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Carlisia Tierra McCord

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**A Knowable Space and Time: Intervening in The Hierarchies of History
via Chronotopic Language**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Martha Menchaca, Supervisor

James Slotta

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Carlisia Tierra McCord

Report

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Dedication

For my ingenious parents Latisia Greer and Carlton McCord, my clever sisters, and my city, Memphis. Thank you for teaching me to march to the beat of my own drum and showing me what it means to be resilient. I am an anthropologist because of you—you taught me everything I needed to know to get here.

For all my urban girls in academies past, present, and future who “get spoke at, spoke through, spoke to, spoke for, but never ever with [...]”. “[...] it’s silent but urban girl heard it. Urban girl knows what condescending feels like—fuck if she can spell it. Matters of fact, urban girl turned her hand into an answering machine in the 90’s so you.can.speak.to.it.” You are a whole, entire mutiny. Don’t let hallowed halls silence it.

(excerpt from “Urban Girl” by Siaara Freeman, 2016)

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Abstract

A Knowable Space and Time: Intervening in The Hierarchies of History via Chronotopic Language

Carlisia Tierra McCord, M.A.

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Supervisor: Martha Menchaca

Archaeology of the Black and African Diaspora contributes greatly to the heritagization of Black life in the Americas. Following this line of thought, I analyze the discursive constructions of historical Black social life in America using the written documents and exhibitions from a small post-emancipation archaeological project in Travis County, Texas. The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project was excavated by a cultural resource management firm in the effort to preserve an important piece of African American history from the late 19th century. Sites such as the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead are recent crystallizations of memory and history based in both pride and trauma in the American narrative. Sites and monuments such as these do the important work of highlighting an often-marginalized version of past American events— and as folklore and history are crucial parts of identity creation, its equally important to discuss how these representations of the past give expression to contemporary social experience. My report is an analysis of how the resulting data, exhibitions, television spots, and oral history report from the Ransom and Sarah Williams

Farmstead Archaeological Project fit into the discursive frameworks that shape space and belonging over time in the American narrative. I examine how contributions to the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project is in conversation with various interpretations of the preservation of American history; and how the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project is, at times, interpreted with the intent to contrast the dominant spatial and historical memory of American life after the Civil War, a memory which extends and shapes life beyond the era and area of the site. My analysis contributes to the bodies of work that addresses the hierarchical spatial and temporal organization of Western progress which continues to perpetuate a violent erasure and misshaping of marginalized communities.

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Introduction

Alternative discursive constructions of historical Black social life in America are marked by their emphasis on the narratives ignored or missing from the hegemonic and traditional American identity discourses of the construction of the United States.¹ Counter hegemonic discourses of Black social life offer complex presentations of heritage and identity, highlight the agency of Black Americans, and redefine collective identity while contesting the racist essentialism of the American Melting Pot. Hegemonic narratives of Black social life are underpinned by racist and imperialist ideologies, intended to marginalize Black people across the African diaspora (Mullins 2008: 104). The alternative or counter hegemonic discourses I identify here underpin discussions on the continuity of Black life in historical and contemporary American spaces and offer narratives beyond the American plantation slave master narrative (Foster 1994, Sitton and Conrad 2005, Reverie 2015). Racialized discourses, interwoven into the larger discourse about the American mosaic, have inherently politicized and shaped history and place African American identities outside of the American imaginary of the valued citizen who has contributed to the making of the nation (Gregory 1998, Blanton 2011).

This paper stems from questions I encountered when I first began working with the archaeological site report from The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project.² As it is specifically labeled as African American archaeology

¹ Discourses here and throughout this report are the discussions/narratives which circulate and shape perceptions of American belonging and heritage preservation. I use discourse in the broadest sense of the word—it is the language (written and oral) and images used to discuss the history.

² Throughout this paper I refer to the archaeological project as “The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project” and “The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project” (Boyd et.al 2015: xix). This refers to the project and resulting reports created and titled by the authors of the project. I refer to the space, the farmstead itself, as the “Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead”. These identifiers are informed by the 2015 site report titled *The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead: Post- Emancipation Transitions of an African American Family in Central Texas Vol. 1 and 2* (Boyd et.al.2015), and the 2012 report of the

and history, I argue that The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project is a part of the counter hegemonic discursive constructions of historical Black social life in America. The project becomes a part of these counter hegemonic discourses as people interpret the data and talk about the project as part of the public history of Texas and the U.S. The site, its archaeological data, and the presentation of it all identify and support narratives of Black Americans continued participation in the recent history of the area. Instead of a timeline that jumps from enslavement to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project works as a spatial and temporal intervention expanding the visibility of Black Americans' lives in the historiography of Texas. For example, the report of investigations or the site report, commissioned by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), is one important piece of media written about the Ransom and Sarah Williams Project which places it into these counter-hegemonic discursive constructions of African American life. Written in 2015, under the supervision of the principal investigators Douglas K. Boyd and Aaron R. Norment, the archaeological site report is an official write-up outlining the archaeological, historical, and ethnographic data about the late 19th century farmstead owned by a Black freedman in post-Emancipation Austin, Travis County Texas. The authors write that a dearth of archaeological investigations at Black farmstead sites in Texas go hand in hand with minorities being ignored in “[...] official records and sanctioned histories [...]” (Boyd et.al.2015: 3). They imply that the archaeological evidence they contribute to the public-facing history about the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead is needed to tell the full story that is ignored in hegemonic narratives of American history. The authors counter traditional versions of history, read here as

oral histories *'I'm Proud To Know What I Know': Oral Narratives of Travis And Hays Counties, Texas, ca. 1920s–1960s* (Franklin 2012).

“official records” and “sanctioned histories”, by asserting that what has already been put forth are well-known but incomplete and misleading histories. This is just one example of how the project is continually placed into counter-hegemonic discourses about American history. The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project particularly fits into the discourse of unknown Black American success in post-Emancipation America. The family’s success on the farmstead is an alternative to the essentialist narrative that most Black families lost their farms or never received land due to continued systemic racism after slavery. The preservation efforts of The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project and its inclusion in various media meant to impact public memory in Austin emphasize the existence of Black freed-people who succeeded in living in the South during the Reconstruction era.³

Major components of The Ransom and Sarah Williams project, such as an oral history component on narratives of Black household life, highlight the continuity/connectedness of a past Black American social life to a present-day Black American social life still in the Travis County area (and within the U.S.). This is in direct opposition to discourses which emphasize that present-day Black Americans are unaffected by the social lives of their ancestors or historical depictions of those lives (Foster 1994, Blanton 2011, Markert 2018). Traditional discourses of this nature emphasize social and historical discontinuity/disconnection by spatially and temporally distancing the past from the present in historical narratives. This aids in denying present

³From 1870-1890, the Reconstruction era in the U.S. is most notable for racial terrorism at the hands of White nationalists and ultimate failure by the Freedman’s Bureau and other federal agencies in helping Black Americans achieve some semblance of social and financial stability after Emancipation (Sitton and Conrad 2005). In 1935 W.E.B Dubois wrote about the era as a way to valorize Black Americans positive contributions to the era and their country. This contributed to early discourses in Black vindicationist scholarship (Mullins 2008).

claims of social decline and focuses sanctioned histories toward consistent social progress.

The Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead already fits within temporal proximity to the present as a post-Emancipation site. The fact that the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead is dated within the 20th century and linked socially and materially to multiple freedmen's communities with living descendants places the site within the counter narrative that Black history is recent American history. The farmstead is not only identified within the geography of Travis County via detailed archaeological investigations, but it is also identified by the oral histories of the descendants. The archaeological material and knowledge provided by living descendants bring life to the story of the Williams family by bridging time and space. The oral histories help in peopling the past spatial history and connecting it to the present. Archaeological data and life stories become distinctive markers of a monument to the community; where a historical tale becomes a symbol and shapes how community members see themselves and are seen by others (Basso 1996: 61-62). In this way the project manifests and is a manifestation of continuities in the Black American social life.

The purpose of this thesis is to advance a case-study about the creation and preservation of American heritage. In particular, I analyze and contribute to the discursive mediums that advance a complicated image of African Americans in contrast to the flattened stereotypes in hegemonic versions of American history. Discursive mediums are the literatures such as official site reports and papers, public television programming such as PBS, and online educational databases which circulate the language and images (discourse) that shape our varied understandings of American history. The contrasting discourse is found in material created in opposition or in addition to the traditional narrative history of the United States and African Americans. In the case of

African Americans, the contrasting discourse focuses on the heterogeneity of life experiences, complex understandings of the past, and employs themes of continuity to intervene in the distance created by versions of history that focus on simplistic versions of American progress. The oral history narratives for The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project are a good example of this counter hegemonic discourse.⁴ Franklin (2012) asserts that the material lives and successes experienced by African Americans post-Emancipation have traditionally been disregarded by history books. Instead there has been a focus on American enslavement and then the immediate freedom of Emancipation. Franklin pulls together narratives of the Black American experience that have been historically silenced. Through the cataloguing of oral histories in “*I’m Proud to Know What I Know*”, Franklin fundamentally disrupts a lack of knowledge about the post-Emancipation lifeways of black families. This is accomplished via the heterogeneity of the individual life histories she introduces to the dominant historical narrative (Franklin 2012: 3-5).

I examine how archaeology and spatial commemoration of the African Diaspora is not only used to ground Black social life within localized spaces like Travis County, Texas, but also within the United States. I use The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project as a case study to argue that memorialization and heritage sites of African American history transcend discursive constructions of and representations of historical Black social life. Discussions about these sites bridge gaps in time and space for Black social life in America connecting past and present with strong physical evidence via academic and state support. Memorialization and physical evidence used to describe or valorize past lifeways are also used to justify present day lifeways and

⁴“I’m Proud to Know What I Know”:
Oral Narratives of Travis And Hays Counties, Texas, ca. 1920s–1960s (Franklin 2012)

potential. I argue that for Black Americans the connectedness of time and space is not always simply artistic or symbolic, at times it is very real. Memorialization not only shapes momentary feeling, it informs identity and behavior, it justifies and undermines present day belonging in American spaces.

For this reason, I employ Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotopes as a framework for understanding how The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project engages with these discourses of American identity and belonging. Chronotopes, as defined by Bakhtin, are the interconnectedness of spatial and temporal relationships, especially as expressed in literary genres. Both time and space, as the whole and fused chronotope, become fleshy, charged images with significant roles in situating subjectivity in the past and present (Bakhtin 1998:84). Here the chronotopes, the intersections/framings of space and time, are visualized by the material culture of the farmstead and discursively brought to life by the descendants' oral histories and the incorporation into Austin's public history. In this case, time and space are fused via the re-presentation of the Williams farmstead and narratives about the surrounding locations and people in the past, and these tales inform the present. Knowledge of these tales become guiding posts for individuals in the present; shaping their self-image (Basso 1996: 61).

