emphasis on the horror and atrocities committed at Lumpkin's, coupled with a redemptive story of slavery's end, freed African Americans who thank God and Abraham Lincoln and a space of the Devil converted to a seminary. I would argue that where the resistance of enslaved Africans and African Americans is not brought into the same spotlight as the above storyline, the message conveyed is one of white domination through violence and systemic power, Africans and African Americans as passive victims and recipients of violence, white (often Christian) abolitionists who fought for freedom, and white leaders who bestowed freedom to passive and waiting crowds of African Americans. Within this narrative, power of freedom and redemption are in the hands

of whites and a Christian God. Self liberation and the weakening of the institution of slavery through ongoing resistance is not part of this narrative of the transition of slavery to freedom, as told through Lumpkin's Jail. These messages deny the humanity of Africans and their descendants and are consistent with the patterns discussed by Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005) in both the United States and Brazilian contexts.

The Reconciliation Statue acknowledges the contribution of enslaved Africans and African Americans to the making of the City of Richmond, the State of Virginia, and the United States as a nation and signifies a movement toward forgiveness and racial reconciliation. While the history of slavery has been largely absent in the memorial landscape of Richmond prior to the establishment of the Slave Trail Commission in 1998, the story of "slavery" represented through these sites becomes the primary African American story in Richmond and the African American experience becomes bounded by a distorted view of slavery. Where present, European and European Americans, such as Lumpkin, have a violent but powerful and dominating presence. Indeed, as will be discussed later (see interviews in chapter 7), European American visitors do not tend to make personal connections to sites related to the history of slavery - slavery becomes marked by and for European Americans as "African American." These Richmond representations leave intact the Euro-centric perspective of European and European American relationships to "others" as powerful/ passive, donor/ recipient relationships identified by Blakey (1990). Slavery is objectified as a natural institution embedded in an unmarked, white supremacist

ideological landscape. African Americans are portrayed as complicit by not resisting enough.

The African descendant community, has fought to tell a fuller story that includes resistance. Independent commemorative initiatives led by African American focus on resistance, particularly Gabriel's Rebellion. Furthermore, a salient connection is made between resistance to slavery as resistance to oppression that is ongoing today. The Gabriel Freedom Park monument in Richmond states that "Gabriel Freedom Park is named to Honor a 24 year old enslaved African, who fought to free his people from bondage." Gabriel, born in 1776, into a nascent United States is distinguished from those who were born free and as citizens of that new country. Gabriel is identified as excluded from the nation and as African. "Further, this park bears Gabriel's name to honor the people of Highland Park, and to remind us all of our ability to rise above injustice and reclaim our lives from economic and social oppression. The spirit of Gabriel (1776-1800) serves as a beacon for every generation of Richmond's Youth." While the monument states Gabriel's historic significance, the contemporary significance and trajectory of repression and resistance to oppression are made overtly clear in the meaning of Gabriel for today.

The aspects of the Slave Trail Commission's sites that speak to resistance, such as the Richmond African Burial Ground and Gabriel's Rebellion (see discussion in Chapter 5), are a direct result of long-term protest and demands made by the descendant community where the Slave Trail Commission, the City of Richmond and the State acquiesced to avoid embarrassment from media attention provided to the

discordant voices, or once the demands of the community provided lucrative opportunities. These opportunities became clear in a 2012 public forum.

On 18 February 2012, a public forum was held to discuss the next major plan led by the Slave Trail Commission: a U.S. National Slavery Museum in Richmond as part of a Heritage Site complex drafted by the Commission in 2010. The landscape of historic sites would become a multi-cited museum complex. Members of the Slave Trail Commission and a representative of Lord Consulting presented. Reverend Sylvester Turner, an African American member of the Commission and the Executive Council, provided a brief overview of the history of the Slave Trail Commission and the Commission's accomplishments to date. Jeanie Welliver, a European American woman spoke of her experience growing up and being intently interested in Richmond's history. She expressed her shock at learning more about this history through work involving the Lumpkin's Jail Project. "I, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was like, this is my city? This is my town? And no one ever told me this story."¹⁸⁷ She demonstrated how much she had learned in recent years by sharing her experience when the Arthur Ashe monument had been erected on Monument Avenue in 1996. She said:

I remember when Arthur Ashe was being placed on Monument Avenue, this is the circle of people I live with, and they said, 'why don't we just put a monument of those that fought in the Civil War - African Americans that fought for the Confederacy - on Monument Avenue?' And, I actually believed that was true, that there were people that actually took up arms and would defend the South's position."

¹⁸⁷ Welliver, Jeannie. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

While this affluent white woman was demonstrating how her knowledge base had been expanded, her comment illustrates the supportive role deemed by some to be appropriate for any African Americans honored on Monument Avenue - supportive of the white slaveholding Confederate South. Vague referents to African Americans as “those” and “people” may demonstrate the further discomfort held by upper class whites in acknowledging and discussing African Americans. An African American monument seems to have been less about the person than a concession to being inclusive and controlling the threat of counter narratives.

Ms. Welliver expressed pride in the work of the Slave Trail Commission “because it wasn’t until we unveiled some of these markers and the Reconciliation Statue that the truth is now finally out there - authentic truth, it’s not overstated.”¹⁸⁸ Ms. Welliver also conveyed how impressed she was by how the “leftover” land adjacent to the parking garage was so quickly and easily designated for the Reconciliation Triangle monumental space through Secretary Viola Baskerville under the Tim Kaine gubernatorial administration. “It never made the paper. It was never argued that we should or shouldn’t place it there. And then, I was so proud of our state” because it “took the first position of, ‘sorry’ - that’s what that means, ‘we’re sorry’ - our City, Country played a major role in this.”¹⁸⁹ Ms. Welliver’s positioning of including herself as part of the “we” who are sorry and apologizing through the Reconciliation Statue is again abstracted out to the City and/ or Country who “played a major role” in slavery. The vantage point from which these monuments and historical site

¹⁸⁸ Welliver, Jeannie. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

interpretations are being positioned is from a Euro-centric perspective, which also places the ownership by the city as an ownership by the unmarked normative referent of elite power holders, who are mostly white. As the protester at the Reconciliation Statue commemoration stated, no one asked the descendant community if they wanted a Reconciliation Statue or, if they wanted it located in this “leftover space.” Indeed, while teaching at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2007, one of my African American students commented on the location as inappropriate, being right next to bars and a strip club.

A cooption of authorial power and perspective is achieved through exactly the kind of maneuvering that was lauded by Ms. Welliver. Secretary Baskerville is African American, the Chair of the Slave Trail Commission is African American and many members of the Executive Council and the larger Commission are African American. However, without the leadership of the broader descendant community (a community that includes, but is not limited to, elite public officials who have a vested interest maintaining their positions of privilege within “official” systems of the city, state, and nation), the “authenticity” of the narrative becomes linked to a space as a past “historic” site and fetishized artifacts that provide the empirical experience of the past in the present. Without a narrative created through an engaged dialogue with and led by the descendant community, the story has served to legitimize the status quo.

The value of historic sites as claims to legitimacy became clear as Joy Bailey, the representative from Lordculture Consulting emphasized¹⁹⁰. Bailey presented the consultation advice and research provided to the Commission. She explained that Lord Consulting was chosen through a competitive process and that their first objective was to review all of the documents and then to provide a summary to the Commission (per Delegate McQuinn's request) of relevant museums/ institutions that have been created elsewhere. The examples provided were: Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, South Africa where many political prisoners including Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi were held and tortured; the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England; and the Canadian Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Constitution Hill was considered particularly pertinent to Richmond, based on Richmond's vision for a multi-site heritage complex and the multiple buildings that make up Constitution Hill. Furthermore, Constitution Hill included "horrific stories from prisoners" and a building where most of the torture occurred.

In this place, as here in Richmond, there were some very hard things going on in this prison. And, we had those instruments of torture, so the question became, how do we make that - treat that sensitively...these items that were so hard, that were so used by people to do such horrible things to human beings. How do we make that an experience that people are actually comfortable in listening to, taking in, [that] they learn from rather than feeling downtrodden, or that they are being preached to?¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ According to the Lordculture Consulting website, the company's "1 mission" is "creating cultural capital, building the vision, engaging the community, and planning the experience." See en.lordculture.com accessed October 27, 2013.

¹⁹¹ Bailey, Joy. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

The Lord representative identified this need for being “very sensitive when dealing with such difficult subjects” as one of the “main important things about this project.” The authenticity of the site was enhanced by having the original torture devices and added to the complexity of telling the story in a way that could be consumed by a visiting audience. The presence of authentic spaces and artifacts, coupled with a need to make a horrific experience comfortable for consumption was part of the reason Constitution Hill was used as an example relevant to Richmond, most likely related to Lumpkin’s Jail, though this was not specifically stated.

The International Slavery Museum in Liverpool was described as a “life changing experience for members of the Slave Trail Commission.” Delores McQuinn was invited to share her reaction to visiting the museum. Delegate McQuinn stated that, in the comment section at the end, she wrote, “One must die themselves to treat another human being the way that they [the enslaved] were treated...you have to die, yourself, in order to treat someone else that looks like you other than the color of your skin, the way people were treated.”¹⁹² She extended this statement to a broader scope of human rights: “Not just in terms of enslaved Africans but other, I guess, cultures and races of people who have been mistreated over the years.”¹⁹³ The experience of the museum was intense and heavy for McQuinn, though appeared to have made a deep impression. Though she did not elaborate, the comments she left at the end of her museum experience convey that the horrors

¹⁹² McQuinn, Delores. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

inflicted on enslaved Africans were particularly salient in her experience of the museum.

The Canadian Human Rights Museum was held up as an example of an “international site” that would open in 2013 and tell international stories of human rights violations, as well as “exceptional, exceptional, wonderful things that happened in the world of human rights.”¹⁹⁴ This was the first mention of an example of what could have been representations of resistance to human rights violation or oppression. However, the example provided was South Africa’s Reconciliation Process that enabled South Africans to “move forward” after the end of apartheid.

Bailey stated that the United States National Slavery Museum “establishes Richmond as the epicenter of the U.S slave trade.”¹⁹⁵ She emphasized that the “authenticity of place - what *really* happened here in Richmond...really became part of the mission statement” for the museum.¹⁹⁶ Here we see where Richmond’s African American history sites related to slavery are a valuable commodity for the “authenticity” and legitimacy they lend to the interpretation of the sites, for consumption by residents and potential tourists visitors. Bailey elaborated that “authenticity begins with our story, capturing the profound human drama. A specific manifestation of Virginia, and Richmond, holding on to slavery, while the rest of the

¹⁹⁴ Bailey, Joy. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

world was dropping it, and how slavery becomes emancipation.”¹⁹⁷ The story is one of Virginia’s “backwardness” in holding on to slavery and then the transformation of slavery into emancipation. Certainly, the story of the horrors committed in Lumpkin’s Jail, the future site of Virginia Union University provides this easy and truncated rendition. However, it continues to attach “slavery” and its attendant horrors to an unnamed perpetrator. Virginia as a state and Richmond as a City were holding on to slavery. Ultimately the institution is “transformed” into emancipation. While this short summary may belie an intended focus on resistance, the examples provided focused on telling the story of horrific human rights violations and how communities “reconciled.”

Bailey went on to say that in Richmond “you have real places, you have extant auction houses, you have the Slave Trail, you have evidence, you have Lumpkin's Jail, you have the African Burial - the African American Burial Ground. You have all of these *real extant* places, you can *walk* those places.” Not only is the authenticity of the story anchored in the historic originality of the sites that are being interpreted (as opposed to the sites, how and by whom they are interpreted), but the value of these sites is in providing visitors (perhaps titillating) experiences that can satiate a visitor’s need to touch and become intimate with the authenticity of the experience of enslaved Africans by “walking” through the spaces traversed by the enslaved; retracing the steps of the enslaved without having to walk in their “shoes” because the message must be delivered comfortably. There is a perverseness in the marketability of allowing possession of an historic space, as a moment of experiential

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

ownership through consumptive performance; where the selling of the experience is constructed in a way that is to horrify, educate, but ultimately be comfortable. Perhaps this is too close to what might be an “authentic” horror experience versus an inauthentic fictional film. A Disney park proposed for Virginia, thematically centered on the history of slavery was ultimately shot down in the 1990s over great controversy, including the inappropriateness of using slavery as a theme for diversion and profit. Clearly caution and vigilance are required to avoid an “authentic” space from becoming a space of such distortion. This critique is not levied at Lord Consulting but to raise questions as to the use and potential exploitation of the history of and story of the experiences of enslaved Africans as consumptive commodities, albeit educational. Who authors the story, for whom and toward what end? Who will profit from the telling of this story through these sites? Among the varied positionings at play throughout, we see a wrestling match of interests, views of history, and goals for individual, group, and national identity.

In discussing how the United States National Slavery Museum “must address the legacy of slavery” this legacy is limited to acknowledging “that the Industrialization of the slave trade provided the foundation, or basis, for the business development of the United States, illustrated clearly here in Richmond. And this is, just a fact.”¹⁹⁸ She goes on to say that the USNSM as a “purveyor of U.S. history...must connect with a broad range of people” by making connections between what is happening now and what happened then, using both interpretation and genealogy.¹⁹⁹ Again, the

¹⁹⁸ Bailey, Joy. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

potential for inclusion of discussions of ongoing oppression and African and African American resistance to oppression within and beyond slavery is evident in vague references, but no specific sites or stories were referenced in this meeting.

The difficulty in telling the “truth” because it is “uncomfortable” was reiterated and the following questions were posed

How do you deal with telling that uncomfortable story? How do you bring people in and not make them feel preached to or fussed at? What is it that you can do that makes us all feel ready to move forward? We take this information, and then we move forward. So that’s one of the things the USNSM is looking to do for people of all ethnicities, races, cultures.²⁰⁰

The power of historic interpretation was stressed in characterizing the planned USNSM as “not just a museum, it is a delivery system” that “has a mandate to do something, to educate, to research, to document, this is not going to be a stagnant space.”²⁰¹ However, the solution to telling a difficult story truthfully in a manner that is comfortable for all visitors is not adequately addressed and leaves the problem of how this will be resolved in the Richmond context unanswered.

As a way of discussing the museum’s “institutional identity” and “how it will play out,” each site within the proposed complex was discussed by members of the Slave Trail Commission. Janine Bell is an African American woman, Co-Chair of the Slave Trail Commission and CEO of Elegba Folklore Society. Bell began by stating that “there were nearly fifty dealers of enslaved Africans in Richmond during the period that we are envisioning to tell” and that among them, Robert Lumpkin was well known and

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

his jail infamous. Bell proceeded to give a vivid description of Lumpkin's Jail, known to Richmond blacks as "the Devil's Half Acre" with four main buildings, the jail being the largest "a two-story brick house with bars on the windows."²⁰² Surrounding it were straggling, smaller jails for 'specials,' a trader's office, a kitchen, and a bar - and the inevitable auction platform, all enclosed within a tall wooden fence."²⁰³ Bell provided human stories to flesh out the historical sketch. She described Robert Lumpkin, "a favorite among buyers" as "a good natured, fat man. Professional looking, always neatly dressed, and swinging a slender, gold headed cane."²⁰⁴ Lumpkin earned his reputation through his "excellent stock and royal entertainment of the traders."²⁰⁵ Bell went on to speak of a young enslaved girl, Mary Ann, who caught Lumpkin's eye and "he decided to keep her on. Saved from the terrors of Cotton Country, she did all she could do to show her gratefulness; she bore him two children and became Robert Lumpkin's wife at the close of the Civil War."²⁰⁶ Anthony Burns, an enslaved man who had escaped, was caught and returned to Lumpkin's Jail where he was held prisoner for four months, described his experience as suffering "such revolting treatment as the vilest felons never undergo, and such as only the revengeful slaveholders can inflict."²⁰⁷ Bell then moved to questions that connected these three figures in the past and that past to the present:

²⁰² Bell, Janine. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Bell, Janine. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

What was going on at that jail site? What was going on with the people there? What were the relationships of the people there? How have those relationships affected how Richmond has evolved? How have those relationships affected each of us in this room? What is the story to tell? What is the story, not only of Richmond to tell, but of a nation to tell? So we begin to tell this story.”²⁰⁸

Bell provided an overview of the archaeological survey in 2006 and 2008 excavation (see Laird 2010). She connected with the forum attendees by saying, “some of you know about it, some of you helped with vigils to maintain ancestral alters there, during the excavation.” Bell located the ensuing narrative and research perspectives from the descendant community’s voice by listing the questions held by the African descendant community: “We wanted to see what survived of the main buildings, if anything, and we did see that there were some survivals there. We wanted to answer the questions, what were the conditions like for our ancestors? What were the relationships then and what could we know about life then that affects us now? And so we are still answering the questions...”²⁰⁹ While Bell incorporates the lives of Mary Lumpkin and Anthony Burns, the resistance components are not included in her comments.

Reverend Ben Campbell, a European American man who is a member of the Executive Council for the Slave Trail Commission and Director of Richmond Hill Mission and a key member of Hope in the Cities (an organization dedicated to racial reconciliation), introduced the Richmond African Burial Ground by saying “those of you who have been involved with us know how funny it is that Janine would be doing Lumpkin’s Jail and I would be doing the African Burial Ground - because I am a

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

convert to the importance of this project, it has grown on me, people have taught me the importance of it, and I'm a true convert."²¹⁰ Campbell expressed gratitude "for the energy of citizens of Richmond that have brought this about."²¹¹ He referred to the Burial Ground as "ground zero for the domestic slave trade, not just the international slave trade" describing the relative obscurity of this piece of Richmond's past - at least for Richmonders. While "folks escaped had escaped from it, or were participating in it, in one way or another, either as victims or purveyors" and these contemporaries knew of it, "it wasn't written about in great length in the books was it?"²¹² While there were sources that existed - one being a book written by Bancroft in 1935, brought to his attention by John Franklin, "somehow that book was not used in the high schools or colleges around Virginia. I don't know why - do you?"

Campbell then goes on to say that Richmond is "so important" because:

One..we actually have physical reality here. Second...we have the American question, which is, how in the period from 1780 to about 1860 can this be a place where both American Liberty and American slavery are perfected? How do these things coexist and to what extent does that suggest the continuing struggle for decency, for humanity, for justice that we still...must undergo and that the world still has to undergo?...Halfway between Patrick Henry's Speech and Thomas Jefferson's declaration is the largest domestic slave market in America, outside of New Orleans - what is that? How do those coexist? How do the same people create this?²¹³

While Reverend Campbell makes connections between past and present, the question of contemporary struggles for justice is applied equally to everyone in

²¹⁰ Campbell, Ben. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

Richmond and around the world. He describes the Burial Ground as “incredible,” stating that, “it represents a way of being true to the men and women - who came here and were dragged here to start this country....this Burial Ground and the Lumpkin’s Jail site together, conveniently connected by an archway underneath Broad Street, give us the opportunity to have a proper heritage site where people can be honored and taught.”²¹⁴

The connection between the Burial Ground and the American Question remains muddled in Campbell’s description, as is his generic discussion of “people” who will be “honored and taught.” For the African descended community, the disrespect afforded by European Americans to Africans and African Americans interred in the Burial Ground spans the past to the present and demonstrates a broader lack of value placed on black life by whites who represent the official positions of the City, State, and Nation (see discussion in Chapter 1 and 7). Broad brush statements do not identify or locate these contemporary social struggles. Reverend Campbell briefly discussed plans to learn the parameters of the Burial Ground Site and possible excavation, mentioning that Dr. Michael Blakey has made himself available for consultation. “So, we will learn more and we’re blessed to have this opportunity to say ‘thank you’ and he concludes by saying, “I believe in redemption and I think..our opportunity is to strengthen our community and our culture and to find the truth so that we may be a stronger people.” Who is being redeemed is unclear, perhaps everyone, but given Reverend Campbell’s commitment to racial

²¹⁴ Ibid.

reconciliation, I believe he is referring to all Richmonders when he speaks of “our” opportunity, “our community” and “our culture.”

Cynthia Newbille, an African American woman and member Slave Trail Commission and City Council representative for Richmond’s 7th district, spoke next. Newbille drew on the significance of the “authentic” experience discussed by the Lord representative in saying that the Slave Trail

allows us to make the local global, and to put it in a context. To understand what it meant to have enslaved Africans come into...the dock...straight through to Lumpkin’s Jail, for some, and on to other parts of the country for many others...This program allows us to essentially place our hands through time and space and really have a sense of what that experience was like, to really understand the trade of enslaved persons from the Continent of Africa...²¹⁵

The Genealogy Center was presented by David Herring, a European American man, Slave Trail Commission member, founder of the Alliance to Preserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods (ACORN) and Vice President of the Center for Neighborhood Revitalization at the Better Housing Coalition. The Winfrey Cottage, the last known extant “slave” cottage in Richmond, will be incorporated into the Genealogy Center as part of the Slave Trail and one of the sites associated in the United States National Slavery Museum. For Mr. Herring, the USNSM “is probably the single most important thing to happen to Richmond in the last 150 years. This is truly the thing that is going to get people to come to this city to...visit and learn what Richmond is all about and the impact that Richmond has had all over the United States.”²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Newbille, Cynthia. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

²¹⁶ Herring, David. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

Despite the discussions of honoring and educating, the people who will be honored were never fully defined and the messages that are to be conveyed through these educational interpretations were never enunciated within this presentation.

Remarkably, resistance was not a topic of discussion within the presentation on the complex of sites for the proposed museum. Gabriel and his 500 co-conspirators were not a part of the historical “authentic” events that were included in the treasure trove of Richmond’s past, nor was the connection of this historic event to the Richmond African Burial Ground site. Authenticity remained in the physical spaces and the horrors that occurred within those spaces. With the exception of Janine Bell’s presentation, the Africans and African Americans who endured those horrors and who fought those horrors remained muted, as did the European and European perpetrators of human rights violations.

The presentations were followed by small group break out sessions where participants were asked to answer three questions, within twenty minutes: 1) Is this a place that you would bring your family? Why/ Why not? 2) Is there anything missing? 3) Is this a place that you would support and how would you support it? Within the group I was assigned to, we were supportive of a museum complex. However, there was a strong opposition to the title of the museum as the “United States National Slavery Museum.” As one African American participant, Janet “Queen Nzinga” Taylor, said, her history did not begin here in the United States or with slavery. She wanted the histories and cultures of Africa to be incorporated. She did not think the museum emphasis should center on slavery as the defining

construct for African American history and culture.²¹⁷ Taylor later clarified this position by saying,

Although the chattel enslavement of African people <Maafa> certainly qualifies as one of the most horrifying episodes in so-called [un]American 'his-story', I think any museum 'livicated' to just that period of 'our story' would be greatly inadequate! That is, without including the glorious civilizations of Ancient Alkebulan prior to our FORCED separation from our Homeland.²¹⁸

A criticism of appealing to and making whites comfortable with the history of slavery was also discussed. Participants wanted to hear more about how resistance leaders such as Gabriel and Nat Turner would be represented. The discussion was lively, though at times was curtailed as our Commission member moderator urged us to stay with the questions. The recorder for the group, however, did not report the majority of these concerns and, instead, gave a report of overall support for the museum ideas. Afterward, one man from our group commented that that group process was a lesson that demonstrates that the person recording the story tells the story as they want to see it.

When the groups rejoined, concerns were voiced that this was not a process of engagement, that everything appeared to have been decided in advance, including the name and that the public was there to simply hear about these previously made decisions. Regarding the name, Delegate McQuinn stated that the legal process for the name was already started and could not be changed. Dr. Michael Blakey

²¹⁷ Taylor, Janet "Queen Nzinga." Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012. These comments were made during a break out session. I later received special permission from Janet "Queen Nzinga" Taylor to use these comments in my dissertation.

²¹⁸ Taylor-Barrett Communication, October 20, 2013.

countered this and said that those processes could be halted and urged that community engagement beyond “checking off a box” occur.²¹⁹

The workings of the Commission have demonstrated that the Executive Committee has served to make decisions that do not represent nor include a process of engaging the broader Richmond community, particularly the African descended community.²²⁰ The Slave Trail Commission, as led by Delegate McQuinn, does not generally make public attendees feel welcome or part of the Commission’s process. On more than one occasion when I attended, there were no chairs set up for the public and chairs had to be found and brought into the room. My presence appeared suspect until Delegate McQuinn came to know me. Once, McQuinn asked her staff assistant to find out who I was. The staff member wrote me a note during the meeting and passed it to me asking my name. I provided it, and later McQuinn said she thought I was a reporter. Others have conveyed similar experiences. A public comment portion is often not incorporated and public comments are not always welcomed. One woman, during a Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Meeting, reported that she was told she was out of turn in trying to make a comment during the meeting. This woman reports that McQuinn addressed her Commission members in the authoritarian and dismissive way she, herself, was addressed. The woman said of McQuinn, “she actually, literally, said to them...she says to the rest of the commission ‘listen – all you serve to do is to inform my executive committee who

²¹⁹ Blakey, Michael. Comments made at the Public Forum on the United States National Slavery Museum hosted by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, February 18, 2012.

²²⁰ See El-Amin, Sa’ad. 2012. The Richmond Slave Trail Commission: A Self Inflicted Wound. A position paper sent to the Richmond City Council and media and circulated by the African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee March 26, 2012. Richmond, Virginia.

will then vote upon what I feel we should do so that we can have a quorum based on what I feel needs to happen.....”²²¹ When Dr. Utsey, a non-Executive member of the Commission, asked if she was following Robert’s Rules of Order, she reportedly replied, “we have it written in our bylaws that when the executive committee meets, we don’t even have to tell the rest of the people on the Slave Trail Commission that we’re meeting.”²²² The woman went further to say that the Executive Committee is “allowed to vote on things that the rest of the people on the commission...don’t even know.”²²³ For some Richmond residents, leadership of the Slave Trail Commission appears to provide McQuinn the authority to make decisions that suit her own purposes and desires, enforced by a small Executive Committee who reports these decisions back to the larger body. El-Amin’s (2012) critique raises issues related to the legal legitimacy of McQuinn’s leadership role within the Slave Trail Commission, calling for increased accountability and transparency for the Commission.²²⁴

The Story of Slavery as a Story of Power and Redemption

Perhaps a dual story of redemption may be held within the messages conveyed by the Slave Trail, Lumpkin’s Jail, and the Reconciliation Statue - a story of redemption

²²¹ Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Meeting Transcript, May 23, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ El-Amin, Sa’ad. 2012. The Richmond Slave Trail Commission: A Self Inflicted Wound. A position paper sent to the Richmond City Council and media and circulated by the African Burial Ground Community Organizing Committee March 26, 2012. Richmond, Virginia.

through slavery, for whites and blacks. A story of racial 'progress' and redemption of blacks through slavery draws on older racist narratives of cultural and social evolution - that African descendants have made "progress" through their forced migration to the Americas and that African Americans are privileged rather than entitled to be American (see discussion of Perry 2009, Chapter 9). Connections between the West Coast of Africa and Richmond are represented on the Reconciliation Statue by chains with shackles and diagrams of crowded slave ships, reaching between the continent of Africa and Richmond in the Americas (See Figures 5.9 and 5.10).



Figure 5.9: Reconciliation Statue, Richmond, Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.



Figure 5.10: Reconciliation Statue, Richmond, Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

Within this context, slavery becomes a 'necessary evil' that ultimately produced wealth and a powerful nation enjoyed democratically by all American citizens. This story provides redemption for Americans as a world power (and world liberator, the leader of the "free" world) and for whites' role in slavery (particularly after an apology). America as "leader of the free world" often holds up American cultural standards as a metric for humanity when judging other countries (see Abu-Lughod 2012[2002]; Said 2003[1978]). The denigration of "Africa" as backward, marginal to humanity, "history," and progress, is critiqued by scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois (2007[1947]) and Chinua Achebe (1978). As Brian Johnson (discussed above) highlights, the employment of Christian rhetoric of forgiveness (for "all have sinned") is also a story of sacrifice and forgiveness by the offended to their offenders. According to this story, suffering in slavery is the sacrifice that African Americans had

to pay (“time on the cross”) in order for their descendants to become more human (given humanity) via their positions as Americans. A story of slavery as a necessary evil is also a story of redemption for African Americans “saved” from the “backwardness” of being African by virtue of their Americanness; a redemption bestowed on African Americans by their white liberators that further redeems whites for their role in slavery.

Furthermore, in this narrative, reliant on obscuring the histories of African American resistance, slavery and oppression become largely bounded in the past - juxtaposed with “freedom” through the abolition of slavery, constitutional rights to humanity and citizenship claimed as having been “given” to blacks by white liberators, such as Abraham Lincoln. This relationship is consistent with Blakey’s analysis (1990) of the Smithsonian Museums’ depictions of African American history as part of the American past, where European Americans are the holders and sites of power, democracy (sometimes equated with freedom in U.S. nationalist rhetoric), and innovation, whereas African Americans are passive recipients (Blakey 1990). In contrast, the tenuousness and ultimate destruction of the institution of slavery required African and African American resistance to it.

This redemption story was enunciated quite clearly in statements made by Richmond’s Mayor, Dwight Jones, during a November 11, 2013, press conference to announce his approval of the development plan for building a new baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom. Signs in favor of the stadium proposal read “Yes We Are, Loving RVA.” A line of approximately 100 protesters stood opposite Mayor Jones and his

supporters as he made his announcement in the space that would potentially be home base, if a new stadium is approved by Richmond City Council. Protesters held signs, with statements such as, “NO Stadium, YES Historic District,” “Public \$ & Land for Schools and Parks, Not for Corp[orate] Welfare,” and “Mayor Jones, I’m Going to Need You to Make These Decisions WITH US not FOR US. RVA is FULL of BRILLIANT Problem Solvers.” Mayor Jones announced his choice for Shockoe Bottom as the site to develop a new baseball stadium stating:

Our city is rich with history, and we’ve got to acknowledge that history, and we’ve got to honor that history. We’ve got to embrace who we are and move forward together. Because I believe, as you believe, that our city has a bright, bright future and we’re here today to move on to that future. And so, the question today is, how can we live, how can we work, and how can we play together. That’s why we’re here today...My job as Mayor is to move Richmond forward, and not to leave anyone behind.

One protester shouted, “Don’t leave your ancestors behind, don’t leave your ancestors behind.” The Mayor continued to state that the way to move forward was through the proposed economic development, as protesters drowned out his voice by shouting phrases such as, “wrong location,” “what about the history?” The Mayor paused to say if he gave the protesters “their time, maybe they will give me my time.” To which one protester responded, “you didn’t give us our time.” The Mayor said, “we’ll give you your time.” The Mayor went on to claim he used “clear economic tests” in weighing his decision to choose Shockoe Bottom as the future site for the baseball stadium. He added that one additional test had to have been met:

Can we properly honor an area and teach people about a unique chapter in American history, that has not yet been fully told? And the answer to the question is that, we can do this. The answer to the question is that Shockoe is the right location. By developing Shockoe in an innovative and historically sensitive way, we will be able to unlock one of the most valuable pieces of land on the East Coast.

Protest responses included “don’t sell out the legacy of your ancestors,” “so it’s all about the money, huh?” and “we want new schools!”²²⁵

The majority of the Mayor’s comments related to financial benefits that could be realized if the baseball stadium development goes forward, and that, “this is the best plan for taxpayers.” As protesters continued to shout and ask for him to “look at the composition” of those who were for and against this proposal, the Mayor stated, “what I am looking forward to is that we will come together as a community to determine what this is going to look like, we will continue to have public input.” The Mayor invited the audience to “listen to what Senator Tim Kaine said,” as he read the endorsement of the U.S. Senator and former Governor of Virginia. Protesters countered by saying, “listen to what we said!” and “you need to serve the people.” As he spoke of the jobs that would be generated, a protester yelled, “who’s going to get the jobs?” and questioned if these would be minimum wage jobs. The Mayor then said:

Let me say something about the heritage piece of the plan. All of this will make possible an investment that is deeply personal to me and it is important to people who are opposing the project here today. All of us who support this plan need to listen to the people, perhaps under better circumstances. Because they have a right to say what they are saying and we are going to make sure that the story of this area is fully told. We want everybody to know what happened in Richmond a long time ago [A protester shouted, ‘it’s still happening’]. About a ten minute walk, down here, around Grace Street, past the train trestles, at the foot of the interstate, lies an area that is called ‘The Devil’s Half Acre.’ The Devil’s Half Acre where thousands of enslaved Africans were held for auction at Lumpkin’s Jail from the 1830s until the end of the Civil War. Richmond was one of the Country’s largest slave markets. Only New Orleans sold more human beings than Richmond.

²²⁵ The Mayor stated that the money generated by taxes brought in through the development of the baseball stadium could be applied to public schools, transportation, and to “make Richmond a tier one city.”

It's a story that needs to be told. Future generations need to know what happened here. We need to commemorate that history so that our sons and daughters never forget.

A protester began to yell "Your not telling it right! You're not telling the story right Mayor Jones!" The Mayor went on to say that, although

There are those that don't want to listen, this is deeply personal to me. In fact, it's so personal that if it were not for what happened those years ago, I would not be here today. I would not be here today if it wasn't for a man named Robert Lumpkin...who was both an evil man and a family man. The evil man sold human beings to other people for profit. But as a family man, he loved an African woman named Mary, whom he once enslaved. Robert Lumpkin died, and left everything to his wife, Mary and their mixed daughters. Two years later an itinerant minister travelled through Richmond looking for land to start a seminary to educate...free Africans. Mary leased the land... [and] some years later, that school...became Virginia Union University...[This history] is very important to me, because I have lived it, and I know it and I am very secure in declaring that if it had not been for what happened on Devil's Island [sic], I would not have had the once in a lifetime opportunity to go to Virginia Union over forty years ago...[and] as a poor boy from Philadelphia, finally wind up leading the great City of Richmond. This is a story that should not be buried, it should not be hidden, but this is a story that must be told. We must celebrate the fact of where we have come from. And celebrate the fact that even though there were disastrous things that happened in the past, the outcome is that many have been able to succeed.

While supporters of the stadium responded with loud applause, protests continued loudly saying, "you do not have the story right and if we put it in your hands, you are going to tell everybody wrong, we cannot trust you with this story Mayor Jones!" and "what about Gabriel?"

The Mayor paid homage to the enslaver Robert Lumpkin, portraying him as a complicated human whose evil half is redeemed through his marriage to a woman whom he purchased as a girl, and through the story of Virginia Union. In this rendition, Mary Lumpkin becomes a vapid conduit through which Robert Lumpkin's

redemption is realized. His fortune, made from his skill in torturing and selling enslaved Africans, created the “once in a lifetime opportunity” for Mayor Jones, bringing him from humble socio-economic beginnings to “leading the great City of Richmond.” A history of slavery is the necessary evil that brought Mayor Jones to his position of success and he credits the notorious slaver Robert Lumpkin for his role in this process. The Mayor’s call for the community to “move forward together” where economic development is what will allow an untold story to become known is reminiscent of the language surrounding the Reconciliation Triangle project where sister cities worked together economically, telling the story of a shared history of slavery and slave trading. Robert Lumpkin and the atrocities of Lumpkin’s Jail become the lens through which the story of slavery in Richmond is framed, with no discussion of African and African American resistance.

After being recognized for the “diligent work of our Slave Trail Commission” in having “uncovered” Lumpkin’s Jail, Delegate Delores McQuinn followed Mayor Jones to announce the Richmond Slave Trail Commission’s support for the Mayor’s proposal. Mayor Jones described Delegate McQuinn as “the young woman who succeeded me...in the general Assembly, in the House of Delegates,” pointing out that he sometimes has to remind her of that fact. Mayor Jones said that “we want to make sure that this cause that she has championed for these many years, is not forgotten...And we are committed to moving forward *immediately* with detailed designs...that will commemorate Lumpkin’s Jail.” He claimed that these plans will “bring tourists and visitors downtown to explore our history in ways that are not being explored.” Some protesters yelled, “But you didn’t ask us!” and “We don’t want to

commemorate a slave jail!" while others called for "referendum." The baseball stadium development was pitched as an "opportunity" that would allow Delegate McQuinn to "lead the community to raise at least 30 million dollars to pay for the development of a Slavery and Freedom Heritage site." Furthermore, Mayor Jones said, "this is an opportunity for the community to come together to build this center, not just with dollars, though we will need plenty of those, but with new energy, new imagination, new tools and concepts, with a larger sense of goodwill. And with the patience and determination to show Richmond can work together." The Mayor assured the audience that he had spent "a lot of time" with Delegate McQuinn and Dr. Ed Ayers, the President of the University of Richmond, "exploring the best ways to commemorate Richmond's history" and was met with the protesters questioning, "what about the people?"²²⁶ Delegate McQuinn came to the stage to chants "No Stadium on Sacred Ground." McQuinn claimed that, "this is the right plan for Richmond because it seriously talks about telling [an] American story the right way...I believe that this is the one chance that we have to honor our history in a big way and I'm excited about it...if a new baseball stadium can help make it possible to invest and commemorate Richmond's history, then we should certainly explore it." She closed her statements by saying,

As a woman of faith, I've prayed over and over and over again that God would send some support and help and assistance to the Slave Trail Commission to advance our agenda and vision. There are those that will love this plan and there are those who are adamantly opposed to it. But what I love is the fact that after toiling for over a decade to tell this story, there's a real opportunity to see an amazing

²²⁶ Dr. Ayers is a leader of the Future of Richmond's Past initiative that partners with museums and organizations that interpret Richmond's history to hold community dialogues on various topics related to Richmond's past. The Mayor said, "We know that understanding history requires an ongoing dialogue and I am committed to that ongoing dialogue. We will be looking to receive input from those who are experts in that area, because the last thing we want to do is tell a history that is not accurate"

vision come to fruition. And if we can do that, for generations that will come, what a gift, what a rich legacy they will receive from us. This is not just our story, this is [an] American story.

Dr. Ed Ayers followed Delores McQuinn to provide a sketch of the historic significance of Shockoe Bottom. What was left unclear was how this history would be incorporated into the development plans and how community engagement would be accomplished, particularly when the voices of community members had been largely ignored to that point and during the press conference. The Mayor implied that the process had already been handled through his consultation with Delegate McQuinn and Dr. Ayers, the “experts” in how the history of Shockoe Bottom should be honored. He was committed to “immediate” action, while saying that community “input” would be received, “perhaps under better circumstances.”

Later that night, the Mayor was to propose the plan to City Council, which will ultimately decide if the stadium development moves forward in Shockoe Bottom. Approximately 30 - 40 people came to speak against the proposal during the public comment period only to be told that the Mayor had cancelled his appearance, the proposal was being moved to another night, and that no public comments were being heard on the issue that evening.

J. Douglas Smith characterizes Jim Crow politics in Virginia as a well honed system of “managed race relations” where “elite whites joined leading blacks on interracial committees and discussed the most pressing concerns but finessed professions of civility and amity to evade any meaningful reform” (2002:4-5). A “genteel” maintenance of white supremacist ideals and policies was contingent upon “white”

collaboration with what they referred to as a “better class” of black leaders to counsel prudence and ensure that change would occur as whites saw fit” (Smith 2002:8). White elites referred to African Americans of Virginia as the “blue blood’ of their race” that was supported by a narrative that “Virginia had essentially ceased to import slaves after 1750” and that “from that point until the Civil War, the most aggressive slaves, who tended to work in the fields, were sold to the newer states in the Deep South, while the most highly skilled remained in Virginia” (Smith 2002:10). Gabriel’s rebellion and the many skilled artisans among those who enlisted, directly contests this characterization of revolutionary actions against slaveholders emerging only “from the fields.” A mixed narrative of biological and class determinism were used to support the story of a “mutual understanding” between this “better class” of blacks and elite whites (Smith 2002:11). A story of slavery is key to this narrative of why some African Americans were able to become successful, particularly in Virginia. The absence of those who resisted, and their stories, are also key to this narrative that served to bolster white supremacy in Virginia while claiming a politics of “goodwill and harmony between the races.” Very similar language is seen in Mayor Jones’ vision that the Richmond community with “come together” with a “larger sense of goodwill.”

I cannot help but be reminded of the current political maneuverings in Richmond when I read Smith’s description of Jim Crow Virginia politics:

More so than in an other state in the South in the first half of the twentieth century, an oligarchic elite dominated Virginia...As few as a thousand state and local officials controlled the Old Dominion’s political machinery. Wealthy industrialists, lawyers, doctors, dentists, bankers, businessmen, and railroad executives offered their support in exchange for favorable tax and labor laws. Influential newspaper

editors, especially in Virginia's largest cities, used their columns to boost the state's economic fortunes, ratify the leadership of those in power, and encourage continued social order. University professors and educators lent intellectual credibility to the ruling class, while a corps of theologians and clergymen added spiritual sanction (Smith 2002:9-10).

Abraham Lincoln the "Liberator"

The story of slavery in Richmond is told primarily through the monuments of Confederate "Heroes," the sites made visible by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, and a monument to the great "Liberator" Abraham Lincoln (see Figure 5.11). Lincoln's "reconciliation" visit to Richmond on April 4 and 5, 1865 after the Union army had taken control, is memorialized at the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar. Inaugurated under Confederate protest in 2003, the statue depicts Lincoln with his son, behind a stone wall where the words "To bind up the Nation's



Figure 5.11: Lincoln Statue at the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar commemorating Lincoln's "reconciliation" visit to Richmond accompanied by his son, Tad, April 4 and 5, 1865. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, Richmond, Virginia.

wounds." The Southern Poverty Law Center described the donation of the monument by the U.S. Historical Society as "a small measure of historical balance" to Richmond, "modest" in comparison to the pervasive Confederate presence.²²⁷ The end of the Civil War required a reconciliation of fractured national allegiance among European Americans, and as Anthony W. Marx argues "elites acted by selling out blacks and reinforcing prior racial distinctions and ideology in order to unify whites" (1998:2). What is the Lincoln monument commemorating? Using Marx's (1998) perspective, one reading could be that it marks the celebration of white

²²⁷ Moser, Bob. Conflicts Arise over Lincoln Statue in Richmond, Va., Cemetery. In *Intelligence Report*, Summer 2003, Issue Number: 110. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2003/summer/lincoln-reconstructed> Last accessed October 29, 2013.

reconciliation where ending slavery was the price of saving a “white” union. For Brag Bowling of the Virginia Sons of the Confederacy, the monument serves as “a not-so-subtle reminder of who won the war.”²²⁸ Indeed, white unity is still somewhat tenuous, as evidenced by the white supremacist organizations who protested the Lincoln monument, some distributing materials “accusing the ‘Great Emancipator’ of being the ‘Great Segregationist.’”²²⁹

In 2010, a “Road to Revolution” heritage trail was inaugurated to “[link] historic sites in Virginia that interpret the life of Patrick Henry, orator of the American Revolution and Virginia’s first governor.”²³⁰ The Richmond African Burial Ground where Gabriel and his fellow revolutionaries died fighting for liberty, for themselves and all enslaved Americans, is eight blocks down the street from St. John’s Church, where Patrick Henry gave his famous speech. Across from the Church is a memorial park funded by a former Richmond City Mayor, the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia (see Figure). In this park, the words from Henry’s famous 1775 speech are etched in glass: “Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me LIBERTY or give me DEATH!” engraved in glass (see Figure 5.12). Patrick Henry was a slaveholder who professed to find the institution “repugnant to humanity” but not overly so, for he did not withdraw from participating

²²⁸ Brag quoted by Bob Moser in Conflicts Arise over Lincoln Statue in Richmond, Va., Cemetery. In Intelligence Report, Summer 2003, Issue Number: 110. <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2003/summer/lincoln-reconstructed> Last accessed October 29, 2013.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Press Release, April 22, 2010. “Road to Revolution Heritage Trail Partners to Unveil New Interpretive Signs to Identify Sites Connected to Patrick Henry.”

in the institution because he was unwilling to conceive of “the general inconveniency of living without them” (Henry in Egerton 1993:10).

While Gabriel paid with his life under the motto “Death or Liberty,” Patrick Henry lived on in acclaim as a founding “father” of Virginia and the Nation. These sites, so close in proximity, are maintained as largely disconnected stories. These words, taught to American school children at the state and local level, tell the story of European American refusal to live in “bondage” of any sort. Absence of contextualization for this narrative, that would include contradictions embodied by figures such as Henry, the U.S. War of Independence, and the fight for freedom by enslaved Africans and African Americans such as Gabriel, risks conveying a message that “whites” fought for and won their freedoms, whereas African Americans did not, but were “given” freedom by the “Great Emancipator” Abraham Lincoln.

