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The 1996 African-American Cross Cultural Workshop

Submitted by Carol McDavid, dutch@neosoft.com

This year's workshop topic will relate to one of the conference themes this year, "Forging Partnerships in Outreach and Education", and will explore, in a conversational, networking fashion how people doing research on African-American sites can involve interested African-American communities in their work -- what needs to be done, how to do it, whom to contact, what kinds of information people want to know, etc. There will be an informal panel, but no formal papers.

This year, the workshop is being organized by McDavid, much as last year's was organized by Esther White and Barbara Heath. With my duties as Executive Director of the new American Cultural Resources Association, I just do not have time to run it this year. I would like to thank Esther and Barbara and all of those who participated in this year's workshop for an exciting and worthwhile time. I know that I learned a lot, and I look forward to Carol McDavid's workshop next year.

Next year's workshop grew out of discussions that David Babson, Carol and I had at last year's SHA conference where there were an extraordinary number of African Americans represented in the audiences and behind the podium. This is, I hope, a trend, and one that all of us welcome and hope will continue. Unfortunately, there was virtually no integration within the research itself. White folks did their thing, and black folks did theirs, and then they came to SHA to talk at each other.

I felt that we should start talking to each other before SHA, and since David and Carol have been conducting "integrated" research so to speak, they seemed like logical people to organize something for next year. David has since organized a session along these lines, and Carol will lead the 1996 workshop. I encourage you all to contact them and offer your time and talents.

Another part of our discussions revolved around developing racially and disciplinarily mixed research teams, a black historical archaeologist and a white historian, or a white historical archaeologist with a black physical anthropologist, for example. The research topic could be relatively focused, an abandoned house site in a city, a slave kitchen on a plantation, a white tenant farmer's house, etc. In fact, the research topic would be secondary. The primary and most interesting focus would be how well the research team worked together, what they learned about the others' mindset and approach, how what they learned influenced their ideas and interpretations of what was found, what they would do differently next time, etc., etc. The results of a series of such small scale projects (not more than a few weekends on a site) would then be presented at a session at SHA with formal papers, two from each project (in "black and white", so to speak). The workshop that year would be a panel discussion with the team participants. The workshop should be held after the papers have been presented, rather than early in the conference as has been the case in the past, to provide fuel for what should be a very lively discussion. If this sounds worthwhile to you, please speak up.

Carol McDavid would like to obtain a copy of the Newsletter's mailing list. Since one of the purposes of the Newsletter is to foster communication among its subscribers, the African-American Archaeology Network, this seems like a reasonable thing to do. However, I am aware that some people may prefer not to give out their names and addresses, ergo this request. In the next issue I will print a list of members and their addresses and phone numbers. If you do not wish to be included on this list, please let me know before November 15, otherwise I will include your name.

You may have noticed that this issue is a little short. I can only publish what I receive. Please consider sending in a paragraph or two about what you are up to or your response to the Newsletter and the articles printed in it.

Chuck Orser has resigned as a regional editor. He is edging out of African-American Archaeology to devote more time to his research interests in Ireland. Todd Guenther is also no longer an editor. I would appreciate volunteers from the midwest, the west and the far west to replace them. The job really boils down to making a few phone calls two or three times a year to track down an article or two, and then getting it to me (preferably on diskette). AND you get your name in the Newsletter with all the prestige and influence that implies!