I argue that the Williams farmstead, as a site within African Diasporic archaeology and study, engages a new narrative form—the genre of continuity. As a site within the African Diaspora, the attention to how descendants take up discourses about African American history moves the narrative about the site beyond the fixed as retrospective sequencing of events implied by the traditional progress discourse archaeology usually engages (Joyce 2008:34-35). Traditional sequencing of events in archaeology distances the present, the researcher, and the public from the past, hence my

referring to it as a fixed retrospective sequencing of events. It is a linear narrative that shies away from multiple narrations of history and imposes a hegemony—the narrative of progress. In contrast, the non-linearity of narratives of continuity goes against the cultural assimilation imposed by the narrative of progress, and instead makes room for an American mosaic. An American mosaic directly contrasts the American progress narrative found in the familiar American Melting Pot, which demands assimilation, racial harmony, and simplistically harmful historical narratives. The American Mosaic allows for non-linearity, multiple narratives for one space or time, and works against the distance that alienates the past from the present. The physical and literary preservation of this history is a part of a process of creating recognizable images of Black Americans throughout time and space, not just the farmstead from 1871 to 1904. The physicality of the farmstead makes this particular Black American narrative more than just an addition to American history but allows for it to also be a part of a meaningful and personal collective memory held by members of the community—the project makes the space real, as in the recovered toys, hair combs, tax deeds, and excavated ground, add tangibility to a history that previously only existed as stories. The artifactual evidence becomes tangible signs of the past and present image making occurring across spaces.

As with most archaeological sites, the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead is chronotopically imagined—language about the over-all project and material culture from the site work together to pull the history of the Williams family out of isolation. The farmstead is placed into the public facing history via an Austin PBS program focused on sharing the history of African Americans in Texas. It is incorporated into sanctioned public history via an accessible publication of the descendants' life histories which is jointly published by Texas state agencies, and via its inclusion in the virtual museum run by the University of Texas. The recovery and re-presentations of the farmstead's spatial

history and narrative, fit within different narrative genres depending on the speaker and target audience for the public history. Each medium relies on specific framing of time and space to put forth or fit into previously established perceptions of the public history. For some archaeologists, detailed analysis about how the space and items were used, along with the emphasis on the importance of race operate as a characterization of the past space-time configuration, making cultural assimilation into the American melting pot fixed and visible for contemplation by the present-day researchers and community, while other interpretations may do the opposite. The Williams family is characterized as Black, hardworking community members and the farmstead is significant because they owned it so soon after Emancipation. A feat which traditional narratives have marked as uncommon and difficult, yet they did it as any good American would.

Preservation and heritage projects sites as the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead have important implications for the present day not only because they arise out of or fit within the aforementioned discourses, more generally summed up as the discourses of American identity and belonging, but they also shape them. The tangibility of archaeologically backed history making, which include historical representations along with artifacts collected and preserved, enable the identity developments of Americans in the present as well as in the past. These character developments are the racialized logics and notions of both Blackness and Whiteness in America, as well as proper performances of citizenship. Our historical imaginations of slavery, or in this case a newly freed Black farmer in Texas, are not limited to the past or as distant spatially and temporally as we would like to believe. These historical characterizations continue to shape who Americans are; and for Black Americans where they and their narrative belong in America. In the case of The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project, the officiality of resulting documents, recognition by state sponsored entities such as the

Texas Department of Transportation and the University of Texas at Austin, bolster the validity of the history being presented. Every component of The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project comes together to create a space and time in which the existence and civic participation of Black Americans extends beyond the 19th century. A historical site recognized by academics and the government animates a particular past and engages in the political process of characterizing American citizens along the lines of mainstream and alternative American identity constructions and belonging in the present. American historical imagination is entangled with American racial imagination (Wirtz 2014: 5).

Using a chronotopic lens to examine The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project allows me to examine how places become constructed through historical imaginative processes and how these processes create identities in a larger national mosaic. The chronotope allows me to employ a spatial analysis in understanding how preservation efforts and heritage sites, such as the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead, affect and are affected by performances of identity in the contemporary American mosaic. As these chronotopes shape and contest racialized discourses they become pivotal to the foundation and function of American history making and belonging. Artifacts from the past have significant contributions to the creation of memory, and collective memory and narratives constitute what Christina Wirtz, following Bakhtin, calls biographical personhood (Wirtz 2014: 8-9). Biographical personhood is a way of defining self as shaped by the direct connection to past experiences. It is outside of the state or political definitions (Wirtz 2014, Woolard 2013). The entire site marked as Black owned, successful, and a part of a Black community still in existence is a very large artifact, authenticated by the researcher's preservation efforts. It is a documented

historical performance of Blackness, shaped by and shaping the discourses with which the entire project must inevitably engage.

In focusing on the entire archaeological project, I analyzed a television program about the site shown on KLRU in Austin, a website for the site managed on UT Austin's *Texas Beyond History* virtual museum, and the oral history report "*I'm Proud to Know What I Know*". I also analyze how this information is used by other researchers and entities to validate their claims about Black Texan identities. These data come together to shape chronotopic language around the site, manifesting the time and space in which they fit. The oral histories and community interactions in the KLRU segment gave insight into how Black Austinites discussed the site at the time of excavations. They also highlighted perceptions of archaeological preservation and presentation of Black historical social life and how it pertains to today's community. The site report offered insight into what discourses the researchers were situating the site within before and after they collected the data. It also gives some insight into their ideological framing for how they represent this particular version of the past.

What follows in Chapter 1, *Heritage Sites as Chronotopes: Mapping Black Lives in the United States*, is further elaboration on my usage of chronotopes. Here I give some background on the usage of chronotopes in African Diaspora theory and archaeology. I also explain how chronotopes relate to collective memory, identity, and politics in American narratives of belonging. This chapter shows how the physical evidence of heritage sites becomes markers for not only Black existence in America, but also the ways in which they existed and still do.

In Chapter 2, *The Farmstead in Bear Creek*, I examine the historical context of the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead based oral histories of their relatives in the Antioch Colony, the history included in the site report and other literature about

contemporary African American life. I also try to contextualize the historical moment in which the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project is conceptualized because its researchers concur that to understand U.S. history, the story of racial minorities must be written. Contextualizing the site and how it is embedded in contemporary discourses of American belonging helps to elaborate why and what racialized discourses are engaged.

In Chapter 3, *Memory Making: How Collective Memory Informs Identity*, I elaborate on the impacts that preservation and discourse have on our historical memory. This ultimately serves to discuss how racialized discourses about making and belonging in American society can be illustrated by analyzing the narrative genres utilized at heritage sites.

In the conclusion I discuss my findings and future trajectories for the project.

Chapter 1

Heritage Sites as Chronotopes: Mapping Black Lives in the United States

The intersection of space and time is an important intersection in African American history. It is at this intersection that Black Americans shape and take up important markers for their identity. This chapter elaborates on my usage of chronotopes and explains how heritage sites become tangible markers for identity in America.

Bakhtin's theory of chronotopes relies on varying levels of spatial and temporal indications which determine distinct literary genres. These genres, linked to different scales of time and locale, enable specific kinds of character development (Woolard 2013: 211). For this project I have pinpointed two contrasting genres of chronotopic language which appear across discussions of African American and American heritage conversations. The chronotopic discourses of continuity and discourses of progress are of main focus here, and there are many facets or styles of each. The progress chronotope shapes the hegemonic erasure of Black American social lives and seeks to assimilate ethnic histories into a singular narrative that pushes white, western productions of history and therein citizenship. This includes a dominant progressive, color-blind, liberal discourse about belonging in America. The chronotope of continuity resists and attempts to change the hegemonic discourse and allows for increased agency among actors in the past and present whose lives are informed by the curated objects and narrated events at sites. The genre is characterized by recognition of how past events shape present day events, language that works against spatial and temporal distancing, and a bridging of times when discussing spaces. Continuity discourse in archaeology relies on physical and oral evidence to place marginalized stories within the geography of America. There is more than one sort of continuity, as the discourse is multifaceted, but the end goal is the

same; this discourse works against narratives that distance African Americans from heritage and narratives that rely on the limiting tropes of progress. Chronotopes of continuity and progress in U.S. communities are often applied in rhetorical strategies to demand or limit access to social resources, rights, and geography, and they also shape collective identities that extend across space and time. The chronotopic language used to frame a particular historical set of events or heritage site shapes the prevailing historical narrative about these events, places, and people, which in turn shapes foundational beliefs about who belongs in the U.S. and how they should be seen in both the past and present social and physical geography. Historical narratives shape a sense of self, and broad national or state narratives shape a sense of who are the (proper or good) American citizens (Mullins 2008, Pilgrim 2018, Roberts 2018a). Hegemonic and alternative discourses employ chronotopic language of progress and continuity by bridging the past to the present in examples of continual interaction and existence throughout spaces, or lack thereof.

Archaeology, with its spatial and temporal focus, naturally engages chronotopic frameworks in the construction of its interpretative narratives. Rosemary Joyce highlights a pervasive chronotope in archaeological writing, that of progress. It is a linear framing of time that distances the past from the present. The chronotope of progress happens at the macroscale. It sequences time into cause and effect as culture moves towards complexity without regard to the everyday and individual agency. The progression of time has already happened, and the writer is in the periphery—the writer and audience are distanced and unaffected by the history described (Joyce 2008:35-36). This genre proliferates traditional archaeology because of the field's Western adoption of evolutionary theory to explain the progress of different communities. The linear progress of hegemonic narratives in the U.S. make actions over time subordinated to the long-term

directionality of an eventual utopic end of time with an assimilated culture. The progress chronotope is exemplified by language that implicitly and explicitly invokes the American Melting Pot. An American historical narrative embedded in the progress genre, and one that is well circulated in public history of the United States, is the narrative that the Northern region of the United States did not have a large presence of slaves, and therein African Americans experienced less prejudice in the region not only in the past, but also in contemporary times. The well-known fact that slaves travelled North to freedom, coupled with the stereotype of the racist, slave owning South, helped historians proliferate the notion that there was not a large presence of African Americans in the region, specifically New York, until after World War I (Foster 1994:39-40). This historical narrative leaned into notions of American progress that painted the North as the ultimate Melting pot by distancing it from the arrival of enslaved Africans in the U.S. It fixed enslavement in a distant past unconnected to the improved present. The regional racial progress put forth in this version of the public history, worked against the personal narratives of contemporary African Americans which held additional and counter-hegemonic histories about the experience of being Black in the U.S. The American Melting Pot genre hinges on the positive assimilation of ethnic groups and distracting drastic differences between communities is a thing of the past. As storytellers try to frame the Williams farmstead within the mainstream American narrative, they invoke this traditional chronotope of progress. But, because the farmstead is a part of African American heritage, a marginalized history, additional and contrasting chronotopes are invoked by authors who write outside of the progress framework.