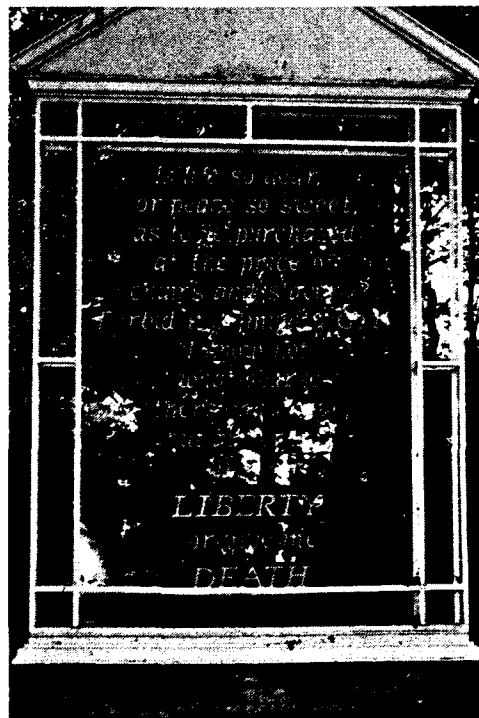


Figure 5.12: Glass memorial to Patrick Henry's Speech in the Patrick Henry Park across the street from St. John's Church, Richmond, Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, June 28, 2008.



Figure 5.13: Patrick Henry Park, Richmond, Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, June 28, 2008.



Figure 5.14: Patrick Henry Memorial Park plaque. Note the financial support from the former Mayor, the City of Richmond and the state of Virginia. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett June 28, 2008.

Historical Reclamation and Self-Determined Narratives of Slavery and Resistance

Political leaders in Richmond use language that seeks to incorporate Richmond's "slave" history for inclusion toward racial reconciliation and "goodwill." These narratives become stories that justify white and black elite privilege, exonerating enslavers and the slave trade as an evil that worked to a greater good. The larger Richmond descendant community also calls for an inclusive history of Richmond, of Virginia, and of the Nation. However, this charge is for descendant community authored, self-determined narratives and representations of a long trajectory of history, culture and heritage, inclusive of (but not limited to) enslavement and resistance against slavery in the Americas. This community struggle to reclaim African American histories and heritage sites seeks to correct the distortions demonstrated in the visions and narratives conveyed during public events and memorials discussed in this chapter. Who is narrating the story of slavery as heritage tourism and economic development emerge in Richmond, Virginia? Who will profit? What is the story that future generations will learn about themselves and their pasts?

Chapter 6: Power and Redemption: Representations of Slavery, Rebel Heroes, and Liberators in Rio de Janeiro

When I began pre-dissertation research in Rio de Janeiro between 2003 and 2006, there were few public markers or memorials that presented the history of Rio as a major trading port in the Atlantic Trade in Human Captives. As discussed earlier, I learned of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the community based initiatives to make the history of slavery in Rio visible. I recorded markers, monuments and imagery that represented this history in 2006. In 2012, the Cais da Imperatriz (Empress' Quay) and the underlying Cais do Valongo (Valongo Quay) were excavated, uncovering the entrance point for enslaved Africans in the nineteenth century. A space of reflection was created, along with a small museum and information center regarding the development of the Port Zone and the history of the area.

In 2006, the Zumbi monument (discussed in Chapter 6), was the most prominent monumental marker. A second marker stood out in Rio de Janeiro, however: the monument to Princess Isabel, the "Redeemer of Slaves," at the intersection of Princess Isabel Avenue and Atlantic Avenue, between Copacabana and Leme (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2). I will return to a discussion of the imagery provided by this monument after a brief historical sketch of Princess Isabel.



Figure 6.1: Princess Isabel “Redemptress of the Slaves” monument in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, August 5, 2006.



Figure 6.2: Princess Isabel “Redemptress of the Slaves” monument in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, August 5, 2006.

Princess Isabel

Princess Isabel was born in 1846, daughter of Brazil's last Emperor, Dom Pedro II. As heir to the throne, the Princess served as Regent in her father's stead three times during the period of 1871 to 1888. As Regent, Princess Isabel oversaw the implementation of Brazil's 1871 Law of the Free Womb, which deemed free all children born to enslaved mothers from that point forward. These free children, however, were required to serve their mother's enslavers until the age of 21 years. After having grown weary waiting for her Ministry members to end slavery through more gradual means, Princess Isabel abolished slavery by signing the Golden Law in 1888 (Barman 2002). After the successful coup of 1889, the monarchy was forced to leave Brazil. Princess Isabel accompanied her royal family to Europe where she would remain in exile until her death in France, 1921.

A bronze statue of Princess Isabel as the "Redeemer" of the slaves was erected on May 13, 2003 in commemoration of the 115th anniversary of the Golden Law, amongst protests made by activists in the *movimento negro* (Araujo 2010). The imagery of Isabel's right hand extended, while she holds a quill in her left hand, evokes the notion of a white regent giving freedom to enslaved Brazilians. As Araujo (2010) notes, this vision conveys the message that the end of slavery in Brazil "was not a conquest, but a gift granted by the princess" (Araujo 2010:257). While the Zumbi monument was supported by Afro-Brazilian organizations and activists, the Princess Isabel monument was the project of a singular politician, the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, César Maia (Araujo 2010). The gifting of freedom to enslaved Brazilians

and the imagery created by the sculptor Edgard Duvivier, does not contradict the “truth,” according to Milton Teixeira, that “blacks remained waiting for whites to give liberty to them” without resistance (see Chapter 8).²³¹ Teixeira’s comments reflect a racist myth, historically held by elites in Brazil. Historian Thomas Skidmore, in noting the events surrounding Brazil’s abolition of slavery, states (albeit in essentialist terms) that the “resistance, often courageous” of enslaved laborers in Brazil, demonstrated the fallacy of the “racist stereotype (entertained by whites then and later) of the Afro-Brazilian as inherently passive and unable to defend himself” (Skidmore 1999:69). The Princess Isabel monument does not challenge this racist perspective and is located between two affluent beachfront sections of Rio de Janeiro. Behind these beachfront buildings, the *morros* hills are home to poor and working class communities, often referred to as *favelas* (vines), because, from the perspective of a distant gaze, over time the communities spread across the hills and ledges, like vines.

Siqueira Campos Inscire Installation

A human rights art project led by Belgian artist François Schein, includes an installation at the Siqueira Campos metro station in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro. The installation was created in collaboration with architect Laura Taves, Talya Khan and Rio residents. Schein’s Inscire project creates installation mosaics using tiles that are created with participation of local residents. The Inscire project has created installations in major cities within Palestine, Afghanistan, Belgium, Brazil, Chili,

²³¹ Teixeira, Milton. Interview, January 26, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

France, Germany, Italy, Israel, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.²³² Most of the Inscire installations in Rio de Janeiro are located in *favelas*; the thirty articles of human rights are included with maps, images from history, and lyrical art. Many of the Rio installations include images of “3 main symbolic figures” (see Figure 6.3): a “black man who represents brazilian manpower force, an old black lady who has known slavery in her life...and a young girl who represents the country’s hope in a better future.”²³³



Figure 6.3: Inscire images representing the project’s main themes in Rio de Janeiro.²³⁴

The pervasive presence of Rio’s poor neighborhoods and their “acceptance” by Rio residents, coupled with the lack of these communities’ presence on any map of Rio, inspired Schein to create collaborative art projects that included maps of the neighborhoods with images of culture and history. The goals of the project were to teach human rights in underprivileged Rio neighborhoods; participatory learning of

²³² Schein, Françoise. 2009-2011. Inscire: To Write the Human Rights, Association Inscire. http://www.inscire.com/index.php?contentpage=françoise_schein.php Last accessed March 4, 2013.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

art history foundations and art skills; and to inspire ongoing dialogues surrounding the images of history, art, and culture.²³⁵ The installation locations are primarily poor neighborhoods in close proximity to affluent neighborhoods, such as those in Ipanema and Copacabana.

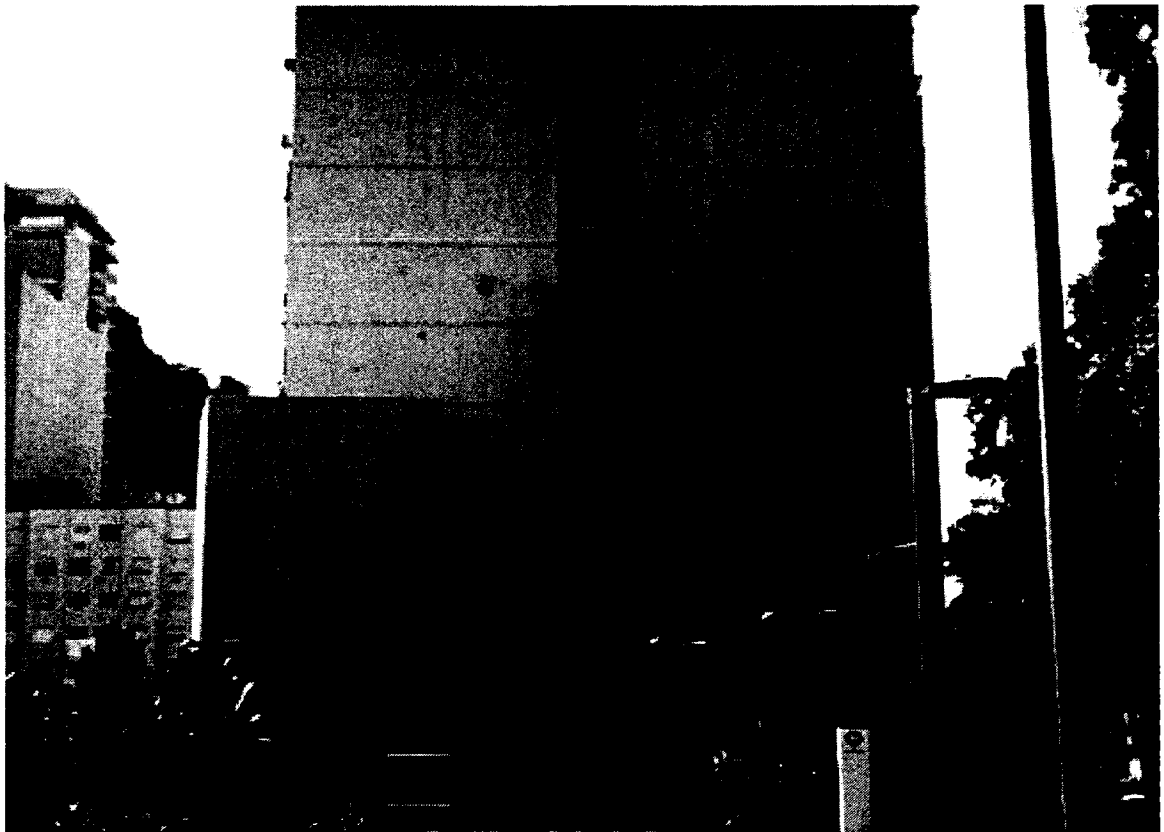


Figure 6.4: Siqueira Campos Metro Station in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett August 15, 2006.

The Siqueira Campos Metro station (see Figure 6.3) was chosen for one of the Inscire installations in Rio because it is located within one block of the famous and expensive beachfront hotel, the Copacabana Palace, and equally close to several favelas to highlight the questions of human rights in the face of stark inequality. The coastline of Copacabana is marked with repeated images of the elderly woman,

²³⁵ Ibid.

representing the living memory of slavery in Brazil. A four meter high image of the black man as Brazil's "manpower force" stands out next to the coastline. On the interior of the map are smaller images of enslaved Africans engaged in labor. Images of crowded slave ships are imposed on the tiles representing water. A poem by Arnaldo Antunes on "the view" that evokes questions of perspective and gaze with lines such as, "The view from here is beautiful. Which may not be. Beautiful for another."

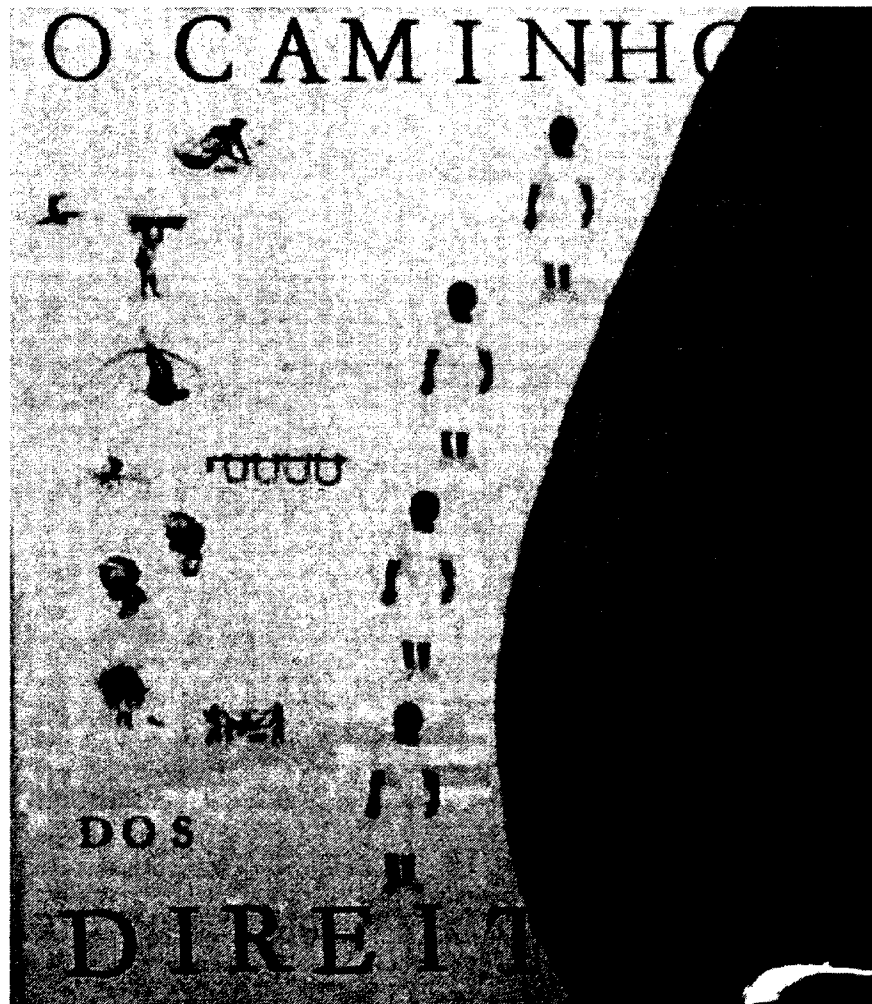


Figure 6.5: Detail from the Inscribe installation at the Siqueira Campos Metro, Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett August 15, 2006.

Song lyrics to “Tem mais samba” by Chico Buarque are positioned below the image of a crowded slave ship (See Figure 6.6).

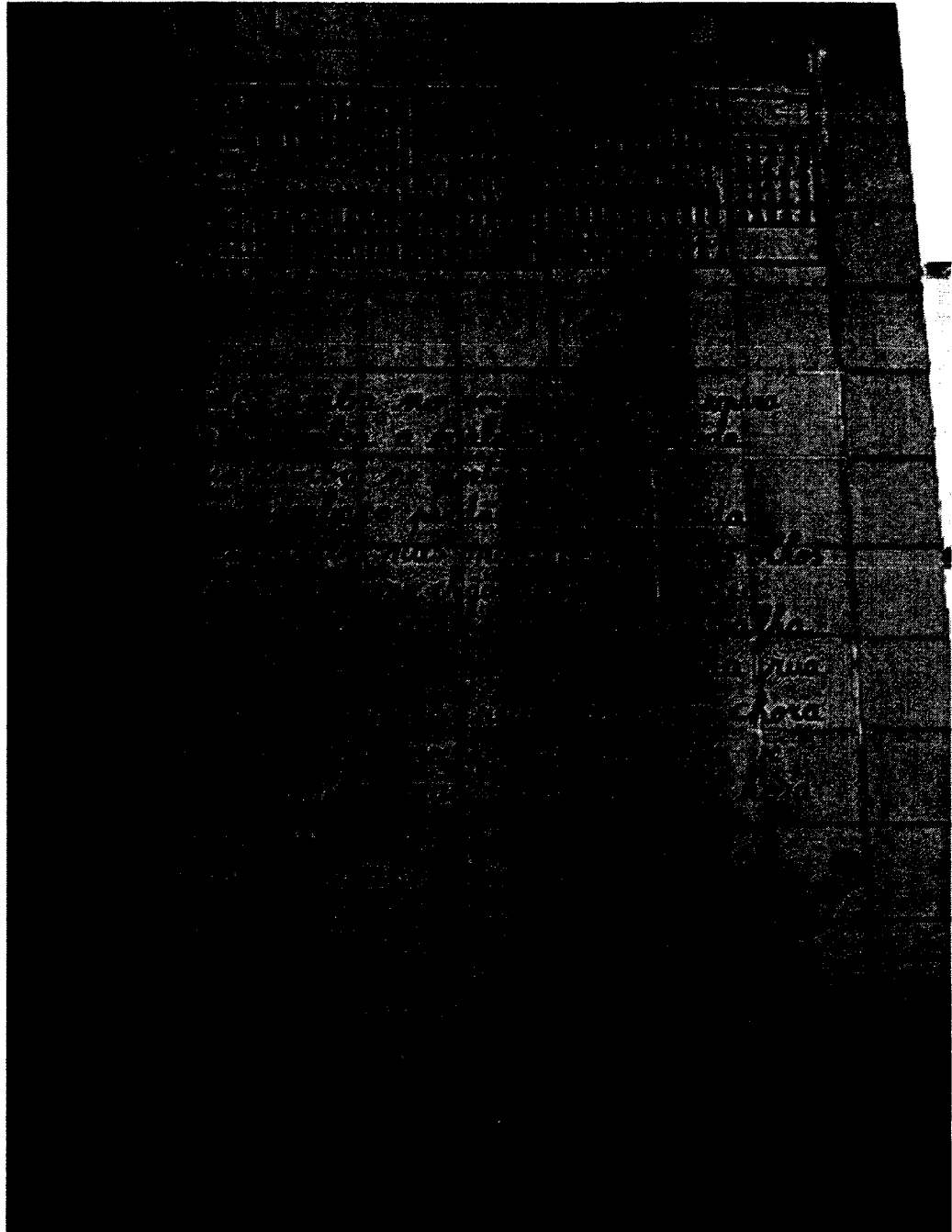


Figure 6.6: Detail from the Inscrire installation at the Siqueira Campos Metro, Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett August 15, 2006.

There is more samba in the encounter than in the waiting
Maldade has more samba than the wound
There is more samba in the harbor than in the sail
Forgiveness has more samba than farewell
There is more samba in the hands than in the eyes
There is more samba on the ground than in the moon
There is more samba in the working man
There is more samba in the sounds of the street
There is more samba in the heart that cries
There is more samba in the mourning of one who sees
A good samba has no time or place
An open heart
Effortless Samba
Come what may
Your suffering
If everyone would samba
It would be so easy to live

Schein's installation visually marks Copacabana as an Afro-Brazilian landscape tied to the history and memory of slavery and the exploitation of African and Afro-Brazilian labor. It is unclear to what extent the local residents of the poor neighborhoods within which Schein works participated in the design choices. However, my reading of this installation is that, while aimed at social justice, the artwork draws on and reinscribes stereotypes of Afro-Brazilian history and culture. Buarque's "Tem mais samba" also conveys a message that romanticizes the history of struggle out of which the music tradition of Samba was born (Vianna 1999[1995]). However, it builds on the identification of Samba as the "national" music of Brazil, signifying *mestiçagem*, where Rio de Janeiro becomes a locality that embodies Samba (Vianna1999[1995]). Samba was also appropriated by elite and white Brazilians as a consumable product of Afro-Brazilian culture in the 1920s and 1940s (Vianna 199[1995]). Buarque's song, though poignant, conveys a message that suffering produces the beauty of samba. More subtly, perhaps, is a message that Afro-Brazilian culture makes life easy despite oppression.

In conversations with middle class residents of Rio, I heard remarks about how residents of favelas may live in dangerous conditions, but they have the best views of the city and they don't have to pay for utilities, such as electricity. Favelas were also described as places of material poverty, but rich in culture. There is a romanticized narrative of reciprocity and justice woven throughout essentialized representations of the favela as a bounded space where material poverty engenders rich culture and, in the most romanticized version carefree happiness embodied by a spontaneous samba. In contrast, the middle class and the wealthy have to pay exorbitant prices to live with the ocean views presumed to be enjoyed by favela inhabitants. Far from carefree and spontaneous lives, middle class and elite Rio residents often speak of how stressful Rio is. One elite woman living in Ipanema wondered at how I felt safe enough to walk through the streets of Copacabana in the afternoon to meet with her in Ipanema. She expressed great fear in leaving her residence without being taken by her driver in a car.

The *favela* becomes conceptually bounded as a space of poverty, criminality, danger, but also Afro-Brazilian cultural production. When I first began to discuss my research interests with Rio residents, I was advised to go to Bahia. When I clarified that I was interested in the representations of the histories of Africans and Afro-Brazilians in Rio, I was advised to study in *favelas*. I was told that the *favelas* were materially poor, but rich in culture. I was also warned not to go into *favelas*, with one middle class Euro-Brazilian woman describing the nearby hillside community as "another world." A recent movement to 'decriminalize' favelas has led to formerly dangerous

communities being deemed safe after police and government intervention. Tourists can stay in a hostel style Inn within at least one such *favela* in downtown Rio. Guided tours of some *favelas* are available, during which visitors can purchase the artwork and items produced by residents. These efforts are presented as positive, legitimate (and legal) means through which residents can earn money and improve their material lives. There is a level of selling a “*favela*” experience that commodifies poverty as a means to ameliorate it.

While Afro-Brazilian culture has been integral to resistance against slavery and oppression, a romanticized view of material poverty as a space of cultural production for consumption by elite and middle class Brazilians fails to reinforce the need to end disparity through social justice. Poverty and privilege is produced and maintained through an exploitative relationship between the working poor who live in hillside communities called *favelas* or *morros*, and the wealth and privilege of middle class and elite residents. This relationship is obscured by focusing on culturally rich poor in contrast to the culturally poor rich who appropriate the cultural products of the poor. Schein’s projects may be making these connections by marking the map of Copacabana with her three main images of a black man, an elderly black woman, and a young black girl, articulated with images of enslaved African laborers. The poetry of Antunes’ poem questions the creation of Copacabana as a space for consumption of beauty and the cost of providing such a vantage point. However, the poem does not identify those Brazilians who have benefited from the history of exploitation. Perhaps the location of the installation itself is to provide this referent. Buarque’s lyrics, set against images of the slave trade may be interpreted as a

narrative of resistance, but the focus remains on the positive results of oppression and pain where the oppressor and inflictor of suffering remains unidentified and absent.

Andrelino Campos (2004), in his work titled *Do Quilombo à Favela: A Produção do “Espaço Criminalizado” no Rio de Janeiro* (From the Quilombo to the Favela: The Production of “Criminalized Space” in Rio de Janeiro) connects the history of Afro-Brazilian resistance through creation of autonomous communities as *quilombos*, to the emergence and maintenance of *favelas*. Campos argues that representation of Afro-Brazilian autonomy within academic discourse has been relegated to religious contributions obscuring the autonomy of Afro-Brazilians in all aspects of life, including the political. Campos (2004) analyses the creation of *favelas* as “criminalized space” within Rio de Janeiro while demonstrating “*favelas*” as autonomous communities with histories of resistance against economic and social oppression. The oldest favela in Rio de Janeiro, O Morro da Providência, emerged as newly freed Afro-Brazilians moved into the City of Rio looking for work



Figure 6.7: Morro da Providência, 1920. From the collection of the Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 6.8: Morro da Providência in August 9, 2006. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

(see Figure 6.7). Providência hillside overlooks Gamboa and is within a short walking distance of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos (Figure 6.8). During my research and fieldwork in Rio between 2005 and 2009, Providência was considered by Rio residents to be one of the most dangerous favelas due to illegal drug trafficking. I was advised to be very careful in taking pictures in Gamboa and to never appear to be photographing the hillside lest traffickers think I was documenting activity. Upon my return, the development of the Port District in preparation for the World Cup and the Olympics, many changes had occurred within the City, including a transformation of Morro da Providência. The government had successfully ousted the traffickers and families were being displaced due to rising real estate values and increased rent prices. Media reports indicate families have been evicted in the wake of development.²³⁶ These concerns were echoed by Brazilians visiting the information center at the newly created memorial space in Valongo (see Chapter 6).

How do these public sites and the stories they tell inform residents? Are these sites meaningful? If so, how and why? The next chapters address the relationships between “history,” historic sites, and historical identities.

²³⁶ Bahia, Silvana. 2012. Moradores perdem casas com teleférico em favela do Rio. BBC Brasil, 3 October.; Theresa Williamson and Maurício Hora. 2012. In the Name of the Future, Rio is Destroying its Past. The New York Times, 12 August.

Chapter 7: The Significance of the Richmond African Burial Ground, Gabriel, and the Confederacy to Richmond Residents

Tiamba Wilkerson, a 25 year old African American activist fighting for public recognition of the Richmond African Burial Ground delivered a speech at the annual forum in honor of Gabriel in Richmond Virginia, October of 2005. Her speech continued to inspire my inquiry into the relationships history and identity. I provide an excerpt of her speech below:

As an African American woman born and raised in Richmond, a city that lives and breathes its Confederate history, I found I suffered from a shame felt by many in this city---“slave shame”. When you are not in control of your history---when others have taken it upon themselves to tell your story for their own purposes---rather than becoming empowered by the past, you become afraid of it. So, while the children of our former slaveholders walk down Monument Ave and smile, we walk hurriedly past that parking lot on 15th and Broad covering our eyes. Why? Because the horrors inflicted upon our ancestors are not reflections of the avarice and wickedness of the perpetrators but a reflection of them and, as an extension, of us. What do these things say about us as African people in this country? Are we weak? Did we not resist? Why did this happen to us? How could it happen to us? Are we, in fact, inferior?

Wilkerson’s statements demonstrate the narratives of the past created by whites in the memorialization of the city, how that narrative is read and received by African Americans, and the implications such narratives have for questions of identity that articulate with racist hierarchies. Wilkerson also demonstrates that these questions of self are historically situated and in dialogue with local or regional histories as well as national and international histories. The story of the past is a story about who we are in the present.

Contest emerged over the Burial Ground site when the African descended community sought a self-determined representation of their history through memorializing the Richmond African Burial Ground.

In this chapter I discuss how Richmonders express the significance of Richmond's African Burial Ground and Gabriel's Rebellion. During these conversations, characterizations of the City of Richmond and the State of Virginia as "Confederate" emerged over and over, as an overarching and salient context with which the alternative narratives represented by the Burial Ground and Gabriel are in dialogue. I rely primarily on public meetings, formal, and informal interviews conducted with Richmond residents between 2006 and 2013. Themes that emerge in conversations are: 1) the role of historic narratives and historic places in honoring ancestors, 2) teaching and learning identities through historic narratives 3) historic sites represent connections between local, regional, national and international processes in the past and present 4) and the role of the Burial Ground as an opportunity to maintain or challenge present inequity 5) the role of education in actualizing socio-political action.

I chose to foreground the voices of participants in this research. I move through each person's reflections, with my comments and analysis throughout.

Dieyah Rasheed²³⁷ (2010), a 58 year old African American woman, was born in Richmond and grew up in Henrico county, just outside of Richmond City. She moved to DC for approximately 20 years before returning to live in Richmond. Rasheed had never heard of the Burial Ground as a child or young adult. For Rasheed, the Burial Ground is a place that evokes a sense of being “overwhelmingly sad.” She says she thinks of the enslaved, “how they died..how they were shackled and chained,” and those who died during every segment of the Middle Passage, before they boarded the slave ships, while en route and upon arrival. Rasheed’s voice is heavy with emotion as she speaks of the illnesses and long working days endured by enslaved laborers. However, she also draws strength from these reflections: “I offer prayers to them all the time, for setting an example of being strong and showing that my race can actually make it through whatever...thing you think you can put us through. We can still triumph through all of it.”

When discussing Gabriel, however, Rasheed identifies with Gabriel as an activist and a revolutionary. She says that Gabriel

makes me rejoice, that we actually had someone who was knowledgeable enough to know that he didn’t have to stand for what they dished out. And that he was actually good at organizing. He was a Revolutionary, and so am I...he was good at being an activist, grouping people together, meeting with people. It made me happy to know that someone was not afraid to beat, to fight the system that they had set up, in Richmond, Virginia at the time...he actually organized us to know that, my

²³⁷ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

people, to let them know that this is not what you're supposed to have to put up with...that makes me real excited and happy, you know, that he fought. Yeah, it's a good thing.

Although Rasheed is saddened that Gabriel's plan was thwarted, she places all outcomes in the hands of "the Creator."

The Burial Ground and Gabriel's story are, for Rasheed, part of a long history of African and African American resistance to oppression and the fight for human rights that is ongoing today. In working as an activist to reclaim and preserve the Burial Ground, Rasheed finds most people in Richmond, including young people, completely unaware of the Burial Ground or Gabriel's story. Rasheed feels that because of a lack of knowledge, many people she meets are not interested in activism surrounding the Burial Ground "because they'll say, 'oh that's the past' but, if we made people aware of it and made them proud of the things that's going on now I think they would love it." She says the Burial Ground should be incorporated into what is taught in the school system "it *should* be important and it *would* be important, if we actually taught it or made people aware of it."²³⁸

Rasheed finds Richmond to be "laid back and apathetic" and reluctant to be politically active toward social justice. Alongside political complacency, Rasheed expressed that people are afraid to look at the past. She expressed particular frustration with African American residents of Richmond. She feels

²³⁸ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

that an apathetic approach is due to the fact that “we have a lot of Bougie Bourgeoisie black folks that’s happy that they made it, and don’t care about how they made it.” Her feeling is that for middle class and affluent African Americans “the last thing they’d want to deal with is slavery.” She say’s “it’s just the make-up of a Richmonder, to become laid back and apathetic and settle and think that life is just that easy...especially when they get in a position where, they don’t have to deal with any of that, they don’t want to look at it.”²³⁹ For Rasheed a distancing from “the struggle” includes denying the history of African and African American resistance against oppression; “they don’t realize that they wouldn’t be where they are, or have what they have if it wasn’t for the struggle...people had to fight to get the rights that they have and they totally, all over the state of Virginia, they don’t ...really realize that. I don’t know what’s missing.”²⁴⁰ Rasheed describes a trajectory of resistance against slavery to fighting for equal rights. When speaking of her African Americans family members who have the attitude she described earlier, Rasheed critiques buying into the myth of American meritocracy, “you know you got that because I was out there beating my butt on the pavement, getting spit at, being cursed at, and everything else. Do you think you really got where you got because you deserved it?...you don’t want to be a part of anything, but if it wasn’t for people like me and the people I work with, you

²³⁹ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

wouldn't have anything."²⁴¹ She says that Martin Luther King Jr.'s memory as an activist who "fought for the rights of the people" has even been muted by focusing on him as a spiritual leader.

Rasheed's critique is not solely for middle-class and affluent community members. She finds in her experience, across Richmond's socio-economic spectrum and even throughout the state of Virginia that people are "ignorant to the fact that they have to fight for their rights to get what they want." In speaking of her door-to-door experiences in Richmond's lower class neighborhoods where she says people are also reluctant to "come out and fight" she speculates on what has happened, what social processes have caused the mentality that she sees:

I don't know what happened in the transition...from being a slave to being a free black man, that the white man put in their mind that they still weren't free and they still couldn't fight and they still had to be afraid of them. I don't know what it is that they put into the mindsets of the black Americans in Richmond, but they did a terrible job. You know, an awesome job to them...but a terrible job as far as trying to still continue to keep the struggle on for their rights.²⁴²

The Burial Ground and the history of resistance that is embodied by the Burial Ground, past and present are central to Rasheed's vision for change and equal rights. Raising awareness about the Burial Ground's history and contemporary treatment will help to create the pertinent connections between

²⁴¹ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

²⁴² Ibid.

past and present for Richmonders. I see in Rasheed's comments a desire to convey the pride that she has in the history of resistance that she knows. She feels that if people were made aware and made proud "they would love it."²⁴³ She says it would have "meant a hell of a lot to me" to have learned at a young age about Gabriel and the Burial Ground.²⁴⁴ She says, "I think it would have been important to know as a young person a little more about my history." She has a long history of activism (see discussion in Chapter 7) but says, "I think if I would have even known more about my history that I would have been even stronger than I was."²⁴⁵

Rasheed sees that the history of the Burial Ground is part of the local and national history. However, she expects that if the site is memorialized and developed as a place of learning, African Americans who are descended from slaves would visit from across the nation because interest in the broader history of "where their ancestors went to" and "being informed about exactly what happened to their people once they were taken from Africa." She also expects people would be drawn to learn more about their genealogy and to learn about all of the sites on the Richmond Trail of Enslaved Africans and the history of Shockoe Bottom.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

Rasheed characterizes Virginia as “a Confederate state” and believes the majority of people in Virginia may not support the efforts to memorialize the Burial Ground. However, she sees the site as an integral part of the state and nation's history and that there should be no tourism that promotes historic sites, such as Confederate sites without including sites related to the history of slavery. She says, “it should be a packaged deal” because “we were the servants...the ones who do the building, do the cooking, do everything....we were the ones who helped build America.” The Burial Ground honors these founders and is one site among many in Shockoe Bottom that speak to these histories.

Rolandah Cleopatrah²⁴⁷ is a 50 year old African American woman who was born in Richmond but her family left when she was 3 years old to live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Cleopatrah received her primary and college education in Philadelphia (see discussion in Chapter 7). She returned to live in Richmond circa 1996. The local significance of the Burial Ground and its connection with Gabriel's Rebellion to Cleopatrah lies primarily with the need for awareness building among Richmonders. Having been educated primarily in the North, Cleopatrah says she was given a foundational knowledge of African American history and key African American historical figures as role

²⁴⁷ Cleopatrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

models. In Richmond, she sees a lack of this education and knowledge, which she believes to result in less social activism among all Richmonders and particularly African Americans. Cleopatrah says

to me, from dealing with the Community, a lot of people who have lived here, born and raised here, aren't even aware, you know. And that's with any nationality, it doesn't necessarily mean it's just the black people. You would think that they'd be more informed, because we were the ones who were effected by it, but it - it just, appalls me how many people just don't know, even with all the things that [the Defenders] have done...there's still so many people who are not aware of the Burial Ground.²⁴⁸

She says, Richmond as a City has an opportunity to change this level of awareness and to begin creating a better future. By making the Burial Ground more visible on the Richmond landscape, she feels more information and more awareness would help the City of Richmond officials "show the people that they're...interested and more involved and not just one type of history, but all history that happened here in Virginia." She sees Richmond as integral to the Virginia's history and Virginia's history as integral to the Nation's history, "America kind of started here."²⁴⁹

Awareness of the Burial Ground "would help us to, to understand who we are and what, what happened there...it's *important* for, especially for the black community, to realize...that...is part of our history" and that this history encompasses "not just modern history, but history...that takes us all the way

²⁴⁸ Cleopatrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

back to our very existence, and it's...it has to do with our *identity*. A lot of us cannot get things done on a personal basis because we don't know who we are."²⁵⁰ Learning one's personal heritage and history is central to having a healthy sense of self and a productive life. Cleopatrah has worked to build community discussions which focus on reparations, but also on what she sees as a need to repair African American identities.

The Slave Trail in its entirety, but the Burial Ground in particular is important "because of the significance of - life and death happened there." More awareness of the Burial Ground "would help the black community start to understand who they are, and then to be able to move forward, because, right now, as a people, we're stagnated...because of that one thing, that one thing, slavery." She says this stagnation is not limited to the experiences of the black community in Richmond, but "all over the planet earth." Telling the story of what happened at the Burial Ground prompts the question, "well, if that's the end, what happened with the beginning? So for me, that's *very* significant, and..the identity part is, is where it really lies." She sees the Burial Ground as equally significant on local state and national levels. "It's very important to know what happened there and to honor it so that people, not only hear...local[ly] , but nationally" in order to "understand and know that this

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

is where [America] all began...and why it came about...It's not worth anything if we don't do better."²⁵¹

Cleopatrah views slavery as the origin of social divisions in the United States that continued after slavery ended through racist legislation that oppressed black people and “even leads up to today, to the modern day.” “What slavery did is...separate us all.” She sees the reason that, “we don't have any peace or good relationships” as being “because we have never faced it, you know, as a people. As a nation. We've never faced it...we don't talk about it.” She says that where there is discussion, there are such strong emotions that “we don't seem to be able to get what we really need...what we really were working toward is really understanding and peace, and relationships.” Working on awareness of the Burial Ground, for Cleopatrah, will strengthen the black community, but by “facing” the history of slavery, will begin to heal racial separation and conflict.²⁵²

Cleopatrah views the contest over the Burial Ground as articulating with global struggles against inequity, systemic oppression and labor exploitation. Cleopatrah saw the Occupancy Movement as reflective of more Americans experiencing and recognizing the exploitative nature of Capitalism. She ponders, “so, you have to taste a piece of oppression in order for you to

²⁵¹ Cleopatrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁵² Ibid.

understand it? I don't know, but that's what it looks like is happening." She said that now "Caucasians are realizing" that wealth and power are held by a small elite group and that disparity is detrimental to them as well. "They are starting to see what...my people have seen, or have been going through all our lives, especially here in America." The reality of American meritocracy as myth is becoming more evident, "more people are realizing now that we don't have real freedom, justice, and equality as is written on the paper."²⁵³

Cleopatrah's vision for the connections between the past of slavery and exploitation of labor is broad. She sees these exploitative relationships existing on a global level and in her own life. The American Dream is not attainable, following a generalized formula that requires privilege.

Cleopatrah says, "I'm 50 years old and I'm just really realizing...what happened. And now...I'm still...in a place, and it's not because I'm not trying hard. I've gone to school, did all of the right things that I was supposed to do, but I'm still in a stage where I'm trying to get out of a hole, and it's mostly because things aren't made up for everybody to succeed." Cleopatrah is hopeful that the Occupy Movement will show the governments of the world that "they have the force, but the people have the power, which is a good thing."²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Cleopatrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

While Cleopattrah recognizes the Burial Ground as Sacred Ground, she recognizes the disrespect European Americans have shown the Burial Ground and those interred. She describes the Burial Ground as not “just a *regular* burial ground, where family placed you there, we all knew you were there. It was almost like a, a dumpster for people that, you didn’t want to be bothered with. And the arrogance...that was going on at the time, and the laws that were made, which would back up that arrogance, just made it all the worse.” She sees her activism around raising awareness of the Burial Ground as an opportunity to interrogate the history represented by that site, “and go back and fix it for the future. Because our children deserve a better world. They deserve to be able to come into life and use their talents to help expand life, make it better, not to be fighting....Freedom, justice, and equality that was given to us by the Creator and others take it from us. We can’t allow that to happen.”²⁵⁵

Cleopattrah speaks to her neighbors and members of her community who constantly tell her how much they appreciate the activism surrounding the Burial Ground. She says “a lot of people appreciate the work that we do with the Burial Ground, and the information we’re trying to bring to the community... And I’m telling you, the ancestors that are there...They are pleased, they are very pleased with our work.” She says that the evidence of this is in the fact that the City is “slowly but surely” complying with the

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

demands of the Community she credits the Ancestors with this change, “they’re making it happen.”²⁵⁶

Cleopattrah is in contact with community members “on all sides of the City” and says that “everyday I talk about the Burial Ground or something to do with relationships with the black community...it’s a daily thing for me. It has been for a long time.” She says she is approached “almost every day” by someone who thanks her for standing up and being arrested and she says “we didn’t do that to be recognized individually, or as a group....We did that to make...awareness.” She says that many people she knows are not in a position where they can come out to protest, many times because they cannot take off from work, “everybody’s got to do their 9-5 and take care of the family, which comes first...they don’t always have time to come out and...protest...but they do back us up.” She says that “most of the community” is fully supportive of the activism efforts to preserve and memorialize the Burial Ground. Those who are not supportive tend to be young people who say, “why don’t you just let it be?” Cleopattrah says her response is, “I give them homework.” She says she gives them information and assignments to look up and tells the young people to report back to her.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Cleopattrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁵⁷ Cleopattrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

Cleopatrah shared one of her favorite experiences: “I was in the laundromat, and a little boy, about 12 years old saw me and he said, ‘Hey, aren’t you one of those people who were at the Burial Ground?’ And he said, ‘what was that about?’ And chills just went all over my body, and I was like, wow...that means that the youth are watching and listening.” She gave the boy two copies of the Defender newspaper that had an article on the Burial Ground written by Phil Wilayto, one for him and one for his mother, and explained why she chose to protest and be arrested. The youth and the coming generations are key to Cleopatrah’s motivation for activism.

Cleopatrah said that, the Burial Ground “on a personal level,...it means family. It means respect for my elders. It means learning and, growing. It means rejoice. It means all these things at one time...Because from that, I have to learn who I am and what I am and what I should be doing. And every time I ride by, walk by, that’s what I think of - family.” Cleopatrah attended the 2011 Ancestor Day held at the Burial Ground and she described how everyone was “gathered around...posts that they put red, black, and green ribbons on there, and people in their family that were positive, they had pictures...on the post, and they had candles, and incense burning, it was real nice.” This provided her the opportunity to talk about her grandmother, who her “affirmation came from, from just being a family person. How she was, you know, the backbone of *my* family.” She sees her family oriented

approach to living as coming from her grandmother. “And I was telling them that we need to make sure that we talk to the people in our family. Because, you know, all the things that we do with the Burial Ground...we’ve got to make sure that we talk to our personal family as well.” She says that if you aren’t working on your own personal family, “how can you do things in the community?” By the end of the program, she said that folks were “laughing and smiling” and ended their time at the Burial Ground with “a rotation around the post and we were singing and dancing” in homage to the ways of their Ancestors.²⁵⁸

The Burial Ground is a space for Ancestral remembrance for Cleopattrah. “I think it’s important to try to connect with the people and feel what they felt so that we don’t have to experience that again and to honor those who were there - who are there. Because they were never honored for the people who they really are, and really were. And to help us to get that information we need for healing.” She says that “the Burial Ground, to me, and the Ancestor Day is...something we have to have so that we keep awareness and...keep respect going, and keep the government on their toes...to respect the people and to change the laws to work for the people, not against the people.” She sees herself as an “agitator” and likens her role as an activist to the role of an

²⁵⁸ Cleopattrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

agitator in a washing machine, “the agitator is the thing that washes the clothes, right? So, obviously we’re cleaning up something.” She says:

some people make people like us, what they call protesters or agitators...like we’re troublemakers. But of course we’d be troublemakers if your not trying to stand with freedom, justice, and equality. ‘Cause, yeah. There’s some trouble when it’s not equal. So, call us what you want, ‘protestor,’ ‘agitator,’ or what the Mayor called us, ‘positive agitators,’...it’s a good thing, it’s not a bad thing.²⁵⁹

For Cleopattrah, the most important recognition she received for being arrested came from her family members: her son, her daughter and her extended family. Her mother, who rarely voices praise, put the articles on Cleopattrah’s arrest in her photo album.

Cleopattrah’s shared conversations with young people about the Burial Ground and the relationship between the history of slavery and present conditions experienced by the African American Community. One young man said, “Well, we just need to...just let it be. Slavery is over...you can’t get mad because somebody makes money and you don’t make money, or you don’t have a job.” She said a man who was about her age was present and told the young man that “things are the way they are, not by chance” and told the young man to look up “the Black Code laws and the Jim Crow laws that they made, right after slavery.” Cleopattrah says that there is a misconception that “they freed you, you were freed, you do what you want to do, but a lot of

²⁵⁹ Cleopattrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

people ended up going right back to the plantations in which they were held captive. Because the way that they set it up” referring to newly emancipated African Americans being given no land or resources to begin independent lives, “they didn’t give you your own.” She sees this as stealing from the African American people who were newly emancipated. Furthermore, she says African Americans have been kept “in a captive state of mind” coupled with oppression through “laws and regulations” that codify racism, “even to this day.” There is a legacy of loss in terms of material growth and independence and in the rupture between African descendants in the Americas and their continental relatives and ancestors: “you even have my own people from the Motherland, we don’t even get along. We have different thoughts on each other.”²⁶⁰ Cleopattrah likened this relationship to having distant cousins, where you don’t see each other often, but you know you are welcome in their house because you are family. She sees the experiences of colonization and slavery as having destroyed that relationship between Africans and African Americans.