Archaeologists of the African Diaspora have acknowledged the political and social impact their work has on the discourses and perceptions of African Americans and American history (La Roche and Blakey 1997, Franklin and McKee 2004, Mullins 2008,

Flewellen 2017). Due to this impact, contentious moments with the public at sites such as the African Burial Ground in New York have shown that it is impossible and antithetical to end goals to interpret diasporic narratives of Black life in the U.S. within the linear and objective structure put forth by the progress chronotope. The progress chronotope, grounded in a trope of objective description places and leaves a sequential story in the past, which is typical of archaeological narratives (Joyce 2008: 37). Conversations with descendant communities around African Diasporic sites like the African Burial Ground, one of the most well-known African American archaeological sites, began to highlight the emergent continuity chronotope drawn upon by descendants and archaeologists to frame specific events and spaces. In his thesis, *Dry Bones Gonna' Rise: Black Thought and the African Burial Ground*, Kevin Foster (1994) notes that Afrocentrics at the excavation site viewed the memorialization of African slave remains as an opportunity to facilitate healing and provide awareness in the present and change the portrayal of African Americans in the past (Foster 1994: 70). The potential interpretations about Black life at the site in the past would be facilitated by discourse around the site in the present, and Afrocentrists stressed that these ways of producing history had implications for the future. This is why they called for a rejection of the traditional American (Western) production of history. If interpreted within the traditional chronotope of progress, then the evidence at the site exposing the harsh truth of Black experiences in the U.S. would have been relegated to the past. But when interpreted within counter-hegemonic discourses that bridged contemporary Black American experiences in the region to a longer continuous history, it gave the community some grounding to combat historical misconceptions that silenced them in the present. The archaeological location was continuing to do symbolic work through the retelling of what was before a fixed

American narrative of progress that led linearly into racial harmony.⁵ Focusing on an immediate racial harmony, that actually occurred *long after* unjust events, distracts from the slow and not always constant move toward racial justice. For the African Burial ground—and, as we will see with the farmstead—as the past was made geographic, so was the present, thus refusing insertion into a white history through distanced archaeological interpretations (Foster 1994).

The progress trope is pervasive in American discourses about history and heritage. A most recent example of the progress discourse would be rhetoric around the mistreatment of Black Americans, Native Americans, and migrant asylum seekers to the United States. Discourses of progress, in regard to instances of racially motivated mistreatment of these marginalized peoples, focuses on singular sanctioned moments recognized as a significant improvement from the injustice of the past. This progress discourse is characterized by themes of racial harmony compelled by temporal and spatial distancing from one major event in the past—after which America(ns) marched linearly toward our present moment of ostensible social inclusion and justice. The macro-scaled narrative time-line is straight and leaves only disdain for how the non-linear narratives of marginalized communities may complicate the timeline by providing counter-hegemonic narrative evidence of the systemic obstacles that continue to bar marginalized folks from American belonging. Use of the progress trope encourages a focus on assimilation; and assimilation signals a lack of conflict, reinforces certain boundaries while dissolving others, relies on a simple and singular narrative history (Vargas et.al. 2018: 30), and also determines the reproduction of these histories. To be clear, a lack of progress is not the antithesis of the progress genre. Instead the contrast lies in what happened in addition to

⁵A part of a broader discursive shift, racial harmony narratives focus on positive racial progress among individuals while ignoring the overall injustices/inequalities found in communities and society. Narratives of simply reached racial harmony obscure ongoing politics of racial justice (Yow 2015: 71-72).

or in spite of mainstream discourses of progress. Facets of the progress genre allow for one assimilating narrative, while invisibilizing any alternative narratives.

In contrast to the progress trope, the continuity trope emphasizes more of an American Mosaic. Each group has specific histories that diverge, intersect, and recognize moments of strife between and within communities, and individual actors have a recognizable agency. The chronotope of continuity also allows for a biographical narrative that diverges from the omnipresent meanings in an assimilated American culture. This gives way for narratives that critique and intervene in the cross-temporal erasure that occurs in linear timelines dependent on assimilation. The genre speaks to the academic audience, potential funding audiences, and directly to living descendant communities. It recognizes that projects become symbolic and material resources for rewriting African American and American histories. The continuity chronotope recognizes archaeological data as more than a material resource for cataloguing historical moments. Sites become what Paul Mullins outlines, in agreement with Timothy Ruppel, as “diasporic transcripts”—common spaces imbued with meaning and hidden in plain view (Mullins 2008: 115). The continuity chronotope allows scholarship produced at the African Burial ground and the Williams farmstead to be of use and consideration in contemporary political issues beyond the site. Chronotopes of continuity are throughout African and Black diasporic theory, read as specters, roots and routes, hallowed ground, (re)membering and re-presenting. I argue that chronotopic language of continuity is a part of how archaeologists of the African diaspora discuss Black diasporic life, especially when recognizing the politicization of the heritage. We seek to ground the thing that seems ungrounded, or as McKittrick identifies it, ungeographic—which is the hegemonic geographic displacement and invisibilizing of Black social lives (McKittrick 2006: x). With these ideological goals at hand, writers and narrators employing chronotopes of

continuity engage language and space to present spatial histories which challenge the fixed and proper places of social and geographic boundaries. They combat spatial domination by employing different sorts of continuity.⁶

Hegemonic and alternative discourses of who belongs or contributes to the American mosaic are anchored in narrative spatial histories that are not benign or natural, even though they seem as such (McKittrick 2006). Archaeology of the African Diaspora already acknowledges this—that the production of space has been and still is hierarchical, uneven, and storied, which is why African American history and perceptions of it sit outside of the “normal” narratives of American history. Hegemonic narratives of American history may leave African Americans displaced or invisible within the geography. Here is where we see African Americans re-presented in history via the continuity of presence. Historic research about space is used to provide evidence for the presence of African Americans in the past geography. For example, Ayana Flewellen writes that the Kingsley Plantation, a National Park Service heritage site in Florida, focuses so much so on the perspective of the white male planter that Black women and other slaves become almost erased from locations where they would have certainly performed important roles (Flewellen 2017). Flewellen asserts that the design of the heritage site affirms the hegemonic metanarratives of U.S. history, which “valorize white ways of organizing the world” (Flewellen 2017:72). In her article on locating marginalized narratives at the Kingsley Plantation Flewellen notes the plantation heritage as presented via Western epistemological standards attaches value and truth to historically white and elite perspectives, and therein continues to harm brown and black

⁶Spatial domination refers to the fact that the enduring politics of colonialism and conquest are geographic political projects. The hegemonic ways of producing space erase marginalized lives from the geography, contribute to violence, and reinforce dangerous ideologies that delegitimize claims to legal citizenship and overall humanity (McKittrick 2006, Flewellen 2017, Roberts 2018a).

bodies by making their experiences invisible on the landscape (Flewellen 2017: 71-73). Flewellen is particularly discussing brown and black bodies in the historical record. Her demand for present-day recognition of Black women's historical perspective employs a facet of chronotopic language of continuity, which links the past to the present by emphasizing the continued hegemonic orientation affirmed by the current layout of the plantation site. Flewellan's use of the continuity chronotype frames not only the visitors' perception of history, but also the work that researchers and sites do in reinforcing national stories of marginalization or providing evidence for alternative stories that combat marginalization. The presence facet of the continuity chronotope here, provides Ana Kingsley with a more agentic personhood, and recognition of her agency at the location via geographic organization has significant repercussions for contemporary audiences who visit the site.

African Diaspora archaeology's focus is mostly about formations of space because African Diaspora studies is well aware that constructions of geography influence perceptions of self and others. Applying chronotopes as a framework to study the discourse archaeology contributes to allows for examination of the flows between the past and present at preservation and heritage sites. We can then see how ideologies of race, class, and gender present in historical consciousness continue to mark people and space in contemporary discourses as part of the American mosaic or unable to be added to it.

In studies of the African Diaspora, chronotopes of continuity are evinced through language about continued use of the land by African Americans and their continued interactions with hegemonic systems of organization and its impact on Black descendant communities. The material evidence provided by these projects is put to work in reclaiming physical and imaginative space for the storytellers who must mark their

existence on the geography by renegotiating the meaning of the space. Chronotopic language of continuity works to pull these alternative narratives of belonging out of isolation and place them in conversation with the hegemonic narratives. Therein, they do not just renegotiate the meaning of the specific space, they renegotiate what it means to belong in the broader historical narrative and landscape of America.

THE PUBLIC FACING HISTORY: ALIGNING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT WITH TEXAN AND AMERICAN HISTORY

Media about The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project was shaped and shared with the intent both to put the Williams family history into conversation with Texas' public history and re-present a Black social history in Texas--and depending on the speaker the narrative put forth either engaged the Melting Pot genre of progress or the American Mosaic genre of continuity. Here is where I began to see the contrasting chronotopes at play in discussions about the Farmstead, African American history, and Texan history. As the audience changes, so does the ideological goal of why or how this historical information is shared. In the analysis below, I look at the discourses in the larger presentations of Texan history. I focus on the institutional programs that included the Williams Farmstead archaeological project in their presentations of Texan history, and look at what discourses they engage to build particular kinds of connections to the history.

KLRU Educating Austin

Juneteenth is the annual commemoration of Texas' (forced and delayed) emancipation of its slaves on June 19th, 1865. Its regarded as the Black Independence Day and is celebrated around the U.S. as a holiday in African American communities. In 2010 the excavations at the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead were featured in the

KLRU-TV, Austin PBS series commemorating Juneteenth, *Juneteenth Jamboree*.⁷ The segment, featuring interviews of descendants and archaeologists involved with the project, was titled “Once Upon a Time Ransom Williams Crossed State Highway 45 Southwest”. Through its inclusion in the annual *Juneteenth Jamboree* television series, the Williams site became a part of the larger public facing history of African Americans in Austin and Texas. In order to contextualize the discourse within which the Williams project sits, I will first explore the discourse found across the public programming produced by KLRU-TV in its Juneteenth series.

KLRU is Austin’s local PBS station and regards itself as “...a valuable partner and trusted storyteller” in the community, as described on the site’s Who We Are page. The *Juneteenth Jamboree* series is hyperlinked there as a local show highlighting unheard stories. This particular slant in advertising fits in perfectly with African diaspora archaeology’s goal of re-presenting the untold or manipulated narratives of Black Americans, which is why the farmstead was included in the broadcasting in 2010.

KLRU’s *Juneteenth Jamboree* programing has run for ten years. Beginning in 2008, the series focuses on sharing the history of African Americans in Texas with the greater Austin community. The main theme of the series uses the commemoration of Juneteenth to explore the freedom and progress of African Americans in the U.S. starting after slavery. *Juneteenth Jamboree*’s “About” page highlights the importance of the holiday to African American communities across the U.S., but not without first asserting that “Juneteenth pronounced the end of slavery in this land, and it has also taken on a note of distinction as a high moment for all people who celebrate freedom” and “Texans

⁷The Juneteenth Jamboree program is a KLRU public broadcast series that highlights the contributions of African Americans to Texan and American history. Each year KLRU airs short documentaries highlighting a specific historical area and the celebrations of the descendant community.
<https://www.klru.org/juneteenth/about>

of all colors and generations have commemorated the day”. This inclusive framing on the *Juneteenth Jamboree* “About” page is indicative of the historical narrative the program is engaging--African American history *is* American history. The commemorative program, hosted by a non-profit dedicated to educating Austin via trustworthy public access television, is intended to build community by focusing on the progress of African Americans as evidence of linear American progress. This is a common structural theme across the series. It engages the assimilation discourse in the American Melting Pot narrative.

Juneteenth Jamboree’s engagement with the historical progress of African Americans and the sharability of African American history arises from a dominant historical narrative. The dominant narrative posits that ethnic minorities in the U.S. do not have distinctly defined histories unassimilated to a melting-pot Euro-American culture (Vargas et.al. 2017: 106). KLRU’s focus on “Texans of all colors” participating in Juneteenth pointedly highlights that racial exclusion is a thing of the past in America. The narrative structure is in line with hegemonic narratives of linear assimilation and progress. The assimilation discourse across years of *Juneteenth* programming does not emphasize an immediate melting of African Americans into the American citizenry in 1865, but it does place racial division as a thing in the past. Racial division is an old story, and the spaces highlighted in the programming show a fixed history of past racial tensions that are *now* a part of a unified and post-racially divided America. The series attempts to maintain a balance between educating the community about African American history and ensuring that African American history is not isolated from a progressive version of American/Texan history. Across the site the Melting Pot narrative works within the progress chronotope to recognize, but ultimately assimilate African

American history into a format that asserts unilateral acceptance and connection to the meanings in the historical interpretations.

In this vein, many of the interviews with community members throughout the programming begin by describing distinct personal and communal histories, that invoke a personal connection to the space or time. These connections made by African American interviewees, shape a sense of self that relies on the style of the continuity chronotope—where space has something to teach about and within time. But caught between the truth of personal history and the hegemony of traditional history, most of those included interviews end in some sort of assimilation dialogue.

For example, the 2008 inaugural episode of *Juneteenth Jamboree* opens with the words “Juneteenth Parade, Austin Texas”. The episode begins with the parade on a crowded street. There are two young Black girls waving from a car window, they are pageant queens, and then the camera’s lens is directed toward a woman instructing children where to get candy. An African American woman begins to speak,

- (1) Woman: “Okay Juneteenth means to **me** um, It’s the day that the slaves were freed.
- (2) It’s kinda like **our** Emancipation.
- (3) It’s the only day, one day a year that **we** get to really celebrate and express **ourselves**.
- (4) So **we** love this parade and **we** want to keep it goin, **we** ya know, because it means a lot to **us**.”

The bolded pronouns highlight the woman’s specificity of who she believes is the target audience for the holiday and who are the intended celebrants. The underlined sections highlight a temporal shift, connecting the past to the present and future. To begin, she counts herself as a descendant of slaves by associating herself with freed slaves in lines 1 and 2. In line 1 she states that the holiday, Juneteenth, is the day African

American slaves were freed. In line 2 she connects herself presently to those slaves freed in the past when she says of the celebration, “It’s like **our** Emancipation”. In her narrative of what the holiday is and means to her she is constructing the identities of those within her community. They are descendants of freed slaves, and Juneteenth not only commemorates the Emancipation of slaves in Texas’ past, it continues to commemorate a different kind of Emancipation of their descendants in the present. She is building a bridge between the identities and circumstances of the slaves freed in 1865 and the identities of celebrant descendants in 2008 to emphasize why the holiday is important specifically to the descendant community.

The celebration offers an exclusive freedom for the community. In lines 1-4 she is creating an exclusive identity. She takes exclusive ownership of the holiday specifically for African American descendants and her community by not only excluding an unspoken “other” through the use of the words **me**, **our**, and **we**, but also by highlighting African Americans’ exclusion from something that occurs every day. In line 3 she emphasizes that the descendant community only gets “one day a year” to express themselves, and that is why they love the Austin Juneteenth parade. This indicates an exclusion of the African American descendant community’s history from a broader celebration of Austin’s history. For a brief moment she is pointedly discussing a broader discourse around the silenced histories of marginalized communities in the United States; she engages the continuity of presence. As with the histories, so are the celebrations separate and isolated to singular days, most prized by the descendant communities due to their exclusion from the standard historical cannon. As is characteristic of this facet of the continuity chronotope, her emphasis that the community only gets “one day a year” pushes against the more standard narrative that the nature of the freedom gained in 1865

was an absolute cultural shift for the entire nation. Her interpretive narrative of the events speaks to an inconsistency in the nature of the freedom gained.

The first four lines of the interview are in line with the alternative discourses within African American history that push against the ideological goals of the dominant narrative. Her biographical history is equally as important as the historical event shared by the nation, Juneteenth. Also, her biographical history re-presents the necessity for the event as not fixed in the past, the community has found a need for Emancipation beyond the timeline presented in mainstream history. But, as mentioned before, most interviews across the site end by switching into the progress chronotope. For example, She concludes the interview by reinserting the festivities into the Melting Pot.

A brief history of the end of the Civil War is edited to scroll across the screen while she speaks. The script explains that the institution of slavery was abolished at different times across the U.S. Just as the script reveals that Texas resisted abolition until the Union won, the woman says,

- (5) Woman: “Well really **not only Black people**
(6) but now it's just the majority of **different kinds of people**,
(7) cuz ya know, now **everybody** participates in it.
(8) So it's all about love and ya know and **people** having a good time.
Ya know just getting along with each other.”

The woman’s inclusion of “**not only Black people**” and “now...**different kinds of people**” in lines 5 and 6 is sudden. It's a quick addition and contrast to the end of her last sentence, in line 4, where she says, “because it means a lot to **us**”. This is the first and only time she directly says anything about race in the interview. She also stops using the possessive pronouns shown in lines 1 through 4 and speaks only of the present. Her demeanor is still upbeat and happy to discuss the commemoration with KLRU-TV, but

her language, now more inclusive, is also more distanced from the communal impacts of Emancipation, the contemporary celebration, and its impact on her personally. What was once a discussion about **us, we, ourselves**, is replaced with generalized phrases about **different kinds of people** and more inclusive of **everybody**. There is also no talk of the future. For now, “**people [are] having a good time**” and “**getting along with each other.**” Whereas in the earlier part of this short interview she excitedly exclaims, “We love this parade and we want it to keep goin.”

Here, the woman relies on the Melting Pot narrative to avoid making the celebration so exclusive that other Americans would not want to participate. Acceptance by a broader audience that is not “only Black people” also validates the narrative that Emancipation happened, and it was an important moment because everyone can enjoy it. It is characteristic of the progress chronotope that the event is now a fixed moment in time, and a point of objective reflection for everyone.

The interview ends, and the sounds of the marching band, once in the background, are now the main focus and the scene shifts to the marching band and high steppers coming down the street. The edited script rolling across the screen now outlines that June 19th, 1865, the day Texas freed its slaves, became an annual celebration. The interview above is the only time an adult at the parade speaks in the short opening sequence for this inaugural episode of KLRU-TV’s *Juneteenth Jamboree*. From describing Juneteenth as a universal commemoration of freedom to focusing in closely on individual life histories, KLRU’s series totters between following the traditional script of objective impersonal looks at African Americans in American history and highlighting the narratives African Americans have to tell about their history. The chronotopes are employed simultaneously because the traditional narrative is omnipresent in the rules which determine what are the “most accurate” ways of telling, versions of, and responses to American history.

Interviews in the 2010 segment on the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead are not pieced together by KLRU any differently.⁸ This is because the farmstead's narrative is presented as a boon to knowledge in overall Texan history and a boon to African American social history post-Emancipation. Depending on the speaker, the chosen archaeological interpretations either reach out to assimilate data from the farmstead into the American historical narrative or turn in to use biographical history of the speaker to make the narrative of the farmstead relevant. When academic speakers, here its archaeologists and historians, choose between engaging different facets of the progress or continuity chronotopes they are not only choosing a narrative, but an audience with which to speak. This is why archaeological investigations of the African Diaspora are so important—the politics are often laid out plainly in its goals for altering the cultural texts which manifest Black social life across American spaces and history. And not all archaeologists on one site, will make the same interpretations. For example, the following interviews, found in the Juneteenth Jamboree 2010 program, are from two different, female archaeologists who participated in excavations at the site. Their interpretations engage completely different rhetoric, and therein narrative possibilities for the Williams' place in history.

As mentioned before, the short segment about the excavations and oral history components of The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project aired in the Juneteenth Jamboree 2010 program on KLRU-TV, Austin PBS. The speakers in the video include archaeologists, community members, descendants, and other researchers associated with the project. In line with themes of chronotopic discourse of progress, some speakers in the segment connected artifacts from the site to a location

⁸ Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas' Cultural Heritage
<https://www.klru.org/juneteenth/episode/2010>

outside of the farmstead—proving the family’s continual engagement with a broader American civic history. For example, in her interview with KLRU archaeologist Bethany Duke describes in detail a jaw harp found on the southwest side of an excavated chimney on the farmstead.

- (9) Duke: “This is an artifact we found this morning on the southwest side of the chimney.
(10) It’s called a jews harp also known as a jaw harp.
(11) It’s a musical instrument that’s played with the mouth and the finger.
(12) It’s a pretty **common** instrument.
(13) Its found **in a lot of places** both here in **America** and over in **Europe**
(14) and they’ve been around for quite a **few hundred years**”.

Duke immediately talks about the artifact at the macro-scale. She engages two different facets of the standard progress discourse—the Melting Pot which aligns with narratives where all Americans fit into a singular, idealized “civil” history, and historical distancing where she introduces the audience to a different world. Its accurate that the instrument’s usage in music is not just within the African American community, and that the jaw harp is used around the world. But what is particular about Duke’s presentation of the instrument is what it does specifically for this site, this family, this farmstead. Following the standard archaeological interpretive model, what is most important is how “**common**” the harp is. In this narrative, it’s important for her to remind her audience that the Williams family are normal; for their contemporary period she even makes them relatable. She highlights that the jaw harp’s continued usage extends beyond the history of the farmstead and into the broader American history which is tied to European history. Here, Duke is relying on hegemonic narratives of early Americans—white Americans of European descent, most specifically British—to re-present this African American family

as belonging to that narrative as well. Her narrative mixes them into the Melting Pot. In the context of her explanation, by linking an instrument found in Europe, the jaw harp, to a rural location inhabited by Black Americans, Duke shows the Williams family's participation in the traditional American sense of civility which specifically leads back to Europe. Duke's comments about the instrument show that the Williams family participated in **common** American past times or activities. She uses the jaw harp to melt the Williams family into the traditional American sense of space and time—their individual experiences of Black social life become subordinate to the dominant tropes in White American organizations of spatial history. She invoked the American melting pot by focusing on the historical thread that connects the artifact to broader American history. The physical evidence she uses works with the discourse she is engaging to pull this African American family's participation in America out of abstraction into an acceptable linear view.

In contrast, the archaeologist Nedra Lee does the opposite in her interview in the Juneteenth Jamboree 2010 episode. Nedra's interview takes place in a lab, and she does not show the specific artifacts she is talking about.