She says, “it’s like nothing’s really changed. And that’s because you still have us captive...we’re a nation within a nation, whose never had a chance to branch out, away from the people who put them in oppression and suppressed them. We have never had a chance to meet back up with our

²⁶⁰ Cleopattrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

family, and have our own land. See, that's where our identity crisis comes in there." Cleopattrah says, "even though I'm a black woman born here in America, I still have no place here that I can say, well this is the area where the black community comes together, and reflects their heritage. I don't have an area. I don't have an area to say that." She says that she tries to "teach the young people that this has been a structural thing that has happened to us. It's not by chance, it's by structure" created "by those who want to be the superseding people or the superpower."²⁶¹ For Cleopattrah, the Burial Ground is a place of reclaiming ancestral space, history, heritage and identity.

Matthew Freeman,²⁶² a European American man who is actively involved in social justice work and racial reconciliation in Richmond, Virginia (see discussions in Chapters 5 and 9), learned about the Burial Ground by attending the 2004 annual Gabriel Forum hosted by the Defenders, where the historical marker was unveiled (see Chapter 7). Freeman describes the procession to the Burial Ground and the libations ceremony performed by Janine Bell as "really powerful." Reflecting on learning of the site, he says, "I thought it was, shameful, and not surprising that the [Burial Ground] had not been preserved. I found it shocking, I think, that it had been that long undiscovered or...forgotten." The "forgotten" Burial Ground stands in contrast to the visibility of Confederate history:

²⁶¹ Cleopattrah, Rolandah. Interview, December 12, 2012. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁶² Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

I think the comparison between the way we treated Confederate history and the way we've treated - and cemeteries particularly, and the way we treated this burial ground..just really, I think it was a powerful symbol of the way Richmond has dealt with its history.²⁶³

Freeman sees the Burial Ground is significant for everyone who lives in Richmond. For African Americans who are direct descendants and for those who are not, Freeman says the Burial Ground is significant “in terms of being a place where ancestors are buried.” For “white folks in Richmond” including himself and “others who are not descendants of slaves, whether they are African Americans, or Hispanic, or whatever,” he says:

I still think that we are one community and from my Christian roots ‘when one person weeps, everybody weeps, when one person’s happy, everybody’s happy’..This is a site where people who had died amidst of one of the greatest tragedies of American history are...buried. Then that’s a place that everybody should know about and should be able to come to , and mourn for the tragedies of our past and, you know, hope, pray, think about a better future.²⁶⁴

As such a “powerful symbol,” Freeman feels that Richmond “should tell the history of how it was paved over with [Interstate] 95 and a parking lot, and recognize that we’ve buried and paved over a lot of our history because we haven’t known how to deal with it...” The contemporary context of the Burial Ground’s “rediscovery” after being hidden, must also be told. Freeman says, Richmond needs to “use even that part of the story to say...we need to figure

²⁶³ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States..

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

out how to better deal with ugly parts of our history in our community, instead of just paving over them and pretending that they're not there.”²⁶⁵

Nationally, Freeman says, the Burial Ground offers an opportunity for Richmond to “become a model of a city that tries to figure out how we’re going to deal with a painful history.” He feels that, “America, in my experience, has not done very well at...embracing multiple narratives...we don’t deal very well with our own faults and failures. We don’t wrap that very successfully into a narrative, because somehow it undermines anything positive that we say.” However, Freeman feels that if Richmond were to “acknowledge, meaningfully, a really painful part of our history, and still be working towards making a better place and proud of who we are becoming, then that could be a really powerful national model.” Throughout the nation, Freeman sees that “every state and every city has its dark secrets” that are not being engaged “well.” To “deal with it well” means, for Freeman that the Burial Ground is memorialized and made into “a place of remembrance and healing.”²⁶⁶

Freeman was involved with the Reconciliation Statue Project (see Chapter 5) as a former staff of Hope in the Cities. For him, “the story of slavery, the more I learned about it, is an international story. It does touch all parts of the world.

²⁶⁵ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

For this reason, “the story of slavery and the significance of the sites...have very international significance.” Speaking to one of the representatives from Benin who visited Richmond for the unveiling events, Freeman learned that there are deep divisions in Benin between the ethnic groups whose ancestors were involved with the selling of human captives and those who were not. “So, it’s not just a Richmond problem, it’s not just an American story, you know, it affected Europe, it affected Africa, it affected North and South America.”²⁶⁷ The Richmond Burial Ground, for Freeman, is part of this international story.

Freeman doesn’t remember learning about Gabriel in high school, though he says he was particularly apathetic in his U.S. History class because he remembers his history teacher as a very bad teacher who used football play diagrams with stick figures to map out military histories. His sense was that teaching allowed the man to coach but that he was not overly invested in teaching. However, when he learned of Gabriel’s Rebellion as an adult, he said that Gabriel’s story resonated with him, personally, because of his work as an activist:

the incredible feat of community organizing that was involved. For someone who is, enslaved...to go out and motivate others to risk death in order to, you know, try to overthrow the slaveocracy. That, to me, is just remarkable, when I look at how

²⁶⁷ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

difficult it is to do community organizing...to me, that has a motivating story, and a powerful story.²⁶⁸

Freeman sees Gabriel as having the qualities of a national hero, whose story has international application in demonstrating “the power of the human spirit and the human will to overcome odds to, you know, create change. And I think that’s where it resonates, seems to resonate with people.”

Tiffany Jana²⁶⁹ is a 33 year old African American woman, who was born in El Paso, Texas into a military household and moved to Richmond when she was a teenager after living in Texas, Germany, and New York during her childhood years. Jana says that the Burial Ground is significant to her because “Richmond is the Capitol of the Confederacy, and it speaks to the sort of disregard for...African American slave history. If it were...widely known, or widely speculated that it were...Edgar Allen Poe’s stepsister’s cousin’s nephew’s burial ground, it would be this really huge deal.” Jana feels this disregard is particularly strong in Richmond; “we know it’s true, we know it happened but no one really knows how to deal with it, so we just don’t want to acknowledge or talk about it.” She feels that “Richmond, because of it’s legacy” could “lead the way on how to get to the other side of it.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Jana, Tiffany. Interview June 25, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

While Jana feels no blame can be placed and that “harping on it’s not going to make a difference” Jana sees that “it’s about acknowledging pain, acknowledging history, moving forward in a good way...dealing with it in a good way.” Doing so, would provide “a very clear statement that we, that...Richmond, and that certain people are not ill-intentioned.” For Jana, moving forward in a “good way” means the City and State bear their a responsibility to conduct research in order to determine if remains exist beneath the parking lot. The treatment of the Burial Ground is, for Jana, “just one more reminder that Richmond doesn’t care...it’s not surprising.” However, she says, “we have to choose a side...we can’t be subtle about it.” Jana was vaguely familiar with the story of Gabriel, and did not know that Gabriel had been executed on the Burial Ground site. She said, “Wow, that changes everything...that makes it so much worse, because for Richmond to ignore the Burial Ground is to say that what Gabriel did was bad, when it was good.” By demonstrating that Richmond, as a City and Virginia as a state, is committed to engaging the history of slavery, Jana feels the City can move forward. Otherwise, she says, “if we’re going to go ahead and continue to...mentally and emotionally, you know, enslave people and...hold on to that particular part of our legacy, then fine...then do that, but don’t expect to be respected....Richmond is 10 years behind the rest of the civilized world...we could be, Richmond could be an amazing, amazing, amazing place, and it is that issue that’s holding Richmond back.”²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Jana, Tiffany. Interview June 25, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

As expressed by Cleopatra, Jana sees the history of slavery and the attendant legacies of racism and oppression as bounded by the South. Jana sees Richmond as stuck in the past and lagging in its place within “civilization.” The treatment of the history of slavery is “holding Richmond back” and is representative of broader systemic racial attitudes held by city and state officials. Characterizations of the South as “associated with redneck culture” also emerge in conversations with Richmond advocates for Confederate history (see Chapter 9). Contest over the Burial Ground brings the factions of Richmond into focus. Jana goes further to say, “if people really, truly feel like black people should still be considered inferior...then Richmond will never go anywhere, because the legacy of *those* people who died will not allow it.”²⁷² For Jana, Richmond is a bittersweet home:

I love Richmond, my kids were...born here...I've built my businesses here, I have a great house here, fallen in love here, but when I drive away from the City...something lifts off of my soul and I feel so much better. It doesn't matter what direction I go, except South, I don't go South. Don't like going further South than Richmond, because it ain't pretty. But when I go North, oh my god, it feels amazing., and as I approach the City limits, it come right back. And I wish I could pretend that it really wasn't there, but it is....I've talked to other black people who feel that way...it's heavy, it is so heavy.²⁷³

²⁷² Jana uses “we” to refer to a normative, dominant perspective that she juxtaposes with the African American perspective. She also speaks of “people” in the normative sense of unmarked whiteness and marks discussions of African Americans.

²⁷³ Jana, Tiffany. Interview June 25, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

The Burial Ground is a moment of choice for Richmond to move forward, or not. This extends to the way Jana has experienced negative characterizations of the U.S. during her international travels. Jana expressed embarrassment at the perception of the United States under the Bush administration. Jana sees the Burial Ground conflict reflecting a larger national trend of not engaging with the history of slavery in the U.S. She says the United States as “running around, liberating the rest of the world...and we don’t know how to deal with this issue? I mean we need to pay attention...look at...the poverty line and the disparities that exist as a direct result of this thing.”²⁷⁴

Charity Pierce,²⁷⁵ a 22 year old African American woman and VCU undergraduate student at the time of her interview, had been involved in several activist efforts to demand the Burial Ground cease being used as a parking lot and be created as a memorial space. Pierce served as president of the Africana student organization who led the “die in” protest on VCU’s campus (see Chapter 1), as well as creating and distributing petitions addressed to the president of VCU. For Pierce, the significance of the Burial Ground’s history lies in honoring the contributions of those who came before her as community ancestors, carrying on a legacy of resistance against

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Pierce, Charity. Interview, September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

oppression and seeing the mistreatment of their graves as a continuation of that oppression.

Pierce says that on a personal level, “the number one concern I have about the Burial Ground is the concept of...honoring ancestors. If we don’t honor our ancestors and what they’ve done for us, then, how can we continue our legacy as a black people?” Pierce feels that showing honor would mean:

us taking the history that they left behind for us and continuing the resistance that they fought - the resistance that they used...rebellng against slavery...taking the lessons that we learned from them...about resistance, about family structure, about community, about honoring our culture, cultural expression, that’s how, that’s how you can honor your ancestors, in taking those lessons to further benefit the black community.²⁷⁶

Pierce sees her role as an activist for the Burial Ground as “my rites of passage into my womanhood...not only...would it affect me personally, now, but it will affect the legacy that I have for my family, for my children.” Pierce speaks of the Burial Ground’s meaning to the state and nation in terms of the influence that community activism to preserve and memorialize the site will have on these levels. She says, “This is the state of the Confederacy.” In “the City alone you can see Confederate statues everywhere.” This is the landscape within which she sees her fight for human rights taking place and, similar to Cleopatra and Jana, Pierce sees the Burial Ground as a moment for change to occur and the local and state levels:

²⁷⁶ Pierce, Charity. Interview, September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.
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So for us to battle with an institution, that in a sense, I believe, supports the Confederacy by putting a parking lot there. If we, if the community, the community in all, not just saying black people, because this is a humanitarian effort...looking at this from a human perspective, parking over someone's burial site? That's...an atrocity...if the community in all shows that this is wrong, the state of Virginia and the City of Richmond? It's going to have a large effect.²⁷⁷

Regarding the activism surrounding the Burial Ground, Pierce is not sure if the struggle over the Burial Ground will get enough publicity to have a national effect. The history represented by the Burial Ground, however, "is a national history" because of Richmond's role in the trade in human captives. "Nationally, the history itself holds tremendous weight. And the fact that it is covered today, as the Confederate state, shows even more the face of the enemy we are really fighting against, which is not necessarily oppression...of white people by itself, it's just money. People come to this state because there's a lot of money for tourism for the Confederacy, for the Hollywood Cemetery, for all of this history from the Confederacy."²⁷⁸

For Pierce the 2009 paving over of the Burial Ground demonstrates a continuation of Confederate ideals in Virginia. "There is a parking lot, we have this parking lot over your ancestors, but where this dude fought in a battle to keep them in slavery, it has, like, roses and big..statues

²⁷⁷ Pierce, Charity. Interview, September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

and...everything on it. But they put a parking lot over my great, great, grandma?" ..."that's where my money is going to? My tax money?"²⁷⁹

Pierce expresses frustration with her student peers who do not actively work to combat the racism demonstrated by the treatment of the Burial Ground. In conversations, she relays that student's might say, "Man, that's really messed up, Somebody should do something about it" but do not becoming personally involved. She is particularly frustrated with African American students, expressing similar observations to Rashid, where she sees complacency and priority placed on material luxury items that is accompanied by an absence of desire to engage in social activism. She says:

How can you sit there and look at that? How can you sit there and really see that? Now they might not be your great, great grandmother or anything like that. You might not have any relation to any of the people there in the Burial Ground, but the fact *is*, is that - they look like you...they might not be related to me but by culture we're related, we have a connection. Why would you allow somebody to put a parking lot over your people? Which just, in essence, like, perpetuates racism, period. And you're okay with that?²⁸⁰

Gabriel figured into Charity's discussion of resistance, but for Pierce, Gabriel was working on behalf of his community, fighting an institution that oppressed himself and his fellow enslaved African Americans. She says that though she cannot speak for Gabriel, she wonders if he would want to be singled out in being honored. "I don't know...if Gabriel would want his mission to be

²⁷⁹ Pierce, Charity. Interview, September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

separated from the history of the black community. I want to honor both of them, collectively, and not separately.” Pierce sees Gabriel’s Rebellion as building on a long history of resistance movements, large and small. “If I’m honoring the Burial Ground, I *have* to honor Gabriel. If I’m honoring Gabriel, I *have* to honor the Burial Ground.”²⁸¹

Pierce speaks to honoring the silenced histories of African and African American resistance to slavery, a history that is both painful and beautiful for her:

I see a lot of the history of the...enslaved African, as always being a struggle, as always being, a history of murder and viscousness and, you know, submission of the black people, but there was so much resistance...And not a lot of times do we...expound on that history of resistance. So, yeah, it is painful to know how Gabriel Prosser was executed. It is painful to know how mothers and children were raped and killed. It is painful to know how my, how the black brothers were...killed and hung and shot, taken as slaves...It is painful to know that. But, it’s also beneficial to know that before they died, many slaves showed resistance. [Discusses resistance in the form of widespread work strikes on plantations]. Even though it’s painful to know that that’s their life, it’s beautiful to know that they died resisting. They died actively knowing that ‘we will not be submissive.’...It’s beautiful and it’s painful at the same time.

Zainab Kamarah,²⁸² a 22 years old woman who was born in Sierra Leone and grew up in Raleigh North Carolina and Richmond, Virginia. Kamarah has been living in Richmond since she 12 years old and was a VCU

²⁸¹ Pierce, Charity. Interview, September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁸² Zainab, Kamarah. Interview September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

undergraduate and member of the Africana student association at the time of the interview. Kamarah joined Pierce for her interview and asked to participate, specifically wanting to respond to my question regarding the significance of the Burial Ground on local, state, nation and international levels. Kamarah, like Pierce focused on the influence the current community activism to reclaim and memorialize the site might have on communities at these levels. She said that students have the power to have much more influence than they are aware of:

we might not realize the impact that we *can* have. The results won't be seen tomorrow or next year, or maybe even in five years, but *somebody* is going to know at some point about a group of students who told VCU it's...disrespectful to put a parking lot over the tangible history of a people who are often forgotten.²⁸³

While the students did not get the media coverage they wanted in order to raise awareness of VCU's use of the Burial Ground as a parking lot, she is hopeful that the work of Africana students will bring positive change for future generations. She says, "I feel like in twenty years or in thirty years and we send our kids to college, this will be documented that we *did* try, we *did* say, we did point out how much of a social injustice this is...."²⁸⁴

To make the level of disrespect clear, Kamarah says that "No one would want someone to go to the West End and mow over the Presbyterian cemetery

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Zainab, Kamarah. Interview September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

there, so it's an issue of respect." Kamarah emphasizes how relatively little is being asked of VCU and the state of Virginia compared to all that was created at the cost of the lives and labor of enslaved Africans and African Americans:

We're not asking for reparations...but just, in death, to remember the people who lay there so that we can be at the school up the street. We weren't *able* to be at this school until a few years ago...black people weren't able to. It was *difficult* to get an education. And they worked and built this city and laid the foundation for the MCV [Medical College of Virginia] hospital and the Monroe Park Campus so that we are now enrolled, we are now students of this University and they're *not* giving us the opportunity to honor those people. Because there's nothing else we can do for them, they're dead. But, we can recognize their important work, their pivotal work, their foundational work, for us.²⁸⁵

Kamarah sees the Burial Ground as nationally significant because it

"contributes to the conversation of black history and the history of slavery. I think...we don't discuss race in a very candid way, unless you have to."

Kamarah sees the nation as having been forced to look at race in the wake of Barak Obama's election as the first African American president. However, she says, "it's still not an honest conversation...we will not be honest about it."

So, for her, the contest over the Burial Ground:

just adds to the larger conversation that, black and white people live separately, economically and socially - probably because of slavery, you know, ...slavery affected everyone, I think, in a bad way...by that I mean it separated us as a people. Because we are all human beings but it separated us as a people. So, whatever white friend I could have had, I won't, because black and white cultures have a very deep distinction. We don't live together, we don't worship together, we barely work together.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

So, I just think this, this burial site influences that conversation.²⁸⁶

The specific link that the Burial Ground has to these broader conversations is in the compartmentalization of the history of the Burial Ground as “black history.” She says, “it’s not just black history though, this is Richmond’s history, this is Virginia’s history, this is American history. Those were...for all intensive purposes, Americans buried there. They laid the groundwork for what we call American civilization. So, I think it adds to the conversation.”²⁸⁷

Kamariah agrees with Pierce’s description of Richmond and Virginia as “having a very strong Confederate history” that is “confounded by” the history of slavery. She says, “You know, you can’t examine one without the other. They were, I guess, two sides of the same coin...the Confederacy was fought so hard for, to keep slavery as it was, to keep the business, to keep things as business as usual.” It is “really disheartening,” Kamariah says, “for Virginia to be so ignorant as to be proud of the Confederacy, and neglect what the Confederacy meant for black people.” She follows this by saying, “I don’t think that any white person should be ashamed of their history, whether your grandfather was a slave owner or not, I don’t think you should be ashamed because that was the culture of the day, but I also don’t think you should deny, you know, the maliciousness that was also practiced then.” Kamariah’s

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

comments reflect comments made by white participants (see Chapter 9) who characterize “the culture of that time” according to white proslavery perspectives. However, while white participants speak to not feeling the need to apologize for slavery or criticize a retrospective imposition of contemporary moral standards, Kamarah proposes that the white proslavery “culture” can be acknowledged without having to avoid or silence the atrocities that those who shared this culture perpetrated and permitted. Also in contrast with European American participants who spoke to this issue, Kamarah recognizes that the white proslavery perspective is not the sole perspective and does not use unmarked normative universal statements that, “everybody” felt this way.²⁸⁸

The fundamental human right to honor one’s dead was expressed throughout the dialogues, but was particularly salient within interviews with African American residents. One participant in a community action organizing meeting regarding the Burial Ground envisioned the Burial Ground serving as a monument, similar to Ellis Island where “people could come and say that their relatives came through.”²⁸⁹ The symbolic disavowal of African American humanity in the past and contemporary treatments of the Burial Ground was implied as well. During a protest of VCU’s repaving of the parking lot over the Burial Ground site, King Salim Khalfani, Executive Director of the Virginia

²⁸⁸ Zainab, Kamarah. Interview September 24, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

²⁸⁹ Anonymous participant comment. Richmond Committee to Reclaim Black History and Antiquities meeting, October 23, 2008. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

State NAACP overtly made this connection by stating, "if we are still in a position of being less than human, no wonder we are in a position where our sacred burial grounds are being paved over....No wonder VCU does not mind desecrating our Sacred Ground."²⁹⁰

While the history of slavery is expressed by several residents as a divisive and looming presence in Richmond, it is a shadowy presence that is also described as an avoided subject. A desire to interrogate this history on a local and national level was expressed. The Burial Ground was seen as a moment and space within which to do this (Cleopatrah, Pierce, Kamarah, Freeman, Jana), toward healing social divides. Furthermore, telling a self-determined African American narrative of this past, is seen as a means toward healing racial divisions (Cleopatrah, Pierce, Kamarah, Jana).

²⁹⁰ Khalfani, Salim. Comments during August 4, 2009 Press Conference and protest at the Richmond African Burial Ground in response to VCU repaving the parking lot for continued use. Transcription by Autumn Barrett. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

Chapter 8: The Significance of Historical Representations of Slavery to Residents of Rio de Janeiro.

Interviews and informal conversations that I shared with residents of Rio de Janeiro in 2006, during my predissertation research, helped me shape questions related to historic representations of slavery and resistance and their connections to identity. While I found that some Rio residents didn't understand why I would study about representations of slavery in Rio de Janeiro rather than Bahia, or said that if I wanted to study Afro-Brazilian culture I needed to study in the *favelas*, my research questions resonated with several residents with whom I spoke. Indeed, all of these early conversations informed and guided my research design.

A young Afro-Brazilian man learning English from my Portuguese instructor listened as I described what I thought I was seeing in terms of the scant public representation of the history of slavery in Rio and, where the history of slavery was told, the history of African and Afro-Brazilian resistance was absent. He said that these are issues that he and his family discussed frequently and he was very supportive of my research. Marcelo Monteiro²⁹¹, an Afro-Brazilian rights activist said that he felt my research was "very important" because, despite his accomplishments, he said that "as a black man, it is difficult" and he expressed frustration by his experience of "being

²⁹¹ Monteiro, Marcelo. Interview, August 3, 2006. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.
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subjugated” and hoped that my research would help “raise the self-esteem” of Afro-Brazilians. For him, the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos tells the story of “Rio’s Holocaust.”²⁹² One upper-middle white class woman living in Flamengo said she felt my research was needed because she remembered as a child, her mother told her to stay out of the kitchen because this was “slave’s work,” which was being fulfilled by Afro-Brazilian servants within her home. Although her mother was clear to teach her identity in juxtaposition with a “slave” identity that was equated with blackness, she also discussed that she saw signs of possible racial mixture in her children, mentioning curly hair in one of her daughters. I continued to move forward with the hypothesis that the history of slavery informs many aspects of daily life in Rio de Janeiro sought to learn answers to the following questions: Are representations of history, particularly representations and sites related to the history of slavery, African and Afro-Brazilian resistance to slavery meaningful in the daily lives of residents in Rio de Janeiro? How is the past articulated and/or disarticulated from the present?

Antonio Carlos Rodrigues²⁹³ comes from a family of Afro-Brazilian activists and has spent his life working for Afro-Brazilian rights as a member of the

²⁹² Muello, Peter. Associated Press Writer. Rio Backyard Once Served as Dumping Ground for Slaves. Los Angeles Times. February 19, 2006. <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/feb/19/news/adfg-slaves19>

²⁹³ Rodrigues, Antonio Carlos. Informal interviews in July and August 2006. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

movimento negro. Antonio Carlos joined the efforts of Mercedes and Petrúcio Guimarães to raise awareness and preserve the history of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos in 2001²⁹⁴ by creating and developing the Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos (IPN) where he volunteered as the Director of Research until 2007. After my initial visit to the IPN, I contacted Mercedes upon my return to Rio de Janeiro later in 2006, and she made an appointment for me to meet with Antonio Carlos, who began to introduce me further to the history of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the IPN and provided a walking tours of the Zona Portuaria (Port Zone), which included telling me the history of the Valongo slave markets and showing me their original sites (see Chapter 2).

As Allen (2001) notes, Zumbi is salient to Americans from the U.S. as an historic figure of Brazil. This may be why the banner to Zumbi hanging in the IPN immediately stood out to me. However, in conversations with Antonio Carlos, he links the struggle for social justice fought for by Zumbi to the ongoing fight for equality and social justice by African descendants in Brazil. The covering up of Rio de Janeiro's role history of the slave trade, community efforts to uncover this history through the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos to make the history of slavery in Rio visible and make these connections apparent, and the historical connection between past and present inequity is

²⁹⁴ Rodrigues, Antonio Carlos. Interview, January 27, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

all part of a trajectory of resistance that includes Zumbi. Indeed, to him, Zumbi has come to signify the fight for Afro-Brazilian rights in Brazil. Zumbi dos Palmares is not specifically, historically, connected to the space and place of the Rio de Janeiro slave markets or the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, but the large banner and sculptures signifying Zumbi articulate the trajectory of resistance to the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro and the contemporary resistance against the silencing of this history, in narratives and in the commemorative landscape of the City. In the following discussion, I draw on interviews conducted in 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2012, to present what residents of Rio de Janeiro shared with me about the significance of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Zumbi dos Palmares, and Princess Isabel.

Cemitério dos Pretos Novos

Penha Santos,²⁹⁵ the Secretary of Culture for the IPN in 2008, and an Afro-Brazilian member of the *movimento negro*, works for recognition of the Cemitério because she says that this history is important for the “*resgate*” of Afro-Brazilian culture. *Resgate*, which means to rescue or recover, was a theme that emerged within many of my interviews, and was a word specifically used in discussing the significance of historic sites and figures related to the histories of slavery and resistance to slavery.

²⁹⁵ Santos, Penha. Interview, January 30, 2008, Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

Antonio Pereira²⁹⁶ learned about the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos through a chance encounter with Mercedes Guimarães at a kiosk downtown, where he lives. He says that Mercedes' daughters spoke of experiences with ghosts and hearing noises, movements and seeing someone pass by them. He and the Guimarães family became close friends and he began to learn more about the history of the Cemitério through this relationship. Antonio describes the difficult voyage of the Middle Passage, saying "many died...many arrived dying, so when they arrived in Rio, they were thrown in that hole and covered up...possibly alive...And so it is a very sad story." Antonio says that the efforts of Mercedes and Petrúcio are bringing this story to peoples' attention "to better know what happened to those people who arrived in slave ships, men and women, it's very sad."

For Antonio, the significance of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos isn't that it brought to light a history that was completely unknown, but that it has made the realities experienced by the enslaved in Rio proximate, rather than a distant or abstract history. "We know that there were slave ships, we know that there were slaves, all of that, but for those who come to know the cemetery, it is much more profound, it goes deeper inside this story of that time period in which the slaves and slave ships existed. It was there that I saw - that opened my mind to how much suffering existed in those moments, in that cemetery there. It was really difficult." Antonio lauds Mercedes and

²⁹⁶ Pereira, Antonio. Interview, July 8, 2006. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

Petrúcio for the “difficult fight” that they have engaged in to “call the government’s attention” to the Cemetery site and asking for official support.

He says:

...the City Council believes they would have to own this area in order for them to be able to invest money. Being private, it was very difficult for the government to spend money on something private, that is the property of Mercedes and Petrúcio, it isn’t the government’s. And so it was difficult.

Antonio sees the efforts of the IPN as fruitful; he says, “I’m seeing more and more people are coming to know [about it]. Antonio sees this history as an important aspect of Brazil’s history as a nation, but his emphasis on the history’s significance was primarily on the past that occurred in Rio de Janeiro, and the ability to know the history of slavery at a deeper level. He also saw the interest of researchers, like myself, as an aspect of the significance of the site and its history.

Carlos Machado²⁹⁷ is the head of a local chapter of the Filhos de Gandhi and has lived in Gamboa for approximately 40 years, though he prefers to call the whole complex of Gamboa, Saúde and Santo Cristo simply “Saude.” Carlos knew of the Cemitério prior to the discovery of remains by Mercedes and Petrúcio. He and other Saude residents began an association for the *bairro* in the late 70s. Among their goals, they wanted to understand “why is this *bairro* stagnated? Why isn’t it progressing? Why were the houses old with no one renovating them? Why aren’t the authorities interested in making

²⁹⁷ Machado, Carlos. Interview July 8, 2006. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

improvements in the quality of life here?” In researching, these association members discovered various facts about the history of their *bairro*. In learning this history, Carlos says that the residents “discovered the history of this region” and in doing so, “came to understand a little of why we are so neglected.” Although proposals were made to renovate the area, it “didn’t get any attention from downtown.” He went on to say that, while they were not successful at that time, their research provided “a counterpoint” in the dialogue between the government’s interests and the people’s interests. The endeavor to raise awareness of Saude’s history had begun years before, but did not serve, at that time, the financial interests of the government.

Carlos says “I was aware of the Cemetery, but didn’t know exactly where it was located.” We knew it was on this street, because this street used to be named “Rua do Cemitério (Cemetery Street)” named after the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, and he clarified that it did not get the name from the Cemitério dos Ingleses (English Cemetery), a well preserved and very visible cemetery down the street (see Figure 8.1). Living behind Mercedes and having worked for a period of time at the Jose Bonifácio Cultural Center, he had known his neighbor for almost 40 years. Only when the remains were discovered in Mercedes’ house did the location of the historic cemetery become known. Carlos remembers the “mess” that was created for the Guimarães family by the excavation and the halt put on their renovations.



Figure 8.1: Cemitério dos Ingleses. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett, August 10, 2006.

Regarding the Anjos family's efforts, he says, "I think it is perfect...I think that whatever is done that...makes a name for our community, for the City, for the State, for Brazil, to the exterior, for me is perfect." Carlos feels that the history represented by the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos is important to the history of Rio de Janeiro because it "is going to serve...to retell this history, a part of the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil." Carlos goes further to say that the history of Brazil "cannot be told without telling the history of Rio de Janeiro and the history of Rio de Janeiro cannot be told without telling the history of this area."

Xantina da Silva,²⁹⁸ is a woman in her 60s who identifies as a direct descendant of slaves, was born in Bahia but came to live in Rio de Janeiro as a young girl. Xantina lives in one of the *morros* nearby and frequents the Jose Bonifácio Cultural Center, where I interviewed her. Xantina sees the efforts of Mercedes and Petrúcio as “really good.” Xantina says that residents knew about the cemetery and had discovered remains in the past, but remained quiet. She says there are also remains beneath the José Bonifácio Cultural Center as well. She is supportive of the efforts of the IPN, because of the awareness it will bring for those who don’t know about the site or its history.

Xantina says the Cemetery is an important part of the history of Rio de Janeiro to remember “what became of those who also fought to build this, here.” She also sees the Cemetery as an important part of the history of “Brazil and the whole world.” But then says that it is important to know “who *created* the cemetery.” She went on to say that questions need to be asked in terms of “why they, our leaders didn’t work better...for the wellbeing of blacks.” She discussed the failure of leaders to give rights to the blacks of today. Xantina says that blacks “have to have the capacity, in the same way that whites do.”

²⁹⁸ Silva, Xantina. Interview, July 8, 2006. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

Xantina's discussion moves further in connecting the history of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos to the conditions of Afro-Brazilians today by saying "slavery ended, isn't that right? But the same ignorance continues - from whites, not from blacks. They won't advance if their culture keeps going on the same, thinking they don't have to give value to blacks." For Xantina, whites are in need of correcting their "ignorance" by learning about and valuing the history and contributions of Afro-Brazilians; a part of this history is told through the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos.

Xantina says that no one chooses the nation, place, color or family they are born into and that everyone is a human being that should be given respect. She is careful to make the point that the United States also has racial issues that must be attended to, describing the way "Brazilians, particularly blacks" are not well received when they come to the United States. Xantina paints a vision of everyone sharing their capabilities as "a present" that is exchanged in reciprocity, with no importance given to the color of one's skin.

Though some residents with whom I spoke in 2006 (during pre-dissertation fieldwork) were not aware of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, as demonstrated in the examples above, those who were aware of the site, whether they had visited or not, were supportive of the work being done by Mercedes and Petrúcio Guimarães and the IPN to raise awareness of the site and its history. The meaning of the site ranged from general interest and

value in “history” in terms of local and national history, to seeing the site as representative of historical trends relating to racial oppression and the absence of representations of Afro-Brazilian histories.

In my 2008 and 2009 interviews, some residents began to speak of Princess Isabel and/ or Zumbi when discussing the significance of the Cemetery site. However, when these two figures did not emerge in the conversation, I would ask about the local monuments and the histories associated with them. I also began to interview residents of Rio de Janeiro who lived in the more socioeconomically affluent *bairros*, Copacabana and Botafogo about their knowledge of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, about Zumbi and about Princess Isabel (whose monument is located at the termination of a highway Avenida Princesa Isabel, marking the boundary between Copacabana and Leme).

The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Zumbi, and Princess Isabel, in Dialogue

Rosana Gomes Sampaio²⁹⁹, who goes by “Piu” is a 34 year old woman who was born in Caxias and lives in one of the *bairros* that she says is “a little far” from Gamboa, where she has worked at the José Bonifácio Cultural Center for the past two years. When discussing the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos,

²⁹⁹ Sampaio, Rosana Gomes (Piu). Interview, February 4, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

located a few blocks down the street from the Cultural Center, she feels that it is important in terms of “maintaining” this history, but says she has mostly come to know about the local history of slavery through the Cultural Center. Her interest is primarily in Afro-Brazilian religion and Piu describes herself as a “spiritualist” and practitioner of Umbanda who is interested in parts of “the history” that relate to the Orixás and the Pretos Velhos. “But outside of this,” she says, “I’m not really interested in those things.”

Piu finds the efforts of Mercedes and Petrúcio to be “cool” and “interesting” because “the history was here...it’s where everything started. It wasn’t over there in Caxias or in Itafuna, because blacks worked here, because of the Port. It’s these places, the *morro* over there. The Morro de Providência is also very historic, just over there.” Piu sees the Port Zone as having ‘more history’ than her hometown and where she currently lives. However, the significance of Gamboa’s history is directly connected to the work that enslaved laborers provided in constructing the city. Similar to Xantina’s comments, Piu says the history of the area is “very important” to Brazil’s history “because it was the blacks that made this here, right?...constructed, worked, so I think a person needs to maintain that history and not leave it to die” which she says is “mainly due to racism.” “It has to be maintained like this, a live history...how the blacks suffered..so I think this history has to always be remembered.” Piu feels this history needs to be taught in schools, “I think they have to tell the history of Brazil, how it started, how the slaves

came, worked..." Piu would like to see more events take place at the IPN that "tell the history" but also dances and exhibits of black art, "I don't know, something simple."

The history of Zumbi dos Palmares is "very important in the history of Brazil...because it's the history of blacks, right? At the very least, a history of Blacks. He is the only person who became like that in history. Zumbi. The others already died" but people "only remember him, right? and tell his story." Zumbi "even though he didn't come from here" she feels he is important to the history of Rio de Janeiro because "blacks came here to Rio de Janeiro." She says that personally, "I think he is in our history, Zumbi dos Palmares...I think that he signifies the history of blacks."

Regarding Princess Isabel, Piu remembers "there was the 13th of May. The teachers spent the day" telling about the history of Brazil, the story of disembarking in Brazil" and about Princess Isabel, the "liberator of the blacks." Piu says that Princess Isabel is important on a personal level because "she has a strong history among blacks, right? She is the one that gave liberty to the slaves, right? So, she weighs important in the history of Brazil...you have to know history."

The history of the area is most salient to Piu in her experience of the past through her religion. She describes being visited by a *Preto Velho* in the

basement changing room of the Cultural Center. While historical figures and sites are important in terms of remembering the experiences of the enslaved and teaching what they went through, keeping the history “alive” through memory, in the way Zumbi dos Palmares has been kept alive, is most important. This is the function she sees being performed by the IPN and the Cultural Center, though she appears to feel more comfortable with learning at the Cultural Center. Her living history experiences come through her connection with the spiritual, through the spirit of an old man who died enslaved, a *Preto Velho*, who sat down to talk with her in the basement of an old historic building cum Afro-Brazilian Cultural Center.

Mercedes Guimarães dos Anjos³⁰⁰ view’s Zumbi’s national status as a “hero” to be inappropriate. All enslaved Africans who were forced to come to Brazil are heroes to Mercedes, and one figure cannot represent the totality of Afro-Brazilian history. While she sees Zumbi as a hero in the history of Alagoas and Palmares, the significance of Zumbi to Rio is symbolic. She questions the limited data on Zumbi and says that he used to be a “legend” to her, and though she has learned more about Zumbi in recent years, she still expresses uncertainty regarding whether he existed or not. Mercedes says, Zumbi “is a symbol because people don’t know other histories...they needed a hero.”³⁰¹ In 2009, Mercedes stated that Zumbi continues to be celebrated

³⁰⁰ Anjos, Ana de la Merced Guimarães. Interview, January 28, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

at the IPN primarily because she would be criticized if she did not hold an event. In the past, when she has considered not hosting anything at the IPN, she says that community members would approach her to offer performances and that commemorative events grew out of this interest. However, she expresses that Black Consciousness Day should be everyday.³⁰²

In contrast, the 13th of May is commemorated at the IPN each year as a *dia do santo*, a day in which practitioners of Umbanda honor the *Pretos Velhos*, the deity spirits of old Africans who died while enslaved. Abolition, Mercedes says, is never mentioned and she respects the perspective of Afro-Brazilian activists in the movimento negro who do not recognize May 13th as a day of celebration because of continued inequities that did not end with the legal abolition of slavery. Mercedes says she has learned “a lot that I didn’t know” because, as a white woman, she used to see May 13th as connected abolition and that was “all good.” Now, she says, she respects the Afro-Brazilian activist position “and [I] don’t say abolition” on May 13.³⁰³

In an informal interview,³⁰⁴ **Lucia dos Santos**, a locally renowned artist who lives in Morro do Pinto, teaches art classes at the José Bonifácio Cultural Center and also works in Copacabana, told me that on May 13, people put

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Santos, Lucia. Informal interviews, November 19 and February 9, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

flowers on the statue of Princess Isabel. Lucia prefers to be called “Tia Lucia.” Tia Lucia said that “everybody” places flowers there, but mainly “people of color.” In a tour of the Cultural Center building, she told me that enslaved Africans were once held in the basement of the building. During my stay in 2009, a U.S. film crew from California came to conduct interviews and collect film footage on the paranormal activity that was rumored to occur at high levels within the Cultural Center. The history of slavery is alive in these stories of the spirits who remain a part of daily life and discourse.

Luciano Alves,³⁰⁵ a 47 year old man who describes himself as a “*negro caboclo, tipo Indio*. I am not white, I am mestiço skin...Indian.” A *caboclo* is someone who is of Indigenous ancestry as well as other ancestry. In this case Luciano is clear that he is also of African ancestry and highlighting his indigenous ancestry as part of the mixture, “black *caboclo*, Indian type” Luciano was born in Alagoas, which he proudly refers to as “*minha terra*,” and has lived in Rio for about 40 years and spent about 10 years working in Gamboa, though he now works elsewhere. He saw the early excavations and the condition of the human remains, which impressed on him greatly. He says, “I saw bones..the skull, one on top of the other. Young and old, one on top of the other.”

³⁰⁵ Luciano. Interview, February 9, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

Luciano supports Mercedes' actions, pointing out that she had not governmental support and had to do everything on her own. He sees the story of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos as "beautiful" because "our history comes...from the blacks in Africa to here" and he points to the fact that the majority of Brazilians are "black or mixed." He says that if her were the government, "I would expropriate the house and leave the cemetery the way it used to be."

Although Luciano is proud to speak of Zumbi and the history of Palmares in Alagoas, his homeland, he never learned about Zumbi until he was an adult. When I asked if his family ever spoke of Zumbi dos Palmares, he said, "no, no way." He also does not remember learning about Princess Isabel until he was an adult, also, and explained that he grew up in a "very poor bairro in Alagoas...we were very poor." However, he sees these histories, inclusive of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Zumbi dos Palmares, and Princess Isabel as most important in telling the story of the "birth of Brazil. They came here, bound, trapped, to work for white plantation owners, for the politicians...So, I think this is a fantastic story, very beautiful, lovely, marvelous, because the story continues forever." From this history "came another world...another people." Luciano associates Rio de Janeiro with "the beach, partying, Carnival. The history of Rio de Janeiro is more Samba, the beach, Carnival...Work." Other places like Minas Gerais and Alagoas have "a more forceful history" through the figures of Chico Rei and Zumbi dos Palmares.

The history of “Brazilian blacks” is the part of Brazil’ history that Luciano connects with most strongly. He says this is because “there isn’t a history, there isn’t a story so painful and at the same time so beautiful today, so beautiful...It was so painful in that time, and today if you go listen, see, it’s so beautiful.” He recognizes that this beauty does not preclude the contemporary struggles and marginalization among Brazilians of African descent who “still today live under the table.” Salvador da Bahia, for Luciano, cannot be left out of any history of Brazil, and is the place from which much of the history of Afro-Brazilian emanates, “Capoeira, the dances, the foods” as well as the slave markets.

There is, potentially, a redemption story within Luciano’s poetic view of the transformations of pain and suffering into the beauty of Brazilian culture, that resonates with representations of slavey as a ‘necessary evil’ (see Chapter 5) that brought about a “new people.” Luciano’s discussion of the “birth of Brazil” out of the pain and suffering of slavery, includes the creation of a “another people.” This dialogue resonates with earlier, nineteenth century Brazilian eugenic tropes that envisioned a “new” Brazilian race, celebrating mixture while moving to socialize European Brazilian ideals as standard against which population “progress” would be measured (see Dávila 2003). However, Luciano celebrates the African origins as the foundation of “our history” and Brazilian people, the majority of whom, he claims, have African

ancestry. Essentializing African contributions as Capoeira, food, and dance is reminiscent of the the Gilberto Freyre's (1956[1946]) classic celebration of racial mixture in Brazil, where cultural retentions from the three foundational races (Indigenous, African, and European) were identified in food, games, and ways of moving.³⁰⁶ Luciano valorizes most highly the story of African and Afro-Brazilian resistance as a force within this transformative process of creating beauty out of pain.

Oscar Carvalho

Oscar Carvalho³⁰⁷ is a 42 year old man who was born in Cabo Sul and lives off of Avenida Brazil in Vista Alegre. Oscar says "I adore where I live" and he adores Brazil. He has been working at the José Bonifácio Cultural Center for two years, after becoming unemployed in his previous profession. He now works two jobs to support his three daughters and his mother, who are his primary focus. Oscar is aware of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, but hasn't visited the site and sees the site as important because of "history is important" and says that slavery "isn't right." He states that he is against racism and that "the real racists here in Rio are blacks....I know a lot of blacks who don't like blacks." However, he says, "It's not important if you are black or white. I think it's important that I am the son of my father."

³⁰⁶ I was asked on a regular basis, by non-academic Brazilians, if I had read Freyre and was encouraged to do so, because it was very important to understanding Brazil. Freyre's ideas, though understood to be flawed, still appear to resonate broadly.

³⁰⁷ Carvalho, Oscar Silva. Interview, February 9, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

Oscar makes clear what his priorities are and that they do not lie with my academic interests and goals:

I will tell you, what is significant for me is my family. Understand? You come, you come from outside, come to study. For you it's important, you are studying. But for me...this here isn't going to help us at all. At all. Zumbi is Zumbi today. I have gone 2 months without getting paid. No one helps us...2 months. So for us, at least for me, it doesn't change my life at all, at all.

Oscar did not learn of Zumbi or Princess Isabel growing up. He says, "I didn't learn everything because I began to work at a young age...So, Zumbi, slavery, isn't part of our lives, it's not anything. But, I myself, I didn't learn any of this...There are a lot of people over there who don't learn anything. It's difficult, this, here." Oscar learned about Zumbi while working at the Cultural Center and found the sociality around the events "beautiful" and sees Zumbi and Princess Isabel's stories as important because they are part of the national history. While Oscar reiterates his affection for Brazil, his main concern is with his work and his family. "I don't like what I do...I'm here because it is necessary."

Simone Ferreira³⁰⁸ is a 29 year old woman who was born in Bahia and came to live in Rio de Janeiro when she was 6 years old. She now lives in Itafuna and has worked at the José Bonifácio Cultural Center for 4 years. Simone refers to herself within various contexts as "black" during our conversation.

³⁰⁸ Ferreira, Simone. Interview, February 9, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil. 378

Carmen Aliz³⁰⁹ is a 32 year old woman who was born in Monte de Sucesso, in Rio de Janeiro, now lives in Penha and works with Simone at the Cultural Center and joined our conversation. Carmen referred to herself as black and also spoke of her grandfather as “a descendant of Indians.”

Both Simone and Carmen knew of the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* and had visited the IPN on one or two occasions for events held there. Simone said that she had also heard about the site and that it serves as a place “for people to know what really was there.” Carmen said that while she was there “no one spoke of the bones or the people interred” and that she had only been to the site where cultural events were held, rather than the classroom and exhibit side of the IPN. Carmen expressed that the IPN and the site are important for looking at and knowing “the conditions of blacks and how they came to Brazil.” Simone made a point to say that when visiting the IPN, that the cemetery “is left to the past” and that “in the present...it’s a cultural center, not a cemetery. ‘Cemetery’ is just, like a name, right? But for those coming nowadays, for an event, it’s a cultural center, not a cemetery.”