- (15) Lee: Two **artifacts that stand out the most to me** um from my work at the site has actually, been the discovery of the graphite pencils and the slate.
- (16) uh those two things are **particularly important to me** because they're **evidence of Blacks** attempting to teach themselves and their families how to read
- (17) um and that was, education was really important after slavery and it was still something that was even, after a time, quite hard to come by.
- (18) So, when I see evidence of that I think its still **further proof** how much education was valued **in the community.**

The narrative Lee puts forth is immediately personal and focused specifically on the Black **community**. Lee is trained as an archaeologist of the African diaspora, and how she frames the relevance of the artifacts found at the farmstead fits within the continuity rhetoric I see across the field. Instead of marking the importance of the lead and slate via its connection to a dominant American narrative and distancing the audience by introducing a different world, Lee focuses on its relevance to the Black community then and now. Lee speaks about Black social life in terms of Black agency across time. She moves back and forth between the importance of education to the community after slavery in line 16 and the importance of knowing about those values in the contemporary moment in line 18. Lee does not need to draw the Williams family into dialogue with broader American values of education because how the Black community valued education is just as important. Lee makes it clear that the slate and lead are tangible signs of continually overcoming barriers in the Black community. In the narrative Lee puts forth, Black communities have a legacy of their own. Thus, her narrative confronts old notions that Blacks lacked the rational minds needed to participate in white society or govern themselves without slavery (Takaki 1979: 11-13). Lee invokes the Mosaic, where this spatial history can exist on its own and stand as evidence against narratives that mark Black social life as subordinate to the intellectual and cultural processes of white American history. The interview ends with Lee addressing the importance of the farmstead to Black American families today.

- (19) Lee: I do feel a special closeness to The Ransom Williams uh project
(20) and partially because I recognize how uh what this story or what
his life means
(21) and how important or how inspirational it is to other Black
families.
(22) Um a lot of times we talk about after slavery we understand the

- immense challenges that Black folks faced to start their lives over to become citizens to learn how to read to earn property
- (23) and often times we don't hear of what happened to the individuals who were able to obtain those things [...]
- (24) and I feel very honored to be part of uh a team that can document that kind of experience a new experience a new story.

Here, Lee explicitly addresses that this is a “new story”, and that it will influence Black families. Lee’s historical narrative about the farmstead is instructive in a way that Duke’s is not. Duke draws on a wider history that informs about a traditional spatial history that has historically erased Black success and addresses no part of the effect this particular narrative has on the present. Lee’s interpretation speaks to a specific audience and intends to inform it about a specific narration of personhood that will inform Black lives in the present. This historical tale is meaningful and instructive of Black personhood in America—the artifacts and excavations are not just evidence of but are also symbolic of Black potential usually lost in less narrowly focused genres.

I acknowledge that Duke and Lee’s answers in these interviews were probably guided by the questions KLRU interviewers asked them. I have also considered that KLRU must edit the interviews for their programming, and this makes the discourse presented multiply mediated—but the messages to the audiences remain the same from the frameworks chosen by KLRU, Lee, and Duke. Duke, speaking within the parameters of traditional archaeology, works within a framework that focuses on white-gaze-inflected archaeological interests and less with the interests of the Black community’s public history. This interpretation validates the lives of the Williams family according to White colonialist and American ways of knowing and connecting to spatial history. I refer to this as a white colonialist/American way of orienting/connecting to the space of history because it engages the broader discourse around the founders of America. Our

historical images of these men play important roles in hegemonic frameworks of spatial organization. Duke's interpretive framework is a part of an ongoing conversation with an authoritative discourse that determines the standards of evaluation among archaeologists and the larger public who will consume the history presented by KLRU's *Juneteenth* programming (Joyce 2008:33). Lee approaches the history using a different framework, and therefore uses different language and standards of evaluation of the artifacts. Her discourse is foremost in conversation with the marginalized community, archaeology of the African diaspora in America, and a public that has never heard a story of Black social life from this perspective. Black American personhood, shaped by the narratives presented in her KLRU interview, is a key component of her interpretation. Archaeological findings, as a form of communication associated with specific spaces and times, are in dialogue with the discourses that exist prior to the findings. Heritage preservation has a major impact on reality via the political ideologies that are often obscured in the details about material culture and spatial organization (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003:33-34; Joyce 2008:31-34).

Texas Beyond History Educating the Citizen

KLRU-TV is not the only public programming that centers research from The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project. There is also University of Texas at Austin's virtual museum, *Texas Beyond History*.⁹ Operated by the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory (TARL), the site is dedicated to showcasing "the cultural legacy of Texas" as discovered via archaeological and historical research. The "About [Texas Beyond History]" page specifically states that the museum shares the

⁹ The exhibits mentioned are all from the Texas Beyond History Virtual Museum. It is mainly managed by Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin. Each exhibit has a different author(s). <https://texasbeyonhistory.net/index.html>

results not only for Texas citizens but the citizens of the world. The material culture is marked as “Our collective cultural heritage” and aims to highlight every facet of over 13,500 years of Texas history. This includes the parts that are “painful to recount”.¹⁰ The most striking line on the page reads as follows,

“[...] by focusing on the broad subject of Texas’ cultural heritage, we overcome the traditional boundaries between the disciplines of archaeology and history as well as the bureaucratic and political fences between institutions of higher education, state and federal agencies, museums, and private organizations.”¹¹

The site offers equitable access to the findings that usually only academics can access. It attempts to put forth objective information about the cultural heritage of Texas, by bridging disciplines and avoiding the politics of who owns the knowledge produced. It is assumed that such a wide expanse of time would lead to a more neutral evaluation of the data. It is also assumed that having various authors contribute to the site would add to cataloguing an objective Texan heritage, and this was the best way to present 13,500 years of history. This particular framing fits into the discontinuity facet of the progress genre. I find this discontinuity trope is often used by archaeologists when discussing history in the accepted traditional frameworks of hegemonic histories. It is a sort of established way of speaking archaeologically which disconnects individual connections to specific histories. The discontinuity facet of progress juxtaposes the facets of the continuity genre which rely on connecting individuals to the history presented and making room for communal ownership of the history.

The purportedly objective, academic approach of the entire site, at times, works to subsume the decimation of the Texas’ native population, slavery, and colonization under

¹⁰Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas’ Cultural Heritage
<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/abouttbh/index.html>

¹¹ Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas’ Cultural Heritage.
<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/abouttbh/index.html>

a monotone presentation of history. History is presented here as a neutral gaze into the past by an authority figure with all of the credentials to be trustworthy. It has the credentials of a state sponsored, academic institution with qualified Ph.D.'s on staff. KLRU caters to entertain audiences of all ages and bring them together via the history. Whereas Texas Beyond History is a repository that aims to educate first. Some exhibits try so hard to be objective that they erase pivotal narrative pieces of Texas' cultural heritage which speak to the humanity and agency of those who could not write their own narrative. For example, a museum entry written in 2008 about excavations of the French colonial La Belle shipwreck exclaimed,

“Here, for the first time, was an intact 17th-century French colonizing kit containing everything needed to establish a colony in the New World.”¹²

This description, of quite an important archaeological find, presents colonization of the Americas as an innocent foray into DIY homesteading. It divides the moment of the wreck and the archaeological discovery from the traumatic geopolitics that occurred in between that time—a discursive discontinuity meant to focus on the data and avoid the historical identity politics indexed by including that history. This short description advances a knowing of history, and therein a knowing of space, where the Americas were “New”—i.e. uninhabited—and colonization was a matter of migrating to empty lands without severe consequences for indigenous and forcefully migrated populations. Across the virtual museum, other points in time are also described from a removed voice of archaeological progress employing its facet of discontinuity. They develop a certain character of Texas and its founders which helps to develop the discourses of who exists and should exist in Texas today. It substantiates colonial conquest as a normative history;

¹² Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas' Cultural Heritage. “La Belle Shipwreck”. <https://texasbeyondhistory.net/belle/index.html>

and without any further engagement with the many narratives that came out of that shipwreck, it reinforces white European spatial domination across time not just on the coast of Texas in the 17th century.

Because the site covers such a large swath of history it employs a lot of different historians, archaeologists, and support networks. The “Credits and Sources” pages for each exhibit shows that many researchers have the opportunity to write the different exhibit components for their data. As a result, some of the exhibits stray from the institutionalized objective framing of the history found in other exhibits. The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead virtual exhibit is one of the exhibits that moves away from the strict linearity of the American progress narrative. Written collaboratively by four researchers in 2014, the exhibit puts forth a complex narrative about Texas’ early citizens by focusing on the Williams family’s social life and spatial history. The exhibit places the Williams family in the Bear Creek community, Austin’s East Side, and freedmen colonies in neighboring counties. This allows for the introduction of more spatial histories with which the Williams family was connected, and it allows the researchers to include a complex narrative of Texas’ geography. They focus on the accomplishments of the Williams family and the rural Black communities around them. They also reach forward to discuss the disappointment of racism as the families migrated into the segregated city of Austin in later histories. These parts of the exhibit engage positive portrayals of Black social life and the reality of what it was like to grasp for a space in the making of America. It does this by avoiding the “objectivity” of a distanced interpretation of history. This directly combats one of the oldest anti-Black discourses around racial formation and citizenship in the United States—that African Americans would never perform the proper citizenship needed to be American (Takaki 2000, Mullins 2008).

One of the most pointed presentations of Black social life in the exhibit is the interpretation of the artifacts from the farmstead. The presentation of the material culture does the work of manifesting examples of the Williams' participation in citizenship and patriotism via their consumerism.¹³ In a catalogue meant to represent 26,000 artifacts excavated from the farmstead, there are very few descriptions for the artifacts presented.¹⁴ The descriptions that are present do more than just shape the subjectivity of the Williams family. Figure 1 focuses on an ornate snaffle bit used to bridle horses. The authors of the exhibit focus on the patriotism indicated by the design of the tool more than the function. This artifact associates the Williams family as part of the American citizenry. They are engaged in occupational activities associated with everyday citizens. Here, Blacks are transformed into patriots and citizens and their history of slavery is not their principle identifier as American. Especially since this is a family headed by two formerly enslaved peoples. Figure 2 is a commemorative spoon from an American battle, which the authors describe as a “symbol of Americanism”. This more directly engages a discussion of citizenship and employs this facet of continuity that focuses on representations of Black patriotism in the past. I find that these artifacts shape the subjectivity of African Americans in the American narrative, not just the Williams family. For example, the description for a few husbandry items (below) does a lot to make apparent the American values that were a part of Black social life in Texas (see Figure 1),

¹³ Here I am discussing more than the legal status of citizenship. I could describe this solely as participation in American patriotism, but the broader discourses about African Americans' (and other marginalized groups) patriotism is deeply entwined with challenges and support for their citizenship. I find this discourse, as it circulates, has little to do with minority rights to legal citizenship. It is about acceptable social performances of American citizenship—ones that do not stray from the genre of progress. For marginalized Americans, who have not assimilated into Anglo expectations of race, sex, heteronormativity, etc their citizenship is up to be (socially not legally) revoked or in need of being defended.

¹⁴Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas' Cultural Heritage. “Artifacts: Traces of a Family”. <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/artifacts.html>



Figure 1: Husbandry tools

“This image shows an assortment of harness and bridle buckles (a), saddle cinch rings (b, c, d), and bridle bits (e, f). One of the items is part of a decorated snaffle bit (e) that has an elaborate shield-star-stripes motif **indicative of American pride and patriotism.**”¹⁵

The discourses of American citizenship and patriotism are durable and constitute American subjectivity. Reiterated over time, through historical tales and other modes of performance, the anti-Blackness in American citizenship seems normal. It goes unchallenged. The description here intervenes and offers a continuity narrative that challenges this. This is a facet of continuity that focuses on the re-presentation of Black social life in the past. It is different from the assimilation stressed in the progress narrative seen earlier in the description of the jaw harp because it does not distance or draw the artifact into another world with European forbearers.¹⁶ The continuity frame here focuses on Black Americans in an American space and proximate time. The last words in bold, “**indicative of American pride and patriotism**”, show how embedded authors were in claiming Williams family were Americans. The artifacts above are listed

¹⁵Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas’ Cultural Heritage. “Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead: Activities”. <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/images/artifacts-8-26.html>

¹⁶ See page 28

in a category labeled activities and pinpoints the everyday tasks of the family. These husbandry tools most likely supported the family's income. So, they were important components of their everyday life. This description, and the following one, shows that expressions of American pride might have been a part everyday life as well. This tool most likely saw regular usage due to Ransom's occupation with horses, therein archaeologists infer that ornate and utilitarian artifacts like this speak to the values of whomever obtained and maintained them (Hendon 2010: 124). Defining African Americans as patriots is as important to framing the Black social present, as it is in shaping the past. These researchers are offering alternatives to who fits into American citizenship and how. Another artifact, a spoon commemorating the sinking of the U.S. Battleship Maine in Havana in 1898, does the same thing. The description for the figure below reads,

“Another interesting item that stands out in the collection is a spoon coated with a thin plating of some white metal, possibly nickel or silver. But this is **no ordinary eating utensil**. This was a commemorative spoon that memorialized the sinking of the U.S. Battleship Maine in Havana on February 15, 1898. The engraving in the bowl depicts the battleship and the date it sank; on the handle is the bust of Captain Charles Sigsbee, who was in command of the Maine when it exploded in Havana Harbor. This incident was widely claimed to be an unprovoked attack and was used as justification for the U.S. to go to war with Spain. While we can never know for sure why this object was acquired, one wonders how this unusual commemorative spoon **ended up in a rural farmhouse in southern Travis County**? Perhaps it represents a **display of patriotism** by someone in the Williams family and was **purchased to demonstrate their support for the U.S. war effort**. Regardless, this item was a **symbol of Americanism** at the turn-of-the-century.”¹⁷

¹⁷Texas Beyond History: The Virtual Museum of Texas' Cultural Heritage. “Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead: Activities”. <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/images/artifacts-8-47.html>



Figure 2: Commemorative Spoon

The choice of words here, about someone in a “**rural**” family possibly purchasing the spoon to “**demonstrate**” support of U.S. war efforts is a demonstration in itself. The authors demonstrate that rural Black Americans showed patriotism and were willing to spend their money on such tokens. This style of continuity, continuity of representation of Black Americans participating in patriotism, goes against the essentialist facet of the progressive genre in which Black Americans would not want to be patriots in the U.S. Here, these two pieces of archival evidence work against hegemonic narratives of African Americans’ lack of patriotism.

When placed into conversation with broader discourses on performances of American citizenship, these descriptions link African Americans to and provide evidence for possibly enthusiastic participation of citizenship dating back to 1898.¹⁸ Once again, via the continuity chronotope, the artifacts found at the site become markers for African American participation in American citizenship throughout time without relying on the

¹⁸ According to The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead exhibit, the spoon (fig. 2) is dated as a commemorative piece memorializing the sinking of a U.S. battleship on February 15, 1898 (<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/images/artifacts-8-47.html>).

qualifiers of European ancestry which rely on an anti-Black definition of American citizenship. This is especially important since the continuity genre takes into account what the future could look like, just as much as what the past looked like. Here, the authors create a narrative history that can continue to be pulled forth to characterize the possibility of belonging in America and being Black. It would be a disservice to the artifact collection if we assumed that the artifacts and the chosen interpretations are relegated to only shaping the perceptions of freedmen in the past, and those solely connected with the site.

Chapter 2

The Farmstead in Bear Creek

Around 1871 Ransom Williams purchased a 45-acre tract of land in the McGehee League near Bear Creek. The McGehee league was originally a large swath of land along the Hays-Travis county line in Central Texas, not far from Austin, Texas (Myers 2015). The South was resettling after the Civil War, and Central Texas offered a fresh and familiar start for anyone willing to work the land. Hard farm labor in a rural economy was nothing new to Ransom Williams because he was a recently emancipated freedman from the area.

Many freed people did not go far from their former places of enslavement. In fact, some folks stayed on their former masters' land as tenants, some had already begun establishing freedmen communities before Emancipation, and some gained land nearby through squatting or saving to buy their land. Ransom Williams seems to have been determined to lean into his freedom to work and purchase for himself. Not more than six years after Emancipation, Ransom Williams acquired the financial means to buy his own land and start his own family. It is especially important that he is accomplishing this in the state that took two additional years to free its slaves.

Lincoln passed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863—taking the drastic step of drawing up an executive order freeing all slaves in the United States. Texas, being a deeply entrenched part of the confederacy, one of the last confederate strongholds housing the last bulk of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Army, refused their manumission, of course (Clampitt 2005:499). Texas did not inform its slaves of their Emancipation until the moment of absolute defeat at the hands of the Union, which was General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in 1865. Even after his surrender,

signaling the absolute loss of the Confederacy, dejected Texans and confederate soldiers expressed disbelief and then resistance (Clampitt 2005:501-504). This was the world in which Ransom Williams, and many other freed people were stepping into to begin their new lives as citizens. Nonetheless, Williams purchased livestock and land. He and his wife Sarah built up a farmstead that lasted for thirty years and saw the births of nine children.

Archaeologists and historians for the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological project assume that Ransom would have had to travel outside of the McGehee league to maintain a community with other freedmen in the area. Their archival evidence points to the fact that Ransom would have been the only African American man to purchase land in the McGehee league. Not too far way though, were well established communities of freed people and other African Americans living in nearby towns. These people lived in the Rose Colony located in Bear Creek on the Walker Wilson and Slaughter Leagues (Myers 2015: 121), the Antioch colony about 4.5 miles away from Bear Creek near Mountain City in Hays county (Myers 2015: 100), and the town of Manchaca which was fairly close to the Williamses; just to name a few of the areas where African Americans were creating communities in the Hays county area after Emancipation (Franklin 2015: 439).

Of the four million slaves freed in the United States at the end of the Civil War, very few gained the land promised by the “myth” of forty acres of land a mule (Lee 2014:11). Those that did purchase land or property still dealt with the racial tensions of white southerners who felt there was not enough American citizenship to go around, and that Black Americans could never be their equals. Due to continued racism and systemic disenfranchisement, most African Americans remained impoverished post-Civil War. Despite this, Ransom Williams was not the only relative success story of the era,

especially not in Hays county Texas. Black Americans, when facing significant disenfranchisement in their spaces, were already accustomed to building their own communities even before the war's end. This was occurring across the United States. In Providence, Rhode Island Black Americans who had escaped to the North were free, but they were not welcome. Barred from public schools, despite paying taxes, and seen as not intelligent enough to work with the early machines of industrialization, African Americans in Providence began building their own neighborhoods and services as early as the 1920's (Jones 2013: 104).

Recently emancipated slaves in Texas did the same thing—they pulled together and built communities by exploiting weak points in the power structures white Americans were attempting to maintain in the post war era (Roberts 2017: 225). Freedmen colonies were built up via squatter's rights, gifted land, and outright purchasing on the outskirts of land unattended by whites (Lee 2014, Scott 2016, Roberts 2017). In the woods, at the end of roads, and planned in ways unrecognizable to those who were not a part of the communities. Andrea Roberts says, “most were rural and invisible”, and they recognized well the power of their sovereignty (Roberts 2017: 225-226). In fact, incorporation was mostly held together by their belief in a community and the institutions that they thought would provide racial uplift for Blacks in America, schools and churches (Sitton and Conrad 2005: 2-3). Schools and churches were two very important institutions to African American community and socialization post-Emancipation and still are today (LaRoche 2014; Myers 2015; Scott 2016, Roberts 2017). The more privileged members of freed communities would eventually deed land to the community to build these communal institutions—they built a church and school for their families to find refuge away from the indignities of racism. Land and economic self-reliance became the most recognized

way for Black communities to free themselves (minimally) from the exploitation of whites (Lee 2014: 94-95).

African Americans focused on building their own communities and pushing for racial uplift during and after Reconstruction due to the narratives that continued to shape their oppression post-Civil war, especially post Reconstruction. White Americans still believed that African Americans needed the social control provided by menial labor (what was originally forced enslavement) and moral white guidance even after slavery. Continuing with the influences of the founding fathers, white Americans found a multitude of reasons to continue the narrative that African Americans could not morally, mentally, and socially handle being free or the rights of citizenship (Jones 2013: 140-141). This was a line of thought that had existed well before Emancipation, as Jaqueline Jones relays in her book *The Dreadful Deceit: The Myth of Race from the Colonial Era to Obama's America*. She quotes petitioners to the People's Convention in Alabama in 1861 as citing a 'complexional hindrance', which barred Blacks from embodying an American citizenship (Jones 2013: 144). The racialized ideology like those of the petitioners had persisted and would continue to persist and structure Black life for years to come. These narratives about the inherent lack of skill, literacy, and decreased mental capacity to accomplish a successful transition to freedom were only stoked by an equally harmful, even if contradictory narrative that four million Blacks would flood labor markets and take their place in menial labor positions. But in many places African Americans were barred from working or continued to work on the same farms on which they were enslaved due to tenancy.

In spite of all of this, the legacies of Black communities built up after slavery showed hard work, determination, and a steady understanding of the rights of citizenship. Many Black Americans pushed forward wholeheartedly to use their rights in the south.

They inserted themselves successfully into the Southern economy, legislature, and confronted the continuous attempts to resubordinate them (Foner 1987). Foner shows that the efforts of Southern Blacks, in fact, impacted the economy in a major way due to their notion of themselves as a ‘Working Class People’ (Foner 1987: 870). Black freedmen in Georgia made it clear that they no longer worked for the benefit of others, expected to be paid for their labor, and would do it autonomously by employing the term above (Foner 1987: 870-871). African Americans across Texas thrived at an even greater rate than other Blacks across the south. More specifically, this was because a greater number of Texan African Americans owned their own land (Scott 2016: 48)—which helped create long enduring place-based identities for the descendants of freedmen across Texas’s social landscape.

FRAMING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

In 2005, the cultural resource management firm, Prewitt and Associates, argued that the remnants of a small farmstead in Travis county Austin, Texas were historically significant enough to receive further archaeological attention and preservation from the state of Texas (Boyd and Norment 2015: 1-3). The site was found during a survey for the development of a housing complex. Once given access to the site, Prewitt and Associates argued that while plenty of farmsteads associated with white tenants and land owners were recorded, evidence of a farmstead occupied by a Black family was a bit rare (Lee 2014:50). The site became known as the Ransom and Sarah William’s Farmstead. Archaeological investigations at the site resulted in a two-volume site report published in 2015 and titled “The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead: Post-Emancipation Transitions of An African American Family in Central Texas”.