In speaking of the history of slavery and the difficulties experienced by the enslaved, Simone said, that if Princess Isabel had not ended slavery, “today we would have to be slaves.” Carmen agreed saying, “yes, if she hadn’t signed the Golden Law, we would be working with masters.” Simone then

³⁰⁹ Aliz, Carmen. Interview, February 9, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

followed up to say that the Golden Law “did no good, in reality. We are slaves.” Carmen agreed saying:

We are slaves. The only difference is that now there isn't race and there isn't color...Those who have, stay at the top. Those here at the bottom are always not paid, deceived, passed [over]...We work for a person who has [money] and doesn't pay us. It is disrespectful to us. In an exchange we give our work, it is for them to give in money.³¹⁰

While Simone said, “in that time it was different...[you] could work and be given nothing...” and Carmen agreed but said “today we work for money, but the disrespect continues.” Simone reiterated “for us, we continue in slavery” and Carmen said again that now both whites and black were subjected to these conditions.” Carmen went on to say that “what Princess Isabel intended to end (slavery)...was a great idea. It is a pity there weren't others that came to end this prejudice, this inequality, what is always done to the weaker or the slaves....she wasn't able to do everything, but she tried.”

A tacit critique of historical validity emerged on a couple of occasions during our conversation. When speaking of the cemetery site and the history represented by the site, there was a discussion of the slave's suffering and the sale of slaves who were bought by the English. Simone said she wasn't sure if this “it is a story or if it actually happened.” Discussing the significance of Princess Isabel to their lives, Carmen said that Princess Isabel's story was

³¹⁰ During this period of time, I heard that the José Bonifácio Cultural Center was going through financial difficulties that were greater than usual. It is possible that there was a budgetary delay and workers at the Cultural Center were delayed in being paid.

something that “we study” and that “our children will study, our grandchildren will study. It’s a story that stays, if it is true or not, and it’s a story we believe.” Simone concurred, saying “we believe it, truly.” Carmen followed up by saying “because we know it from our parents, our grandparents, and I want us to pass it to our children, our children will pass it to our grandchildren. So it’s something very interesting, very cool.” The credibility of the story came from within the family rather than a historic site, monument, or school.

The story needs to be passed on from generation to generation, Carmen says, “because it’s important for them to see that nothing ever falls from the sky” but takes pushing forward “in her case, going forward to sign the Golden Law” to improve the lives of blacks a little. “This fight for us to make our space.” For Simone, the story of Princess Isabel should be passed on because of “what she did for the slaves,” describing it as:

a beautiful story...to give this liberty...to pass to us, that today we too can do what we want to do. Through our color, our race, we can do it. We have the goal to fight to get ahead. If she hadn’t given this freedom to the slaves today, what would we be? This was a beautiful thing that she did for them...She didn’t think of herself, she thought of us, we are slaves, blacks, right?

At several points during our conversation the word “negro” or black became interchangeable with the word “slave” and also with references to “we,” blacks in the present. “The weak” and “slaves” were the recipients of oppression that continues today within Carmen’s narrative. Veins of the story of Princess Isabel as the beneficent redeemer, as conveyed and variously contested

within the discussions of several Rio residents, are heard within Simone and Carmen's comments. However, there is also a story of resistance that is folded into why her story must be told to their children, to learn to fight for a better life. The image of blackness as synonymous with subservience or weakness, however, did appear to resonate within Simone and Carmen's recollections, and were coupled with a story of fighting for a better life.

Simone and Carmen remember learning about Princess Isabel in school and at home, but neither Simone nor Carmen learned about Zumbi dos Palmares growing up, in school or from their families. Simone learned about Zumbi more recently, and primarily through her religion, where Zumbi is an Orixá. She said, "I know he was a warrior, I heard he was a warrior, a fighter" She said that he was "very important" because there are "few blacks in this religious culture." Simone said that he isn't very well known in the religions of Condomblé, Umbanda, "those things" but this is where she received her knowledge of Zumbi dos Palmares. "So, I think it is important. There's a day for blacks to remember, also..." Carmen said she didn't know much about Zumbi other than "there is a holiday, there's Zumbi day, they put a monument there in Praça Onze." However she adds, "I know that he fought for blacks, so I say that he is for blacks, in favor of blacks." She says she is "into" this, "I'm black."

Érica dos Santos³¹¹ is a 23 year old woman who lives in Copacabana. She was not born in Rio de Janeiro but has lived in Rio for less than a year. Érica describes herself as “really multicultural.” She says she has Portuguese, Indian and Black (negro) ancestors. “My family is completely mixed...I have physical traits that are mixed, I am white, but I have a side that has Black origins.” She says that ethnicity for Brazilians is “is something just so common, that we don’t even speak about it, it is just part of our lives. It’s just normal for me.”

Érica was not familiar with the Cemitério dos Pretos novos or the Princess Isabel monument in Copacabana because she doesn't tend to pass by the location of the monument very frequently. However, she knew the history of Princess Isabel and said that Princess Isabel “signifies the Brazilian woman in a general way.” She described Princess Isabel as someone who worked alone to liberate slaves, without the support of others and her actions were contested. However, she says that “history tells us that she was responsible for the lives of slaves. She liberated them, but didn’t provide help or support.” Because of this, enslaved people were not really freed, but the Golden Law was “a step.”

Princess Isabel’s story is important to Érica in terms of her role in the history of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil because “history is always important, so that you

³¹¹ Santos, Érica dos. Interview, December 19, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

remember what has already happened so that it doesn't happen again." She sees remembering the history represented by Princess Isabel as particularly important in the effort to "always be fighting against prejudice. I think today it represents this. That there is prejudice against blacks in Brazil, despite slavery having ended a long time ago." This is also the personal significance of this story, for Érica, "to remember what happened" and to "remember that it is important, because we are equal, no one exists who is better than another."

Leandro Nunes³¹² is an 18 year old man who lives in Copacabana and has lived in Rio since he was 4 years old, though he was born in Mato Grosso do Sul. He describes himself as pardo (brown), "in the middle of the road" being neither white nor black. He describes his family as primarily of Italian descent on both his mother's and father's sides, who came to Brazil as immigrants. He said, "I think there is a mixture along the way...I think one of my great grandfathers was a Northeasterner, but I don't know what ethnicity." Though he says his family "is a really big mixture, I don't know if there is some black person along the way, probably not because...I would be darker" and then says that if he were to describe his ethnicity, it would be Italian.

Leandro had never heard of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, nor was he aware of the Princess Isabel monument. He tended to hang out in Ipanema at a spot where young surfers often frequented, rather than going to the

³¹² Nunes, Leandro. Interview, December 19, 2008

beach in Copacabana (the monument is located between the beach and the highway facing the coastline). However, Leondro, as were all Rio residents I interviewed, was familiar with the story of Princess Isabel. Similar to Érica, Leondro saw Princess Isabel as representing the abolition of slavery and that the significance of this historic moment was complicated. He says:

for me, the abolition of slavery is a process that happened and turned out to marginalize blacks (os negros). It ended slavery, but - this was good...the abolition was positive. But it just triggered a process of exclusion of, of blacks from society, marginalization, making it so that the majority of the poor would be black. While they had freedom, they didn't function with true equality, there wasn't what the U.S. had, that fight for equality...in society.

For Leondro, the inequity present in Brazil today is due to the flawed implementation of abolition that did not generate from the people. "Blacks are very marginalized today, much on the account of this process of abolition. For not having been something that comes from the ground up, like this was something that came from the top down. The prejudice that exists today, the discrimination that exists today is because of this." While Leondro sees abolition as having been "a good thing" and that "the essence of that act" was meant for good, it "triggered" the process of marginalization and inequity that are seen in contemporary Brazil today.

The history is important because "we, in Brazil, we have a large portion of the population that are mostly black." and he says that, as in the days of slavery

when blacks were forced to “work in subhuman conditions” some blacks today “continue to work in subhuman conditions.” The signing of the Golden Law, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, was not locally significant to Leondro outside of Rio being a microcosm, evincing larger Brazilian trends. Rio de Janeiro “reflects the Brazilian population” in having many “black” residents. Furthermore, he says Rio de Janeiro “is also a reflection of everything...of this process of exclusion. Blacks live in favelas, the majority of criminals are black, but [are so] because of being excluded from society, because society made them this way and not by their own choice.” He says that in Rio de Janeiro, “this exclusion is very evident. The *bairro* you live in, the place where you live, the color of your skin, determines a lot nowadays.”

Leondro has learned to connect blackness with social inequality, poverty, and oppression. However, he makes clear that he sees himself as contrary to these processes. He describes himself as “a person with a totally open mind in relation to this. Because, for me, there is no distinction based on skin color...between one person and another.” He sees that “we would do well” to recognize the equality of human beings who all have “natural rights, without respect to skin color, they have a right to life, they have the right to acquire, the right to do what they wish in life, regardless of skin color.” He says, “I am not marginalizing them, society marginalizes....I don’t act with prejudice, or any discrimination. So, for me, it (abolition) was not a process that was right,

but something that had to happen...” Leondro is most interested in the more recent political and military history of Brazil.

Marcelo Barbosa Larcher³¹³ is a 23 year old man who is living in Copacabana as a student. Marcelo describes his family history as French Austrian on his father’s side and “Jewish, apparently, but I can’t confirm this, but he came to this colony to settle in Minas Gerais.” His mother is from the interior of Bahia. Both grandparents are Bahian and he knows “for a fact” that his great grandmother “was a slave,” describing further that his great grandfather “had a son with a slave woman and her son was my grandfather. And so, in this way, I am really mixed.”

Marcelo says that aspects of Brazil’s history and sites related to slavery in Brazil are “extremely interesting” and important on a personal level. He has traveled to Bahia and made a documentary film about his journey in finding “the origins of my family.” He says that he is “passionate about” the history of his family and the history of Brazil. Not only is this history important to him personally, but “it is essential.” For him, historic representations of slavery in Brazil are connected to both his family history and the history of Brazil.

Marcelo had never heard of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos or the monument of Zumbi located in Praça Onze, but he was familiar with the monument of

³¹³ Larcher, Marcelo de Barbosa. Interview, December 2, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

Princess Isabel in Copacabana. He felt that having a monument for Princess Isabel was very important because it expresses “a milestone in history...in Brazil, and...it’s a way of preserving culture.” Monuments allow people to learn and become interested in aspects of history. Regarding Princess Isabel’s particular history, he says “in truth, the only thing that she - the only thing, no, the important thing that she did was to have signed the Golden Law.” While he recites what appears to be widely circulated, that she was “a person who fought, the only person...who fought against slavery.” However, he sees that, contrary to the idea that she was a lone advocate for abolition, he says, “I think that there started to be a movement” that led to the conditions that enabled Princess Isabel to enact the Golden Law. But he says that “semi-slavery” still exists, both in Brazil and in the world. The Golden Law, he says, “was important, it’s just that, unfortunately, the only thing that was done was the signing [of the law]. But it didn’t give the equality deserved...in the end, it was, at least, an excellent start.” Princess Isabel and the historic moment of abolition is significant on a local and national level “but it didn’t change the lives of people much.”

Marcia Bragança de Oliveira³¹⁴ is a 46 year old woman who works in Copacabana as a beautician and lives in Jacarepaguá, one of Rio de Janeiro’s largest *bairros*. She describes herself as a descendant of Italians and Portuguese on both sides of her family. Beatriz is familiar with the

³¹⁴ Beatriz. Interview, December 2, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

Princess Isabel monument in Copacabana and finds it to be a worthy installation because the history is “important to commemorate.” She had no particularly personal connection to Princess Isabel’s history other than her story being “important for everyone” and this included a more local significance to Rio de Janeiro and for Brazil. Beatriz connects most to the history of Brazil’s discovery.

Laura Souza³¹⁵ is the owner of a boutique store in Copacabana. She has lived in Rio de Janeiro all of her life and has lived for 30 years in the building where her store is located. Laura appears to be in her 60s and describes her great grandparents as Portuguese. One grandfather was a peddler who sold imported goods and another grandfather was a farmer. While she says the history of immigrants in Brazil is “very strong,” she makes clear that she’s not going to tell me a story about how immigrants came to Brazil and made their life, because she lives her life as a Brazilian and that is how she chooses to describe her heritage, “I am very Brazilian.”

Laura sees monuments of history in Rio de Janeiro as having become neglected. While she is familiar with the Princess Isabel monument and sees her “as an important person for Rio de Janeiro...for all of Brazil,” she says that people, in general, don’t connect to or value historic monuments. She feels that this has led to their neglect and finds it “a pity that they are not preserved

³¹⁵ Souza, Laura. Interview, December 2, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

her in Rio de Janeiro.” She sees that people pass by historic monuments without giving them thought, appreciating their beauty, or showing them to someone, they go without mention.

For Laura, the importance of historic monuments lies in their relationship to “history” in the abstract, “they reference the history of our country.” Rio de Janeiro has a particular importance to the country’s history because it served as the nation’s capitol “so these monuments make up part of an historic moment for Rio de Janeiro.” For Laura, Rio de Janeiro has, in a sense, become like the neglected historic monuments that attest to bygone days of grandeur: “later, when the capitol was moved, what happened was that it [Rio] was abandoned.” Laura then says, “I don’t think anyone goes out to see the Princess Isabel monument, I don’t think it’s...done.” She has a sense that more “modern” attractions are noteworthy to Rio de Janeiro residents. Even where preservation efforts have occurred in parts of Rio de Janeiro, such as downtown, Copacabana’s preservation movement to restore old houses and structures is in the very early stages and “there’s a lot to take care of.”

Laura had heard about the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* but when I asked what she thought about it she said, “I have to research more to know everything, but I have heard about these movements...but I can’t give my opinion.” When I offered to give her information on the site so that we could talk again in the future, she declined. For Laura, the history of Rio de

Janeiro's role in the nation's history was encapsulated in the monuments and both this past and the commemoration of it had become less relevant to residents of Rio de Janeiro.

Túlio Valentim³¹⁶ is a 26 year old man who was born in Duque de Caxias, and lives in Rio de Janeiro. In discussing his origins and ethnicity, Túlio says "I am considered black, an Afro-descendant, but in truth, for most in Brazil, you never are just one thing." He uses Barack Obama as an example "he is black, but he was raised by whites, and so what is he more of?" He says, "I consider myself black and my family is a little, is mixed, right?...my father is black, and my Mom is, I can say, almost white, because my grandfather is a little bit Indian and my grandmother is really white-ish." He says that the two sides of his family have very much in common, "they both have very similar origins, poor beginnings from the fields and have had very similar struggles to rise socially." So, he says "I perceive that there are differences in treatment related to my person, on seeing the color of my skin, but I don't think there is a big difference between the two sides of my family" which he describes as "the part that's black (negra) and the part that isn't, but also, it isn't so white..." He feels that being considered black is "a little complicated because, it's so strange...when you are considered black, you will leave the other part to the side." While he recognizes some ill treatment based on his skin color, he says, "I think in practice...there isn't a lot of difference between a white person

³¹⁶ Valentim, Túlio. Interview, January 13, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro.

or a black person or an Indian person.” His family story is one of similarity based on class positioning and he seeks to embrace both sides of his family while being confined in being identified with only one side.

Túlio finds history important, but says that “as a resident of Rio de Janeiro...we pass by monuments and don’t feel anything, don’t think anything.” He was aware of the Princess Isabel monument but went on to say that when he sees a monument he is “not accustomed to go by and read what is written below. Normally, historical monuments, for me have very few feelings associated with them, in general.” Similar to Laura’s impression of the lack of connection Rio residents feel for monuments, Túlio expressed this as “a question of culture, Brazilian, and even more, perhaps, of residents of Rio de Janeiro. I feel this, it could be only my own personal issue, and other people are different. But I really feel this....There’s not a very big concern in relation to ‘what is that monument there’....Normally, you note that the monument draws attention, but there’s no culture for the monument to have significance for people.” He says this is the same experience he has had with the Princess Isabel monument as well as other monuments.

When I asked more about the history represented by the monument, Túlio said the history was important because

it serves to remind people so that people don’t forget that that history happened. So, on this point I consider it important, but I can’t bring that to my day to day [life], it’s not my culture...it’s not

my way of doing things...I would have to be re-educated to be that way. I think this is natural for people in general, for an average Brazilian.

In relation to representations of Zumbi dos Palmares, Túlio said that he has never gone to the celebrations on November 20th, but has gone to 13th of May activities before. Regarding the history of Zumbi, Túlio said, "For me, personally, it has significance by being an Afro-descendant, it only has this significance for me." Though Túlio says Zumbi sets an example, he also says he wasn't able to end slavery or to see the abolition of slavery. He sees November 20th as important to "some groups in the country" including "political and cultural groups....groups that represent...Afro-Brazilians, descendants." He characterizes these groups as "defending commemoration, they are defending inclusion of, of black culture." He feels that the participation in commemorative activities by people who are not part of these groups lends "more importance to these events."

Túlio returned to the lack of significance that monuments hold for residents of Rio de Janeiro and says that he has never gone to see the monument and says "I, for example, never went, my school never took me there for November 20th or May 13th, nor did my parents go with me. So this is what I said, this is the culture, what your parents do with you, what happens in school. This never happened with me." He sees this as possibly changing over the last 10 years, where Brazilians in general are becoming more

interested in monuments, but that primarily particular groups are interested in particular monuments.

Túlio says “the history of Zumbi dos Palmares signifies a history of struggle...of black Africans who came to Brazil. And it wasn’t a story of resignation.” Túlio goes on to discuss that there were “various methods” of resistance, including flight and that Zumbi is the “maximum example of this.” Zumbi “had a chance to change the system, before the abolition of slavery...that’s what he signifies for me.” However, he does not see Zumbi’s history as significant for the “general population” of Brazil, only a small percentage, maybe 20% he estimated. He says that the histories of Indigenous Brazilians and Afro-Brazilians need become a part of the mainstream historical narrative of the Nation (see Chapter 10).

“History” in the abstract is not a part of Túlio’s daily life and isn’t particularly meaningful, therefore representations of this history are passed by without much thought. Túlio is able find reasons for pride in the history of Dom João, and sees that the histories of Indigenous Brazilians and Africans in Brazil are relevant to the history of Brazil’s making and to Brazil’s present population. However, the history of Zumbi dos Palmares remains, for him, a bounded and particular history relevant to Afro-descendants and political groups. Zumbi, a national hero, is important to the history of Brazil, but Túlio does not see him

as relevant to the majority of Brazilians and personally irrelevant to him outside of his ascribed identity as an African descendant.

I met a woman in a coffee shop in Copacabana who appeared to be in her 40s.³¹⁷ A woman who worked at the coffee shop introduced me to her and described my research. The woman said that no one views historical sites as relevant, personally. She said Maracanã stadium or the Sambadrome, perhaps, but not historical sites. When I mentioned the nearby monument to Princess Isabel, she said that, of course, these sites are important to history, but have no personal meaning for people. However one Copacabana resident, a woman in her late 30s who identified as “white,”³¹⁸ said that she thinks the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos is important to the history of Brazil because it brings attention to the treatment of “them” and raises awareness against prejudice. She connects this past to contemporary accounts of prejudice she has heard from her Afro-Brazilian clients. She said that this knowledge was important for “whites, for me personally, to understand better the experience of blacks and to raise awareness.” She had been against the quota system before she learned about the levels of “prejudice” that still exist. She thinks learning of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos will, however, “bring up more” for Afro-Brazilians and make them become angrier. Later, however,

³¹⁷ Informal Interview. December 16, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³¹⁸ Informal Interviews. September 29, 2008 and November 19, 2009.

this woman said that she found the Black Consciousness Day “ridiculous” because “we don’t have a Jewish Day or Italian Day.”

Milton Teixeira³¹⁹ is a local historian and tour guide, who lives in the Botafogo with whom I discussed the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the annual commemoration of Zumbi. History, for Milton, is a passion and he says he has been studying history since he was a child. While he was familiar with the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, he expressed the significance of the Cemetery as racially and locally bounded. He said, “it is an important history for the black community of Rio de Janeiro...something very localized.” Milton says that the coffee plantations are more important to understanding the history and origins of “black culture” in Brazil. However, locally, he views Valongo (formerly where Valongo Street was located) as much more important than the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos. He says, “because it was the port where where *negros* entered Brazil” before being sent to plantations and farms. “That street has much more importance than the cemetery.” Milton also stated, “there was a really big preoccupation on the part of Rio de Janeiro’s administration to erase the black memory from Valongo Street”; houses were destroyed and new structures were erected. The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, on the other hand was, according to Milton, “a final destination for them.” Milton says the Cemetery doesn’t represent African interments but “rushed, without any care. Because the black slave was treated like trash.”

³¹⁹ Teixeira, Milton. Interview, January 26, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

He then reiterated that “for me, no” the site was not personally significant, but “for blacks, anything is important.”

In discussing Zumbi, Milton said that “Zumbi had nothing to do with Rio de Janeiro,” but symbolizes the beginning of black resistance against white domination. “This is why he is remembered.” For Milton, there should be no holiday for Zumbi, stating that he did not think it would become a national holiday (November 20 was the national day of Black Consciousness in 2003, but was, indeed, made a national holiday in 2011). “Soon,” he mused, “we will have a holiday for Buddha, for Hare Krishna” and then continued to say that “November 20 was made as a concession, first implemented here by the municipality of Rio de Janeiro and later by the state, but not for the rest of the country.” For Milton, Zumbi’s importance for Rio is limited to “black Little Africa...that’s why [the monument] is there...” When I asked if Zumbi had significance to him personally, he said “Ha!” and after a pause, simply reiterated that Zumbi “is important for black Little Africa” and that “for me [Zumbi] has no importance at all.” Milton went on to say that what is known of Zumbi is “very little.”

He is remembered as a symbol of resistance. Zumbi is a black god that never died, right? He lives on. In the decades and centuries after he died, blacks believed that he never died. This is why he is a symbol of their resistance. But in truth, there is a history that the black community doesn’t want to remember, that they want to forget. But I think that it is an important history: the truth, the truth, the truth, the truth, the truth, the truth, the truth is, that blacks remained waiting for whites to give liberty to them. There was no revolt like there

was in Haiti. What happened is this...[they] waited for the government to give them liberty, like they are waiting for the government to give them college [education], graduate education and a university title from having studied

Milton goes on to say “what happened was this” and described a trajectory of blacks waiting for liberation like they wait to be given entry into universities and wait to be given university titles. However, he states that blacks won't be able to get jobs because employers won't accept degrees that are attained in this way. He further states that there are “two ways of thinking among the Brazilian black community:”

one is Zumbi style - to fight to get things, there are no university quotas...no quotas for anything. It's just fight, in the field, and win; and there exists the other [type] that stays spoon-fed - ‘the government has to give to me, the government has to pay me, the government has to support me’ - enduring for centuries because of this. This is the mentality that exists in Brazil. Except for those who fight and win... there are those that wait for Brazil to give them a handout. That race I don't even consider Brazilian...they want to cheat, to get a handout, they want quotas, they don't want to study, they want to get into University just by the color of their skin and with the lofty declaration that is from merit.

Milton goes on to discuss the quota systems limitations in allowing someone who could be white to claim their great grandfather was black in order to enter into college, while those who have studied are passed over. He believes that quotas would still not be right, but would be more logical if based on class and not skin color, allowing entry for students who cannot afford to go to college. This system, he contrasts to the unforgiving job market that awaits, which only rewards those who are capable.

Milton uses Zumbi to make connections to the two types of blacks in Brazil that he describes. Zumbi is associated with resistance and the black person who fights for what is achieved and is implied as the only type of black person that Milton considers a true Brazilian. However, Zumbi's significance as a symbol of resistance is, according to Milton, not based on historical fact but based on a myth of his immortality, and of his god status, and is part of a cover-up of the "truth" that blacks waited for whites to give them their freedom, just as contemporary blacks wait for government support and a university degree that will mean nothing in a labor market because the degree was not rightly earned. These blacks are not considered by Milton to be Brazilian. Class becomes dissociated from race in his discussion of quota systems and he evokes the injustice of those who could be white claiming a black great grandfather to gain entry.

The Zumbi who Milton valorizes as a model for Afro-Brazilian inclusion within the nation - fighting in the existing battlefield, without any concessions of government handouts or quotas, is negated by his earlier claim that Zumbi's significance as a symbol of black resistance is based on myth and that there is little documentary evidence regarding Zumbi. Milton's valorized Zumbi is abstract and held as a fabricated ideal without the substance of historic presence, a presence based on Euro-centric standards of documentary evidence.

The “givers” of freedom in Milton’s narrative are Brazilian whites, this corresponds with the received lesson on Princess Isabel as the Redemptress and Liberator of slaves that other residents relay, often with criticism of its efficacy and sometimes critiquing the validity of arrogating the liberation of blacks to Princess Isabel, rather than a process which included a long history of African and Afro-Brazilian resistance. In contemporary contexts of Milton’s narrative, the “giver” of money and education becomes “the government” which is unmarked racially, but takes the place of whites in the trajectory of donor-receiver relationship (Blakey 1990) being described through time. Milton’s characterization of Afro-Brazilian, the history of slavery, and the relationship between slavery and contemporary social dynamics relies on racist stereotypes, depicts Afro-Brazilians as passive, relegates Zumbi’s story of resistance to a mythical status, and where he speaks of the enslaved, it is not of their experiences but of their treatment “as trash” though he does not say who is responsible for this treatment. Milton’s narrative is consistent with the patterns identified by Santos’ (2005) in her analysis of messages conveyed by Brazilian museums that depict Afro-Brazilian history and culture (see Introduction).

Informal conversations with white middle-class retired school teachers³²⁰ conveyed a discomfort with teaching about Zumbi, stating that it was “complicated” when students asked about Zumbi because Zumbi was

³²⁰ Informal Interview. November 19, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.
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mythical and not a historical figure. He was a “social reality” and real in terms of “folklore,” but not historically real. One former teacher said that “there is no way/ *não tem jeito nenhum*” that Zumbi actually existed, but rather he is a figment that blacks created as a symbol in order to have something to be proud of. This exchange suggests that the construction of Zumbi as myth may be more broadly resonant among the white middle class, perhaps the generation in their 50s and 60s, for whom Zumbi inhabits a symbolic role that is mythical at best, if not outright fictitious.³²¹ Rio’s Zumbi monument does not contradict this narrative.

In 2006, **Antonio Carlos Rodrigues** was creating presentations to IPHAN (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional) to propose etching the history of Zumbi into the sides of the monument’s pyramid pedestal. He said that his history needed to be included on the monument, which simply had a plaque that read “Zumbi dos Palmares” (see Chapter 6). The blank pyramid leaves the question of Zumbi’s historicity in question.

The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos provides the irrefutable evidence of the history of slavery in Rio’s Port District. As of 2009, there had been no additional excavations within the IPN spaces. Antonio Carlos was concerned that, until there were efforts to excavate and have educational exhibits that

³²¹Younger residents of Rio de Janeiro tended to self-identify as “brown” or “mixed” and not “white,” and did not speak of Zumbi dos Palmares or his story as potentially mythical, though areas of contest were sometimes referred to in discussing his history (see also Chapter 10).

demonstrated the archaeological and osteological findings, to “show how it used to be, show how they were interred, how the Cemetery came to be, where the cemetery was before” that it would remain suspect as a “story” rather than “history.” Indeed, this is reflected in what Simone said regarding the site. Though, evidence of the cemetery may also deter some from visiting, like Simone, who prefer to think of the site as a cultural space for events. As of 2012, excavations had been conducted and a small portion of the burial ground was left exposed for public viewing (see Figure 8.2).



Figure 8.2: The Instituto de Pesquisa e Memória Pretos Novos, renovated exhibit space July 10, 2012. In the foreground, a portion of the excavation remains visible for visitors. Photo taken by Autumn Barrett.

There is a class dimension to the significance of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, as well. Antonio Carlos also said that residents were averse to visiting a cemetery site due to “an issue regarding the dead. With the dead, you have a certain fear...” Antonio Carlos expressed the need for more events where the residents can come and be familiar with the IPN because “really, those who come there to visit, in truth it’s just people from outside [of the neighborhood], people from there very rarely go, very few people go.” He sees this as partially an issue of “culture” because the neighborhood residents “are poor...why are folks going to come in to a gallery of art to see a painting or a sculpture?” Similar to the desires expressed by Simone, Antonio Carlos said that music events would be more accessible to residents. While the IPN has consistently held various types of cultural events, the cover charges for some events held at the IPN may have deterred some residents from participating. For Mercedes and Petrúcio, the upkeep of the IPN required charging and selling concessions to raise funds. However, the accessibility to residents was a topic that came up in several interviews in 2008 and 2009.

Alder Augusto Silva is a 20 year old Afro-Brazilian living in the adjacent neighborhood of Morro de Conceição, next to the Pedra do Sal (see Chapter

6). In our first conversation,³²² Alder said that he felt that the U.S. and Brazil have differences that are “primarily cultural,” but that both countries have gone through the same processes. He also said that he was interested in studying history, anthropology, psychology, and political science, in order to understand his own “historical identity,” a concept I had not discussed with him at that time.

In 2008, while having a conversation in Machado de Assis park in Morro do Pinto, overlooking the Port District, Alder spoke of how there are proposals to change the port zone because it is no longer being used in the same way, and the area has died. He points to condominiums that were built to house workers who, now, are no longer needed. Proposals, he says, include creating an aquarium and focusing on Dom João VI, because it is “the History of Brazil.” “THIS” he says, with sarcasm, “is the history of Brazil.” There is a desire to change the port without any reference to the real history of the area. “This,” he says, referring to the *Zona Portuaria* (Port Zone), “is where this country was born.” He spoke of Morro da Providência, the first favela and where favelas got their name, where “negros” e “pretos” came when they moved here from the northeast to work. He says that blacks still work in

³²² Augusto Silva, Alder. Informal Interview, August 2, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

“salaried slavery,” saying that he is referring to concepts he has been reading about alienation.³²³

For Alder³²⁴, the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos is a site that exemplifies current society. He said the IPN has “white owners” and criticizes that it is private rather than public and is often closed, pointing to the fact that it was currently closed at 10 am on a Wednesday as we walked by. He said that the history of the site is very tied to the history of Brazil and Afro-Brazilians but it is not a space that has been recognized as part of the history. In his opinion, it should not be a private space, but a space for “the people, the public.” He said that these are “political” issues. He thinks that Afro-Brazilians must be in leadership positions in order to make changes.

Alder³²⁵ spoke to me of science and the distancing of scientists from the lives of people on whom their work is focused. He said that they maintain a distance and do their work and then they go back to their countries. More broadly Alder critiqued how scientists distance themselves from emotions and the aspects of life that make us human beings. Alder said that the desire to

³²³ An avid reader, Alder spoke frequently to me of his latest literary find. Although he was not enrolled in a University or taking University courses at the time, Alder has since been accepted and is now attending the Federal University of Bahia, where he is studying social science.

³²⁴ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interview, August 27, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³²⁵ Augusto, Alder. Interview, September 4, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

quantify the number of Africans who entered Rio and the IPN wanting to know the parameters of the cemetery and the numbers was part of this approach. He did not see a desire to understanding the lives of “*negros* and *pretos*.”

Alder observed that, once again, the IPN seemed closed.³²⁶ The doors, at that time, were garage-style sliding doors with a smaller doorway that could be opened, and only the small door was open that day. Indeed, when I arrived in 2008, I noted a difference in the space since I had last visited. There didn't appear to be as many visitors and Petrúcio said that he had to be there all day, alone, and that he got scared. There was a heavy military looking police presence in Gamboa at that time.³²⁷ I mentioned to Alder that there used to be a lot of cultural events before, when Antonio Carlos Rodrigues was working there. Alder said, “Yes I know. He built the Institute. He did everything.”³²⁸ Alder went on to say that he felt Mercedes and Petrúcio, had exploited Antonio Carlos and that the IPN was not for the people, but for their own benefit. Mercedes and Petrúcio, who have “no historic ties to the site” want to keep it privately owned because it brings them importance.³²⁹ Alder provided, as an example, the fact that Mercedes now

³²⁶ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interview, September 5, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³²⁷ Barrett, Autumn. Field Notes August 2, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³²⁸ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interview, September 5, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³²⁹ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interview, October 1, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

keeps company with local politicians who would not have paid her attention in the past.

Regarding the statue of Princess Isabel in Copacabana, Alder said,³³⁰ she would have been the first queen here in Brazil, but she helped to bring about the republic by signing the Golden Law due to “international pressures and bourgeois pressures.” He was standing in the front of her statue and referred to her as “aquela bonitinha” (that little pretty one), and spoke of the history of her father leaving and how she signed the law. He then said that while it is believed that liberty was given to the enslaved, it did not happen all at once but gradually and the descendants of slaves are still experiencing the repercussions of this badly executed liberty.

We visited the statue together, and when Alder read the plaque that says “Princess Isabel – Redentora dos Escravos” (Redemptress of the Slaves) he said, “this is ridiculous, whites created this monument and call her the ‘Redemptress of the Slaves’” and all of the Afro-Brazilians “who struggled and died fighting for their liberty” are forgotten, as well as the international pressures that influenced her signing the law.

³³⁰ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interview, October 2, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The History of Slavery and Resistance in Daily Life

“History” in the abstract was usually discussed as “important” by most residents in Rio de Janeiro. The particular significance of histories represented by the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the Rio monuments to Zumbi and Princess Isabel varied and tended to vary according to class status and whether or not people identified as Afro-Brazilian or “black,” rather than “mixed,” “brown,” or “white.” University educated Afro-Brazilians identified connections between slavery in the past and racial oppression and social inequity in the present. The political struggle for equality was a personally experienced part of their lives that was contextualized by the history of African enslavement and resistance in Brazil. Historic sites and representations of these histories were about the past *and* the present.

Oscar, who vaguely described his ancestry as “I don’t know, Portuguese,” sees absolutely no personal connection between history and his struggle to make a living for his family, much less the sites and monuments related to Afro-Brazilian history. These interrogations are for academic exercises that bring him no benefit. The relationships between the history of slavery and the present were most saliently discussed as personally relevant in the daily lives of people who identified as Afro-Brazilian (or black), were among the working class and the poor residents of Rio de Janeiro. Even where the historic details of the Cemetery, Zumbi, and Princess Isabel were not well known or were variably known, the history of slavery was relevant to their lives,

primarily as workers who were still being exploited and felt that slavery continued in various forms. These residents valued efforts to tell the stories of enslaved Africans and Afro-Brazilians who built and created Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. This self-determined narrative directly conflicts with Milton Teixeira's, white middle class vision of Brazil as having been built by his ancestors, to the point that he, himself embodies the history of Brazil.

Residents of Copacabana tended to view history, in general, as important but expressed this importance as a distant narrative of the broad connections of the past to the present. Marcelo saw the history of slavery as personally important because he has ancestors who were enslaved, though he does not identify himself as "Afro-Brazilian" or "black." Túlio discussed the personal importance of the history of Zumbi dos Palmares as relevant to himself almost solely because he is an Afro-descendant, and is ascribed the descriptor of "black" (*negro*). Zumbi dos Palmares remains a distant racial example that is important primarily for African descendants in Brazil and political groups who work for social equality. Inclusion of the histories of Indigenous Brazilians and Afro-Brazilians into the mainstream historical narrative was of particular importance to Túlio, to tell a complete story of Brazil (see chapter 10).

Princess Isabel emerged as a contested historical figure for most residents, with the Golden Law, as flawed attempt at ending slavery and leading to contemporary inequity for many Afro-Brazilians and for exploited laborers of

all ethnicities. However, her narrative was the most well known and consistently relayed by all residents, despite class status, education, or ethnic affiliation. While resistance was read into this received narrative of the “Redemptress of the Slaves” by Carmen, the story remains a narrative of an Portuguese Regent’s gift to the enslaved, whether faulty, or not.

The material presence of the human remains of enslaved Africans within the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos anchors this history of oppression and resistance in the place and space of Rio de Janeiro’s Gamboa and brings the trajectory of past and present within a material and tangible domain. I suggest that articulating Zumbi with the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos site (through prominent tributes, events, representations) is more than a political signifier of a “black history” site, but continues to assert Zumbi as part of an historically particular fight against racism experienced by Africans and African descendants in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. As Antonio Carlos explained, this fight includes the contemporary struggle to have the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro told and represented. Community claims to recover, and sanctify ancestral burial places that have been desecrated by slaveholders and slaveholding societies, predominantly by people of European descent, is contextualized as a Diasporan fight through displaying and telling the history of the New York African Burial Ground at the Cemetery site. The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos holds a story of atrocious human rights violations committed by enslavers against enslaved Africans, in life and in death. This

is a story that could easily fall into the mainstream messages identified by Santos (2005), where the victimization of enslaved Africans is used to create an image of weakness and passivity. Making visible the most prominent narrative of Afro-Brazilian resistance against slavery at the Cemetery site serves to contextualize the atrocities within a larger trajectory of experiences. Afro-Brazilians did not express wanting to reverse the erasures of history by only focusing on resistance and heroic figures, but to tell the whole human story of Africans in Rio de Janeiro and in Brazil.

Several of the Rio de Janeiro residents who spoke with me, used the term “*negro*” and “slave” interchangeably. Carmen spoke of the oppression against the “weaker or the slaves” which has “always” occurred. The history of slavery, even where it is being criticized as unjust, seen as a history of the strong Europeans who used their strength to vanquish and enslave weak Africans. An absence of resistance in the historical narrative and in the historically represented landscape corroborates this myth. The history presented by the IPN during Antonio Carlos tenure included all of the atrocities committed against the enslaved who were interred, and honored their lives by representing stories of resistance that run throughout the history of slavery in Brazil. Celebrations of African and Afro-Brazilian cultures celebrate the resilience of the ancestors who went before and is lived by those who carry on their memory. “The Cemitério dos Pretos novos, for me,”

says Antonio Carlos,³³¹ “represents the debt that enslaving nations owe to the black Brazilian. This is why we speak about the issue of reparations. One of the pieces of evidence for reparations from France, England, Portugal... is the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, for us, as activists in the *movimento negro*.” The story of resistance is ongoing.

Alder's critique of the current dynamics surrounding the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos suggests ongoing conflict over the ownership of the site, its use, and the story told through the site. He views the site as having “white owners” who benefit from the work of an Antonio Carlos and from a slave history site, while the descendant community does not experience the site as accessible. Since the IPN has received some financial support as the renovations to the Port District are being implemented in anticipation of the World Cup and the Olympic Games, renovations have taken place in the space of the IPN. The IPN exhibit, classroom, and cultural spaces had been renovated when I returned in 2012. Although scholars such as Júlio César Medeiros Pereira and Claudio Honorato have been involved for years, an increasing number of archaeologists, historians, and anthropologists are becoming more involved in the research and activities of the IPN, though Mercedes Guimarães continues to make all executive decisions. Activists and members of the *movimento negro*, such as Penha Santos, continue to be integral to the daily

³³¹ Rodrigues, Antonio Carlos. Interview, January 27, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

administration of the IPN. However, Zumbi is no longer as prominent within this renovated space. While foregrounding the lives and stories of those interred is absolutely appropriate and is exciting to see, centered in the exhibit space is a reconstructed whipping post (see Figure 2.26). As the IPN and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos move further into public knowledge and official recognition with governmental support, will the narrative move toward displaying the messages identified by Santos (2005)?

Penha³³² is concerned that the current support for IPN and the attention being paid to the Valongo site and excavation will not be maintained once the World Cup and the Olympics are over. Representatives of the *movimento negro* had petitioned for the government to promise to maintain these sites beyond the upcoming tourism boom and, at that time, no commitment had been made. Penha refused to go to the inaugural opening of the excavation and memorial space at Valongo because of this. Control over the representation of the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro is still in contest. Residents are unclear if their voices are being heard, or simply co-opted to increase tourism at the their expense.

³³² Santos, Penha. Informal Interview, July 10, 2012.

Section IV: Narratives of History, Narratives of Self

“identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall 1990:225).

Introduction

One of my research questions asked how U.S. Americans and Brazilians learn to see themselves in relationship to a past (or not)? What aspects of the histories that contribute to national and alternative narratives are made personally meaningful in the lives of residents in the United States and Brazil? Related to these questions, I sought to understand how the representations of African enslavement and resistance informed the articulation of meaningful pasts and personal histories in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, two cities that were central to the history of slavery in each country, and two cities central to the histories of these multi-ethnic nations. Forced and voluntary founders of Indigenous, African and European ancestries, are central to national stories of origin in the U.S. and Brazil. Stories of ‘who we are’ and ‘how we came to be’ in particular cultural and geographical contexts are woven by residents with threads of family, regional, and national histories?

My preliminary review of ethnographic literature on Brazil brought me to question how people living in multi-cultural nations see themselves in relationship with particular narratives of the past. Robin Sheriff’s (2001) ethnography on racism and the ideal of racial democracy within Rio de

Janeiro demonstrates the connection between modes of identifying self in terms of color, ideas of race, and the history of slavery (see discussion in Chapter 10). Sheriff (2001) explores the difference between understandings of color, which is much more fluid, and race. Race “is conceptualized as more of a fundamental, immutable, and deep quality than cor [color], which is, of necessity, always imprecise” (2001 :37). One woman said,

Look, so many [words] exist exactly so that one is not totally of a negro color. So they use the mulata color, the parda color, the morena color, to treat the person as if they were a little lighter, a little like, less discriminated against..One is white or one is black. But people feel so humiliated to be negro. The negro was a slave. The negro suffered. The negro was treated like an animal. All that. But here, it is truly correct to say that one is white or one is black (preto). No one can be anything else. (Sheriff 2001:39)

The racial, “immutable”, qualities of a “negro,” associated with the color descriptor “preto,” are connected with shame and humiliation associated with the history of slavery. Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ (1992) ethnography of impoverished communities in Northeast Brazil includes conversations where participants refer to their abilities based on associations with self characterizations connected to being Northeastern Brazilians. Scheper-Hughes claims, however, that Brazilians in the Northeastern *mata* do not conceive of history in understanding connections between the past and their material conditions and socio-economic status. Scheper-Hughes states:

These people are the descendants of a slave and runaway slave-Indian (caboclo) population. Yet they do not think to link their current difficulties to a history of slavery and race exploitation. Racism is a disallowed and submerged discourse

in Northeast Brazil, so that every bit as much as Wolf's (1982) European peasants, these are a people, "without a history." They call themselves simply *os pobres* [the poor], and they describe themselves as *moreno* (brown), almost never as *preto* or *negro* (black) (Scheper-Hughes 1992:90) [bracketed notation added]

While Northeast Brazilians who participated in Scheper-Hughes' study may not have conveyed particular connections between the history of slavery and their contemporary conditions, they demonstrate that they apply negative characterizations of Northeastern Brazilians as less educated and less intelligent to themselves. When asking a pointed question, one man answered, "I am a *matuto*, Dona Nanci; I have no head to answer a question like that" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:184). Another woman described a choice that she made as evidence of her "race,"- "ignorant race that I am, did I understand anything about bank checks?" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:257) There is a history to this association and the ways they were learned that is not explored by Scheper-Hughes.

France Winddance Twine's (1998) study of a rural Brazilian community, Vasalia, whose members were children and grandchildren of enslaved Brazilians. Their ancestors lived and worked on the very land where Vasalians now live. Interviews with members of this community surprised Twine, because Vasalians did not acknowledge to Twine that slavery existed there. "Slavery" was an event that happened somewhere else in the Northeast for example, far away from Vasalia (Twine 2001[1998]:115).

African ancestry was silenced within oral histories and in photo albums (Twine 2001[1998]:122). Discussions with residents demonstrated a sense that European ancestry was associated with social mobility and therefore, constructions of family trees in which European ancestry could be demonstrated increased the potential for economic success.

One man, who identified himself as “negro” or “preto” described slaves as “most backward” and “primitive” and that slaves “brought that type of behavior here with them...so they didn’t have the facility to progress like the Italians.” Furthermore, Fernando explained that blacks do not get hired for jobs within banks because they have low IQs - not because of racist discrimination – because bank jobs are open to everyone (Twine 2001[1998]: 77). Twine’s (2001[1998]) study demonstrates a characterization of African ancestry as “backward” in association with a past that included enslavement and forced migration which “brought” innate and heritable behaviors that were viewed as negative, versus innate and heritable behaviors brought by Italian immigrants that were viewed as positive. Further, Fernando identifies himself as directly associated with a “backward” African heritage and past that determines his future socioeconomic potential.

Within Twine’s observation of Vasalia classrooms, teachers discussed slavery briefly and highlighted “racial harmony.” Imagery used in the classroom foregrounded identification with European ancestry rather than African or

Indigenous ancestry (Twine 2001[1998]: 54). Twine (2001[1998]) goes further than Scheper-Hughes(1992) and Sheriff (2001) in exploring the ways the past informs present presentations of self. However, Twine's (2001[1998]) analysis is not focused on the ways narratives of the past as History inform personal ideas of self and ability. ³³³Narratives of the past and contributions of multiples stories of indigeneity, as well as forced and voluntary migrations have made up the contemporary society of Brazil, who people are now and what they can do in the present.

Within the following chapters, I rely on ethnographic interviews conducted in Rio de Janeiro and Richmond between 2006 and 2012. The following material focuses on how residents view the learning and teaching of History, through childhood memories, historic places, and representations of the past as meaningful (or not) to themselves personally. I will first, however, situate my research within scholarly discussions on history, self, and identity.

Narratives of the Past

The "truth" in any singular past in History has been questioned and redefined by scholars exploring complex and nuanced relationships between past and

³³³ Twine's (1998) focus is on the ways race and racism are meaningful to Vasalians. For Twine, childhood was a crucial time during which she learned of racism and her identity as an African American. Twine's assessment of the Vasalia community is that this learning process does not occur for these Brazilians of African descent. Afro-Brazilian teachers made and displayed posters with blond haired and blue-eyed figures and racism, within her experiences, was not discussed in the privacy of Afro-Brazilian homes nor acknowledged as a problem. Social inequalities were recognized as class related.

present within historical inquiry and constructions of historical memory (Lowenthal 1985; Denning 1995; Sahlins 1995; Shaw 2002). Historiography is a constructive and selective process, as is construction of memories of the past. Furthermore, historiography and conceptualization of the relationship between past and present is constructed within particular cultural, temporal and spatial contexts (de Certeau 1988; Trouillot 1995; Price 1998, 1990; Cohen 1994).

Binary classifications of societies, following Lévi-Strauss (1962), as hot or cold, with or without history, civilized or primitive were challenged as anthropologists studied the cultural specificity of conceptions of time and change. As Marshall Sahlins states succinctly, "Different cultures, different historicities" for "different cultural orders have their own modes of historical action, consciousness, and determination – their own historical practice" (1985:x, 34). Critique of anthropological method and "western" historiography were inherent in challenges to formerly held notions of History and Time. Renato Rosaldo, in his study of Ilongot society and history, argues:

the analytic method of freezing time in order to better perceive the relations of a structural-functional societal whole has itself produced the illusion of 'timeless primitives.' In most anthropological studies, the whole question of history, both as process and as consciousness, has been neither refuted nor confirmed, but simply ignored. It is surely no accident that historians study so-called hot societies and anthropologists study so-called cold societies (1980:27).

First Time by Richard Price demonstrates the culturally specific historicity of the Saramaka in Suriname as well as how Saramaka historians weighed evidence in selecting from “the general past (everything that happened) into the significant past, their history” (Price 2002[1983]:5).

The informing role of the present within this selection process and the articulation and re-articulation of “the significant past” to present meaning requires understanding a plurality of pasts and vantage points rather than a singular narrative or “truth” (de Certeau 1988, Price 1990, 1998; Cohen 1994, Denning 1995; Habu et al.2008). Understanding the plasticity of “History” enables analyses beyond what “actually happened” but how present day power relationships direct the construction of history, memory and meaning (Lowenthal 1985, Shaw 2002). The role of power must be understood in relationship to competing narratives in determining the contextualization of various “pasts” and what histories become dominant narratives at the expense of silencing others. Such an understanding foregrounds the integral role past and memory play in mobilizing action against social inequality (Rappaport 1990, 1994, Blakey 1991, Trouillot 1995, Price 1998, Epperson, 1999). Within such a context, foregrounding and re-contextualizing narratives and pasts that have been silenced are crucial to reshaping the present and future. Rappaport (1990), referring to Páez historicity states:

the moral history articulated by contemporary Páez activists is operationalized at the interface of the native community and the broader Colombian society...Consequently, Páez historical

consciousness must be examined within the context of historical developments in the broader society, including transformation of political systems, the changing nature of historical evidence in the legal system and the history of Colombian historiography (1990:9).

History becomes contested terrain within which identities and lives are at stake. Past and present are intricately and inextricably intertwined.

Studies of historicity in terms of memory, history, identity and resistance include the ways in which historical narratives are represented through commemorative events, monuments and historical imagery, as well as enacted within daily activity (Lowenthal 1985, Connerton 1999[1989], Comaroff 1985, Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, Trouillot 1995). Borofsky's ethnographic analysis of Pukapukan historicity explores the ways in which knowledge and historical meanings are learned contextually through action, "what is learned often arises from carrying out concrete tasks in everyday life" (1987:79). As Shaw argues,

there are other ways of remembering the past than by speaking of it... A theory of practice is also a theory of memory that suggests a different way of 'remembering' the past, in which not only everyday choices...but also violently dislocating transregional processes...are rendered internal, are (literally) incorporated into people and their social and cultural practice (Shaw 2002:2,5).

While my research focuses on dialogues on the past and historic sites, my ethnographic research suggests that these narratives of the past are narratives of national, regional, and personal aspects, or dimensions of

identity. Historic sites become sites of contest because they touch on contested values that resonate outside the discussion of the past as History.

I approach identity as fluid, lived, and constructed, seeking to understand people's "own sense of being" (Clarke 2008:513). I have also sought to understand how residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro perceive relationships between power, knowledge, representation, and the idea of race in the process of "becoming" as well as "being."

National identities in the Americas include histories of colonialism and slavery, historic contexts in which the idea of race emerged and was used to justify exploitation of peoples and their bodies, labor and lands (Blakey 1999; Smedley Smedley 2012; Baker 1998). The stories of "contributions" made by Indigenous American, African, and European peoples and cultures to forming the nation become moments of identity production, or in the process of always 'becoming'. The telling of these stories occur through formal education programs, family education, monuments and historic sites.

In United States and Brazil, personal identities are historically situated in relationship with particular pasts that are learned as children. Personal identities continue to be re-formed, and/or maintained through ongoing positionings of self with dialogues of the past. Formal schooling perpetuates narratives supporting a racist and hierarchical vision of the past, where

historical progress was driven by the actions of European elites and their descendants in the Americas. How do the stories of Indigenous and African members of multicultural nations in the Americas fit within the formative narratives that include multicultural “contributions”? How do the histories of slavery, genocide, and oppression become reconciled within narratives of nations that claim egalitarian ideals? Do these narratives socialize the relationships described by Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005)?

The chapters in this section discuss how residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro remember learning about history, particularly the histories of slavery and African resistance to slavery. Through conversations with residents of Richmond and Rio, the role of history in multiple positionings of self emerges, as do the relationships between narratives of the past, ideas of race, and naturalized notions of contemporary hierarchy and inequity. As with previous chapters grounded in ethnographic interviews, the following chapters foreground narratives of people who express how residents of Richmond and Rio have learned to see themselves in relationship to particular pasts during their life experiences and how these lessons have influenced perceptions of self, state, and nation.

Chapter 9: History and Identity in Richmond

"You can't tell us the story, we know the story, we're PART of the story." (Rolandah Cleopatrah, 6 November 2001, Richmond, VA)

The myth of American slavery being bounded in the South of the U.S. was exposed by the "rediscovery" of the African Burial Ground in New York (Blakey 2009; Perry et al. 2009; Medford 2009). Warren Perry, Director for Archaeology on the New York African Burial Ground Project, discusses the import of the African Burial Ground site, research, and interpretation. Perry (2009) points out that distortions and silencing of the African American past miseducates every member of American society.

The significance of the African Burial Ground extends beyond its importance to the African-American community. The history of this cemetery and of those buried here speaks to the complex history of the United States, with all its diverse populations, and to an even larger, world history. Understanding is diminished when African people, women, and subaltern or working class communities are marginalized; their omission from our collective historical consciousness has negative implications for all (Perry 2009: xix).

The African Burial Ground resonates beyond historical significance, and is made meaningful on the personal, national and international levels. Historic sites, through interpretation, tell stories of who we are now through the connections we have with past peoples, places and events. However, the learning of the past as meaningful in the present often occurs during childhood, being taught at home and at school.

Perry (2009) recalls his experiences learning about history as a young person in New York City schools and the relationship between this experience and the significance of the African Burial Ground site, research, and interpretation:

Growing up in the South Bronx, I was taught in elementary school during the late 1940s and early 1950s that I was fortunate to live in New York City and not in the south, because black folks were

enslaved in the south but were “free” in the north. This “fortune” was belied when I looked around the school and saw no teachers or administrators, let alone principals, who were people of color. The only people of color were black women working in the lunchroom and one black man who was a maintenance worker. Almost all of the students were of African descent, and a few were Puerto Rican. I never knew if we were supposed to be oblivious to this disjuncture, or to accept secondary status and be thankful that we lived in the north.

Our received vision of Africa was no different. I remember being shown a cartoon of loincloth-clad African men with bones in their noses and negatively exaggerated lips and eyes, holding spears and dancing around two white men with pith helmets in a pot of boiling water. The message was clear: I was fortunate to have been descended from Africans who were brought to New York and “saved” by Lincoln, rather than left in the “jungles” of Africa with those cannibalistic ‘savages,’ my ancestors. It was painful to be black in New York City and subjected to an educational system that taught us that Africans had no history until Europeans rescued us from ourselves.

On the other hand, I had parents and grandparents who instilled black pride in my brother and me, and demonstrated to us that we did have a history beyond, and in spite of, captivity in the United States. They taught us about our own family, in particular my great-grandfather, Christopher J. Perry I, who in 1884 founded Philadelphia’s first black newspaper, the Philadelphia Tribune. They introduced us to the achievements of W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Paul Robeson, Marion Anderson, Sojourner Truth and other black leaders who were not part of the New York City school curriculum (Perry 2009: xvii-xviii).

Contrary to a story of African American redemption through slavery that Perry (2009) was taught in school, at home he was taught to be proud of his ethnicity and heritage. Pride was conveyed through the stories of key accomplishments of family members and members of Perry’s “race” throughout the African Diaspora.

How is the “slave shame” that Tiambah Wilkerson says so many African Americans feel in Richmond (see Chapter 7) conveyed? For Wilkerson, the history of slavery was linked to a sense of shame, a feeling of weakness and a question of inferiority,

residual and essentialized characterizations from older dialogues within scientific racism (see Douglass 1854; Blakey 1999; Baker 1998). For 58 year old Dieyah Rasheed, says that the pride she takes in the Burial Ground is that those interred because of their strength and “showing that my race can actually make it through whatever...We can triumph through all of it.” In speaking of Gabriel, Rasheed is inspired by his accomplishments as a leader; “we actually had someone who was knowledgeable enough to know that he didn’t have to stand for what they dished out - and that he was actually good at organizing, he was a revolutionary, and so am I.”³³⁴ Gabriel’s accomplishments countered, perhaps, a racist narrative of blacks as passive to oppression and as disorganized. Indeed, white contemporaries of Gabriel thought white masterminds must have been behind the conspiracy (see Chapter 3) because in their racist worldview, the vast organization and coordination of Gabriel’s rebellion conspiracy was “unthinkable.”³³⁵ Rasheed’s connection with the history of Gabriel is personal “he was a revolutionary, and so am I.” Rashid speaks of her ancestral community and her present community in the same tense. She says that Gabriel “organized us...my people.”³³⁶ Gabriel’s resistance to oppression is part of a long trajectory of African American resistance, a trajectory that she situates herself within as a long time activist and former member of the Black Panthers.

Rasheed has been an “activist and a revolutionary” since a she was a young girl and remembers being the first black student at her high school at age 15. Rasheed

³³⁴ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

³³⁵ Trouillot (1995) discusses how the Haitian revolution was “unthinkable” to contemporary Europeans who consistently looked for white masterminds responsible for using the Haitians as puppets to undermine France.

³³⁶ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

approached her new school about celebrating Black History Month by having Henry Marsh (current state Senator and an African American) come to speak. Marsh agreed to her invitation and Rasheed proceeded with plans until she was called into her school's administrative offices to say that they could no longer proceed with the planned program or recognition of Black History Month because the administrators said, "some parents have complained. They said if we let [you] we've got to celebrate Catholic Day, Jewish Day, Amish Day...everything." Rasheed's response was "Well, we're going to celebrate it, or I'm going to boycott." She says she doesn't know "whether or not the white students were boycotting just to get out of class or not" but for 4 days "no one went to class."³³⁷ The boycott was successful and Henry Marsh was permitted to speak.

In an undergraduate history class at the University of Maryland, Rasheed noticed a "little small chapter" on African American history in her text, but her instructor skipped over it. The instructor, when asked by Rasheed, said she did this because she didn't know anything about African American history. She says, "any time you go to College and you've got to ask an instructor why she's skipping over a chapter, you know, that right there just shows that 'we didn't intend to make it a part of our history, you know, in America'...it's supposed to be just something that's jumped over." Rasheed went to the Dean's office and said it was "a must that we speak about black history in College."³³⁸ She "made a big protest" that resulted in all University professors having to take a course in African American history.³³⁹

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

Rasheed says, "I've been in a battle since I was a little girl" having learned from her father to fearlessly face and combat racism at a very early age. She remembers nights when she stood by her father as her European American neighbor held his regular Klu Klux Klan rallies:

My family had land and white people's land was connected right next to his. So, they had their Klu Klux Klan rallies right beside my father's land. So at 5 and 6 and 7 years old, I was standing on my property with my Dad and his brothers and others with shot guns...daring them to step one damn foot on our property, or they would've been shot because my father did not play.³⁴⁰

She remembers hearing the KKK members' conversations during the meetings "the way they talked about Jews and Black people. They even sometimes spoke out against Catholics...anybody that didn't agree..." Recalling the whole scene she says, "it was an image of, really, meanness to me, because of course they had...their Confederate flags and everything flying too." Rasheed says that she "grew up with a very negative image about Confederates, and white people." Many of her neighbors and the people who "lived right in our community" were KKK members that attended meetings next door to her. But then, afterward, would greet her father as though they were simply greeting a neighbor or friend, a contradiction that seemed "crazy" to Rasheed.³⁴¹

Rasheed learned about African American history "by doing research for my Mom and for my Dad and going to the Library. This is how I studied black history...not in school." Rasheed feels that if African American history had been integrated into her

³⁴⁰ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

younger education, she would have been even stronger as a person (see discussion in Chapter 7). Rasheed says, "I wouldn't have had to go through so much if people would have realized how important it was. Every time I looked, I had to be fighting something, or struggling to do something, or being called a nigger."³⁴² Though she says she was "never intimidated" by racists, she wished she had been taught African American history earlier, "I shouldn't have had to go through all that, as a young person." For contemporary youths, Rasheed says this is still important, "it could give them something to look forward to, that could make them stronger." From conversations with young African Americans in Richmond she sees "they have no role models." She says

even if they could see the role models, like Gabriel...if they could just even read that in a book, you never know what kind of influence that could have on some young black man...to know that, and even see Martin Luther King, Malcolm X..Gabriel Prosser, all of them together...Haile Selassie, all of them...Elijah Muhammed, all of them were leaders...They need to see these black men that did something for...our education and for our upbringing and for our rights...³⁴³

When she shares the story of Gabriel with Richmond youth, she says they react by saying "He did what?" and "Oh Man, that's bad!" She says, "It's like...they can't believe it." Rasheed's dialogue demonstrates her desire for education to incorporate histories that provides role models from national leaders as well as international Diasporan leaders.

Rolandah Cleopatra says she learned about Gabriel and Nat Turner and "a lot of different leaders, or Freedom fighters" because she was educated "up North."

³⁴² Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Growing up in the North is salient to Cleopatrah, where she says there were “more..what we call freedom fighter type people, or revolutionary type people.” She says she has “always been a Freedom Fighter from day one. Or, for as far as I can remember.” For Cleopatrah, a “Freedom Fighter” means:

Freedom from oppression, and slavery type things. Freedom from not being considered equal. Freedom Fighter meaning, getting that awareness out to the people so that we won't have to be fighting for, just to live on a day to day basis...to fight to get that stance that we should have already had that is really God given. But, because you live in a community, or communities of people who don't feel that you are equal to them...we have to fight to prove our equalness.

She feels she was educated in the North to be more aware of the history of slavery and that, for the United States, it began in Virginia. When she moved back to Richmond, making the specific connections to of space and place to the history she had learned “amazed” her. Through working with the Defenders in 2003, Cleopatrah learned more about the history of Shockoe Bottom and the Burial Ground.

She contrasts her education in the North with her continued secondary education in the South. In 1995, about a year after moving back to Richmond, she was enrolling at a local Community College “and at the time they were having the students vote on whether they should have Black History classes. And, for me, I was like, why do you have to vote on something like that? That should be a normal thing...Where I was raised, they were already doing that.” She wondered why a vote was needed “here, where most of that stuff happened...So, I was appalled by that. This is just crazy. Of course, I voted ‘yes’ but I just didn't understand why I *had* to vote.”

While Cleopatra's education provided her with African American figures of resistance, her education also conveyed a characterization of the North as home to freedom and freedom fighters, while the history of slavery and racism within were bounded by the South. In the South, these narratives remain contested. While Cleopatra was aware of Gabriel, she said that the "only thing I knew is that he was...revolting against the slave masters, that's the only real story I knew. I *did* know that much." She says she learned much more after becoming involved with the Defenders and the Sacred Ground project.

Cleopatra says that growing up in the North shaped her because of the way one's mentality is formed, she says, "the mentalization is very different. It's still somewhat the same because we all still live under the same flag" but she says that people who grew up in the North are "more willing to come out and fight for freedom, justice, and equality. They are more educated on the history, much more educated...much more willing to do whatever it takes to bring on equality than they are here in the South." She speaks to a greater level of respect and ease of interaction between cultures, an "unstructured way of knowing how to deal with each other." In contrast, "down here in the South, it's a lot more laid back, and they're not educated as much on the situation...I thank the Lord everyday...because I just look at my own individual family, and I see the ones who stayed here, and the ones who lived up North...I see the big difference."

The characterizations of North and South, as described by Cleopatra, echo comments made by an African American resident of Richmond who participated in a

community meeting in October 2008 to discuss action around the Burial Ground. The woman introduced herself by discussing the differences she experienced between living in Richmond and her home state, New York. She said, "coming from New York, I feel like such a Freedom Fighter" and went on to describe her experience of African Americans in the South, specifically referring to lack of knowledge surrounding African American leaders and scholars. Another participant who grew up in Henrico County, east of Richmond City, made the point to say that "40 years ago a lot of us were put in jail, killed" and that others were "run the hell up out of Richmond. Anyone who had any power - Confederates ran up out of here." While expressing a frustration in the "apathetic state" she sees among African Americans in Richmond, she also made clear that that there has been a history of resistance as well as a history of severe repercussion in Richmond; "they tried back then but it was, whew, it was treacherous."

Charity Pierce, a 22 year old African American woman African American Studies major studying at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2009 remembers learning about resistance from her mother's advice after she was upset by a 6th grade classroom experience with a European American teacher:

I remember in class, like, I had asked one time....why were we learning the history of slavery....And we weren't learning, like, the figures of resistance in slavery, we were learning about like how people were hung, or how people were...1/3 of a person...we were learning about these things, these things that show inferiority, the so-called inferiority of ...the enslaved Africans.

So, we were *learning* this *constantly*, like I remember we were on this topic for, like, forever. And I just finally gave up...I raised my hand and I said, 'Why are we still learning this? Like, was there any other history in Virginia, period? Why are we still learning this?' And, all he could say to me was "It's very important to learn your history." After that, I

went home and told my Mom what happened, because, I didn't know why that affected me. I didn't know why it hurt me, but I knew for some reason, something - that's something that should hurt me. And then, when I sat back and told my Mom about what he said,...she told me that, 'Charity, what he is telling you to your face, is that you're inferior. So, what you have to do, is show him that you're not inferior, and you don't have to get his approval to know that you're not inferior. You've just got to show him what the Creator has created you to be, what the ancestors have created you to be, what the Universe has created you to be. You're not created as what they said.'

So, since *then*, I've always had this air of like, 'I'm not going to *prove* you wrong, but I'm going to *stand* in this person who I am, because I don't have to prove anything to you, I'm just going to be the black woman I was created to be...³⁴⁴

The lessons of slavery were, for Pierce, lessons in who she was to see herself to be. Her teacher saw the history of slavery and the atrocities committed by enslavers as her history, but resistance to that oppression was omitted or distorted. When I asked if Pierce she ever learned of Gabriel or Nat Turner, she said that "when we were taught the story of Nat Turner, we were taught...he was like, the most evil dude ever and you should be ashamed that he was an African American." Compared to the time spent discussing the atrocities of slavery, Pierce remembers a one hour class being committed to discussing Nat Turner and characterized the representation of Turner as "this guy, he went out and killed and look at what an abomination." For Pierce, even the story of resistance she learned in school was a narrative of African American inferiority and a lesson in futility:

He killed so many and didn't succeed. You're teaching me that this person who fought against the wrongs of slavery, who, in his mind, felt that killing people was the way to..resist against slavery - and that 'he didn't succeed.' That kind of like...puts a slap in your face to say whatever you do, you're not worth it, or it's useless...don't even worry about trying, because you're not going to succeed...the biggest plan that you ever had, don't worry about it because it's going to fail. And your going to look like a bad person in the end.

³⁴⁴ Charity Pierce, September 24, 2009, Richmond, VA.

Pierce said that if it were not for her Mother, whom she described as a former Black Panther, to counter the lessons she learned in school she said

I would've definitely felt no pride in being...an African American...I wouldn't have pride in who I am. I would just be an American....I'm Sudanese and Nigerian, that's who I am...I do have Portuguese in me, I do have British in me, but my root, my color, my skin, shows that I'm Nigerian and I'm Sudanese...that's me. That's my ancestry. So, if I didn't have my Mom there, I wouldn't care at all about the fact that I'm from...Sudan and I'm from Nigeria.

Pierce described her mom as a former Black Panther and said that the lessons she taught her in resistance against contemporary oppression included choosing not to patron stores who treated her with prejudice, taking care of herself and her body and eating healthy. She used the example of her Great Auntie who is in her 90s and "the reason why she's alive for so long and why people around her are so healthy is because she owns her own farm...That's resistance...that's resistance against an institution that doesn't care about the black community...it doesn't have to be ...protesting all day." Pierce drew on family members, primarily women, who taught her strength and pride in her ethnicity. Pierce's activism, including protests and petitions to preserve and memorialize the Richmond African Burial Ground emerged from a strong desire to honor her personal and community ancestors, to serve the Black Community, and to strengthen her community members.

Pierce's expression of personal identity in relationship to the Burial Ground site was variably expressed as a racial or a Diasporan identity that she conveyed in terms of the Black Community and the philosophies of the Afrikana student organization that she led. Pierce's school experiences and her mother's counter lessons, however,

were expressed as personal and she spoke a great deal during our discussion about her desire to continue to grow as a strong black woman. The examples she gave of strong black women she admired included family members and Harriet Tubman.

Zainab Kamarah accompanied Charity Pierce and provided an interview after Pierce. Kamarah is a 22 year old African American woman who grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina but moved to Richmond when she was 12 years old. Recalling her educational experiences, Kamarah said:

Before college, very sparingly, I remember I was in a lot of advanced placement history classes...and we *really* didn't talk about it too much.

"I remember in my eighth grade history class, it was called World History and we did examine the ancient dynasties of Africa, but we never really discussed slavery. And I went to Collegiate School here in Richmond, which is an awkward context to try to and teach slavery and black history in general, so there was minimal discussion about slavery or civil rights or black history in general...

...it was awkward because Collegiate is a community of very well-to-do white people. So, their world view is even more different from your - I guess, your average everyday Joe-like man. Because they come from a position of white privilege and a position of financial privilege, so their world view is a lot different, and - they're much more Eurocentric...

We had to fight...to get an African American literature course at our school.

Because each grade is organized by themes. And I think 9th grade is like American Literature, 10th grade is Modern American Literature, 11th grade is British Literature, so there's really no discussion of *any* people of color. They are very, very Eurocentric and convey a Christian tradition oriented - and they say that - they're very well aware of that.

So, it *is* an awkward context to, you know, bring it up, because a lot of these people are wealthy *because of* slavery...these are all old tobacco inheritance, you know? So...it's an awkward context to try to teach it, and they don't really try attempt [to]."

For Kamarah, most of her knowledge about the history of slavery and African resistance to slavery in the U.S. came from personal investigation, though she claims that VCU provided an environment where questions arose in the classroom setting that she researched on her own. Her experience at a primarily white, elite, private school was formative in shaping how she saw herself.

...going to Collegiate gave me a different cognizance as a person of color. I don't think I was that aware of my blackness before Collegiate, and after Collegiate, I think, just naturally wanted to know more about my world culture as a black person. I kind of took the initiative to learn on my own.

Kamarah emphasized on several occasions, the need for young black children to learn histories of Africa's richness in culture and history. In discussing the personal significance of the movement to memorialize the Richmond African Burial Ground she spoke of the pervasive presence of Confederate history in Richmond (see Chapter 6) and then moved on to say:

...for me, I just want to be able to tell my kids one day, you know, this is *why* I'm proud to be black and I want *you* to be proud to be black. Hopefully, maybe we'll get to the point where, that's not important...your blackness isn't part of your identity, but, for the time being, it looks like it won't be that way for a while. I'm going to tell my kids and my brothers and sisters in the community that are younger than me that this history matters, like, you matter because this history matters.

Kamarah went further to explain her emphasis on young people:

...it's important because it builds self-esteem...before I went to Collegiate, like I knew I was black, but I had no idea the social significance of being black....It's just like when you find out you're a girl and people evaluate you as less than because you're female.

I was aware of myself, my characteristics, but I wasn't aware of what they meant, how people would perceive me. And it was a battle with my self-esteem when I got to high school. I wanted to develop as a normal teenager, I wanted to date and do all those things, but, I was

isolated in a way, and alienated in a way because I was black and I wasn't upper middle class or upper class.

So, I think if kids know that from the beginning, they're not inferior, their history is *rich*, their history is interesting, their legacy is important. It just gives you a much better self concept, because racism and prejudice are bad, because it's bad, obviously, but it's, it's bad because of what it does to people, you really do *feel* inferior, it's not just oh, a big grand, intangible cause, you as a person, as a black person, when you come into your blackness, you really do struggle with inferiority. You, you personally do...there's not a person of color in this nation who could say at one point they didn't wish they weren't...So, I think that if you can tell the kids that from day one, before they can start reading, you know, that, this history is good, you are interesting, you're dynamic, you're important in this fabric that is world culture? I think it would avoid a lot of cultural deterioration later. I think the kids have no concept of their culture, no concept of their blackness and their power, and they kind of just run amuck, there's no - there's no connecting them to something...

When I asked Kamarah if she felt that learning about African and African American history at early ages would influence children's vision of their future, she said:

Very much so...I think think it would have been nice if when I was in kindergarten and first grade I knew something about Harriet Tubman, I knew what my people were capable of doing...I wouldn't have felt like I've wasted the first 18 years of my life not doing anything for my culture because I didn't know [to be proud of it].

Pierce then said that Harriet Tubman was "one of my favorite female figures. Period."

The admiration for Tubman went beyond her role as leader in the Underground Railroad, but was her commitment to her community, her willingness to kill anyone who tried to leave the Underground Railroad in order to keep everyone else who was fleeing and everyone involved in the Underground Railroad safe.

A gendered vision of strength was very important to both Pierce and Kamarah, with Harriet Tubman being a central figure in their discussion of role models from the

past, though they regretted not having been taught of Tubman's more militant side until they were adults. Being the "conductor of the Underground Railroad" had no real meaning for Pierce or Kamarah as children. Kamarah said,

I was like 10 or 11 when it occurred to me...that this [the Underground Railroad] was people, walking at night, underground, suffering intolerable conditions to, to escape the intolerable condition of slavery...and then I didn't learn until 10 years after that [about Tubman's militancy]...it really *was* give me freedom or give me death. And you weren't going to escape, you were going to get to the North, or she was going to have to kill you.

While family members, particularly women, were incredibly important in terms modeling strength and teaching a sense of self, what I will refer to as 'community ancestors' were equally significant. When I asked Kamarah what it would have meant to have been taught about Tubman's militancy versus what she learned, she responded:

That would have been amazing, because, I come from a family of Africans, various tribes of African women, and - so *that* was my reality. I, I *knew* that black women were strong, but I couldn't - there were no examples of that in the media, there's no examples of that when I go to school, so *all* the wonderful black women I know are in my lineage.

I think it would have been *amazing*. It would have just, exponentially, increased my interest in *myself* if I had known that there's a woman I'm *not* related to, who doesn't know me, who will never know me, who died before my parents were conceived, who did this so I can have this life....

I only read about the Greeks all the time and how they got their names, and I love Greek mythology, I love it, it's so interesting and, I can imagine the pride you must feel as a Greek when you hear that, you know, civilization....came from your country, that would have been magnificent to learn as a person, as a *black* person, that the fruits of the civilization that I live in, came from this woman [Harriet Tubman]...yeah, I think it would have been amazing.

For Pierce, Tubman's life modeled a life of commitment to bettering the black community. Pierce expressed frustration that the history of slavery in the U.S. is

taught “as if that’s the beginning of our history.” Zainab corroborated stating that “black history and slavery are just...they’re interchangeable terms.” Pierce continued to list the histories she wished she had learned in school:

They are....and you don’t learn about Songhai that much, you don’t learn about Kemet and Kush and Maat, you don’t learn Chaka - the *true* history behind Chaka, not just the tourist attractions of Chaka Zulu...you don’t learn ...the fact that we are legacies of *Kings* and *Queens* and women who are warriors...like the Kendake warriors. They were women, who were, like, malicious warriors, fought *better* than some men....So...teaching that history, to some black little girl? That is empowering....We’re not taught that in school. We’re taught that we have to be submissive because our slavery history shows that we’re submissive and inferior...

Kamarah was taught about the ancient dynasties in high school, but she felt this was because her European American teacher was married to an “African man,” otherwise, “we would have gone around the world and skipped Africa, as is usually done in World History.”

Returning to why the silencing of African and African American history is so important to identity acquisition at a young age, Kamarah states:

I think that might even be the bigger point about making kids feel powerful. I think, we learn from day one that we’re black, they tell you all the time ‘you’re black.’ Maybe not verbally, but you live your life completely aware of your blackness - and that means something is wrong with you.

If we had learned these lessons as children, I think we wouldn’t, we wouldn’t think about African American history as such a sob story, because that’s *really* how they present it to us. They just tell us about the beatings, the lynchings, the tar and featherings, which are all horrible things, and they *should* teach us. They should teach us because we should be afraid of that history so as not to do it again, but it’s *not* a ubiquitous *sob* story. There were heroes, there were protagonists, there were amazing people, white and black alike, but they don’t tell us that...slavery was very sad, but slavery is *not* the end all be all of this story.

But that's all that we talk about, and I feel, even Harriet Tubman, although she was a slave, if we had just learned about that kind of power being in existence far before us, I feel like that gives you a cognizance that you don't have to wait on, you know, I feel like I waited for 10 years to be 18... to *have* my own initiative to go and research these things. Whereas, if someone had planted that seed maybe at 10, there's no telling what I would be doing for my community at this point. You know?

Pierce and Kamarah demonstrate what Blakey (1990) refers to as the process of “successive omission” of African American resistance from narratives and representations of the U.S. past, which “fosters passivity in those it socializes” (Blakey 1990:43). As Fanon (2008[1952]) demonstrated, colonizing of identities occurs through education. Distorting representations of the past are mechanisms of social control that were implemented by elites during colonialism and continue contemporarily (Trouillot 1995; Moraña et al. 2008; Ashcroft et al. 2002[1989]; Said 2003[1978]; Said 1989; Cooper and Stoler 1997).

Teaching US and World History

I interviewed three European descended teachers of U.S. and World History within the Chesterfield County Public School System, which is part of the Virginia public education system and is obliged to follow Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOLs). The next three participant perspectives will come from a teacher's point of view.

Hilda Baumgartner³⁴⁵ had been teaching for 37 years at a high school that she described as having transformed from a “country club” school populated primarily by European American children to a predominantly working class African American

³⁴⁵ Baumgartner, Hilda Interview on October 31, 2011, Chesterfield County high school.

school. Baumgartner has taught German Language classes and “just about everything that can be taught in the Social Studies arena” including U.S. History and World History, which she was currently teaching.

Baumgartner, described the World History I course as covering the following content:

the prehistory unit up to the Neolithic Revolution, and then they do the various and sundry civilizations,...they start with the Fertile Crescent, they do Egypt, India, and China, then they literally teach them as individual civilizations with not a great deal of contact - between civilizations...until you get to the Middle Ages, and then, you know, with the Crusades and things like that you begin to see the interaction between different parts of the world - and that's the trade that starts things rolling.

World History I ends with a brief overview of the European Renaissance, which is where World History II begins. World History II covers World Religions, which includes Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Religions that originated in Africa are not discussed among the “World Religions.” Baumgartner is overt in stating “we teach history from pretty much a Western history...Western civilization approach. We do mention the griots and animism.” Baumgartner acknowledges a Euro-centric approach to teaching “World History” in Virginia high schools. As is demonstrated within our discussion, World History is equated with European History and later “Western” History and how the rest of the World, past and present relates to these trajectories. African American students and their African heritages are outside of this scope and considered something they will have to explore on their own, with their families.

Baumgartner immigrated to the United States from Germany when she was 4 years old. She identifies as a German American, though she says she never calls herself that; she “has always been a Virginian.” Having immigrated so young, she speaks with a Virginia accent, though not markedly southern, so some people have a hard time trying to “peg” her. Baumgartner’s immigrant experience has framed her approach to teaching history and her more recent dedication to teaching World History to English as a Second Language (ESL) students. She says “the fact that everybody, literally, in this country comes from somewhere else...is, something that has always been part of my teaching.” Baumgartner actively brings her personal experiences growing up in the Cold War era into her teaching of that time period and highlights the role of personal biography and personality in the making of historical figures and the shaping of world events. Referring to her Honors level students, Baumgartner says:

My focus in history is not so much just teaching them the facts, but teaching them the relationships between what goes on. And you can’t really understand those relationships until you start looking at backgrounds of the people...part of my goal is to get these kids to understand not just *that* things happen, but that, more importantly, *why* they happened.

In teaching World History II, Baumgartner begins with the European Renaissance “as a big Revolution and drastic change and then we simply work from one drastic change to another to show how they’re all connected. That’s the key. And how everything in the world is connected.” While it was a state decision to begin World History II with the European Renaissance, Baumgartner agrees with this decision because she says,

...that’s when, really, things start rolling, when you move out of the Middle Ages...into the quote, unquote “Modern Era.” Because, you know, you have the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Voyage of

Exploration, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, then the French Revolution, so you've got those biggies that are happening that are encouraging change, that lead to the French Revolution...I'm teaching the 500 most important years in World History.

Current events are brought in at the end of the year to make those connections contemporaneously relevant to the students. Baumgartner wishes she could do this exercise throughout the year, but cannot because "I don't have time to do it with the SOL constraints." Baumgartner's experiences growing up influenced her development of an interest in history. She describes a dual perspective on current events. She says she "literally, lived with one foot in two different continents...I would get the...European perspective on why things happened...and...the American perspective. And one of the things it allowed me to do, was take a look at, at both points of view."

Baumgartner views the atrocities committed by peoples and nations in the past as "learning opportunities," because, "when you look at the broad spectrum of history, we've all got baggage, we've all got something in our closet...that we're ashamed of. But, to survive, you've got to learn to - deal with it. You know, history doesn't go away simply because I didn't like that period of time." Baumgartner recalled an encounter with a past department chair:

[He] just walked up to me and completely and totally out of the blue, said... "As a German, how can you explain what happened in the concentration camps?" And I was completely and totally and utterly speechless by that question, because, I can't. And it's very, very, difficult for me, as a German, to reconcile that. But...I looked at him and said, 'Ok, so explain to me how you can live with the fact that the American Army put small pox germs into the blankets that you gave to the American Indians that you'd already put on reservations after you'd stolen all of...their land?' And he walked away completely and totally, utterly, dumbfounded...

Although earlier Baumgartner characterized all of U.S. History as a history of immigrants, here she acknowledges Native Americans and the history of genocide and exploitation perpetrated by European colonizers and, later, the United States. Of note in this interaction is the personal connection ascribed by the department chair and Baumgartner to past human atrocities committed in the name of their respective nations. Each ascribed to the other, a position of representing their nation's history of human rights violations. Indeed, Baumgartner, herself, feels a personal connection as well, and struggles to "reconcile" with the Holocaust of Nazi Germany.

When teaching the Holocaust, Baumgartner says, "I have a hard time dealing with that one...it's a unit I have to teach but, I have to steel myself to teach it." She says her focus is "not so much 'this is what Germans did to Jews,' but 'this is what people do to other people.' And - the Russians have done it. The Serbs have done it, the Croats,...and we just need to make sure we don't do it again.

Baumgartner gave an example of how atrocities are compartmentalized into the past in her student's perceptions of racism not existing in Europe, "that, this big thing that happened during WWII, as far as the Jews were concerned, you know, was a one time incident...it's very , very hard for them to understand that, I'm sorry, racism is still alive and well, in Europe, it's...kind of underground at the moment, but it's still there..." Baumgartner talked about the various forms of racism that she discussed with her class, and the connection to immigration histories and religious conflicts and said, "so, all of these problems are still in existence, you just have to face them, and try to understand why, and deal with them." When I asked how she helps her

students move through understanding and connecting these discussions to their own experiences, Baumgartner said:

Well, that's really, really, hard to do...sometimes I'm very successful with it and sometimes I'm not. And, what I try to do is...I try to bring it back into their own backyards. Many of the children in this building, obviously, are - bi-racial, and that has problems for them of an entirely different aspect, but, this school is not as diverse as it used to be...we're predominantly African American....I ask them...what does African American mean?...I mean, are you American? Or are you African? I mean, were you born in Africa? Or is that just what you're calling yourself at the moment? I said, you know, when I was a child, the word was Negro. Ok, then it became black. And then it became African American, so, how do *you* identify *yourself*? And how does this identity fit into your plans for your future? Because you need to figure out who *you* are in relationship to everybody else, before you can succeed.

Baumgartner felt that 10th grade students were not as attuned to defining themselves in terms of identity as they might be when they are in college, but she hopes to prompt her students to think about how they define themselves. She says, "at least I've sown a seed." Baumgartner characterized her students as not very interested in history, in general.

Speaking on how she sees the ethnicities of her students influencing their learning experience, Baumgartner said that the "Asian students are very, very quiet - when I talk about Vietnam or the Korean War. I don't think that they want to talk about it." She could relate saying "many of them may have the same type of background that I do, actually having had, you know, grandparents, who were there, and, who came to, to escape - what it was like over there. So, they just don't talk about it. It may be a language barrier or, whatever." Her African American students, she says, "Believe it or not...if they want to talk about anything they want to go back to slavery. Which is,

you know, really not my thing, because I don't teach U.S. History. But they really get shocked when I tell them, you know slavery still exists today." Baumgartner tells her students that slavery still exists in parts of Africa and the Middle East and says they are bewildered:

Because, they assume that when slaves were freed here in this country, that that happened all over the world...when we talk about slavery in the first place, they get very, very upset when they find out, or...they don't like to admit that it was the Africans on coasts who raided the interior to get the Africans to sell to the Europeans. That's, you know, that's something that's hard to acknowledge about your own people, about your background. They would much rather have it thought that, the big white Europeans raided the continent of Africa and brought them all over to serve as slaves. Which is partly true, they...leave out that step about the Africans, you know, bringing them to the coast to sell to the Europeans. And it's the same thing today. They want to associate simply being black with, or being African, with being a slave. And they don't understand all of the nuances about why slavery still exists, why it existed in the first place.

When I asked how Baumgartner approached the history of slavery and African enslavement through the Atlantic Slave Trade in terms of World History, she said she has the students revisit what they learned in World History I, that the Greeks had slaves, the Romans had slaves, the Egyptians had slaves. She reminds the students that Egypt is in Africa. "What they begin to realize is that, slowly and surely, everybody had slaves." She addresses the non-racial basis for slavery in the ancient world and the many forms of slavery, including slaves who "were educators, were doctors, were actually released from their slavery later on." She says she has "to dispel a whole lot of myths, and that's hard to do. Because even though I seem to be successful in the classroom, when they go home...well, Mom and Dad frequently might say I'm wrong...But...I can't fight that. All I'm trying to do is get them to think." In the context of the Atlantic trade in human captives, Baumgartner tells her students

“Ok...the nature...of the slave trade is going to change, right now. Now it's all going to be based on race.” At this point, she says, “I start getting some grumblings...‘the only thing we were good for was to be slaves.’ And then, you know, I have to calm the waters down...it's very, very difficult and I really have to tippy toe through it...I just...have to say, ‘well, you can't change history. Ok? Unfortunately, that was the way things were during that period of time.” Baumgartner says she then tries to relate to the students by sharing her own experiences as a German child living in the U.S. in the late 1950s when anti-German sentiment was still high and hearing comments about the “damn Germans.” She hopes this may help because, she says, “the only way, I think, they can understand something like that, is for them to know that they're not the only ones who went through it...that's my approach.”

Although Baumgartner has taught U.S. History, she is very open in stating that this was out of necessity and not a subject she feels well versed in or is comfortable with teaching. But she says that “of course, in Virginia there's so much history with the Civil Rights movement and...the schools and things like that, fortunately, that's a U.S. History teacher's job and not mine...but I would imagine that I, you would have to tippy toe your way through that because it's a very, very sensitive topic - for some children.” These topics that Baumgartner expresses needing to “tippy toe through” appear to be topics African American children desire to explore more fully. I asked if Baumgartner is able to teach about perceptions of Africa versus the complex culture and history that existed since before European colonization? She said, “when we talk about...the first University being Timbuktu on the African continent, and the fact that there has been a very, very valued and...diverse African culture, that helps, and I

think - some of these children are...becoming more in tune with that *themselves*.” This, however, is “a family issue” that depends on “how much Mom and Dad want to pursue that.” I asked if, primarily, inquiry into African cultures would have to come from personal exploration with their family and she said, “yes, yes.” Baumgartner warned the students not to let divisions such as “cultural background,” become obstacles for “achieving your goals.” She advises them “not to let it be something that divides you from the mainstream” because “there are certain things that, in the world, not just in Virginia and in the United States, but there are just certain things that you’re going to have to do that are considered to be mainstream.” As a specific example she said that students shouldn’t wear “baggy pants” or “African native dress” on a job interview. She teaches her children about their German heritage at home by doing. “It wasn’t much of a teaching thing...I just did it and explained as I was doing it, this is what we did in Germany when I was growing up.” This is the domain where she feels African American children should learn about African cultures. In many ways, Baumgartner speaks of her African American students as immigrants who need to acculturate to the mainstream European American culture.

I asked what historic figures Baumgartner’s students are most interested in, as “heroes.” She said “when we talk about history, we fly through it quite literally, so rapidly, that I’m not sure that they have the time to delve greatly into any of those historical characters. Martin Luther King, Jr. resonates with the students and they bring him up when learning about Martin Luther of the Reformation. “I definitely think Martin Luther King is one of their heroes, but as far as anyone from European history - no. Now, I think if we taught African history, that they could much, much more

easily associate with a hero from their own background.” Given that Baumgartner felt her African American students would be more attracted to figures with African ancestry, I asked if the Haitian Revolution and Toussaint L’Ouverture were discussed in World History II. Baumgartner said that, in accordance with the Virginia Department of Education requirements, “we cover both in about 5 minutes after we cover the French Revolution and treat it as a revolution that was influenced by Enlightenment ideas.”³⁴⁶ Baumgartner sent me the Virginia Department of Education requirements for teaching the Haitian Revolution, which states:

Explain that the contributions of Toussaint L’Ouverture and Simón Bolívar led to the development of independent states in Latin America in the nineteenth century. Toussaint L’Ouverture was a former slave who led Haitians to rebel against French rule. The Haitians defeated the armies of three foreign powers: Spain, France, and Britain. Haiti was free until L’Ouverture’s death, when it fell into despotism.