Conveying the significance of the project in the two-volume oral history narratives (written separately from the two-volume site report) Franklin exclaims that the public outreach for the project was a sign of the strides cultural resource management firms and the state agencies were making to include communities in the archaeology (Franklin 2012:4). This archaeological site received a lot of state support, from excavations to the oral histories collected, due to the fact that it was excavated by the cultural resource firm Prewitt and Associates under a state contract. Both reports are published by Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Environmental Affairs Division, and the Archeological Studies Program. Each report receives an official report number and will go into the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, State Publications Depository Program to meet certain compliances (Franklin 2012: ii). This history, considered marginalized and rarely recorded, is now readily accessible and sanctioned by multiple state agencies.

The academics and other media producers involved with the project do not pinpoint the political climate of preservation and heritage efforts at the time of the excavations at the farmstead, the publishing of the site reports, or the broadcasting of the KLRU segment. They focus on the general knowledge that there is a lack of recorded archaeological sites highlighting the African Diaspora in Texas. A common theme across all of the media about the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project is that African American history in the U.S. has been neglected. I cannot pinpoint the contemporary politics occurring around heritage specifically in Austin that may have pushed the archaeologists and historians beyond simply collecting the data, besides their stated intentions that descendants have a right to know about the heritage. What I can talk about is the broader discourse happening in the U.S. around heritage sites since the initiation and publication of these media.

Across the southern United States there have been ongoing battles about the visual representation of American southern history. The arguments have been most contentious when it comes to southern monuments commemorating a post-Civil War south, and guidelines for its inclusion in public education.

As of July 27, 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center reports 1,740 emblems commemorating the Confederacy, and many of them are protected under state law. They also report that the largest spikes in commemorating the Confederacy were in the early 1900s during Jim Crow and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan; and again in the 1950's through 60's during the Civil Rights Movement (Southern Poverty Law Center 2018). Across the southern landscape there is state sanctioned naming of streets, statues, schools and historical markers for the people who fought to maintain state's rights to slavery. It is not uncommon to have schools, parks, major roads and other public land dedicated to the generals and slave owners of the regime that lost the Civil War. Considering the racial violence ethnic Americans experienced after the war, all in the name of preserving their social subjugation under the ideas of the confederacy, there are always calls to bring the monuments down and change the names. But those who oppose ridding the landscape of the symbols put forth arguments about their rights to protect their southern heritage. Reingold and Wike (2000) refer to this as the "Southern Heritage Defense". In which, they claim, white southerners argue that the confederate symbols represent a heritage of southern pride and do not hold the same racist connotations that they did in the past (322). Popular discourse in favor of valorized confederate sites and symbols employs temporal distancing of the south's racist history from the temporally and socially progressed contemporary moment.

Southerners who view the monuments as alienating blights on the geography have gone so far as to remove the symbols themselves. In 2015 activist Brittany Newsome

scaled a thirty-foot flag pole outside of the South Carolina statehouse to remove the Confederate battle flag. Newsome removed it a few weeks after Dylan Roof, a young white man, walked into the historic Emanuel A.M.E Church in Charleston and killed nine Black parishioners. He specifically chose a well-known Black heritage site. In one of the most widely circulated images of Roof, he has a gun in one hand and the confederate flag in the other. In 2015, after the killings, President Obama called for the removal of the flag from state property, as it was a reminder of “racial subjugation” (Joiner 2017, Southern Poverty Law Center 2016).

Attempts to hold onto confederate history were not the only important conversations occurring about American heritage. The Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead project is a part of a national push for more state and federally sanctioned monuments about African American heritage. In 2007 after years of public outcry the President’s House Site in Philadelphia was opened for archaeological investigations of its previously un-commemorated slave housing (Levin 2011). A historic American landmark because it was home first to George Washington and also has the Liberty Bell on site, African American residents and activists near the national park felt that a lack of interpretative information about Washington’s slaves invisibilized their ancestors and them in the historic area (Levin 2011). Not only did the community, historians, and archaeologists push for the federal change to acknowledge the site, but archaeologists also ensured that the excavations were open to the public. Archaeology at the President’s House site was not the only (more historically inclusive) major heritage site to receive recognition in the American landscape at the same time as the Williams farmstead. In 2012 ground was broken for the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It had taken over 200 years to place the monument in D.C.’s landscape, and on the National Mall no less. By 2016 the museum would open with a massive 400,000-

square-footage and over 35,000 artifacts representing a time span of centuries and Black Americans spatial history across the entire U.S. Congress having passed a bill in 2003, the museum was also a part of the prestigious Smithsonian institution (Brown 2016, Shapiro 2016).

MacManamon and Hatton (2000) argue that curation, education, and preservation must be a pivotal part of all heritage management plans. In addition, communities must be included in preservation efforts, as this is an investment in the long-term value of preservation efforts. The authors argue that federal agencies, museums, academics, and cultural resource firms set the tempo for what heritage projects contribute to national heritage, and therefore play a role in the enthusiasm of future heritage use and preservation. At the moment of the Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Archaeological Project's conception and completion, the nation is vibrating with discussions about what all these historic symbols mean to the various identities in America. Acknowledgement of one past brings contemporary pain for some and solidifies placed based identity for others. And the discussion is not limited to the small Black White dichotomy I have presented here; for Native Americans and Latinos also had pivotal struggles arise over land and continuity in the U.S. during the same ten years the Williams farmstead is a part of these discursive moments about belonging in the space of America. I hope that contextualizing the farmstead within the political climate of the late 19th century and contextualizing the research efforts within its contemporary political climates give some insight into the dialogic of preservation and American discourses about identity and belonging.

Chapter 3

Memory Making: How Collective Memory Informs Identity

The dialogic of preservation and the discourses in relation to preservation has important impacts on historical memory. The oral histories from descendants show that the continuity genres invoked by discussions of historical time and space at heritage sites impact memory and are impacted by memory.

Antioch colony is located five miles from Manchaca and about a thirty-minute drive outside of Austin—a quick online search for the east Hays county community will point you toward Old Black Colony Rd (Jasinski 2010, Franklin 2012:18,71). Researchers for The Ransom and Williams Farmstead Project had a difficult time finding the immediate descendants of the Williams family. So, they relied on the slightly distanced familial connections in the Antioch freedmen's colony to create the oral history component of the project. These descendants' memories of growing up on land owned by freed slaves enriched the project even if they grew up miles from the farmstead. The combination of the oral history from Antioch and excavations from the Williams farmstead work across and with time and space to invoke a social memory of Black life in rural Texas. The following section explores how the descendants and archaeologists work together to contribute to the public memory of Black social life in Texas and America.

As noted before in my discussion about contentions at the African Burial Ground in New York and the spatial organization of the Kingsley Plantation, archaeology plays a role in the creation of public social memory. The role it plays is contentious and political, not only when it comes to how African American heritage is interpreted and commemorated, but also how it is taken up and employed in the present day (LaRoche

and Blackey 1997, Barton and Markert 2012). African Americans have relied on memories, shared through narratives or oral histories, about spatial markers to inform their sense of self and the community.

These memories have also played a role in narratives that guide Black American socialization (Barton and Markert 2012: 93, Pilgrim 2018: 2). Stories about hanging trees (Barton and Markert 2012), Black men escaping death by running through fields (Pilgrim 2018), and ancestors in love who broke the rules to meet at a well each night (Roberts 2008) provide meaningful guidance for descendants. In their archaeological and oral history work at Timbuctoo, archaeologists Barton and Markert heard stories about a hanging tree but could not locate it in the area. Descendants at Timbuctoo know the story but have different ideas as to the location of the tree. The archaeologists acknowledge that the oral traditions are not always true, but they can still do the work of serving as a medium for socializing community members toward a legacy of collective identity in connection to a site, and in some cases help them in understanding the dangers of life as African Americans in a hostile space (Barton and Markert 2012: 93).

The memories about Black social life in the past become part of a collective consciousness that build recognizable bridges between the landscape of the Williams farmstead and the oral traditions of descendants from Antioch colony. Here I return to dialogue from the KLRU Juneteenth Jamboree program to show how the site itself, along with artifacts, is employed in shaping Antioch colony descendants' sense of self and expanding collective memories about identity. In the 2010 *Juneteenth Jamboree* video LeeDell Bunton, a descendant and local historian of the Antioch freedmen community, which the Williams family a part of, is interviewed at the site. LeeDell Bunton talks about his connection to the farmstead.

“I feel like I’m ha ha ya know **I’m really connected to this site**. Ya know I mean **I’m connected through our kinship**. Ya know **I don’t know that I’ve ever met any of Ransom’s direct descendants**, but I certainly know I have met lots of people who are directly related to Emma So, **I feel very much tied to this site** ya know.”¹⁹

Archaeologists are directly impacting a new formation of memories for Antioch descendants. They are expanding the geography of the colony’s community and therein contributing to their sense of place and belonging through these memories. LeeDell repeatedly says, he is **connected** and **tied** to the site. Visiting the site and being included in the formation of this history is a ritual of commemoration through which the memory is collectivized. In another video from the Texas Beyond History site LeeDell says,

“Boy you know I always say that especially when I’m standing in a site like this, it’s almost like being on **hallowed ground**. You know because you look back and you think of, especially me with **my ancestors**, I look at the trees, we talk about the three-hundred-year-old trees that’s in the back of the home site and you say, ‘if trees could talk’. Ya know you just wonder what kinda stories could they share [...] ya know **I can imagine** Ransom and his family waking up in the morning and thanking God you know for being freed men for being able to own their own property [...] so ya know it **makes me proud** ya know to **take a stroll back down through memory lane**.²¹

The site, as physical evidence of what Black Americans achieved in post-Emancipation Texas, is what Andrea Roberts refers to as a “depiction of Black spatial agency”, and these depictions of the past provide Black self-determination not only in the present but also in the future (Roberts 2018a: 13). Citing Bjorn Sletto (2014), Roberts asserts that narrative, particularly associated with landscape and identity, is a form of memory performance which links present, to past, to future. There is a dialogue between the discourses that erase Black life from certain spaces and contributions to the American

19 LeeDell Bunton’s great-grandmother was the sister of Emma Bunton, and Emma is directly related to Sarah Williams (Franklin 2012).

20 “Once Upon a Time Ransom Williams Crossed State Highway 45 Southwest”.

<https://www.klru.org/juneteenth/video/2010/ransom-williams-crossed-state-highway-45-southwest>

21 “Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead: Field and Lab Photos and Videos

<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/ransom/images/arch-field-leedellbvideo2-h5.html>

mosaic, memory of descendants in freedom colonies, and preservation (Roberts 2018a: 8). The themes of continuity employed in this dialogue resists the erasure of Black of heritage in the geography and reinvigorates the power of the space. Discourses of progress and the discourses of continuity are in constant conversation with one another—reacting and countering the different facets of the genres presented as evidence for history and memory. This is how ground becomes **hallowed** so often in the preservation of Black and African diasporic spaces. Black American life has relied on just the storytelling, oral histories, to fight the placelessness caused by discourses of progress—and archaeology along with other ways of making Black life strategically geographic (Roberts 2018a) bridge landscape and the memories passed down through oral tradition to stake a claim on the land and American narrative.