While acknowledging that African American students engage with history lessons where they make connections of personal heritage, Baumgartner demonstrates how the Virginia educational system and the Standards of Learning constrain discussions that would allow critical engagement beyond a Eurocentric narrative. Furthermore, the messages conveyed in Baumgartner’s discussion demonstrate an overt theme of identity and a bounding of African American identity as outside of American identity, and African History as ancillary to “World History.” According to Baumgartner’s characterization, World History I moves discussions from prehistory into the Middle Ages of Europe, setting the stage for the European ‘revolutions’ that map the trajectory of World History. The events that “start” major historic phases are generated from Europe and later the United States, even if they are perceived as

³⁴⁶ Baumgartner, Hilda. Personal Communication May 23, 2013.

brutal (the Crusades, Colonialism, the genocide of Native Americans, and the Atlantic trade in human captives). Atrocities are largely abstracted outside of power dynamics with ongoing repercussions, but are simply examples of what “people” do and have always done. Inhumane acts are reconfigured as evidence of humanity.

For Baumgartner, a discussion of Egypt arises as African in the context of slavery. On the one hand, she criticizes her students for seeing slavery as an American phenomenon, but then says that slavery really isn't her area because she doesn't teach US history. Baumgartner recognizes that slavery in the Atlantic context was unique, because it was racial, but abstracts “slavery” out to having occurred everywhere and throughout history. The messages Baumgartner conveyed to me reinforce that identity for African Americans is attached to Africa as a continent *and* to the history of slavery. For Baumgartner, African American culture is equated with an immigrant culture, external to the ‘mainstream’ tradition which is a European Western tradition. This allows Baumgartner to feel her experiences as a German immigrant during a period when many Americans held anti-German sentiment, could be equated to African American experiences of racist oppression associated with slavery, where “they’re not the only ones who went through it.” “They” become all blacks in this context, because she tells her personal story as a way of responding to her African American students’ characterization (and, ostensibly their critique since they are ‘grumbling’) on racialized slavery as conveying “the only thing we were good for was to be slaves.”

World History, or human history, is European History. Despite the expressed desire to connect beyond *what* happened to *why* and *how* through investigating relationships, fully 'fleshed out' biographies of historic personalities and relationships are limited to figures like Churchill and Napoleon. I see in this dialogue a simultaneous socialization of inclusion and exclusion, children being taught to recognize where one is included and excluded through ethnically marked historical inclusions/exclusions. Biodeterministic ideas are folded into historic narratives, normalizing a vision of European humanity, superiority, ability, power, accomplishment and contribution to the nation, with an attendant narrative of shame, passivity, inferiority and lack of accomplishment or contribution associated with an African American past told, primarily through a distorted lens on the history of slavery. The discomfort Baumgartner feels when she has to 'tippy toe' around particular subjects and seeks to leave discussions of slavery to teachers of U.S. History may convey to her students that there is an uncomfortable truth that is left partially said, "Well, you can't change history. Ok? Unfortunately, that was the way things were during that period of time." Within this narrative of U.S. slavery, this history and the shame that is attached to the telling of slavery's past become the heritage of (all) African Americans, not the European American descendants of enslavers. I will return to this dissociation of the history of slavery from European Americans later.

Linda Rusher³⁴⁷ was born in New York, but moved to Richmond, Virginia when she was 18 months old and was educated in the Richmond Public School system.

³⁴⁷ Rusher, Linda. Interview November 7, 2011. Midlothian, Virginia.

Rusher has been teaching for a total of 38 years, with 34 of these years having taught at the same school as Baumgartner. When describing this school, she also discusses the demographic shift she has witnessed, though she describes the earlier years of the high school as a mixture of working class and poor white students, with no elites. She says that there was, as there is today, a nearby Country Club as a middle class establishment, “they had a golf course, and tennis courts, and a swimming pool. But it wasn’t made up of doctors and lawyers, and what we call FFVs [First Families of Virginia].” She said that approximately 10% of the population belonged to the Country Club. Rusher describes the year the school was racially integrated (her first year there), the anxiety the teachers had in anticipation of the first African American student in Chesterfield County Public Schools who was to attend her school. “I can remember,” she says, “all the meetings we had. ‘What are we going to do, how are we going to keep any fighting [from happening] and it was like, ‘Oh my gosh!’ And then, nothing. And had all this preparation and then there was nothing.” Today, Rusher describes the school as 90% African American. Among the remaining 10% she described her students as European American, Sudanese, Serbian, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mexican, El Salvadoran, with fluctuating representation over the years, but a continued increase in African American students. Rusher has taught World History, Government, Virginia American History, International Affairs, and has taught in the International Baccalaureate and English as a Second Language programs. For Rusher, teaching history is important because “it’s the old cliché...if you don’t learn from history, you’re doomed to repeat it...you can’t know where you’re going, unless you know where you come from. And studying history does give a tremendous respect for people who went before you.”

Rusher likes to teach “from the story aspect” of history. She uses dollar bills to ask who each of the figures featured on the bills were, and then goes into their biographies. Rusher wants her students to see trends and the ways the world is connected. She sees history as “evolving since...pre-historic man, and what we see going forward.” Like Baumgartner, Rusher sees great changes in various ‘revolutions’ such as the agricultural revolution and the current technological revolution. In teaching slavery within U.S. History, Rusher emphasizes the transition from indentured labor to enslaved labor, with Bacon’s Rebellion as a pivotal moment:

it wasn't until after 1676 that Africans began to replace indentured servants as the primary labor...force, due to Bacon's Rebellion. And that showed 'whoops' these old Scots-Irish are out there in the back country, and they can be might pesky...we don't want...all these landless whites hanging around, so they figured they could better control the African, and so they began to come over more and more.

She said that her students are often surprised to learn that all of the 13 colonies practices slavery and that the abolition of slavery in the North was based on economic profitability and that many people in the North had made their fortunes through the Atlantic trade in human captives before it was ended. “So, we try to show that it wasn’t just the South that was evil...” and that slavery became less profitable due to the invention of the Cotton Gin rather than moral motivations. She then said that in teaching the Civil War, “slavery certainly was a major factor, but there were other things...” Rusher described how she has to counter her students’ perspectives that all southern whites where slave holders by telling them that only between 20% and 25% were slaveholders, but that that they “were the wealthy people, so they had the most power” and therefore had the most influence. “I like

them to see...the facts, and that most of the soldiers in the Civil War on the southern side didn't even own slaves" but were fighting because the North had invaded their land..."³⁴⁸ Within this description of slavery, it was not the only forced labor system, but was most successful when the labor source shifted to enslaved Africans who were easier to control and "began to come" in greater numbers, omitting the action of who captured, enslaved, forced the migration and brought the enslaved Africans to the colonies. Passivity is implied in the reason enslaved African labor increased in the colonies.

Rusher said that the Reconstruction was a "real tense topic...because you've got the scalliwags, carpetbaggers, and the KKK rears its ugly head." In teaching the Jim Crow era, Rusher tells her experiences as a white girl growing up in segregated Richmond. She says that she wanted to sit at the back of the bus as a little girl, because she liked the bumpiness, but when she asked her mother why the bus was segregated, her mother said 'Well, that's because it's always been that way' so then you just go off on other things. So, you know, it really wasn't that you hated..." She refutes comments from her students saying that she probably used the "n" word by saying she never used that word "if I had ever used that word, my mother would've taken a bar of soap and washed my mouth out...I was not allowed to curse, I was not allowed to call anybody anything bad." She also tells her students she never heard this word used "among the kids I hung around with. We never used that word, never, ever, ever." Rusher encourages her students to ask family members, like

³⁴⁸ Baumgartner mentioned that she gets into discussions with younger teachers who were taught that Civil War was fought over slavery, but that she was taught that slavery was only one of the reasons.

grandparents, about their experiences, “they can probably tell you from a different point of view, because they experienced it differently.” She encourages her students to interview the elderly in their families to learn about various history lessons, such as Jim Crow and WWII.

Rusher said that students become more engaged when they have a family member that they know is connected to the history lesson, but she says she rarely has time to explore these connections because of the SOLs, which mandates teaching ‘this is what happened on this day and this is what happened on that day’...so we *lose* the stories.” When I asked if there were any people in history that resonate with her students, she said “Sadly, no.” She mentioned Martin Luther King, Jr. as someone she would think would be an example “but he’s so far removed. And that doesn’t mean that they think that much more of Malcolm X, they just don’t make connections.” She used to have an assignment for her AP American History students to dress up as an historic figure at the end of the year, “they were supposed to become that person, dress like them, speak to the class about that person.” While she said a few students early on chose figures like Harriet Tubman, Billie Holiday, Dorothy Dandridge, Louis Armstrong, and Douglas MacArthur, the trend grew more and more toward sports figures like Michael Jordan and Babe Ruth. While she tried to be flexible, in allowing entertainment figures like Louis Armstrong because of his contributions in “music and culture, it’s a part of our history and part of our society, so it’s good to include, ...so we were having balance.” She stopped it completely when a student asked to come as Kim Kardashian.

Charity Pierce and Zainab Kamarah asserted that opportunities to learn about African and African American histories beyond a Eurocentric curriculum were largely dependent upon the perspectives and experiences of their individual teachers. Their observations are corroborated by the ways Baumgartner and Rusher describe what they teach and how they teach. While the Virginia Standards of Education are very rigid in outlining what and how teachers can teach, the navigation of these guidelines and taking opportunities to expand upon the curriculum are dependent upon individual teachers' interests and knowledge. "White" teachers appear limited in making connections on personal levels that might engage African American students in the learning of World History and U.S. History, due to their own Eurocentric educational training around African and African American histories, coupled with their personal experiences as a white person. In describing the trajectories of their classes, African and African American resistance to slavery was not foregrounded when teaching about slavery arose, unless I asked particular questions. With the exception of Egypt, Africa was not brought into discussions of World History unless I asked. Timbuktu was raised by Baumgartner when I asked if she was able to teach about the perceptions of Africa versus the complex culture and history that existed since before European colonization.

Rusher and Baumgartner both mentioned tensions over the causes of the American Civil War. Ms Baumgartner said she and other teachers get into discussions with younger generations of teachers who, unlike her, were taught that slavery was the central reason the American Civil War was fought. "What we learn in history, depending on when we go to school and when we go to College is two entirely

different things.” The primary cause of the Civil War was her example. “So, we have to reach a consensus in the building...those of us who have been around a little bit longer have to sit down with the ...younger ones and...not to say that we’re correct and you’re wrong, or that you’re correct and I’m wrong, but that historical perspective changes, depending on the evidence that’s uncovered.” Ms Rusher expressed concern that young teachers do not know details of their subject area well enough, and mentioned a conversation around the history of slavery and the lack of detailed knowledge demonstrated by young teachers.

For **Lamar Bannister**³⁴⁹ (2010), a living history interpreter as well as a teacher of U.S. History in Chesterfield County Public Schools, these issues and questions over the history of slavery, the Civil War, and characterizations of the North versus the South evoke strong responses from Virginia residents living in Richmond area. Bannister was born in Lyons, New York and moved away when he was around 1 year old, moving around the south and finally to Virginia when he was 9 years old. When discussing what is salient among the lessons he learned about the Civil War as a young person, Bannister remembered conflict on the playground over identifying as a Northerner or a Southerner while playing games as a young boy.

I remembered it was about slavery, I remembered it was about state’s rights...I remember the quandary...of the broken brotherhood, how they had to fight against each other and the nation being torn...while I was learning that, I was going to school down here in Virginia...whenever we had battles...playground wars and stuff and we were playing soldier, I always picked the Northern Yankees, said I was a Yankee. But I didn’t have anything to do with the North at all, I mean, I was born there...but I picked it because the North was right, you know,..in their positioning. And I always remember thinking that - and my family was raised Southern, you know, but I, I picked that up

³⁴⁹ Bannister, Lamar. Interview, July 13, 2010. Midlothian, Virginia.

from my family and the way I was raised....but I picked it up also from the...I must have gotten it from the education. Why would a Southern raised kid purposefully pick, I mean, we got in fights, you know. I got in fights because I was a Yankee. We had to have Yankees and sometimes friends would just temporarily be a Yankee, though they were always the Confederates...because you need to have another side, you know...it was lonely because...there was a *whole bunch* of Southerners, you know, a bunch of kids...but I got that from somewhere...I got that from the family...

Bannister remembers learning gendered roles within lessons on the Civil War, identifying with soldiers' "courage and bravery and fighting." History lessons were moments of learning masculinity, and I would argue an ethnically marked European American masculinity. Mr Bannister's recollections go from learning of the Civil War to learning of the Revolutionary War, visiting historic sites and getting memorabilia that allowed role playing to continue:

...guys, you know, fighting and being strong...it was always more of the masculine guy...you have to be strong and you have to take it and you have to fight for what you believe....you would go to these battlefields and stuff...you would always get the Civil War hat, and you got the rifle. You got the revolutionary rifle when you went to Williamsburg. I had the tri-cornered hat and I got the musket...and it was always the soldier, you know, and the way of identifying with the soldier.

Bannister learned gendered roles for girls and women, "the girl would get the frilly cap...and she identified with being the matronly mother, caretaker, you know, that kind of thing. So those images, back then in my generation, those were real clear...images of a woman's role and a man's role." The historic figures that Bannister identified with or was drawn to included Washington, Lincoln, Robert E. Lee (he said that growing up in Virginia, Lee was a "household" figure, "in Virginia here, that's going to be huge...he's going to be famous"), Grant, Martin Luther King, Jr., Billy Graham, Reagan, and Eisenhower.

When recalling learning U.S. history, the Civil War and the history of slavery in the U.S., Bannister immediately identified the Civil War as “about slavery.” However, in his discussions of the resonant lessons, the experiences of slavery and the meaning of the North and South’s divisions over slavery do not emerge. The North and South are somewhat reconciled through a focus on the difficulties experienced by European American brothers and families that were disrupted by the Civil War, and the courage of the soldiers. While, unlike the rest of his peers, Bannister identified with the North as “right,” the righteousness of the North remains in the acts Northern soldiers against the institution of slavery. Constructions of male whiteness emerge as the lessons learned; Bannister learned to see himself in relationship with these particular pasts. Heroes still emerge for Bannister among the Southern side, despite his conviction to role play as a Northerner. The ‘good’ is gleaned and focused on, while African American experiences and historic figures do not stand out in his recollections. I asked if Bannister had learned of Gabriel and he said he had not, and that he thought Gabriel was a relatively new addition to the SOLs.

When discussing how he teaches, Bannister sees history as an ongoing story of the interactions between God and Man “God creates us with a void that only He can fill. But in that process he makes us human...His story...is the story of Man and His [God’s] presence involved in that process.” While Bannister is a devout Christian, he sees all cultures as relating to God as a Higher Power. Storytelling is part of the human condition” spanning across cultures, “there’s always these storytellers and there are always these people in the stories that carry on the values of the culture, so

that they're not only telling the story, but they're...passing on their identity." This storytelling occurs in the family, as well, he says. For Bannister, race and gender inequities, and cultural differences are human created divisions that distract from the unity of God. Telling history through stories brings the questions of this struggle into a space for discussion in the present.

In teaching U.S. History to his high school students within special education classes, Bannister utilizes story telling as much as possible. When describing the trajectories of U.S. History, African American histories do not usually emerge in Bannister's conversation unless I asked specific questions or, once, within the context of discussing the music during the Civil War period. Bannister had a vast knowledge of historic trends, biographical details, and liked to point out exceptional stories. When I asked about teaching Gabriel's Rebellion, he said that "Gabriel Prosser, yeah...that's an SOL...Prosser's Rebellion and Nat Turner's...very briefly, we don't teach about the whole issue." He then briefly mentioned the Dredd Scott decision and "all the aggression of what was going on for the freedoms" and then shifted to a discussion of 1619 and more recent discussions of the first Africans in Virginia not having been enslaved, but possibly indentured. Bannister then brought up the story of a man whose name he could not recall, "somebody on the Eastern Shore, free from the beginning, African American and very wealthy, had two slaves, two African slaves...and so we try to teach these things." He recounts the shift in racial slavery and changes in the codification of racism. He mentioned Frederick Douglass's publications that questioned the constitutionality of slavery and "then the constant fight until Civil Rights."

Bannister says he tries to engage students on emotional levels, and as an example describes clips he and a fellow teacher use from the movie “The Patriot” that depicts the U.S. War of Independence. He and his colleague show their students a clip where a formerly enslaved African American is working to rebuild the home of a former enslaver because they are now friends and working to rebuild *their* country together. During the Cold War period, he says, “I can talk about that with my kids...I can tell you when I walked into fuel stations and asked my Dad, ‘why do you have to have colored water fountains?’ Because I saw it, I experienced it, and so I can tell them and it brings more life.” Bannister recognizes that his perspective as a white man will have limited effectiveness in reaching his African American students. To be more effective, he and an African American woman collaborate in teaching their classes about the Jim Crow era.

She and I can talk, it’s easier...in a class [where] it’s two white men... it’s a little bit suspect, you know, whatever we say if you’re an African American student..It’s great when you have two teachers together, because then...because she says it and he says it, then..we’re collaborating together....we have great discussions.

He says that he and his collaborator do not “mince” words or “try to make this politically correct” but tell the students “the way it was...It’s ugly, but it’s the truth. But we’re going to tell you how great this Country its too.” He says students have to travel to see how great the U.S. really is compared with other countries, despite the flaws and mistakes of the U.S. A positive and redemptive narrative of the country is a focal point in teaching the difficult topics of racism and inequity in the U.S., where Americans, no matter what, are still lucky to be living here than somewhere else.

Bannister says that the lessons on the Civil Rights movement evoke strong responses from his students.

Two students that are two different colors, you know, black, white, Asian...different races that are together, that haven't been raised in that, they don't even know what you're talking about. I have kids of all different colors that would say, 'Bannister, why are we bringing this up, it's just, you know, it just makes us *feel* bad. What is this? Why do we have to study this? That's all old stuff' And you say 'it's so important that you understand' 'Well, I don't *want* to understand, I don't feel that, so why are you bringing it up?'

Perhaps the students are looking for the stories of resistance to Jim Crow oppression, rather than solely the stories of the ugliness of oppression. Bannister responds to student complaints by telling them, "your grandparents...do you have any idea what they had to go [through]?" and encourages them to speak to the elders in their family. Sometimes students return with stories that their grandparents have shared with them and he says "that's the point, you want to honor the people and the price that they paid to get here and not forget them, but you don't want to spit at somebody that's not like you...Because they were somebody else's relative way back when you weren't even born, you know, and you're just mad because they're mad." The investigation of racism in family histories is encouraged to make the point that history is relevant to the students, but any anger at the injustice experienced by their family members is tempered with an argument toward relativism that would displace any emotional response as belonging in the past. Thankfulness for past sacrifices that have made "today" possible and thankfulness for the greatness of the U.S. as a Country are the encouraged outcomes. An acknowledgment of racism today is not coupled with an outlet for connecting trajectories of past and present injustice toward social action.

Bannister spoke about the protests of the African American community against installing a banner of Lee on the Richmond flood wall, saying “I do understand the emotions behind them and the idea behind the African American community getting so upset..and it was torn down and there’s just so much bitterness there...how can you embrace the people who supported something so mean as is slavery” He said, “I really appreciate the African American community” for bringing discussions of what “this person was thinking then, at this time, and this is why they were thinking it. You know, the culture at the time.” However, Bannister feels that as productive as the critique from the African American community was in prompting public discussions of the past, he warns against applying contemporary perspectives to past contexts:

We can’t try to take an overlift of today’s thinking and put it onto them, when people weren’t thinking these things...So many people had slaves. And, they were trying to deal with it then, but when *everybody* thinks a certain way, it doesn’t make it *right*. It just makes it history. It’s just the *truth*.

“People” and “everybody” are used as universal descriptors of the normative white standard. As has been demonstrated by Ruth Frankenburg (1994), European Americans (anti-racist women activists within her study) often refer to “people” when meaning “white” people and qualify non-whites with ethnic markers to make/ keep the distinction. In order for Bannister’s statement to be valid (“when *everybody* thinks a certain way”), the resistance of African Americans, enslaved and free, against the institution of slavery and the racist oppression must be completely ignored. The culture of the time that must be respected is a white slaveholding culture. This also ignores abolitionists. Although this statement would appear to contradict Rusher’s description of slaveholders as an elite minority, she says that the

power held by the elites provided the overarching perception of their viewpoints as the mainstream viewpoints of the period.

Bannister refers briefly to Frederick Douglass during our discussions, however, Douglass' opposition is not present in references to the homogenous past of a slaveholding culture. The emotion of the African American community is appreciated but is not congruent with "history" and "truth," which is implied as the objective reality of the past. A conflation of Americanness as whiteness and European Americans as objective in relation to the emotive responses of African Americans to offensive valorization of Robert E. Lee. The African American past and present, particularly the histories of resistance to oppression which have been ongoing, are ruptured by the telling of this version of the U.S. past. Bounding, or compartmentalizing resistance to racial oppression within the past of the Civil Rights Movement lends to an interpretation of action against oppression only occurring in the more recent past and only as part of the African American past within the context of U.S. citizenship, perhaps implying that becoming "American" instilled humanity and the American tendency to fight for justice (see discussion in Chapter 5).

Baumgartner, Rusher, and Bannister each shared fascinating stories of the lives and complexities of historical figures such as George Washington, Napoleon, Winston Churchill, Robert E. Lee, General Grant, and Abraham Lincoln. While knowledgeable about timelines and events in African and African American histories, these were not "fleshed out" with personal characteristics, attributes, even flaws that were conveyed through European and European American figures, although much

has been written about their biographies from which teachers and broader audiences may draw. Each teacher felt the most effective in connecting with their students where they could provide these types of stories of personality and humanity, or through their own personal experiences.

Contemporary Confederates

In an interview with two members of an activist organization called the Virginia Flaggers, **Laura Boden** and **Dave Schmidt**³⁵⁰ (see also Chapter 7), I had the opportunity to learn why the Confederate Battle Flag is meaningful to them, and what urged them toward political action.

Laura Boden is a European American woman in her early 40s. Boden grew up in Henrico County, just east of Richmond City, and has always lived within 5 miles of her childhood home, an area “very rich” in terms of Civil War history; “the 7 days battle was right in my back yard.” She describes growing up very aware of her ancestral connections to her Confederate heritage, accompanying her father, “a relic hunter” on his search for Civil War artifacts. Boden says, “some people may have went to the beach for vacation, I went to battlefields. That’s what we did as a family on the weekends...and vacations...I grew up immersed in history of that aspect.” She said that she has “always had an interest” in Civil War Confederate history and gave, as an example, the fact that “even a wedding present was a Robert E. Lee print that I have in my home, I’ve always been interested in history.” While becoming

³⁵⁰ Boden, Laura and Dave Schmidt. Virginia Flaggers interview, November 12, 2012, Richmond, Virginia.

politically active in defending the right to fly and display the Confederate Battle Flag was a recent development, “for the first 40 years of my life or so, it was just an appreciation, a pride in my..heritage, a pride in my ancestors...” Indeed, most thought not all Virginia Flaggers have direct ancestors who fought as Confederate soldiers. Boden has “4 great, great grandfathers who fought, all of them for Virginia” hailing from South and Southeast Virginia, three of them having lived in the Richmond area.

The decision of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) to ban the Confederate Battle Flag from the former Confederate Chapel on VMFA grounds, coupled with the political backlash against Governor McDonnell’s proclaiming April to be Confederate History and Heritage Month. Boden characterizes the criticism of McDonnell was generated “from a lot different sectors, but mostly outside of Virginia.” According to Boden, each year the Governor of Virginia had “always” issued the April proclamation “honoring those who died for Virginia.” In fact, the first proclamation was issued by Governor George Allen in 1997 and was not continued by all subsequent Governors. But in Boden’s memory, it had been a longstanding Virginia tradition. She went on to say “there were 32,000 Virginians who died in the War Between the States and they were called by the state of Virginia, they went and fought for the state of Virginia and this proclamation basically honored them, it honored Lee and Jackson who were also Virginians.” The reaction to the 2010 McDonnell proclamation was “immediate outcry” because the Governor “did not include anything about slavery, that you can’t really talk about the Confederacy without anything about slavery.” Following the criticism, Boden reports “within 24

hours he flip-flopped and took the Proclamation and changed it all around and made it *not* about Confederate history and heritage and made it *about* slavery, emancipation, and that type of thing.” The political upheaval of the proclamation, coupled with the VMFA’s banning of the Confederate Battle Flag from being displayed or flown on Memorial Day during services she celebrated with her children prompted her to take action and protest. These “two things in a very short period of time, that I thought were very offensive, as far as just more signs of the attempted eradication of my history, my heritage, the history of Virginia, the heritage of Virginia.” Boden spoke of petitions against Confederate flags lining the streets of Lexington for Lee Jackson Day (which she pointed out is a Virginia state holiday), remarking that in 2011 “one person complained ...that they were offended, and a petition was started at Washington and Lee University by a professor, a Russian professor, actually.” Comments regarding criticism as primarily coming from outside of Virginia or from people who did not grow up in Virginia implies that the opposition is invasive rather than authentic to Virginia. Ultimately, the Lynchburg City Council voted to remove all flags from the streets.

Boden’s memories of learning her Confederate heritage included being careful not to display the Confederate Battle Flag. She says “I think, you know, I even grew up...even with the pride that I had in my heritage, somehow along the way I was also taught, ‘but don’t bring that flag out,’ that, you know, it’s great to be proud of your heritage but you don’t, you know, [bring out the flag].” So, the first time Boden held the flag in public protest, she says it felt “amazing. It’s amazing.” She chooses to protest with the Confederate Battle Flag because this was the flag her ancestors

fought under and “most of those men never saw First National.” While Boden began protesting outside of the VMFA by herself, she says that within a month, she was joined by a dozen protesters and interested participants continue to join, including people on vacation traveling to Virginia from out of state. As of 2013, the Flaggers are regularly seen in front of the VMFA displaying and carrying the Confederate flags, with the Battle Flag prominent. Largely due to gaining recognition among networks of “heritage organizations...flagging, which is what we call it, has actually picked up. There’s a group started in Tennessee and Florida and Texas.”

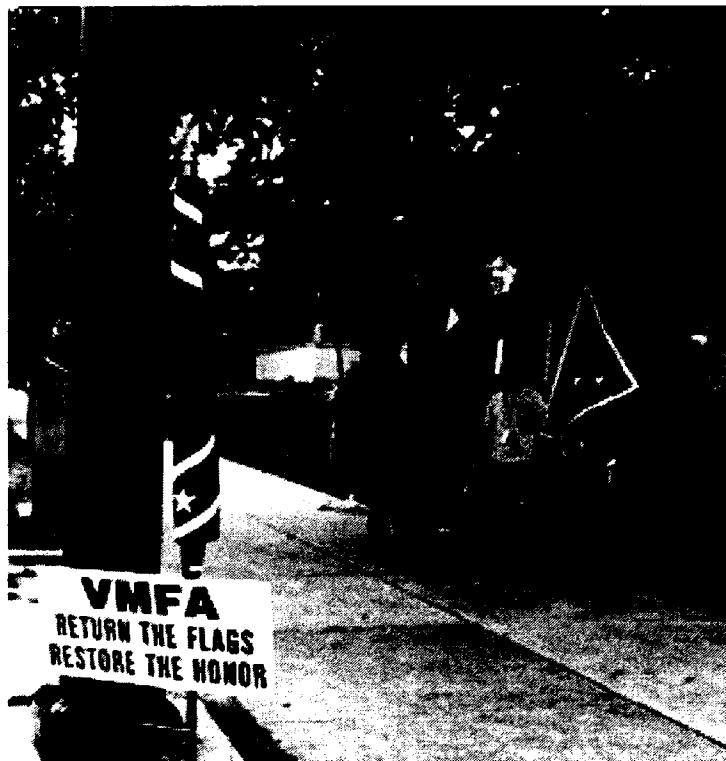


Figure 9.1: Photo of Virginia Flaggers protesting in front of the VMFA. Photo by Autumn Barrett, September 8, 2012.

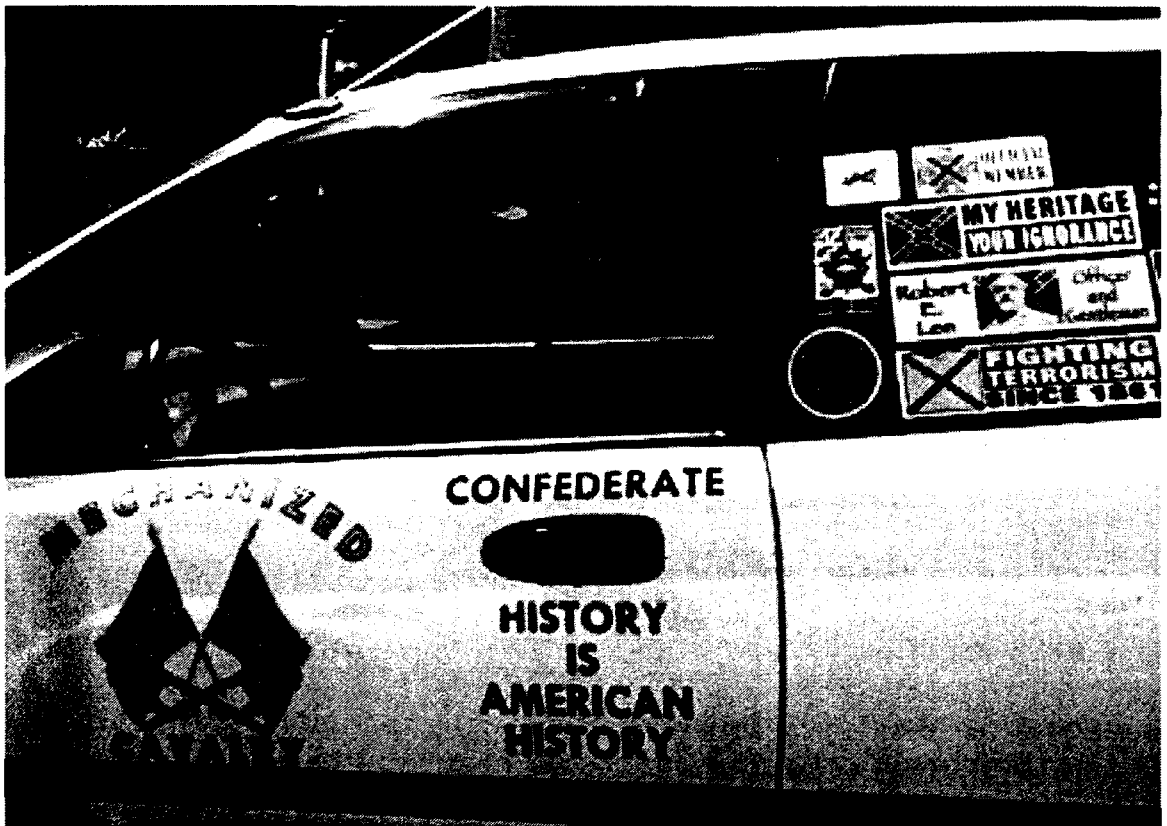


Figure 9.2: Virginia Flaggers demonstrating in front of the VMFA June 8, 2013. Photo by Autumn Barrett.

Boden characterizes her “Southern heritage” as rooted in pride for “the men who left home, hearth, everything to fight for the state of Virginia.”

Virginia called them, they were fighting for our property rights, for our freedom - from an oppressive government that had, you know, come to Virginia, not the other way around, they were fighting in defense of Virginia and I’m very proud of what they did and what they fought for and very hurt that in a lot of cases it’s the same state that doesn’t want to recognize them, from a twisted...politically correct wave that has hit, I guess, in the last 25 years, that if you even mention anything about the Confederacy, or a Confederate soldier or anything Confederate, it’s automatically has to do with racism and can’t be discussed.

Both Virginia Flaggers that I interviewed were insistent that the Confederacy was separate from the institution of slavery and racism. They see their efforts as educational, to “win hearts” toward understanding Confederate pride, and the Confederate Battle Flag becomes an opportunity for discussion of the past. However, when I asked how they approached the topic of slavery since the Confederate flag often evokes the history of slavery, Boden said “I tell you the honest truth. We don’t ever bring it in, because we want our flag not to be associated with that.” However, when it arises, Boden says “we point to the U.S. flag” and say “I hear you’re wanting to put all of slavery on this flag, but did you realize slavey was only legal under this one for 4 years, but it was legal under that one for 83?...that one’s much more guilty.”³⁵¹ Boden claims a double standard is applied where discussions of slavery without discussing the Confederacy is acceptable, but not the reverse:

somehow the idea that you can’t discuss the Confederacy without discussing slavery, when it was legal in all, in all states and very widespread. And to just say that about the Confederacy makes no

³⁵¹ See the introduction for a discussion of Gwaltney (1980). Hannah Nelson speaks to the two flags by saying, “I don’t care what flag white people have, it gives me a headache to salute the Stars and Stripes or the Stars and Bars because I hate what both of them have really stood for” (1980:5).

sense. When at the same time, certainly, we're not invited to the Juneteenth celebration to have a table. So, it's like one way, but not the other. To me, if you're going to say you can't discuss the Confederacy without discussing slavery, then I don't think you can discuss slavery without discussing the Confederacy, but it doesn't work both ways...we like to call it 'selective diversity.' People are very much into accepting others, with the exclusion of Confederates and their heritage and our history.

I asked Boden to please explain how the history of the Confederacy is distinct from the history of slavery, and what this separation means to her. Despite having just claimed that the institution of slavery was pervasive and legal, Boden responded by saying that the separation is clear for her because,

the highest number anyone can even possibly project is that 20% of Southerners that owned slaves...and I think it's a lot lower, but that's the highest any historian does. So how do you account for 80% of Southerners who left everything...in many cases to die of dysentery...away from their home and family, for someone else's right to own slaves?...it's not comprehensible at all. There's so many issues that point to slavery not being the reason those men fought....Racism, certainly, in 1861-1865 in the United States and the Confederate states, was a completely different way of thinking about race, but it was no different in the South than it was in the North. We have Abraham Lincoln's quote in the Douglas debates...that mirror the thoughts of Southerners and it crossed...the Mason -Dixon line....So, how anybody can equate racism with the Confederacy, I, I can't even imagine, because the thoughts in that time frame were the same no matter where you lived, it made no difference. And that's...well documented.

Boden's account is apparently referring to whites in the Confederate States and the United States as racist during the period of the Civil War. A broad white universal is appealed to as a standard that should not be judged against contemporary standards. Divergent voices and actions of African Americans against slavery and other abolitionist movements are not acknowledged in any of these statements.

For Boden and Schmidt, there is no recognition of contemporary racism or inequity as legacies of slavery. Discussing the activities of the Virginia Flaggers, Boden mentioned that their network had recently alerted them to vandalism of the Robert E. Lee monument on Monument Avenue. Boden says that “sometimes those things will be racial,” though this instance was “just some goofy kid” who spray painted something like “beefcake” on the statue. When I asked about the “racial” incidents, Boden said,

the last time we went through this, someone took plaques of Civil Rights heroes...and attached them to the...railings with big bolts and things like that. And...to think what J.E.B Stuart and Robert E. Lee had to do with 1950s Virginia, there’s absolutely no connection, I mean, none whatsoever. So...it’s ignorance of history, in my opinion, to paint those men with some kind of racism, racist brush...there’s *no* foundation for it, whatsoever.

2011 Media coverage of these plaques debated whether they should be considered street art or vandalism. However, Boden and Schmidt saw ignorance in the actions. I saw in these acts a public re-marking of Richmond’s premiere avenue of Civil War heroes who fought to defend an institution that denied humanity (much less civil rights) to people of African descent, with Civil Rights heroes who fought to claim their civil rights as human beings in an America that remained oppressive (see Figure 9.3).



Figure 9.3: December 17, 2011 Richmond Times Dispatch photo of a plaque fastened to J.E.B. Stuart’s monument (beneath the wreath). The plaque commemorates Richard and Mildred Loving as Civil Rights Heroes.

Becoming a Confederate activist, for Boden, has been a process of retrieving a history and heritage that she feels has been muted. “What I see is that we have hidden the flag for so many years, just for fear of offending someone or hurting someone because of a few bad people that used it for a period of time.” In clarifying

who the “few bad people” were, Boden specifically referred to the “misuse and misconception through hate groups.” **Dave Schmidt**, a European American man from North Carolina, said that the Confederate Battle Flag had been “misused in a lot of ways,” particularly in popular culture where it is “associated with redneck culture and..anti- you know, country, or anti-black.” Television shows have featured the Confederate Battle Flag, which, for Confederates “had a meaning to the people who were defending and who had honor” but on TV shows becomes “connected with ignorance, with fear, with Southerners and how they are not a part of the culture and that type of thing. And that has crept into our popular culture.” The association of the Battle Flag with the Klu Klux Klan is also a distortion, according to Schmidt.

You had the Klan, which, you know, from its beginnings, particularly in the 1900s when they were marching in Washington, you cannot find a Confederate Battle Flag, any Confederate represen[tation] among any of them. There were 10 thousands of people marching. It’s all the United States flags...in the 60s and 70s, the Southern Klan actually reemerged, and that’s when...you see Klan marches with the Confederate flags, and the United States flag, and the Christian flag. It wasn’t just a flag. Again, another selective thing, it’s like, ‘oh we don’t see...the Christian flag and the United States flag, we don’t see those. The same people are carrying ‘em...

...in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, you really got the pop culture and some true racists. [In] my opinion, the Klan would be considered a true racist organization. They perpetrated *the* South, *the* Confederacy, *the* way it is and it’s just not true, never has been. There’s a misrepresentation *there*. And it’s just something we’ve never been able to fight back.

For Boden and Schmidt, associating racism and slavery with the Confederate Battle Flag is hypocritical when the U.S. Flag flew over a slaveholding country long before the Confederate Battle Flag was used as a symbol of the Confederate States and was also a symbol of the KKK.

The Confederate flag signifies three things for Schmidt: sacrifice, Christian heritage, and freedom. When flagging, Schmidt carries a replica of the flag his ancestors fought under and sees it as representing sacrifice and the survival of his family lineage. All of his male ancestors who fought for the Confederacy died. His great grandfather was too young to fight, and therefore his paternal lineage survived. Schmidt spoke of his German ancestry and their poor background and their agricultural occupations in North Carolina. The flag symbolizes pride in his family, “my family, who did not own any slaves, who probably didn’t even know anybody who owned slaves...[in] fact, any black folks that we knew were probably indentured slaves and...free blacks, that kind of stuff.” For Schmidt, the Confederate flag also represents “Christian heritage” in the portrayal of St. Andrew’s cross and the story of his martyrdom, “so, for me, it’s an emotional, religious symbol going back thousands of years.” The third significance of the Confederate flag is “also a political statement...it represents freedom, from oppression, from tyranny...the same as so many other flags..to me, it’s about ‘we’re fighting to *be* free under the Declaration of Independence and under our *own* very Constitution.”

Both Boden and Schmidt said that, while the majority of the Flagger membership had ancestral ties to Confederate soldiers, their supporters include a black woman who flags with them (Schmidt was clear that she does not like to be referred to as African American) and members of the range of political parties from “Ron Paul folks, all the way up to staunch liberals.” When I asked if Boden and Schmidt consider themselves Confederates today, both Boden and Schmidt said “yes.” When I asked what it meant to be a Confederate in 2012, they both responded that it meant they

were “proud of their heritage.” When I said, what does this mean in terms of following the politics of the Confederacy, Schmidt said “we already do, it’s called the Tea Party” and Boden agreed. Schmidt followed up to reiterate “it’s called the Tea Party. The Tea Party doesn’t know that yet, that’s one of them little secrets.”

Ancestry was such a key component of why Boden and Schmidt identified as Confederates, that I returned to the statement made by Schmidt that his family had never been slaveholders. He said, “no” that his family

doesn’t have a trace of it...Far as I know. We came over in the boat 1741 into Philadelphia. My branch came into North Carolina and became farmers and gold miners and furniture makers. It think it’s possible, It’s kind of a little scary, there might be, like, a cousin that supposedly owned 8 slaves running the area.

At that point, an exchange occurred where Boden interjected and said “Did you say scary?” appearing irritated. Schmidt said, “Yeah, because it’s like -” and was interrupted by Boden saying “Why do you want so bad to -” Schmidt interjected “Because...we were farmers. And I’m just saying we were agricultural people.” He then said to me, “And see, I see what her [Boden’s] point is, if I had slaves in my family, they were legal at the time. I’m just saying if they were.” He then went on to speak of his German ancestry on his father’s side, but that his mother’s ancestry was less well known “on the Cherokee side.” When I asked if his mother was Native American, he said, “no, no, no, but she’s *part* Native American...her side of the family had the inter-racial marriage of the Cherokees and the *English white folks*.” I asked if he also had African American ancestry and he said, “as far as I know, I don’t.” Boden said, “[with] those blue eyes?” He said that portions of his genealogy are hard to trace.

Boden knew of “4 folks, that’s all I know” who were slaveholders in her family. After the interchange with Schmidt, she said,

I had both situations. My ancestors in the Southeastern Virginia were dirt poor and they didn’t own anything. They were sharecroppers, but I have quite a few in Richmond, and yes, many of them did...One of my great, great grandfathers had a plantation in Virginia and anybody that lived in Richmond in that day, had a house, generally had one or two house slaves. So, I’ve even found that, my wealthier ones that didn’t own plantations had some in their house, yeah. Which, to me... it’s almost like, if you had money, you had one, so, I don’t really apologize for, I don’t...honestly, see any need for an apology for something that was 3 generations ago, that was standard practice, North and South.

Schmidt reiterated “Legal, standard practice.” I then asked if when Boden sees the history of slavery represented, if she feels any personal connection to that history based on her ancestor’s slaveholding past, particularly given the strong connection she expressed feeling to her Confederate ancestors. She said that “it’s kind of hard at this point, it’s a little far back” but in terms of her ancestors actions as Confederate soldiers she agreed she feels a strong connection to that history: “Right, the soldier, blood, straight down, but what they owned and what they did - it’s a little harder I guess...it’s just...I don’t, I *do not* get the - I mean, where does the apology stop?” Regarding any personal connection to the history of slavery she said, “Yes, I guess it absolutely is part of my history because I have the documentation” but in terms of feeling a connection when seeing this history represented, she remains disconnected. The history of slavery is only personally connected to the descendants of the enslaved but not the enslavers.

I don’t, to be honest, I don’t think I feel a personal connection, no, I really don’t. I would hope that I would if I was the descendant of a slave...I would very much, I’m all about my history and what...I know, so no...if I could meet the family, maybe of some that we lived

together with, I think that would be amazing. Yes....Because I have a feeling that...who knows, but...typically in that day and time the ones that would have lived in...the houses with the ones in Richmond here, they would have been close to the family, there wouldn't have been a different place for them to live, they'd have lived in the house. Who knows?

Schmidt later emphasized that, "if you had money, you probably, like her situation, if you had house - slaves, it was a sign of privilege and they weren't making money off of their backs, they were, just domestic servants." Within the conversation with Boden and Schmidt, those who profited from slavery and those responsible for the immorality of slavery largely emerge as Northerners and European slave traders and colonizers. Southern perpetrators remain nebulous.

Because the idea of apologizing for slavery had emerged in Boden's responses, I asked how she felt about Delegate Hargrove's reaction to the state's apology for slavery during the Reconciliation Statue dedication. Boden said, "I would not be for that either. I don't see how anybody can apologize now for something, I mean... are we going to have one for the Irish indentured servants that came over?" Schmidt then said added to Boden's statement by saying the treatment of the Germans by the Italians and the Romans would have to be attended to and they both said "where do you stop?" Both Boden and Schmidt did not feel they benefited from the wealth or white privilege created through the institution of slavery. Boden qualified this by saying "it depends on which branch of my family you were in, 'cause like I said, the ones...growing tobacco in Southeast Virginia were as dirt poor as the blacks they lived next to." Schmidt said that the people who experience white privilege are "the people who go to Harvard, Princeton, Yale..because they were the slave traders, not the Southerners." Boden followed up by saying:

it's not us...I mean, certainly it was a fact of life...there's no doubt about it. In that period in time, every white was more privileged than, than every black. How that is in the 21st century?...That might be a different story [depending] on how you look at it. And I guess that's what your job is to do.

A discussion arose around of the immorality of the Northern slaveholders who sold enslaved African Americans in the Southern markets rather than freeing them.

Schmidt said,

To me, that's just one of the most immoral things in the world. I mean, you outlaw slavery, and yet, you don't *free* your slaves, you *sold* them. That's been a very bad taste in my mouth all my life...Georgia was one of the largest slavery states but, again, it was under British rule, not Southern rule...that's just some of the things that I think...the hypocrisy of calling *us* racists.

When I asked if Boden and Schmidt felt slavery was immoral, albeit legal, Schmidt said, "In *our* world, yes." Boden expounded to say "Absolutely. We as 21st century Virginians believe it's immoral, but I don't know how to know what they thought then." Schmidt said that some documents from Robert E. Lee and early abolitionist groups left statements, but qualified that the first abolitionist groups were in Virginia and were fighting against the British imposition of slavery. Boden felt that her ancestors who were slaveholders demonstrated in their wills that the institution of slavery was dying out because, upon their death, their wills were freeing the enslaved who worked for them "and they would have left some type of support." In contrast, she said Lincoln was "immoral" for freeing the enslaved "with no way to support themselves." Within this dialogue, "slavery" and the discussion of morality was not about the experiences or exploitation of the enslaved, but a hot-potato game of passing blame between white factions of the past, with a great deal of focus on the absence of guilt in the present. Though the acts of bravery and courage were

personally claimed as blood inherited personal history that still evoked strong emotions in Boden “just thinking about” what her ancestors experienced as soldiers, she dissociated their experiences as enslavers from herself.

The positions of the Virginia Flaggers, in dialogue with the reflections of Virginia residents on their own education, and on educating, points out the contradictions that remain within white Virginians’ negotiation of the ‘status quo,’ which attempts to allocate overtly Confederate rhetoric as “extremist.” This relegation obscures the shared messages and values that make the Virginia Flaggers see hypocrisy within the actions of state institutions while most residents I interviewed characterized the City of Richmond and the state of Virginia as Confederate. Perhaps relegating the “sins” of slavery to the South, under the essentialized symbol of the Confederate flag, serves the same purpose on the national level.

Boden’s appeal to the relativity of the past is also similar to the discussions that emerged with the three teachers regarding negative aspects of their heritage and personal experiences. Baumgartner appealed to the relativity of the Nazi Holocaust as one of the horrible portions of the German past, because everyone has aspects of their past they are ashamed of, and unfortunately “what people do to other people.” Rusher and Bannister both remembered questioning segregation in Virginia, but Rusher’s explanation to her students was her mother’s response that it had always been that way. We do not hear how Bannister’s father responded to his question on why the restrooms were segregated, but he later says, that slavery was pervasive, “when *everybody* thinks a certain way, it doesn’t make it *right*. It just makes it history.

It's just the *truth*." No one is to blame because it is in the past. This position requires maintaining separation of past and present.

Jessie Daniels (1997) argues that racist rhetoric and imagery, generated by white supremacist organizations characterized as "extremist" by mainstream U.S. society, convey values of white, heterosexual, male supremacy that are concurrent with and reflective of broader "white" culture normalized as "American" culture. By compartmentalizing "extremist" groups, "mainstream" racism, sexism and homophobia remain obscured and taboo topics, because they are 'extreme' positions that 'good' people don't engage in. While the Virginia Flaggers are very clear and adamant in stating that they are not a hate organization and do not agree with white supremacist organizations such as the KKK, they have expressed being marked as outside the mainstream through their identification as Confederates. However, their Confederate telling of the significance of their history and heritage coincides closely with themes that emerged in my conversations with the three Chesterfield County school teachers and with the learning experiences of Pierce and Kamarah. African American resistance is absent from white discussions of the Civil War and slavery and is muddled when speaking of the Civil Rights Movement. The history of slavery belongs to African Americans as presumed descendants of slaves and a propensity toward being controlled is implied (by Rusher). The history of world change, of American change, belongs to Europe and its American descendants, even if the narrative is as contested as that of the Confederates. African Americans are largely absent as biographically fleshed out, acting, human beings in these discussions. The narratives of Virginia's slaveholding past and Civil War era history overlap

between the school teachers and the Flaggers, but it is clear that marking that narrative as Confederate is no longer 'mainstream' in Virginia and that the Confederate Battle Flag has become the symbol of demarcation (like the word, "nigger"). Boden says that even the Daughters of the Confederacy are moving toward not using the Confederate Battle Flag. African Americans and some European Americans with whom I spoke, characterized Virginia as 'Confederate.' However, the narratives and values of the Confederacy appear to be mainstreamed as unmarked and normative. The monuments and history represented can be relegated to the past, from which only positive, progressive, and egalitarian results can or should be acknowledged. A heritage of continued inequity is buried.

Learning Ethnicity in Virginia

How does one learn ethnicity? France Winddance Twine's (1996) ethnographic work titled "Brown-skinned White Girls" with African American college students with Euro-American mothers and African American fathers demonstrated a pattern of becoming aware of themselves as ethnically marked African Americans during their college experiences in California. Young women whose fathers had not lived with them during childhood reported identifying with the middle class white culture of their mother and their mother's family, which became contrasted with the salience of their blackness during their social interactions in the University context. Furthermore, it allowed them to identify the unmarked normativity of their European American ethnicity that included remaining politically inactive, viewed as 'neutral,' and not getting involved in political activism toward social justice. Twine's (1996) study

demonstrates the complexity of ethnic constructions beyond, but including, the way one is 'read' in various contexts.

When **Ana Edwards**, who was born and raised in California, was discussing her experiences surrounding her political activism in Richmond with her paternal Uncle, he responded, "You know, you never realized how African American you were until you moved to Virginia!"³⁵² Ana's mother is European American and her father is African American. She says that in contrast to her Virginia experience where she was immediately 'read' as African American, her appearance was ambiguous, not salient among the diverse populations of California. Researching the history of her two grandmothers who were sold from Shockoe Bottom's slave markets and the process of becoming politically actualized in her work to mobilize and educate community members on Gabriel's Rebellion and the Richmond African Burial Ground were part of a process that included a heightened awareness of her positioning, to use Hall's (1990) words, in relationship to the historic context of Virginia. Much like Zainab Kamarah's experiences entering an elite "white" school, Ana's reflections show the lifelong process of identity acquisition, where positionings of self are fluid, ongoing and linked to contexts with particular historic trajectories.

Tiffany Jana (2010)³⁵³ is a 33 year old African American woman, who was born in El Paso, Texas into a military household and moved to Richmond when she was a

³⁵² Edwards-Barrett email communication. October 27, 2013. Correspondence clarifies a portion of a November 19, 2009 that was lost due to technical malfunctions of my digital recorder.

³⁵³ Jana, Tiffany. Interview June 25, 2010. Richmond, Virginia. Photo provided by Tiffany Jana, taken by Stephanie Slatner of Hoot Media. Jana owns all rights and permissions.

teenager after living in Texas, Germany and New York during her childhood years. An exceptional student, Jana was accepted to several universities, including Harvard, by the age of 13 and graduated high school as a sophomore in College. Virginia Union University offered her the opportunity to transfer with a full scholarship, "and that's how I got to Richmond." Jana says that she was "really glad I went to Virginia Union", an historically black university, because "*that was the year I really found out that I was black.*"

Prior to attending Virginia Union University, Jana was reluctant to go to an historically black college or university "because I didn't have a frame of reference with African American people for the most part. Both of my parents are black, my mother is your complexion with your color eyes...I think her grandfather was Irish and her mother is Cherokee, but, she's black. How that works, I don't know." Jana attended a Catholic school for part of her education and recalls little awareness of her ethnicity as marked:

when you sound like everyone else in your little Catholic school, with your little uniform on, and you're not walking by mirrors all the time and no one is making a big deal about the fact that you happen to be brown or different, I just didn't think about it. I mean, I was mildly aware of it, but...it had no significance, it didn't really matter.

Jana's mobility as the daughter of a military parent meant rarely staying in one educational setting for more than a couple of years. While Jana did not learn to see herself as having a marked ethnicity she did experience what I interpret as racist presumptions within her educational settings:

So, what became normal was when I stepped into a classroom, they expected me to be the lowest performing person in the room, because I was brown. And that just became normal and it became a jolly good

time proving to them that I'm probably sitting at the top of your class, thank you very much.

This was in stark contrast to Jana's experience at Virginia Union University, where she says,

everybody else looked like me, that was crazy. And for the first time...no instructor expected me to be anything but brilliant. And that was great...and then I found out, I learned more about African American history and achievements and what we've done and it was just like...not only am I black that's kind of cool!...I like that! So that's what that did for me.

Jana then described moments where her awareness of race and ethnicity emerged with her parents. She says, "at home...I became more aware of Jim Crow, Reconstruction and the..differences in the South and the North, not so much about slavery" because her father lived through the racial integration of his high school in Raleigh, North Carolina and "it was really horrible for him." Tension would arise over her interest in white boys at school, where her father would say "you can date these boys, but don't even think about bringing one home." She said she was frustrated because "who do you want me to crush on if I'm, if there are no brown boys around me?" Being married to a European American man now, she says her father has "obviously gotten over it, I think" because he loves her husband and her brother is also married to a "white woman." She sees her father's refusal to allow her to bring a European American boy home as a direct influence of his experiences: "the way he was treated by white boys made him, you know, loathe the idea of me being with one." Her mother grew up in New York and expressed to Jana that she "just didn't have any experience around being black" and that "people always thought my Mom was white." Jana's mother was the first black woman model to be featured in Seventeen Magazine and was featured on the first cover of Essence Magazine and

the first black woman in a television commercial, but she says “it was all because she...looks very Mediterranean, but she’s black.” Her mother did share with Jana moments growing up when “people kind of figured it out” such as when Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated and school was released early “and one of her white female friends made a really nasty comment...‘why are we getting out of school for this nigger’ or whatever, and she [Jana’s mother] slapped her.” While Jana’s overall memory of growing up involved an absence of her ethnicity as salient, these moments show the ways she was taught to see and not see herself as “black.” Crucial to the development of a sense of pride in her ethnicity, was learning African American and Diasporan history that included the many accomplishments of peoples of African descent.

Jana is an entrepreneur as well as an actress, and says she is rooted in Richmond, that “Richmond became personal” through a combination of having children and “the fact that my placenta’s buried in Jackson Ward” and researching the lives of historic figures she portrays, such as Maggie Walker. Along this process, Jana learned of historic sites related to the history of slavery, such as the Richmond African Burial Ground (see Chapter 5). In discussing the potential Richmond has for taking a proactive role to memorialize and interpret the city’s African American history, Jana compared the “disregard for...African American slave history” as part of “Richmond’s legacy as the Capitol of the Confederacy” to her experience being educated in German schools where the difficult history of the Holocaust was directly engaged. Jana remembers that “every year, we learned about the Holocaust...it wasn’t glossed...it was beautiful. I mean it was horrifying to be, you know, 8,9,10,11,12

years old and be learning about it” but she says it was “beautiful that this nation of people” were choosing not to “[sweep] it under the rug.” She remembers visiting concentration camps and reading “the stories...reading about, and hearing about it, and learning about the atrocities made it real. And it, to me, honored...what these people went through that made it significant, it made it important, you know, it made it in-duplicable.” She says that for the students “that learned what *I* learned, *think* about how they treat people, and *think* about the...legacy and the history of their people and what they’ve done and what they’ve been through.” Jana said that in Richmond, Virginia “we’re not doing that.”

Jana remembers that learning about the history of slavery in school was “so embarrassing, absolutely humiliating.” She says “I was always the only black person...in a school, or in a room. And...*that* was moment when you want to crawl under your desk and die.” She remembers a difficult but positive experience with a 3rd grade teacher, an African American women who became so close to her family that she referred to her as and Aunt. Jana says, “she showed us ‘Roots’ in the 3rd grade. Unedited...all there.” She says,

I was one of the lucky ones...it was horrifying, but there was no...at the tender age of 8, there was absolutely no misconception in my mind about exactly how *bad* it got, about how *horrible* slavery was...I was really glad that I had that experience, it was just that one teacher, nobody else in the course of my education *ever*..did such a good job.

Although Jana values having learned the harsh realities of slavery within the context of a classroom led by a teacher she trusted and cared for deeply, she also expressed that learning about slavery can be detrimental to African Americans and their perceptions of self and ability. She describes Richmond as has having many

descendants of enslaved African Americans who suffer from what she calls “self oppression.” She says that today there is nothing really hindering African Americans, except for their impression that they cannot achieve certain things because they believe the “system” won’t allow them to succeed. Jana’s experience is that when African Americans in Richmond learn that she speaks several languages and has travelled around the world and has started two companies, they don’t understand how. While other Richmonders such as Wilkerson, Pierce, and Kamarah spoke of shame associated with the history of slavery as it was taught to them in Virginia, and the quickening of pride when learning alternative narratives of African and African American resistance, Jana was the only person I interviewed who characterized the oppression as self-imposed, rather than a consequence of Eurocentric and racist education systems. The insistence of Pierce and Kamarah that they could have been contributing so much more to their communities if they had been taught a fuller version of their history and heritage as African descendants at earlier ages demonstrates the power of these stories in shaping a sense of self, ability and connections between a shared heritage and future potential. I would argue that folded within narratives of the past are ideas of race that resonate and orient stories of “community ancestors” as well as personal family histories toward understanding broader trends in ability that resonate with older biodeterministic rhetoric. As Rashid (see Chapter 5) said, learning of Gabriel gave her pride in her people, because he “actually organized us...my people, to know that this is not what you’re supposed to have to put up with” and he was “actually good at organizing.”³⁵⁴ These dialogues demonstrate Fanon’s (2008[1952]) arguments on the colonizing of identity through

³⁵⁴ Rasheed, Dieyah. June 07, 2010. Interview, Richmond Virginia. United States.

Eurocentric education and socialization toward internalizing Eurocentric denigration of all that is African. W.E.B. DuBois wrote *The World and Africa* (2007[1947]) to combat the distortions of Africa within World History through its shadowy presence as a stage for European development and action.

As Bannister's memories attest to, European Americans in Virginia learn to see themselves through narratives of the past, as members of humanity, where humanity is based on hierarchical European Enlightenment ideals where full humans are white adult men. When my niece, who is European American, was 10 years old, she told me that she had "learned about slavery in school today." I asked what she had learned. She said she learned that there was a man, Nat Turner "who killed a lot of people, even women and children" and that "there were a lot of white abolitionists." The 'take home' lesson that was salient to her was of an enslaved man who murdered women and children and white people who fought against slavery. Though she had learned about Thomas Jefferson that year, she said she was not taught that he was an enslaver and was surprised to learn so. European American children are left with European and European American figures whose lives are made "real" through the stories of their accomplishments, while the crimes of Europeans and European Americans are abstracted out to examples of mistakes that humans have always made in history, examples that further demonstrate a linear progress of humanity that must continue by not repeating past mistakes. The value of history is learning so as not to repeat them, however, the message is also one of reaching higher level of humanity in the present than we see in the past. Bannister learned to see himself in the stories of soldiers who were brave and courageous, despite which

“side” they were on, though he chose to identify with the North as “right” - a white abolitionist north.

Josephine School Museum and Cultural Center in Berryville, Virginia tells the history of slavery in Clarke County. The museum exhibits portray the experiences and daily lives of the enslaved, but also show the distribution of plantations, slaveholders, and a list of enslavers' names. The museum was created to tell the story of Josephine City, an independent city founded by African Americans after the Civil War because of the racism experienced from whites in Berryville. In 2012, the Director, Dorothy Davis³⁵⁵ shared with me that she has had European American visitors who are from the area, either still residents or visiting, who claim to have no family history of slaveholding and then are shocked to see their family's name and homestead on a display showing enslavers and the number of slaves held, from the Clarke County 1860 slave schedule.³⁵⁶ The perpetrators of slavery have largely been erased from “white” memory, further dissociating contemporary white privilege (in the broader sense) from the histories in which it emerged. Also ruptured is the connection between a slaveholding past and material wealth that was gained by white slaveholding families and has been passed on from generation to generation. According to Araujo, “Ruptures, gaps, and denial mark the memory of the descendants of the victims of slavery. But among the descendants of the perpetrators, such as masters, slave merchants, and other collaborators, memory is often characterized by continuity” (2010:10). Araujo (2010) is primarily speaking to

³⁵⁵ Dorothy Davis is now retired from this position.

³⁵⁶ Davis-Barrett Communication. Permission granted and details provided in an email on October 27, 2013.

the maintenance of family histories and connections. However, we see here a “ruptures, gaps, and denials” that exist for European American Virginians in understanding their families role as enslavers. How is these denials and omissions taught within “white” families and toward what end? How do European Americans learn of their slaveholding pasts in their families?

Matthew Freeman³⁵⁷ (2010), a 33 year old European American man who was born in Roanoke, Virginia and moved to Richmond at the age of 5 and now lives in Richmond. Freeman has worked actively to promote social justice since returning to Richmond after attending graduate school in Canada. He says that he knew that if he wanted to work toward social justice, “you couldn’t do that in Richmond without dealing with race.” He and Jana, his business partner and fiancé, work to facilitate dialogues on topics that relate to race and diversity within the Richmond area. When discussing the personal significance of the Richmond African Burial Ground to him, his discussion went to recent genealogical discoveries. He said, it “is probably wrapped in” the fact that:

Until a few months ago, the only ancestry that I knew about, in my family, was Scottish folks who came over post-Civil War, late 1800s. And though I very much believe that all white folks have unearned privilege based on the color of their skin, there was always something a little bit satisfying about, ‘well maybe my ancestors weren’t actually directly involved’...I knew that...it doesn’t absolve me of any responsibility to be involved in creating a solution because I’ve inherited the benefits. But, it always made me feel a little bit...good.

And then I recently discovered that my ancestry can be traced back to 1608 in Jamestown...a year after it was founded...and it was kind of...interesting, because...I always tell white people, it doesn’t matter whether your family was a Russian immigrant in the early 20th century, you know, you were involved in the slave trade, we’ve all

³⁵⁷ Freeman, Matthew. Interview, June 15, 2010. Richmond, Virginia.

inherited the privilege of the color of our skin, and the way that society has created that hierarchy, so we've all benefitted from it, we all have to create the solution. But there is still something a little bit different to know that your family was actually, directly, involved, at least for me.

Freeman had also recently found his name on a slave ship manifest, listing "all the Americanized names that had been given to folks" and Freeman had been assigned to three enslaved people, which he took as more evidence of his enslavers in his family, both maternal and paternal. This newfound knowledge of Freeman's also led him to want a place for reflection (see Chapter 5). He says that

In most of Richmond, it's very easy to pay homage to one's ancestors that were involved in oppression, slavery. I can go anywhere, I can go to Hollywood cemetery or walk down Monument Avenue and that story is represented, but the story of the people who were oppressed, or...even the allies who were trying to...fight against it...that story isn't completely told. And so, on a personal level...I would love to be able to go someplace, and, reflect on the damage that my family did. And, have a spiritual place ...not just to reflect on the positive, wonderful things, but the...negative things and what the meaning of that is for me, for our community.

A space in Richmond to reflect on the wrongs of his European American ancestors for Freeman, "would be really powerful." He was inspired by his visit to the National Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio where "the museum was designed really well, there was a lot of reflective space in it." While, having seen his name on the slave ship manifest, Freeman said, "it was both kind of convicting and...I think kind of healing to have the story told...and to have a place, a physical place to go and, kind of process, 'what does this mean for me that I am the descendant of slaveholders?'"

For Freeman, who overtly acknowledges his "white" privilege as one of the legacies of slavery, and acknowledges his personal connection to the acts of enslavers, reflection on the history of slavery is a personal reflection, albeit uncomfortable.

Where the narratives of slavery obscure this connection, it serves still to reconcile these tensions for European Americans. Slavery as a history, can be a distant lesson on morality, and an example of mistakes made by 'humanity' in the past. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, memorials and historic representations of slavery place the onus on African Americans to forgive without contemporary European Americans taking responsibility for benefitting from slavery and racism.

In conjunction with the characterizations of history lessons provided by the European American high school teachers that I interviewed, it appears that it would be difficult to identify and locate the slaveholders and the racists who were the perpetrators of the atrocities committed through the institution of slavey and the racist oppression that existed and continues. While the enslaved largely remain abstract masses whose complex history and cultures are presented as dismembered and essentialized distortions, African and African American resistance is presented as pathology or exceptional, if presented at al. The enslavers become a small elite minority (who are usually not named, or when named are dissociated from their slaveholding actions) and who held racist views that were so pervasive that they cannot be held accountable. Yet, the specific construction of these racist views by scientists and society is well recorded to have been created by Americans to justify their slavery (see Douglass 1854; Smedley and Smedley 2012; Tadman 1996[1989]; Baker 1998). "White" teachers trying to make connections with their students by sharing their personal experiences with racism do so in a way that conveys that they were not the racists, nor engaged in hatred, but products of the 'way things were.' The Virginia Flagger who acknowledged slaveholders in her family, did not associate

this with her own personal heritage but actively dissociated any association with slavery from herself, personally.

While slavery becomes marked as African American history, the telling of that history from a self-determined African American perspective, through sites such as the Richmond African Burial Ground, threatens to obviate the connections between past and present inequities and the location of privilege that is part of that trajectory.

Chapter 10: History and Identity in Rio de Janeiro

France Winddance Twine's (2001[1998]) research on an Afro-Brazilian community situated in the historic location of a former coffee plantation (briefly discussed in the introduction to this section), where the descendants of enslaved laborers who were forced to work on the plantation continued to live raised questions regarding constructions of family and personal identities. Twine (2001[1998]) found that Afro-Brazilians constructed their visual family representations in photo albums foreground European ancestry. She also found that "slavery" was something that happened at a distance "over there," not in the space and place of their homes and lives. Community members who were descended from the enslaved coffee plantation workers were reluctant to claim this ancestry. I came to ask how these individuals learned to associate and/or dissociate themselves from particular narratives within the nation's history? How is the history of slavery taught and represented? Are the descendants of slaveholders taught to feel connected to slavery's past? How do members of multicultural nations learn to see themselves - how they came to be who and where they are? In multicultural nations, is identity historically situated? If so, how?

Within this chapter I will present conversations with residents of Rio de Janeiro that begin to answer these questions. This chapter is in dialogue with Chapter 8, and the conversations were begun by discussing the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, Zumbi dos Palmares, and Princess Isabel as local sites of historic commemorations.

Neia Daniel, Director of the José Bonifácio Cultural Center in 2009, is a 54 year old woman who was born on the outskirts of the City of Rio de Janeiro. While people from Rio de Janeiro often refer to themselves as “Carioca,” she makes a joke that she is “*Carioca da clara*” rather than the more frequently used phrase of identifying as “*Carioca da gema*” drawing on an analogy of an egg, where the yolk the “*gema*” is in the center and people born in the center of the City of Rio de Janeiro are Cariocas “*da gema*.” Neia sees herself as Carioca but from the outskirts, the white of the egg, “*da clara*.”³⁵⁸ However, she says that this “suburban³⁵⁹” life is culturally different from the more affluent bairros of the “Zona Sul” area of Rio de Janeiro and that this is part of what has shaped her life’s path. In our conversation, Neia refers to herself as part of the black population of Brazil.

Neia fondly remembers growing up in what she describes as a lower-middle class family. Her father was in the military and her mother was a seamstress. She said that her parents made education a top priority for her and her sister, “they invested in this education.” She says, “we could not have countless material possessions, but we had an education. So, school was always a very important factor for us. And this enabled us to fly. You fly in knowledge.” She feels that this is “one thing that is missing in many black families” and it made a huge difference for her and her sister. “This was always a basic point in my family - know, study, read a lot.” She remembers that she and her sister used to pretend that they were researchers when

³⁵⁸I have been told two meanings of this phrase, the one above, as well as “*Carioca da gema*” referring to people who are children born in Rio de Janeiro, whose parents were also from Rio de Janeiro, making one Carioca even from the time of conception and the fertilized egg.

³⁵⁹ “suburban” neighborhoods refer to poor and working class neighborhoods, usually on the outskirts of the city, many located along major highways.

she was only 7 or 8 years old. They would choose a subject to study and then would each create projects about public figures they had chosen, gluing images, writing about the subject and then getting back together and comparing each other's work, providing comments and feedback. Creating stories and journeys was also a large part of her playtime with her sister and she feels this type of activity "is going to open your world, of fantasy, opening your world of knowledge."

Neia remembers when human remains were first found by Mercedes and Petrúcio Guimarães, because Neia was working as an assistant to the Director of the José Bonifácio Cultural Center at the time and Mercedes invited her to come see the findings and to the events that occurred early on. She says, "I remember that I was one of the first people to visit." She remembers reporters were always coming by to cover the story and Mercedes would sometimes ask her to take part in the interviews. She says that while other residents in the neighborhood had found remains, Mercedes was the first to contact the authorities and to fight to bring awareness to the cemetery and its history. Neia is very supportive of Mercedes' actions, "because many people would have hidden [it]. Her, no, she fought and showed - showed to the world, the importance of those findings."

Neia sees the history represented by the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* site as

an *extremely* important history. Not only for Afro-Brazilian culture, but for Brazilian culture as a whole...right there are interred African ancestors, ancestors of the people, of our descendants, African descendants in this land...imagine, in any other place in the world, this cemetery would have historic value, much greater than is being given.

She goes further to express the power of historic sites by saying, "whether it is told many times in schools...this story is represented right there. It's a type of, this street

is a memorial to an extremely important period for...black culture in our country.” Neia is hopeful that resources and legal measures will be found to continue to preserve and tell the story. She says “it’s a question of historical “*resgate*” (recovery).

This history, she says, is “Black history, that isn’t told in the histories in schools.” She says that “one or another fact connected to slavery” is told, but the “entire sequence isn’t shown.” Everyone knows, she says:

Africans came here as slaves, right? They were taken to the plantations. That’s it. And on the 13th of May Princess Isabel signed the law to free the slaves. This is the understanding, that is very well known. Now, the suffering, the way they came, the way they were stored inside the ships, the way they disembarked, that they disembarked in the port that is right there....if they didn’t survive, due to the manner in which they were brought...they died and were buried. And the cemetery....they were practically thrown, to the point that the neighborhood complained, writing letters to the authorities, requesting that the cemetery be removed from here. This story here has to be told in history.

For this reason, Neia sees the work of Mercedes and Petrúcio to be “of utmost importance” and “a key role in making visible a history that, until now, was hidden, that makes up part of the history of Brazil.”

On a personal level, the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the struggle to gain recognition of the site and the it’s history connect to Niea’s advocacy in education:

we have been fighting for so long for the inclusion of Black History in the school curriculum. It’s not a fight that has just started, this struggle started many, many years ago. So, it’s a huge finding and we will continue to fight as much as possible, within our means, that this history may be [included].

The contest over the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the history it represents is demonstrative of larger trends of exclusion within the history curriculum. Neia says,

that this is not the only story that has been omitted, “there are so many others.” She then goes further to speak to the compartmentalization of “Black History” within Brazil:

But, black history, for me, is part of the history of Brazil and not just told on the 13th of May and the 20th of November, right? This history has to be told daily. It is a half history that is considered, not the whole history. We are always giving support until the day comes. Would that it comes soon, right?

This history of Zumbi dos Palmares is “one of those” histories that Neia says remained untold for a long time. She was very excited during her travels to Austin, Texas, to find “Americans, African Americans...who knew and were telling the story of Zumbi, with a knowledge of this really big thing that was unknown to many Brazilians.” She said that the history of Zumbi began “to have it’s own life in the 80s” and the advent of the 20th of November as Black Consciousness Day.” She says that over the last 30 years “many things happened and today, Zumbi is now considered a national hero. Today he is part of the pantheon of national heroes. There are few heroes that are part of that pantheon, but today he is included among them.” She does not see that the struggle has ended in regards to knowledge of Zumbi, however. Neia says that “society was wholly ignorant” when it came to the history of Zumbi and those who were not aware “diminish his historic value.” However she says that, in large part due to the inclusion of Zumbi within the educational system the history of Zumbi is becoming more accepted. “Today,” she says, “people cannot say they don’t know.”

Regarding the monument to Zumbi in Rio de Janeiro’s Praça Onze, Neia remembers that when the statue “was inaugurated in 1986 and at first people passed by there

saying, 'Ah, there's a statue of an Indian' because they didn't have any idea who this hero was...those who know about Zumbi dos Palmares already have respect." She sees that the "lacuna" that has kept Brazilian people from this history is "diminishing" and she is positive that, "in time, all of Black History will be a part of Brazilian history."

This is in stark contrast to her memories of learning about the histories of slavery and resistance when she was a child. She said that she "never" saw the history of Zumbi in school textbooks." She said that during her early education no one mentioned Zumbi and she "never heard any talk of Zumbi. What I knew, always, was that blacks were slaves and it was Princess Isabel who liberated them." While Neia's mother and father did not teach her about Zumbi or a counter narrative of history, per se, they did actively work to positively shape a vision of herself and black people in general. Speaking specifically of her mother, she said,

since she had little education, she didn't have this knowledge and so she couldn't tell us those stories that were unknown. But at the same time, she told us other stories of overcoming. She never depicted the black person as someone to be pitied 'poor thing,' even [telling us] that we could achieve to the heavens. She always showed us how to move forward. This was important for [us].

Education was key to the "story" her family, "this necessity to study." Although her mother had "very little" education, "she insisted that her daughters would study."

So, one of the things that marked me the most was my sister's graduation. Because we managed, with a lot of difficulty. It was not an easy path. And, I remember my Mom, at the moment when they called my sister's name to receive her diploma, my Mom, rising up, applauding, you know, with a happiness, with emotion, you know, with pride. Because she was able to achieve the graduation of a daughter, which wasn't common at that time.

Neia connects the significance of her Mother's example and motivation to how one views one's self, and sees early education as having the potential to form the foundation of children's self vision.

It's something called self-esteem. Because, the image that always appeared in the textbooks, was always a very negative image, of blacks. The black person is very subservient...So, perhaps within the focus of formal education, my Mom realized, even despite this educational focus, that it could be the opposite. The active side would have to be shown, the side [showing] black people doing positive things. So, this is an element of your self esteem.

Neia further articulates the educational representations of "Black History" as a history of slavery and subservience as a mode of teaching self loathing and passivity. Neia says, "and so a people who don't like themselves, how are they going to fight if they don't like themselves, right?" Similar to Charity Pierce of Richmond, Neia learned that taking care of one's self and achieving is a form of resistance (see Chapter 5). From her mother she said, "we learned this thing, of wellbeing, you can, you can dream." This is the lesson from her mother that she hopes she passed on to her daughters: "The sky is the limit. You can do it...you can dream and realize those dreams."

Neia was familiar with the Princess Isabel statue in Copacabana and said "I don't abhor the form of an image of Princess Isabel. Because the signing of the Golden Law was an important historic fact." However, she says that the context and impetus for the signing needs to be considered critically:

Brazil was the last country in the Americas to liberate their slaves, and it was much more of a political move from England, Industrialized England. So, it was also a way for this industrialization to come to Brazil, and within a slave system, this wouldn't happen, right?...it was much more of an economic play that this law was signed. Now it is an historic landmark. The monument marks the day, May 13th in 1888, marks the end of slavery. And it was all a process, that includes

slaves running away...on plantations, slaves fled, forming quilombos. So there is this whole story that brought about the signing of the Golden Law, and not the *benesse*³⁶⁰ of Princess Isabel. She wasn't a good person who said 'Oh, what a horror slavery is, I'm going to sign [the law].' Everything happened with historical process, with the abolitionists, which included politicians, poets, members of the general public, fighting against slavery...

This "process" Neia says, "has been missing for many years" from the received story of abolition in Brazil. "It has simply stayed as a person who, thanks to her kindness, ended slavery. We know that this was not the process."

Francisco Carneiro Barobosa is a 38 year old man who works in Gamboa.

Francisco lives in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro and refers to himself as "mulatto."

Francisco studied history as an undergraduate and says that, "history is part of the life of every human being...every human being has some history." Francisco followed the news coverage surrounding the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and knows the history of the area. He feels that the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the history represented by the site are "fundamental" and the preservation of the site is very important. He believes that professionals, like anthropologists and archaeologists should be involved in this process. He also thinks there needs to be a way for the whole city, but particularly for the residents of Gamboa to know and become more familiar with the history of their *bairro*.

Knowing one's *bairro* and the history of the place in which one lives is an important aspect of "self-awareness" and "self-consciousness." Francisco sees an awareness of history as distinguishing humans from animals. He says the Cemitério dos Pretos

³⁶⁰ a figure of speech that refers to something lucrative that comes without having had to work for it.

Novos is “a good point of departure for...knowing the history of your *bairro*” which can then lead to understanding “the history of your city and your country.” For Francisco, learning the history of his *bairro* was a personally meaningful experience. A priest began to tell the history of his *bairro* during Catholic mass, bringing historic photos to share with his congregation, acknowledging the elderly in the community and telling their stories and how their lives related to the *bairro*'s history. Francisco says, “I came to have even more pride in, in a *bairro* that isn't an upscale *bairro*.” He says that when people live in the “upscale” *bairros* “you take pride in saying you live in Copacabana, that you live in Leblon, that you live in Glória” but not in his *bairro*, “because it's a poor *bairro*, a suburban *bairro*.” Learning the history of his neighborhood made him value where he lived. After the mass, he said to himself, “how good” that this history “is part of my life.” He feels that school teachers “should incentivize their student to walk their *bairro*” to see it from “an historic perspective,” to get their students to interview older residents. “What the priest did in that mass, teachers can do in schools also...to lift people's self-esteem.”

Francisco sees Gamboa as “a *bairro* that has history,” a history that is important to the history of Brazil. He says that Gamboa's “mark is it's history” and this history “is it's main and only wealth.” Francisco contrasts the historic value of Gamboa with Copacabana, whose “mark is the beach and tourism.” Francisco discussed the history of the slave markets that were located in Valongo, just a few blocks away and how this was also the location “where the blacks disembarked.” The history of slavery is a “very important part” of the history of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. He says, “despite being a sad characteristic, I think the history is linked to our culture and our history. First, it's something that cannot be hidden, something that has to be brought

up, has to be accepted, also.” As an example, he says the fact of Brazil being “the last country to liberate its slaves...cannot be negated and has to be studied. It cannot be forgotten.” However, Francisco says that he learned that silencing history and forgetting history “also speaks” and that where you see “an historic feature...where things happened and you don’t see it spoken about by the contemporary public...this is also revealing. Silence also speaks.”

Francisco connects pride in history, one’s home place and self. In particular, he sees the pride associated with blackness as being connected with learning these histories. In this “case,” Francisco says, “the history of blacks has to be rescued in this way...mainly in this time of transition in which we are living. Blacks in Brazil are losing the shame to say they are black.” In the past when research was done, he says, “many mulattos, brown people, always....claimed to be white.” Recent surveys, he says, demonstrate that shame in identifying as “black” (negro) is diminishing. “So,” he says, “I think this [historic] reclamation is also important.” This led him to share an experience he had about 6 or 7 years prior, before he had health insurance and had to go to the public hospital. An attendant gave him a card to fill out before being seen by the doctor. He said:

I noticed at the bottom of the card a type of study. The guy hadn’t asked, he had written there the color of the patient. There was white, black, and yellow, I think, referring to Orientals. There wasn’t any checkbox for “I’m Indian.” It was interesting...But the guy looked at me and marked “branco” (white).

At first he said he didn’t think of it, but then while waiting for the doctor he began to think, “it’s funny, maybe in Brazil and in a few countries in the world a guy like me is white....I’m actually brown, or as I consider myself, mulatto. But there wasn’t this

classification, I ended up being put down as white.” When I asked him why he identified as “mulatto,” he said:

because of the genetic inheritance of my parents, right? My father is Carioca, he was born here. My Mom is from Paraíba...a state in the Northeast...my dad had blue eyes, right? But he had things that were more black (*preto*). My mom also had frizzy hair. But...their skin tone said they were white. But we know that this doesn't necessarily mean that someone is of white ethnicity, right? So I'm also not black (*negro*), black I'm not. The conclusion that I come to is that I look like the majority of Brazil's population. I think few are white and not many are blacks (*negros*). The majority are mixed.

I asked Francisco if he identified as an Afro-descendant and he said, “This is curious. Although I consider myself brown (*pardo*), logically this doesn't work, but intuitively I don't feel like an Afro-descendant, no. Despite that I have black blood in my veins. I don't identify with African culture.” Francisco goes further to say that “you can't know African culture without knowing the Orixás.” As a Catholic, “I couldn't identify myself with African religions. In fact, he says, “I don't know if it is a point where I am showing my prejudice in this” but, as a child, he remembers passing stores on the way to the market that sold “African products” and had religious figures displayed that he associated with evil and the devil. “I felt bad when I passed by. I felt a heavy evil, and so...I naturally associated that with African religion.” Francisco also expressed having no affinity for African music and prefers symphony and orchestra music. “And so this focus, also, pushes me away from Africans, from African culture.” Again, pondering if he is revealing “prejudice” within himself, he says that he has heard that blacks “aren't aesthetically as beautiful as whites...I find the milky white aesthetic more interesting. Light eyes, light skin, straight hair.” He sees these preferences as “just these things that make us up.” His colleague, he claims, “says the opposite. He thinks those characteristics, black skin, are more interesting.”

Despite his aversion to African religion and culture, Francisco was adamant that respect must be given and is an advocate for religious tolerance. "I watch myself to have this relationship of respect" regarding African religions. He says, "you don't accept, but you have to respect." Francisco feels strongly that the growth of protestantism may also bring an increase in religious intolerance and that Brazil may be "running a serious risk" of losing this "virtue." Brazil, he says, "may be the only place in the world in which Arabs and Jews get along well." Francisco sees the disrespect of African religions as a punishable crime that needs to be enforced and is not. He believes that "black culture" and "African religions" should be taught in schools.

Francisco remembers learning about Princess Isabel in school, which he feels was primarily what all students learned, a rote story that "Princess Isabel is the Redemptress. It was she who liberated the slaves" by signing the Golden Law. Zumbi was not taught to him and he did not learn of Zumbi dos Palmares until after he graduated with his undergraduate degree. He discussed the relationship between Ganga Zumba and Zumbi, Zumbi's reign, Palmares' impressive size and strength, "a territory the size of Portugal with 30,000 people in resistance," and that the history of Zumbi dos Palmares was complicated by questions regarding Zumbi's sexuality, and whether or not he himself was a slaveholder. This is the "image" that he is aware that circulates regarding Zumbi. Francisco sees this history as "fundamental for the history of Brazil" and that it is "unacceptable" that he didn't learn about Zumbi as a student. He sees this omission as a product of "historiography" which "chooses

certain figures and certain facts and explores them more than others” and is particularly true in the way that African culture has been “relegated” outside of this historiographic focus. Francisco believes this is changing due to new political emphases on “black consciousness.” Francisco regards Zumbi dos Palmares and Princess Isabel as two of many historical figures that students should learn because they helped to shape Brazil, but neither has personal significance for him. Regarding Zumbi he says he feels no connection because “I don’t have a direct connection with African history.”

Local histories and historic sites, for Francisco, embody knowledge that have the potential to connect people, personally, to the histories of their regions, states and nation, thereby bringing pride of place and self into understanding these connections. He advocates the “resgate” (recovery) of Afro-Brazilian history and culture to increase historic knowledge, self-esteem and tolerance. While Francisco does not personally find African history, culture, and religion attractive or meaningful in his life, he advocates the inclusion of these aspects of Brazil’s history within the education system and the larger national narrative. The silencing of Afro-Brazilian history is characterized as happening because of “historiography” a process that is given no human agency or location. Francisco appears self reflective and critical of the areas where he has learned prejudiced perceptions.

Túlio Valentim,³⁶¹ a 26 year old Afro-Brazilian (introduced in Chapter 8), learned about Zumbi at home, hearing his parents and his family members speak of Zumbi.

³⁶¹ Valentim, Túlio. Interview, January 13, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Photo provided by Túlio Valentim, taken by Livia Silva during his one year tenure working in China.

"I never had a class, because the question of teaching a history of Zumbi dos Palmares is something very recent." He says this history is part of an emerging body of knowledge variously referred to as the "History of Afro-descendants, African History" and "Black History." He said, "this is not normally taught in school. At least I never had a lesson on this, I didn't learn this [in school]." He became aware of Zumbi's history because of the holiday that was established and from doing his own research. "The form of information that I had was television, my parents at home, and some relatives and friends, in general. But...there wasn't any formal education on this." His learning came within "a really natural context" such as "over breakfast" with his family or discussions about a program on television. The holiday, he feels has spread awareness of Zumbi's history, but that didn't exist when he was younger.

Túlio had never heard of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos but shared with me why he thought Brazilians don't have a familiarity and knowledge of historical monuments and sites. He said "because...Brazilians study history in general, of various other countries, a lot about Brazil, but they don't study much about Brazilian society. He also feels that there should be a greater emphasis on studying the histories of "Indians and Blacks, because they are two really big components of the Brazilian people and are not studied." From his perspective, these components were not deemed important enough to study. "In school you study about the Mayans and the Incas, but you don't study about Brazilian Indians, specifically, not in detail." He sees this as "really lacking greatly, for you not to know your own people, your own culture." He says he never studied about Zumbi in school because his school didn't teach this.

During this time in Rio de Janeiro, there were events around the city focused on Dom João VI, so I asked if Túlio remembered learning about Dom João and he said that he had lessons on Dom João VI, that he “was the Emperor of Portugal who came to Brazil because he was expelled from Portugal” and that lessons were focused on “why he came, when he came, what he brought to Brazil, the issue of culture.” Prior to the Emperor moving his court to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil “wasn’t much considered.” Túlio credits Dom João as “a figure who has a lot to be proud of” and remembers learning much about him on several occasions during his school years.

For Túlio, the dearth of school lessons on the histories of Indigenous peoples, Africans, and African descendants in Brazil in comparison with the detailed and repeated learning of Dom João is because “the history that is valorized in Brazil is the history of the Portuguese, which is the European history, the story of the Portuguese and the Europeans.” He goes on to describe the scope of topics that were focused on, such as the Industrial Revolution and “the evolution of Western cities.” He said that he “even the history of Mesopotamia, of Greece” he learned a little because “there is an intention to valorize this history as being an important history. And the history of Indians and Blacks aren’t studied because it is considered unimportant...It isn’t given importance. Not in Brazil, I think, and probably not in the world, but since Brazil is a country...with a lot of black descendants, it...should be given this importance.” He sees that there are movements to change this now, and advocacy groups raising awareness of these issues.

Milton Teixeira³⁶² is steeped in the history of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. He shared that he has written with collaborators to prove that quilombos did not exist in local *morros*, as residents and researchers have been claiming. He downplayed the significance of the Afro-Brazilian presence in the Morro de Conceição, where the Pedra do Sal is located. Milton advised me to be careful in going to the Port District neighborhoods. He also said that “among the things that you will experience in that region is the difference between the official history and the history that is told by that community. They have a mythical history in that region of Gamboa.” Emulating residents he said:

‘Our ancestors were here in [such and such] century.’ So many stories, some are even funny. This is very different than what is documented. And if you do research in any morro in Rio de Janeiro, you are going to encounter this. It is the difference between official history and vernacular history told by the local community.

Milton spoke of doing research in a favela, saying that the residents wouldn’t help him and that they had a story in their head that was completely different, again speaking as a resident he said, “No, it was my uncle who founded the favela..dada dada dada.” He said, “it’s complicated.”

When discussing Zumbi (see Chapter 8), I asked him how Milton learned of Zumbi; he said that during that period Zumbi was considered a “very famous circus clown” that didn’t really draw his attention. When I asked what aspects of Brazilian history Milton was most drawn to, he shared his family history that extends to “the first Portuguese who set foot in Brazil.” Milton’s identity as a Brazilian is integrally tied to his European ancestors in Brazil. Milton goes on to share that he has ancestral ties

³⁶² Teixeira, Milton. Interview, January 26, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

to the famous Tiradentes, to Alber William Fisher in Baltimore and passengers on the Mayflower. "My genealogical tree knows all of humanity," he says, describing that he has been Brazilian for 500 years, and on his mother's side, North American for about 400 years, European for 1,800 years and says there are even "folks from the Orient, but I don't want to tell that" and laughs.

Milton says his family story "makes me very proud, because it is my family that helped build this country, and I get furious when someone tries to destroy it." Milton feels the present salience of his family history so strongly in terms of who he is that he sees himself as embodying the Nation's history, he says, "I am the history of Brazil." and when I asked him how long he had lived in Botafogo, he answers, 430 years to make clear his ancestral ties to his *bairro*. Although Milton was very descriptive in telling the story of enslaved people being treated as "trash" upon their arrival in Rio's ports (see Chapter 8), the perpetrators of slavery and the treatment of humans as "trash" are not included within the telling of Brazil's history through Milton's family tree. He was taught and learned his family history and the history of slavery in Brazil as separate trajectories. These histories did not intersect in his telling of these stories and their personal meanings to him. Brazil brings him pride because he has learned that his family created Brazil, they built Brazil. The enslavers who bought and sold humans to extract forced labor, and the enslaved workers who provided the labor that built Brazil are erased from Milton's family narrative. Where Milton discusses slavery (see Chapter 8), the enslaved are shadowy figures that are treated poorly and the enslavers remain completely invisible, lost in the passive voice.