I first asked why the oral histories from descendants at Antioch were included in the research for the Williams farmstead. The answer is that the oral history adds additional temporal and spatial layers to the farmstead. It fleshes out not only the land, but the community around the farmstead. Here we see where language and space work dialogically to shape more holistic historical figures. Re-presentations of heritage do so in the hopes of pushing against the dominant rhetoric and racial organization of the geography (Flewellen 2017:81).

MEMORY MAKING: ARCHAEOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC UPTAKE

Broadcasting The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project on an annual television program and including it in a virtual museum, expands the range and effect of this narrative. These mediums lend the supportive platforms to not only enable descendants at Antioch, but it enables a local Black diaspora as well. The Ransom's, along with many other Black and rural families, eventually moved into the city of Austin.

Here they faced displacement and continued segregation and continued making space for their family. As mentioned before, the styles of continuity utilized in studies of the African diaspora are what allows for alternative narratives to silencing discourses about American racial harmony found in progress narratives. Platforms like KLRU, Texas Beyond History Virtual Museum, and the oral histories in *“I’m Proud to Know What I Know”* contribute to a local diasporic memory. The Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead may not hold lasting importance to the state because it does not depict the wants and desires of a nation. But the narratives around it can hold identity shifting significance to the Black communities still making space for themselves in Austin as they are taken up and added to the spatial history.

Additionally, the social reach and backing of where these narratives are broadcast play a significant role in legitimizing these memories. These very marginalized ways of knowing the spatial world and definitions of the nation’s past are given additional power when presented as such. They are impactful and linked to a larger struggle for self-determination in Black spatial matters. The Farmstead Project creates a place not only for the re-presentation of Black rural identity, but also Black Austinite and Texan identity. When added to state depositories of sanctioned history, conversations about Black placemaking heritage across Texas becomes a part of the strategic ways in which we make Black America visible and continue to transmit memories which retain a defiant sense of humanity.

For example, in *“I’m Proud to Know What I know”*, Franklin and Lee interview the residents and descendants from the Manchaca area, the Antioch colony and the Prairie, and East Austin. The interviews may seem disconnected from the project of excavating and sharing the data from the Ransom and Sarah Williams farmstead, but they are not. Spanning a broad region of Travis-Hays county, and having included informants

born as early as 1915, these life histories expand a timeline of Black rural life that may have ended with the latest dates established for the farmstead.

As informants work to orient the interviewer to the way they remember spaces, they continue orienting Black life in the Texas landscape. And it is completely different from the distanced and methodical ways that archaeologists may explain where something as simple as a tree or road was located. Descendants and residents, narrating their memories, can speak to change over time quickly without saying much. In the example below LeeDell Bunton is describing his childhood home to Franklin.

“MF: So, the kitchen side of the house would be the south side of the house then?

LB: Yes, and it would have been facing Black Colony Road. [***There is one thing that remains in my memory, and that is, there were six of the largest oak trees I had ever seen that stood in middle of Black Colony Road. It would have been nice if they had left those trees standing, they were beautiful. At that time the road wasn’t called Black Colony Road—it was just a road that ran through the colony.]

MF: And it was dirt?

LB: [***Yes, it was a dirt road, and the part that ran in front of our house is where the six large oak trees were. After I became an adult, I went back to Buda to visit, and the trees were still there, that was in 1968. I went back in the early seventies and the trees were gone and the rode was paved.]” (Franklin 2012: 71).

LeeDell’s memory does a lot for discussing the change over time in the area, for which he and his family is present or continuing to visit. The names of roads have changed, the trees he knew are there for many years then gone, old dirt roads are now paved. The narration of his memories adds spatial and temporal layers artifacts and excavations cannot do alone. His memories are primary evidence of the continued occupation of the space, and it is proven simply by him recollecting the changes he has seen. When combined with the excavation data from the farmstead, the archaeologists are

building up their evidence of Black social life in Texas within a genre of continuity. They are combining timelines and spaces to combat a discursive erasure.

In another interview Franklin speaks with Kay (Hollis) Randall, a resident of Austin and descendant of the Black community of Manchaca. Kay is talking about the narratives of Black social life her mother shared with her.

“MF: Right, yeah. And so did your mom ever talk about how she wanted something different for you? Or do you think her moving to Austin—?”

KR: Well, of course, I think every parent wants something different for their kids. But of course, I don’t think she wanted me to pick cotton, but she wanted me to make sure that, “Listen, this is something you don’t want to do in your lifetime. Education is the most important thing.” It should be the most important thing, because without it you can’t do anything. But to go back and to pick cotton and to—

I know once before she was talking about wearing hand-me-downs. I never had to do that, and she had to pass on her dresses to her siblings, and how she had to come from sewing up her shoes. And I can go buy Steve Madden—they didn’t have Steve Madden back in the day, or a Jessica Simpson, you know. And those are the things I’m saying that we tend to take for granted. You know, just like I said, looking at my mom and seeing where she came from is like, and then seeing her siblings, and you can say **wow, you guys make it, you guys made it, and here we are—we can continue to keep celebrating.**” (Franklin 2012: 784)

The narratives handed down from Kay’s mother, and now from Kay speak to a continued resilience often missed in broader historical narratives about Black rural life. Their impact on Kay shape her values—rural life was hard, but her family can **“make it”**, **“made it”**, and are **“here”** now. She ends the sentence with a *continuation* of celebrating. The mix of tenses used point out definitive moments in the past, present, and future about her family’s social trajectory. Memories she has about the land and their way of life define some familial possibilities. And as they define personal possibilities and identity formation for Kay, Franklin espouses that transmission of these histories are just as important to the overall African American community. Franklin writes that the

informants' lack of blood relation to the Williamses is not very important to the “**broader context**”. She instead emphasizes an importance of the descendants' bond via a common African American descendant heritage (Franklin 2012: xvi).

Via the co-creation of these oral histories Franklin and the state agencies that published this report definitely impact Texas's public facing history about African Americans in the past, but there is a chance that it impacts the current sense of where African Americans belong, as well. The inclusion of the oral histories in an archaeological project is a methodological application of the continuity chronotope. Now the community has been mapped on farmsteads in the rural south (after slavery and on land they owned), in up and coming Austin, and back building on land that has been in their family for generations. This report expands collective memories of the times and spaces in which Black Americans have been and still are seen in America—it relies on the facet of continuity that emphasizes spatial presence to intervene in discursive erasure.

Conclusion

Part of the catalyst for writing this paper stems from my interactions with Black Americans, and how they speak about or perceive these defining historical narratives. During my preliminary research I continually came across Black Americans living in Austin who voiced a distrust of the traditional American and Texan history they learned in primary and secondary educational institutions.

In these ethnographic encounters, spurred by mentioning that I was an anthropologist focusing on African American history, many expressed wariness that the educational focus on enslavement and brutality of Jim Crow were intentional social reminders of African Americans' subjugation in America in the past and the present. There was an obvious distrust of these histories (assumed to be written by white academics). In these encounters people were linking historical depictions of Black Americans to present-day expectations and characterizations of Black Americans via their distrust of a narrative that they felt highlighted a past subjugation. These narratives stemmed from the focus on slavery as a main time period for recovery of Black American history. They also stemmed from the present-day valorization of confederate heritage, which supports their subjugation. The focus on past subjugation is perceived as facilitating continued subjugation in the present. When discussing the archaeological investigations of a farmstead owned by a Black freedman in Austin from 1871-1904, individuals did not only connect the importance of the research to its focus on a successful Black man post-Emancipation. They placed added value on the researchers as Black archaeologists of the African Diaspora.

This project also highlights the importance of conducting archaeological research in the contemporary city of Austin because it draws out the ideologically erased heritage

of African Americans still fighting erasure from the landscape. Residents' comments demonstrate how both archaeologists, as shown in the official site report (Boyd et.al. 2015), and Austinites, in these encounters, link the historical site to the present-day city through discourse.

My conversations with Black Americans about history, and my engagement with components of The Ransom and Sarah Williams Farmstead Project evinced recurring themes of preferred continuity frameworks and distrust of progressive frameworks. These frameworks were throughout the counter-hegemonic discourses of historical Black social life in America. These counter discourses, created by Black Americans and academics, juxtaposed the historical narratives that emphasize Black enslavement and lack of agency, lack of fully recognized citizenship and rights in America, and general historical trauma that is deemed unrelated to the (Black) American social present.

Chronotopic language of continuity is so prevalent in African Diaspora studies because people are not talking about echoes or the last lingering shadows of a history long past. Academics who study the African Diaspora recognize that these progressive discourses are the most recent reiterations of utterances that either continue to create life and space or erase it. Furthermore, these chronotopic narratives are not just limited to African Diaspora studies but can also critique dominant orientations to sites in archaeology and circulate in the popular discourse. Wirtz, following Butler, describes powerful discourses as stylized widespread discourses that reiterate the categories of subjectivity (Wirtz 2014: 67). My analysis of chronotopically progressive spatial histories and heritage as powerful discourses emphasizes the continued political gravity of archaeological and historical scholarship, and popular discourse about space in America. It is a repetition of norms which are often taboo to break and maintains a deadly status-quo. Fortunately, spatial histories and heritage discourses that fit within the frameworks

of continuity rely on the rigidity of progressive frameworks to bring attention to their seemingly natural categorizations. When people employ continuity frameworks, they question the rigid characterizations of who belongs where and when in the American narrative by fighting assimilation. They tell a different story using the same space and time, and in doing so calls into question long held assumptions about the everyday hierarchies which minorities are subjected to. For example, Katherine McKittrick argues that stereotypes about dispossession of the Black Diaspora are important racial narratives that mark Black lives as *ungeographic*. And these categorical stereotypes are so constricting that we only view black geographies through these hierarchical and dehumanizing lenses—even though they are “colonial fictions” (McKittrick 2006: 5). She calls for a breaking of these patterns by refusing to duplicate the traditional features of them—preferring to contest hegemonic spatial histories and organization via the subordinated spatial imaginings and interpretations of the marginalized. Chronotopic language of continuity relies on the spatial imaginings and interpretations of marginalized Americans by undermining the norm with personally meaningful relationships to space and time, and collective heritage. Undermining the norm is Newsome’s refusal to accept the confederate flag as a benign symbol of Southern heritage disconnected from its historically racist inception. It also resembles oral histories of generational uplift in Black families, in spite of narratives of Black failure.

The chronotopes of continuity are not limited to the heritage discourses here in the United States. I argue that such chronotopes will be found in any diasporic discussion of home, borders, and belonging. When their narrative histories and a few trinkets, such as a key to a house that no longer stands, are all diasporic communities have to combat geographic displacement, those in diaspora can pull themselves from abstraction via their historical tales. Collective and personal memories about geographies they feel a deep

connection to bridge space and time for generations of descendants; as seen with the oral histories in *“I’m Proud to Know What I Know”*. Diasporan people call into question the state sanctioned or prevalent narratives that seek to disregard their ancestors, and thus the political realities of the contemporary diaspora, through histories that run counter to hegemonic temporal and spatial organization. My findings demonstrate the imperative for diasporans to continue to talk back from the margins about the dominant organization of history and space. Displaced peoples’ oral histories, memories, and a refusal to place distance between themselves and the past disrupt the domination of status quos. Refusal to accept standard narratives continues to disavow national attempts to forget and re-write the histories that shape marginalized lives.

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