Alder Augusto Silva³⁶³ is a 20 year old man who was born in the state of Pernambuco, but lives in the Port Zone near the Pedra do Sal. In conversations, Alder refers to himself as “negro,” and a descendant of *quilombolas* (residents of *quilombos*). Alder expressed that the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos site was important because the history of Brazil that has been told has been the history of Europeans and that he himself does not identify with this history because he is “*negro*.” He said that blacks built the country of Brazil and contribute so much to the daily life of Brazil and Brazilians, yet the focus of history excludes the history of his ancestors. There is an erasure, a forgetting of this past, he says, which creates a need for *resgate* in order to understand ones identity in Brazil.

Alder says that the structures of Gamboa are “historically preserved” so they cannot be changed, because they are important historically, but only because they represent the European history of Brazil. The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos demonstrates that slavery existed in Rio, “here.” The significance of the site is that it is one element in the rediscovery of the history of Gamboa, of the cultural history and social significance, toward a “valorization of Afro-Brazilian identity.” Alder has a high school education and is an avid reader of social theorists, including Karl Marx³⁶⁴. Drawing on his readings, he says he believes that the issues at hand are about humanity and that while he is thinks that the important movements such as the *movimento negro* and feminists movement should not be dismissed, he ultimately sees the issues involved in these movements as part of a larger dialectic of humanity. Alder wants to

³⁶³ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interviews August 2 and August 27, 2008.

³⁶⁴ Currently, Alder is a university student, studying social sciences at the Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia.

address the inequity that is experienced in Brazil and states that this must be accomplished through a dialectic that includes and recognizes past injustices.

Alder spoke of the violence that he sees is committed against Afro-Brazilians. He visited Petropolis, a city dedicated to honoring the Portuguese Imperial family who lived in Brazil. Alder shared that it was very difficult for him because he went there to understand the lives of his people as they lived then. He was not interested in huge paintings of rich whites with gold and ornaments, or of Afro-Brazilian women holding white babies. He said that, unknowingly, blacks take in these images that are made central in the presentation of the history of Brazil and that this commits a violence against their self perception and their identities. Alder says that it is difficult for him, a poor black man (*negro*). He also said that others who are “pretinho” (a little black) say “I’m not negro,” which he sees as evidence of the violence committed against the identity of Afro-Brazilians.

Alder³⁶⁵ said that people don’t recognize that prejudice still exists. But, he sees the fact that he doesn’t “have the same access to resources” as evidence of its existence. Alder shared that he met a white woman who told him that “only Europeans” contributed intellectuals and science and philosophy.” He relays that she said this “as though this validated her.” He said that she was stating things that are not true, they are false, but provide her support for her position. When Alder studied history in the past, he had “no one to identify with.” He remembers there was a discussion of slavery and the Portuguese and how slavery was a thing of the past.

³⁶⁵ Augusto, Alder. Informal Interview, September 4, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

Similar to Simone and Carmen (see Chapter 8), Alder goes on to say, that slavery did not really end, it simply changed and “we the descendants are still here.”

Alder shares a recent example³⁶⁶ of what his experience is as a young black man. He tells me how he is sick with a stomach problem and had to go to the public hospital, where everyone in the beds were black (*pretos*) and all of the doctors were whites (*brancos*). The doctors were laughing and playing, joking with one another and speaking about their boyfriends and girlfriends. When the doctor spoke to Alder he said he was so furious because the doctor spoke to him with a tone of total disrespect and disbelief and spoke about him to other doctors as if he was not present and could not possibly understand what they were saying as they discussed methods of treatment. He said that he gets so upset with the way he is treated, as though he cannot understand anything because he is poor and black. He lies to them when they ask him questions and feels “so ignorant” when they speak to him this way that he just answers, “I don’t know.” He said that he has very little value here in Brazil.

Visiting friends in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, he was struck that “people don’t think about their identities or consciousness, as pretos as negros.” Everyone in the neighborhood “is preto, is negro.” But he says, the people living there “think only of living and dying in the same place” and he noticed that they age very quickly. “For them,” he said, “poverty is natural.” Then he said, “no, not natural, normal. To have

³⁶⁶ Augusto, Alder. Interview, August 27, 2008. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

a small house and live in poverty is normal, without questioning.” Alder expresses interest in understanding how people learn to view themselves in this way.

Alder says that he is spending his younger years focused on increasing his “consciousness” and he is working with a group of children and young people, because he thinks it is very important to change the way Afro-Brazilians see themselves. When he is 40 he says he wants to focus on himself but right now he is studying and working on these issues.

Antonio Carlos Rodrigues³⁶⁷ is a 53 year old man who grew up in the Rio’s Port Zone as a child. His father was a longshoreman who worked in the Port. The youngest of ten siblings, Antonio Carlos remembers being taken to Independente Samba School in the Morro do Pinto with his father. Antonio Carlos identifies as an Afro-descendant, has been a long time activist for Afro-Brazilian rights and a participant in the *movimento negro* (see Chapters 2 and 4). After working to develop the IPN for six years,³⁶⁸ Antonio Carlos came to work in the nearby Morro do Pinto to build community projects and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that valorize the history of resistance in the *morro*.³⁶⁹ Although Rio de Janeiro is often associated with tourism and leisurely related activities and histories, Antonio Carlos says that Carnival developed from the Samba Schools, “this is a phenomenal history...this

³⁶⁷ Rodrigues, Antonio Carlos. Interview, January 27, 2009. Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

³⁶⁸ Antonio Carlos is a practitioner of Candomblé, his mother was a *mãe de santo*. He was advised by his religious elders to not spend more than 6 years working on the cemetery site. He says that he left his position at the IPN for religious reasons.

³⁶⁹ The *morros*, or “hills,” are usually where working class and poor communities live in neighborhoods sometimes referred to as *favelas*.

history has great resistance.” The full histories of *morros*, according to Antonio Carlos, are not recorded and he is working with residents to record and commemorate their histories.

As of 2009, Antonio Carlos had launched 8 NGOs in Rio de Janeiro. Wherever he is, he says he starts to organize based on the history of each place. He says:

I think everyone should know their histories...or the history of their place. Because I think it is a form to valorize and recover (*resgate*) this, this history that you don't know, right? I think each child in Rio de Janeiro should know this history of their area, that if these histories were valorized, we would be, perhaps, less marginal and our problems less marginalized...

Antonio Carlos says, “this is something I believe...as a black Brazilian, right? An activist in the black movement.” Rather than become a professional, or a pilot, or any work in any other specialized occupation, he says, “I decided to be an activist in the *movimento negro* with the intent of recovering black history at each point where I can.” He seeks to “bring back this history to provide something good.” “For me,” he says, “to recover this history is to seize this history, reclaim this history that is theirs.” Antonio Carlos has found that NGOs provide the best structure for accomplishing this within communities and he works to combat what he refers to as the “process of marginalization³⁷⁰” within the *morros*.

Antonio Carlos says that radio and television programs do not include education on the rights of the marginalized. There are public programs but they don't teach people how they can defend themselves within the legal and judicial systems. “This,”

³⁷⁰ This “process of marginalization” often infers becoming criminalized, through police harassment and through engaging in criminal activity.

he says, "doesn't happen." Part of this in the *morros* includes constant surveillance and constant fear of police. Assaults, he says, don't occur in the *morros*, "below, yes," but in the *morro*, "here, everyone is more afraid of the police than the gangster." One must always have your identification documents on your person. "This, here, is a *morro* and a *morro* is considered marginal in Rio de Janeiro." To be within the space of the *morro* is to enter marginality. Antonio Carlos said that unless I opened my mouth and let police hear my accent, I would be treated in the same way as the residents in the *morro*. A man sitting in his neighborhood bar must have his identification or the police will arrest him; "any person walking on the street (in the *morro*) has to have their documents, until they stop at the doorway of their house" or they will be arrested. The law, Antonio Carlos says, applies "to particular groups." Some *morros* are more difficult than others. Despite what he has described, Antonio Carlos says that, Morro do Pinto "doesn't have the process of marginalization that other *morros* have." The youth of nearby Morro da Providência, the first "favela" in Rio de Janeiro, call young men from Morro do Pinto "playboys" because the comparatively different levels of oppression and marginality experienced by them - from their perspective, the Morro do Pinto youth have a much easier life. The NGO provides a legal way for marginalized communities to organize and work toward positive social action within their neighborhoods and Antonio Carlos sees it as his "personal objective and...personal pleasure" to assist in community organizing. As a "Carioca" he also sees it as his "obligation" to do so.

Antonio Carlos says that *resgate*, is not just about history, but "there is a whole process." Part of that process is the renovation of buildings so that residents can

take pride in their neighborhood. The old structures that are falling apart, combined with improvised housing lends to “low self-esteem” for residents, who feel, “I’m poor, I’m miserable.” Part of this process is learning the rich histories of the *morros*. Morro do Pinto’s history includes famous *sambistas* whose music was appropriated by Hollywood stars such as Fred Astaire. Ernesto Nazareth was born and raised in Morro do Pinto and developed the classic *Chorinho* musical genre, traveling the world to perform. Antonio Carlos wants the young people to know that the music that has made Samba and Rio de Janeiro famous was created right in their neighborhood. He feels this will open new visions for young people in terms of how they see themselves and their own ability to accomplish in life. “If everyone knows this story, they would attempt all [sorts] of other things. They would want to be a musician or a ballet dancer, you see?” He feels that in the U.S. figures like Sammy Davis, Jr. and Michael Jackson, places like Brooklyn and Harlem, provide pride and high self-esteem for African Americans, despite there also being marginalization processes in the U.S.

One of Antonio Carlos’ current projects is renovating the space of an old Samba School where famous *sambistas* gathered with the community each Sunday. Antonio Carlos describes that “to go to Samba, people wore only their best Sunday clothes...each person brought something to eat, a cake, snacks...a drink, a little cachaça or wine...they sang, played and ate the food that they brought themselves. This was the real origin of Samba in Rio de Janeiro.” This project has involved teaching the history of the site, but also teaching young people how to build the structures that will serve the contemporary community. They are gathering the sand,

the bricks, the cement and rebuilding. "It sparks the imagination of what else can be done." All of this, Antonio Carlos feels, builds pride in one's self and one's community. Classes will be taught by professors who grew up in Morro do Pinto and he already has professors in English and Math lined up to teach. "These professors were born here and raised here and played here when they were little. Their fathers were part of the Samba band." Classes are intended to help prepare young people for university entrance exams, to increase the rate of university attendance within Morro do Pinto. Community members have said that, "taking the university entrance exam is needed for blacks." These efforts are all part of the process. "Our work with this black history is needed...our work to recover Afro-Brazilian history." He says, "I think the community is very rich in terms of [history], extremely rich. It's just not known."

In general, Antonio Carlos says, the history of the Port Zone isn't taught to children in the public schools of this district because it isn't in the textbooks. "Where the slaved arrived, or the development of the City, that really, downtown....used to be here, because of the Port, right? Over there was the second city, the City now is new." The "enormous avenues" that can be found in the contemporary downtown area were an effort "to copy the avenues of France." A recently passed law requires that the schools talk about "Brazilian cultural work" which includes the Praça Mauá, Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, the Cemitério dos Ingleses, the *morros*, the history of the Port Zone. While there are maps and documents showing all of this, everything has to be coordinated and combined to create a textbook. However, he says, the

problem is not solved simply by doing the research to create a textbook. The teachers have to be able to teach the subject.

Antonio Carlos sees the history that he is working to reclaim as not solely relevant to Afro-Brazilians. He says this is “Carioca history.” However, these efforts are needed because “the history of blacks” isn’t told in Rio de Janeiro. As an example, he tells me that the first church visited by Dom João VI upon his arrival in Rio de Janeiro, was the Igreja de Nossa Senhora de Rosario e São Benedito de Homens Pretos, a church of the black Catholic brotherhood, because the Emperor’s guide had been an enslaved man who took him to the church. “This is a story that people don’t know. Sure, we know it because we have looked for the history of blacks here, right?” He goes on to say:

When we say ‘*resgatar*’ the history of blacks, we aren’t talking about discrimination, no. We are saying that we have to recover this history because we want to tell that history. It was real, it is what happened, and so we want to tell that story. We want to recover it so that it can come forward for people, so that it can be in the textbooks as well, right?

Antonio Carlos then tells me what it was like for him as a child in school:

When I was ten years old, I participated in a school play...they put on a play of May 13th [abolition day]. You know what I played? A slave...very well, I was a child, so I participated in the play...the textbook from 50 years ago only had the history of the slave, in as much as what the slave did, what the slave was like, ok? But Zumbi was never spoken of, Ganga Zumba was never spoken of, Luís Gama was never spoken of. A series of others were never spoken of, heroes, poets...these people were *never* spoken of. Not even Machado de Assis until...10 years ago, right?

Not learning Afro-Brazilian history, not learning the history of the place and people you come from negatively affects one’s subjectivity as well as one’s material reality.

“When you don’t encounter this history, for those people who are supposed to know

that history” this has a very negative affect “even your own self-esteem” and he says, “you really end up being marginalized.”

Antonio Carlos says that he was able to escape the process of marginalization because he was very studious and because he says he “didn’t have the courage” to hurt or kill people. In contrast, most of the friends he grew up with did not escape this reality and engaged in criminal activity. He says, “80% of my friends that I grew up with are dead due to being marginalized.” He claims to have been just as rebellious and that he “could have become marginalized as well.”

I revolted, but my revolution is a cultural revolution. So, because of this, I think that it is my debt to those of my friends who were marginalized and died, who were so revolutionary in contrast with me. But they revolted and looked for weapons, went out to kill and assault. And I didn’t have this courage, because I had another choice. I was very studious. So, I liked to read a lot and learned a lot of things...but I was incapable of hurting another person.

Had he been different, he feels he could easily have become like his friends who are now dead. He sees his work as a tribute to the lives they did not have; “So, I feel, I think what I do, in truth, unconsciously, is a debt that I owe my friends.” For Antonio Carlos, “resgate” is not an academic or abstract project to simply teach history or to fill the gaps of Euro-centric historiography, though his efforts include this as well. His work is a social justice project to reclaim a past that instills pride, self-esteem, build access to resources, better futures, and even save lives. Antonio Carlos then says, “So, really, I work on this issue, to recover history. We, as the NGO, as the community, charge the schools, that this history has to be told to the children.”

Resgate, reclaiming the past to build a better future

Advocates for the *resgate* of Afro-Brazilian history repeatedly made connections between the way one learns one's cultural heritage as "history" and the way one envisions self and one's future potential. Teaching children was consistently part of this push to build self-esteem by teaching students the history of their ancestors and their home place. Who children are and how they came to be 'here.' Antonio Carlos' discussion of *resgate* involved "seizing" the history to make a better future.

Represented histories are part of the daily lives of Brazilians, whether saliently so, or not. Those who have more privilege, tend to convey history as a backdrop to their daily lives that does not contribute to and is not connected with their privileged position. "History" is an abstract element of their lives that is largely unseen, but everywhere (in schools, buildings, and monuments for example); perhaps similar to the way privilege becomes 'normal' and less salient because of its pervasiveness. For some, such as Milton Teixeira, history validates and naturalizes his position vis a vis Afro-Brazilians. Representations of the history of slavery in Rio de Janeiro are a formative part of telling the history of Brazilian people, and serves to naturalize contemporary social inequity as well as socializing passivity.

As the ethnographic evidence presented here suggests, the erasure of Afro-Brazilian history, Afro-Brazilian resistance to slavery, and the teaching/ learning of low-self esteem are effective forms of social control and the maintenance of social inequality. As Neia Daniels says, "a people who don't like themselves, how are they going to

fight if they don't like themselves, right?" As Alder Augusto Silva observed, the conditions of poverty become naturalized. The educational system described by residents fosters this naturalization. Children are even placed in the roles of the past, as remembered by Antonio Carlos Rodrigues, "playing" the part of a "slave" because he was an Afro-Brazilian student. The Afro-Brazilian activists who spoke with me seek to learn and change the social processes that maintain the marginality and inequality experienced by Brazilians of African descent. Teaching the humanity of their ancestors and a legacy of resistance to oppression are key components of their advocacy.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

Who are we and how did we come to be? This is a question that has been answered in many ways among humans. Narratives are powerful modes of creating a sense of self, community and humanity. Chinua Achebe critiques the image of Africa held by and taught to students in the United States, arguing for what he characterizes, broadly, as an African approach to art and literary forms which overtly acknowledges that everything produced by members of communities can and should be created for the betterment of the community (Achebe 1978;1965;1963; see also Ashcroft et al. 2002[1998]). Achebe particularly identifies a need for presenting the rich history and culture of Africa's past to present generations of Africans and African descendants toward correcting Eurocentric distortions. Achebe locates these humanistic goals firmly within the long history of cultural and philosophical approaches of African cultures to social contribution through art, industry, and innovation (1963;1965).

Blakey (2001) identifies self-reflexive and activist positions among African Diasporan scholars who recognize the social import of academic knowledge production. Modes of interpreting and representing the past via history texts, monuments, museums, interpretations of historic sites, and family histories hold the social power to which Achebe refers (1963; 1965).

Two cemetery sites, the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos are spaces where the enslaved were buried by enslavers without

regard or respect. The histories of slavery and resistance to slavery have been, until recently, largely muted in two cities that served as major centers in the sale and trafficking of captive humans. Europeans and their descendants in the Americas denied the humanity of those whose labor and lives they exploited to build colonies and nations. The human remains of those interred in the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos hold histories of the violations enacted on their bodies, their lives and their descendants. Disputes over whether and how to preserve these two cemeteries continue to convey to African descendants in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro that the humanity of their ancestors, and by extension themselves, is still in question. Dispute over these two cemetery sites are connected to the ongoing fight for self-determined representations of African ancestors in the Americas, and the ongoing fight for social justice and equality.

The prominent public history in Richmond, Virginia is a Confederate history, celebrating a maverick and rebellious Southern, “white” culture that dared to fight the federal government in defense of honor and family. The Confederate fight for Southern states to maintain the legal right to own humans as chattel becomes subsumed within the honor and virtue of Confederate heritage. The Confederacy and slavery are separated by the public history of Richmond, Virginia. While an avenue lined with monuments memorializing political and military leaders who fought to defend slavery is recognized as a National Historic Landmark, descendants of Confederates protest the silencing of the Confederate battle flag carried by their ancestors. Educators teach a history that muddles the relationship between slavery and the U.S. Civil War, providing a narrative that largely mirrors that told by

contemporary Confederates. Although a pervasive Confederate presence is maintained in the City and a complementary narrative is taught in public schools, a celebration of the Confederacy by displaying the battle flag remains highly contentious. Tacit homage remains pervasive in the monuments and the names of streets, schools, and buildings.

Where the history of slavery is represented in Richmond, focus is placed on the torture of the enslaved, freedom given to the enslaved (through Lincoln's emancipation), and racial reconciliation. African and African American resistance to slavery are either silenced or muted. The Richmond African Burial Ground embodies a story that the African descended community and activists in Richmond have fought to tell. The long fight to claim this space and show honor and respect to those interred is documented as far back as the early nineteenth century. The struggle to tell the story of Gabriel and the revolutionaries who died in their fight to end slavery, is all part of a history and ongoing processes of resistance to racist oppression in Virginia. Self-determined narratives and memorials to Gabriel acknowledge that the systems of oppression fought by Gabriel and his fellow insurgents did not end with the institution of slavery, and that Gabriel serves as a figure to inspire ongoing fights for social justice and equality.

In Richmond, political leaders of all ethnicities serve as gatekeepers, mediating community access to resources and often silencing community voices that oppose the status quo. African American representatives in key local and state government positions are often tasked with stewardship over projects related to the African

American community, including cultural patrimony. The Richmond Slave Trail Commission led by Delegate Delores McQuinn is an example of this, though the political connections among the leaders of this Commission reach into upper level political tiers. In the case of the Richmond African Burial Ground and Shockoe Bottom, these politicians fail to adequately represent their constituents, in general. Where these leaders are tasked with acknowledging, preserving, and representing African American history and heritage, they have failed to represent their African American constituents in particular. As Smith (2002) has demonstrated, Virginia has a political history of “maintaining white supremacy” through “managed race relations” that rely on collaborations of “white elites” and “black leaders.” Interracial committees that tout racial harmony often served to contain and control the mode and pace of social justice initiatives toward elite benefit.

Sustained protest of community activists in Richmond have forced the hand of political figures to take action in preserving and acknowledging the Richmond African Burial Ground, largely through media coverage that threatened the reputations of politicians who had been reluctant to act, otherwise. The removal of cars and disuse of the Burial Ground space as a parking lot were all demands made by community activists, for many years. Requests from the community to conduct non-invasive or minimally invasive, expert archaeological investigations to establish the boundaries of the Burial Ground, however, have not been realized. Although candidates for Mayor, Delegates, and Governors gave activists impressions of support for memorializing the Burial Ground, many did not follow through unless it became

politically expedient for them to take a public stance. This dance continues with the current contest over placing a baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom.

Capitalizing on heritage tourism has also turned attention toward the monetary value of an “authentic” historic experience that visitors to the City may experience, however, direction from the descendant community is not being sought and their protests and input are not being honored. The Richmond Slave Trail Commission’s presentation on the proposed United States National Slavery Museum (USNSM) demonstrated this. The history and culture of Africans prior to their enslavement in the Americas was not a focus to be included in the USNSM. As one African American woman, Janet “Queen Nzinga” Taylor, expressed in the February 2012 public forum breakout sessions, the history of African Americans did not begin in 1619, nor with the institution of slavery. The very name of the museum itself threatens to tell a story of Africans in the Americas solely through the lens of slavery. A vision expressed by the Slave Trail Commission and by the Richmond Mayor’s comments on the proposed baseball stadium in Shockoe Bottom.

These trends and foci reflect the problematic origins and emergence of a “Slave Trail” Commission in Richmond, that began as a racial Unity Walk in 1994 and the Unity Walk Commission in 1998. If these commissions serve the same purpose as the Commission on Interracial Cooperation during Jim Crow Virginia (Smith 2002), these Commissions operate as mechanisms to manage and control African American dissent by claiming to work for social justice on behalf of the African American community, while upholding elite privilege. Process and product cannot be

disentangled. As the history of slavery begins to be made visible within the public spaces of Richmond, a focus on the horrors and subjugation inflicted on the enslaved by enslavers is the primary narrative, with little focus on the multi-faceted modes of resistance against slavery and the ways that Africans and their descendants fought to free themselves and claim their humanity every day. These patterns follow Santos (2005) patterns of museum analysis in Brazil. A focus on “reconciliation” vis a vis amelioration of white guilt and discomfort with the history of slavery will present a distorted and Eurocentric narrative on the experience of Africans in the Americas.

Children are taught about slavery in Richmond area schools, where few figures are “fleshed out” with the details of their human biographies. In the cases of the resistance figures who are discussed, the militancy of Harriet Tubman is muted, Nat Turner is pathologized and both are provided as singular and exceptional examples of African American resistance to slavery. Gabriel’s historic markers and mention in textbooks foreground the failure of his revolt, not the strategy and the broad reach of enlistment, and not the local place where he was executed. The Haitian Revolution, the hallmark of successful “slave” revolts, is not foregrounded within Richmond area World History courses, nor made relevant within the telling of Virginia history. While figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Robert E. Lee are taught through rich biographical sketches that make their complex humanity a reality for students and laud their virtues as leaders, these men are dissociated from their role as enslavers. The enslavers within the story of slavery largely remain part of a shadowy conglomerate abstraction, the institution of slavery.

Robert Lumpkin, the notorious owner of the “slave jail” that bore his name, where torture and humiliation were his daily business, is an exception to this. Why might this be? While Lumpkin is frequently named outright, his story is often presented as complex by telling of his wife, Mary whom he purchased as an enslaved girl, and the children he had by Mary. Lumpkin’s humanity is stressed through the stories of his African wife and his children by her. His role as an enslaver is presented as complicated, if not redeemed, through the story of his marriage to an enslaved woman, the inheritance he left his family, and the establishment of a theological seminary for African Americans, transforming the space of the former jail house into a religious institution of education. This seminary would later become the historically black Virginia Union University. Richmond’s Mayor Dwight Jones credits his success to this story and to Robert Lumpkin. The Richmond Slave Trail plaque for Lumpkin’s Jail tells the story of Anthony Burns’ torture as a captured runaway imprisoned by Lumpkin. However, many acts of resistance remain absent. A long excerpt of the inhumane treatment he suffered in Lumpkin’s Jail fills one of the plaques. Missing from the plaque is the story of how Burns, despite these atrocities, taught other Lumpkin’s jail prisoners how to escape and where he made mistakes. Burns also began a relationship with one of Lumpkin’s mistresses (until Lumpkin found out and put an end to their communications), sent messages to abolitionist attorneys via African American postal couriers, and won his freedom from the jail and enslavement (once again). These aspects of Burn’s life are omitted. Burns’ humanity is flattened and his victory over torture and, ultimately, the institution of slavery, is erased in this site’s public interpretation.

These stories of past resistance threaten the legitimacy of contemporary inequity and racist oppression: by making visible the connections between past and present and by making visible the role of African and African American resistance to oppression in creating social change toward equity, asserting their humanity, creating their own freedom, and undermining the efficacy of slavery. As Charity Pierce and Zainab Kamarah in Richmond expressed, an actualizing of their own social activism could have happened at much younger ages had they been taught their full history and heritage of African American resistance. They wondered what they could have accomplished if this education had occurred. Perhaps this is why it did not occur. Achebe (1965), Douglass 1854; Fanon (2008[1952]), W.E.B Du Bois (2007[1947]), recognized the revolutionary power of the story, of history, in teaching subjectivity and actualizing or suppressing social action and in building or disfiguring a sense of self for African descendants. Indeed this tool for social control was honed during European colonial expansion (see Césaire 2000[1955]; Cooper and Stoler 1997; Stoler 1995; 2002; Moraña et al. 2008).

In Rio de Janeiro, the role of the city as a major port of importation and sale of captive Africans was largely absent in 2003 - 2006 when I first began developing research questions. The Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, the privately formed Institute for Research and Remembrance, and activists for Afro-Brazilian rights fought to bring this history into the public eye and public knowledge. For activists volunteering their time to build the IPN and create community educational and cultural events, the present day struggle to bring the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos and the story of

enslaved Africans entering Rio de Janeiro into view again is part of a trajectory of resistance, a rescuing and reclaiming of the full range of Afro-Brazilian history in Rio de Janeiro - *resgate*. Erasures and distortions of Afro-Brazilian history from Rio de Janeiro's landscape and historical narratives affect self perceptions and identity acquisition. Pride in the rich history of one's city, one's neighborhoods, and pride in Afro-Brazilian figures who are part of that local history teach a vision of how residents fit into the histories of Brazil, on personal, local, and national levels. Racist stereotypes of innate capabilities and deficiencies are normalized through history lessons that teach children to see themselves in relationship to racially and ethnically marked pasts. Residents interchanged references to blacks (*negros*), slaves, and the weak when speaking about the history of slavery. European colonizers, explorers, rulers, inventors, are juxtaposed with passive slaves who were captured because they were weak.³⁷¹ Present day inequity is naturalized as an extension of these historic trajectories of ethnically and/or racially marked abilities that resonate with older scientific racism.

The inclusion of Zumbi as a national hero, taught in schools, was a major victory for Afro-Brazilian activists. However, his historic validity is still questioned by some middle class whites who believe him to be mythic and symbolic, but not historically 'real.' The history of Zumbi is still not well known among many working class residents, though he is generally known as someone who fought on behalf of Afro-Brazilians. The story of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos could be compartmentalized

³⁷¹ In a Portuguese language course taught by a Brazilian professor, I was told that that the slaves who came to Brazil were acclimated to this lifestyle because they had been slaves in Africa.

and fall within the patterns identified by Santos (2005), serving to reinscribe relations of black subjugation by whites by focusing on the dehumanizing of the enslaved by enslavers. Zumbi dos Palmares, through representations and commemorations, is articulated with the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos history. The fight to have Afro-Brazilian histories represented and taught include the long history of Afro-Brazilian resistance to oppression, both past and present. Zumbi dos Palmares stands as a quintessential figure of resistance, through the story of Palmares and in his prominence as a symbol for the *movimento negro* in Rio de Janeiro. Evoking Zumbi contextualizes the story of the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos as part of a broader historical process.

Despite activists' victory in having Zumbi included within school textbooks and the founding of state and national holidays on November 20th, Princess Isabel was much better known among residents with whom I spoke. Princess Isabel was primarily known as the figure who signed the Golden Law that ended slavery, against much opposition. While her actions were not seen as ending the legacy of oppression and inequity, she was largely viewed as benevolent for trying. Residents of more affluent neighborhoods had been taught the ultimate ineffectiveness of the Golden Law. However, this narrative also told a story of historic disadvantage that set Afro-descendants up for future inequity based on a faulty implementation of abolition. Afro-Brazilian activists, such as Neia Daniel were the most knowledgeable of the complexities of Princess Isabel's story and the way her story has been used to convey white benevolence through abolitionists actions. Blakey's (1990) donor-receiver relationship is clearly demonstrated in the narrative of Princess Isabel.

A recognition of racial prejudice was expressed by most residents of Rio de Janeiro, inclusive of poor, working class and affluent residents. However, residents who were among the working poor of Rio de Janeiro connected the history of slavery to their lives as a continued state of oppression and exploitation. For Simone and Carmen, slavery had not really ended, the mode by which their labor is exploited had simply shifted. Zumbi was a figure who fought against such oppression, and Princess Isabel's actions ended chattel slavery. The history of slavery was relevant on much more personal levels, expressed in terms of labor relations and in terms of racial identity. For Oscar Carvalho, having had to enter the labor force at an early age, he did not remember learning much about history and felt no personal connections to historic figures. His family and their economic welfare were his primary concerns, along with living an honest life and working hard. Though, he too, was frustrated by his economic circumstances, he did not make the historic connections between past and present that Piu Sampaio, Simone Ferreira, Carmen Aliz, and Xantina da Silva made.

Residents in more affluent neighborhoods tended to relate to history in a more distant and abstract way. History was important, but it was not expressed as personally relevant to daily life. Marcelo Barbosa Larcher found his personal connection through his journey to know more about his family, which included ancestors who had been enslaved. For the Euro-descended shop owner and longtime Copacabana resident, Laura Souza, the grandeur of Rio de Janeiro's Imperial past was a nostalgic and bygone era that should be remembered and

honored accordingly. But for some residents of Rio de Janeiro, the past and the present are not as salient as trajectories that connect present privilege and disparity, because part of a privileged experience is not having to recognize one's privilege. Middle class and elite privilege allows the past to be an abstract backdrop that is important because 'history' is important. Túlio Valentim, an Afro-descended resident of Copacabana, expressed a distance from historic narratives and monuments, as well as an imposed connection with Afro-Brazilian figures, like Zumbi. The exclusion of African and Indigenous histories from Brazilian national histories, as they are taught, was most significant on a personal level. Túlio saw this as reflecting a devaluing of African and Indigenous historical peoples and their histories. Túlio conveyed frustration in being automatically identified as black or Afro-descended, when he felt his family history and his experiences were more complex and were overly simplified by an imposed identification as 'negro.' Within his family narrative, class struggle to overcome poverty transcended racism or difficulties based on degrees of African ancestry among his family members. For Milton Teixeira, his genealogical connections to Euro-Brazilian history are fundamental to how he sees himself and his relationship to Rio de Janeiro and Brazil. He feels he embodies the history of Brazil, a history that he expresses as vindication of his privilege and demonstrating African and black inferiority. For residents who do not have this familial knowledge of direct connections, community figures and local histories make these connections between self, space, place, and nation. Racial and ethnic markers become genealogical connections in a broad sense, linking national origin stories (ethnically and racially marked) to the personal and the local. Brazil is often

referred to as “a grande família” (the great family), drawing on the familial and genealogical metaphor in creating national identities that are distinct yet interlinked.

Historic sites are sites of identity production on personal, regional, national, and international levels. Interpreting and narrating a multiplicity of histories employed in representing these pasts include ongoing challenges for contemporary scholars (Habu et al. 2008). Interpreting multiple pasts through archaeological investigations of historic sites has reflected ideological trends that Trigger (1984) identified as nationalistic, colonialist, and imperialist. In a discussion of Trigger’s (1984) work, Fawcett et al. (2008) characterize the nationalistic trends as interpretations that seek to “bolster the pride and morale of nations or ethnic groups aspiring to nationhood” (p. 1). Colonialist interpretations, however, “often emphasized the primitiveness or lack of accomplishments of the ancestors of colonized people to justify discriminatory behavior as well a colonization itself” (Fawcett et al. 2008: 1). Imperialist interpretations, “take for granted the superiority and universal applicability of their theoretical and methodological approaches. They also exert a strong influence on research around the world...” (Fawcett et al. 2008:2). While Fawcett et al. (2008) draw on Trigger (1984) to specifically address archaeological interpretations of historic sites, the trends identified demonstrate the influences of researchers’ socio-political positions on their academic products.

In the United States and Brazil, as postcolonial multicultural nations, all three of these trends can be seen in the contested interpretation of the sites and historic figures discussed in this research. Euro-centric interpretations of Richmond and Rio

de Janeiro's pasts have served to justify inequity and exploitation by denigrating and/or distorting representations of African histories and heritage. This can be viewed as ongoing "colonizing" of national subjectivities through the cultural work performed by historic representations and narratives. Self-determined narratives follow Trigger's (1984) pattern of "nationalist" trends, however, I see them emerging within the context of claiming rights to the Nation, within the Nation and transnationally as a members of the African Diaspora. I believe Trigger's (1984) imperialist trend reflects the governmental and, at times, academic and private approaches to national and local historic sites, where Euro-centric methods and a scientific and/or proprietary sense of entitlement to determine value and meaning are enacted irrespective of descendant communities. This may also be seen in attitudes of entitlement to research, having access to, and use of sites, artifacts, and human remains for capital gain and academic production, without regard for the present and future implications of residents and descendant communities. The renovations and development of the Zona Portuária, the discussions between Brazilian academics interested in re-excavating and analyzing the remains extracted from the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos exemplify these Euro-centric and entitled approaches. Discussions between academics and Mercedes regarding who has the right to house the remains for analysis and display may also reflect Euro-centric senses of academic/ scientific and proprietary entitlement.

Blakey (1990) and Santos (2005) theorize the implications of museum interpretations for constructing national identities and individual subjectivities that articulate with ideas on race and ethnicity (see the Introduction). Blakey (1990) demonstrates how

the Smithsonian's exhibits convey a European American narrative of the nation's past. The nation's past is articulated with the human past, where a phenotypically European man stands as the evolutionary representative of anatomically modern *Homo sapiens sapiens* (Blakey 1990). All other ethnicities are hierarchically subsumed beneath the European American and an American identity is represented as an unmarked European American ethnicity. The nation's history, vis a vis, world history and the history of humanity, is conveyed as demonstrating a pattern of relationships (see the Introduction) that serve to naturalize privileged positions of power held by Europeans and their U.S. descendants. Exhibits in the Museum of National History tell stories of Europeans and European Americans who are powerful, generative, and innovative in relationship to peoples who are represented as weaker recipients of European and European American knowledge, technology, and governance (Blakey 1990;1991). Santos (2005) identifies the role of Brazilian museums in normalizing elite privilege, silencing African and Afro-Brazilian's as founding figures in the creation of Brazil as a nation, marking Africans and African descended Brazilians as subordinated and conquered victims. Santos (2005) and Blakey (1990; 1991) demonstrate that skewed representations of national histories by museums teach perceptions of Europeans and their descendants as entitled to power and privilege based on the accomplishments and abilities exemplified across time, through 'history.' In contrast, where histories of slavery are conveyed with a focus on the subjugation and torture of enslaved Africans and their descendants, perceptions of African descendants as passive and/ or weak recipients, complicit in their enslavement are perpetuated. These narratives fail to fully incorporate the stories of ongoing, multifaceted resistance to slavery by African descendants in the

United States and Brazil. African contributions to the National narrative are often relegated to essentialized markers of culture, such as food, music, and dance (see discussions of Blakey (1990; 1991); Santos (2005); and Freyre (1946)).

The messages conveyed through representations of the histories of slavery and resistance in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro construct subjectivities toward elite social control and maintenance of social inequity. Eurocentric narratives of national pasts in the United States and Brazil have been presented in ways that place the institution and experience of slavery in the distant past, against which contemporary social reality is framed as progressive. In this context, “slavery” represents a shame from which the nation has redeemed itself. However, in these representations, the perpetrators and defenders of slavery often exist as shadowy figures or aberrant examples of an evil that the nation evolved beyond, or progressed away from. “Slavery” and the attendant shame became dissociated from the enslavers (primarily Europeans and their descendants) and associated with those who were enslaved. Representations of slavery in the United States and Brazil foreground the role of European descendants in ending slavery (particularly Lincoln and Princess Isabel), while silencing or muting the long histories of African resistance to slavery. Histories of pre-colonial Africa, the Atlantic slave trade, and domestic forms of slavery and resistance have been taught in ways that convey European superiority as self-evident. These ‘lessons’ construct whiteness as normative and white/elite privilege as justified. African ancestry and representations of “Africa” are marked as part of the slaveholding past from which the U.S. and Brazil desired to place distance through “progress.”

Elites employ the history of slavery and exploitation to create self-vindicating narratives and to capitalize on telling a history of the capitalization of human lives and labor exploitation. Descendants of enslavers remain largely invisible in these narratives. Institutions become the faceless perpetrators of violence where all citizens reap the economic benefits built by slavery. Cultural contributions created through colonial invasions of indigenous lands and the forced migrations of African captives are part of the consumable benefits as “ethnic” contributions and products. Within these Euro-centric portrayals of slavery, descendants of enslavers disconnect from their ancestors’ slaveholding past. “White” privilege, as a legacy of slavery, is also disconnected from the historically contingent contexts in which white supremacist ideologies were born, honed, and continue to be maintained. The absence and/or distortion of resistance against slavery by Africans and their descendants in the Americas reproduces images of complicity and passivity among African descendants and de facto positions of power for Europeans and their descendants.

How do multicultural and democratic nations reconcile these seeming paradoxical relationships between the democratic ideals of egalitarianism, colonial, and nation-building histories of slavery and exploitation and continued legacies of racial disparity and labor exploitation? As Uday Mehta (1997) has argued, exclusion and inequity are intrinsic to seminal intellectual foundations of European liberal ideologies. The ‘universal’ language of humanity was modeled on the human as a fully rational man, developed through European Enlightenment theories, a position only attained by

white elite males. Questions on who is fully human and gradations of humanness are still being contested through telling, representing, and teaching national and world histories. The histories of slavery, within these historical trajectories, fold in tenets of white supremacy to convey hierarchical valuations of humans (and therefore social inequality) as natural, self-evident, and borne out by the evidence of human history across time.

The United Nations declared access to one's heritage and culture, including knowledge of and access to historically and culturally significant spaces to be a human right in 2011.³⁷² In 1993 the Commission on Human Rights declared that, descendants of enslaved peoples "have a right to restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation" that includes "moral compensation."³⁷³ Activists in Brazil and the United States contest the exclusions and distortions of their ancestral histories as ongoing affronts against their humanity. Concern for the enculturation of younger generations were expressed in Richmond and in Rio de Janeiro. Young African Americans and Afro-Brazilians should not move through their city streets without seeing monuments and markers that connect their heritage to the places and spaces

³⁷² Shaheed, Farida. March 21, 2011. Report of the independent expert in the field of cultural rights to the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights. A/HRC/17/38.

³⁷³ van Boven, Theo. July 2, 1993. Study concerning the right to restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation for victims of gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Sub Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. E/CN.4/Sub. 2/1993/8. Page 12. Moral duties are specifically address in terms of "reparation to make up for the past exploitation by the colonial Powers and some others" which included: "research..to determine the degree to which descendants of persons held as slaves continue to suffer from social handicaps or deprivations"; "affirmative action...until such time as members of these groups experience no further handicaps or deprivations"; and "an accurate record of the history of slavery, including an account of the acts and the activities of the perpetrators and their accomplices and of the sufferings of the victims" which "should receive wide dissemination through the media, in history books and in educational materials" the human right to know of and have access to the history and cultural spaces associated with their ancestors.

where historic events occurred, as European American and European Brazilian children can so easily do. The attempted colonizing of subjectivities continues as methods of social control within nation-states and their localities. 'Colonizing' origins is a powerful tool for social control.

Claiming and reclaiming origins is an equally powerful weapon against such efforts toward disempowerment. African descendants in Virginia and Rio de Janeiro are creating and demanding self-determined representations of their African ancestors, the history of Africans in the Americas, and are teaching African descended children an alternative version of their selves, their pasts, and their futures. Claiming and reclaiming the burial grounds where the human remains of African ancestors may be honored in the present, if they were not honored in the past, is a quintessential fight against past and present Euro-centric devaluing of African lives. Where the New York African Burial Ground was reclaimed as a Sacred Space forged by African ancestors over three hundred years ago, the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos were spaces where African bodies were disregarded and dishonored. Their descendants are claiming these ancestors, reclaiming and transforming these spaces into places of honor, respect and pride for future generations. Indeed, as Ana Edwards has stressed, the process is as important as the product, and the process of resistance is productive in and of itself.³⁷⁴ The acts of descendant communities in claiming and reclaiming sacred spaces in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro, is transformative. Corrections to national and local narratives of the past also transform the way European descendants view themselves as part of

³⁷⁴ Edwards, Ana. Interview, November 19, 2009. Richmond, Virginia. United States.

their cities, states, and nations. For some, this includes a critical examination of “white privilege” as a legacy of slavery and racism.

The democratization of a conversation about difficult pasts for which there are multiple narratives is being addressed internationally as a process for progressive national development (Habu et al. 2008; Igarashi 2000). The May 2010 special edition of the UNESCO Museum International is dedicated to case studies exploring the modes by which heritage is muted, distorted and/or silenced, “the political, cultural and historical factors that determine the choices behind recognition, preservation or, conversely, the pretexts for its rejection” (Vinson 2010: 4). Vinson’s (2010) comments on the edition’s investigation of past omissions and their contemporary consequences places sharp focus on the social, cultural and political work of representing history, whether through exhibitions, monuments or site interpretation. Also recognized within this edition is the unique evocative capacity of historic cemetery sites, including America’s African Burial Ground in New York (Blakey 2010). The connections between past and present lives and identities are often made most salient through sites that bear human remains. The studies within this edition are particularly interested in redressing distortions and omissions in the commemoration of heritage toward “a consensual representation of the past through the integration of all actors’ interests and histories” (Vinson 2010:4). African descendants in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro did not express a desire to invert or recreate an alternatively distorted vision of the past. The desire to recognize the full histories of their ancestors, their cities and their nations was expressed as a mode

toward healing - for their descendants, future generations, and for society as a whole.

Dialectical relationships of past and present, productions of knowledge, spaces and places are embodied by the Richmond African Burial Ground and the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos. The histories and legacies of slavery, scientific racism, labor exploitation, human rights violations become crystalized in contest over representations of slavery and resistance in these historic sites, as well as others. Scientific knowledge and academic products, more broadly, are produced and made legitimate within socio-political and historically contingent matrices of power relationships. Questions asked and answers sought reflect the social positions of researching scholars. These limitations of data and researcher bias are challenges that can be addressed (though, perhaps not fully overcome) through interdisciplinary, culturally diverse, and community engaged research teams that overtly recognize the cultural work performed by their scholarship (Blakey 1998; Blakey 2010; Fawcett et al. 2008). While academic knowledge derives from scholars embedded in sociocultural and historic contexts, the analyses of complex narratives provided by residents of Richmond and Rio de Janeiro attest to ways history, science, and other modes of academically produced knowledge are made meaningful in daily lives. Academia, economics, art, politics, past, and present are in constant dialogue within daily lives where their meanings and legitimacy are made, challenged, dismantled and maintained through social actions. As Achebe's vision (1963; 1965) for narratives-as-art reflects, our life's work as humans and our daily actions have the power to create a future that is socially just, if we choose this vision and implement it

in what we do in all spheres of our social lives. Stories of who we are, where we come from and what we have accomplished as peoples are powerful tools in this process.

An anti-racist anthropology requires overtly acknowledging the racist history of anthropology as a discipline and process of knowledge production. Following Leith Mullings' (2005) call for an anti-racist practice and discipline in anthropology, I have sought to make explicit the histories of racism and anti-racist discourse in anthropology as they relate to the study I have undertaken. Drawing on Blakey's (1998) model for research that moves beyond the trappings of Euro-centric Enlightenment ideals, I have sought a dialogue among diverse theoretical perspectives and present multiple lines of evidence. My research questions were formed in dialogue with African descended communities in Richmond and in Rio de Janeiro. I present analyses of what I learned from residents in Richmond and Rio de Janeiro in hopes that these processes are reflected in the product of this dissertation.

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