

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY**  
Newsletter of the African-American Archaeology Network

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**Editor's Notes**

This is the first issue of the newsletter of the African-American Archaeology Network. The idea for a newsletter developed from discussions at the conference, Digging the Afro-American Past, held at the University of Mississippi in May 1989 [A summary of the conference is in this issue]. A need was seen for a publication that would keep people apprised of current research on the archaeology of the African diaspora.

The newsletter will include information about relevant conferences and publications, ideas for symposia, site reports, short articles, book notes, exhibit reviews, and requests for information. I also want to compile a directory of network participants in a forthcoming issue. Let me know if you want to be included. Please also spread the word to others you think would like to be listed and receive this newsletter.

This newsletter will only be as good as the contributions of its recipients. I need your input to find out the kind of publication you want. Although it has taken some time to get out this first issue, I hope to get the second one out for the fall. Submissions for the next issue should be made by August 30.

Submissions should be sent to me at the Department of Anthropology, Museum of Natural History, MRC 112, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560

**Digging the Afro-American Past**

The conference "Digging the Afro-American Past: Archaeology And the Black Experience" was held at the University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS, May 17-20, 1989. The conference consisted of six sessions of presented papers, a keynote luncheon, roundtable discussion, and tour of the Mississippi Delta, a major area of African American settlement in Mississippi from 1880 to the present.

Some of the themes conference papers examined include: the search for archaeological evidence of an African heritage in slave material culture from Virginia, South Carolina, Jamaica; cultural histories of African American communities in Florida, Michigan, Louisiana, Virginia, and Jamaica, research plans and strategies for proposed archaeological studies in Maryland, South Carolina, and

Mississippi; discussions of research paradigms applicable to the study of African American experience. Neil Silberman wrote an excellent review of the conference published in Archaeology, September/October 1989 issue. Selected papers from the conference will be published in a volume on African American Archaeology.

### **"Digging for Slaves" - BBC Documentary**

The BBC recently produced an hour-long documentary on slave archaeology entitled "Digging for Slaves". It was produced by Jonathan Dent and premiered in the United States on January 12th on the Arts and Entertainment Cable Network. Research at Monticello, Colonial Williamsburg, and Middleburg, a rice plantation in South Carolina, is depicted, and there are appearances by Ed Chappell, Rex Ellis, Leland Ferguson, Bill Kelso, Theresa Singleton, and Betsy Reitz. The film explores the potential for learning about slavery through archaeology and could be used as a supplement to archaeology and history classes. Unfortunately, the film is as yet unavailable for purchase or rental. This situation may change in the near future and we will make the news available if and when it is distributed.

Other films relevant to the archaeology of African-Americans:

--The Strength of These Arms: Black Labor - White Rice (26 min., for purchase, VHS \$60.00). Explores the archaeology of a South Carolina rice plantation. Available from: North State Public Video, P.O. 3398, Durham, NC 27702, (919) 682-7153.

--Ground Truth: Archaeology in the City (for purchase, 16 mm \$400.00, VHS \$85.00; rental, 16mm \$100.00) Film documents the excavation of the First African Baptist Church Cemetery in Philadelphia. For information contact Richard Robinson, Silverwood Films, PO Box 4640, Philadelphia, PA 19127.

--Other Peoples' Garbage (59 min., for purchase, 16mm \$600; rental, 16mm \$60.00). Includes a segment on Chuck Fairbank's research on slave sites on St. Simon's Island in Georgia. Available from DER (Documentary Educational Resources) 101 Morse St., Watertown, MA 02172, Phone: (617) 926-0491; Fax (617) 926-9519.

### **Objects for an Exhibition**

The Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia is currently seeking information about exhibitable objects related to the African-American experience in the antebellum South. Material will be used in a major exhibition opening July 1991 and in a publication funded by NEH and now in preparation. Contact Kym Rice, Project Director 7120 Piney Branch Road, NW, Washington, DC 20012 or call (202) 726-1977.

## **African-American Archaeology Bibliography Project**

Mark Bograd and Theresa Singleton are currently compiling a bibliography on African-American archaeology for the Society for Historical Archaeology. The SHA plans to publish it fronted with a review essay as part of its recognition of the Columbus Quincentenary. The bibliography will include material related to all periods of the African-American experience in the Americas, the Caribbean, and relevant material from Africa. It will cover monographic and journal citations, but also theses, dissertations and the substantial "grey" literature of contract reports and delivered papers.

For this bibliography, African-American archaeology includes material culture studies, analyses of African-American cemetery populations, and theoretical pieces relating to the archaeological study of race and ethnicity. More general studies of plantation and tenant farming will be included regardless of whether an African-American component has been identified, since these sites provide information about the labor systems under which African-Americans worked.

The National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution has agreed to be a repository for collected materials. We will be collecting references and materials to be included in the published bibliography until the end of September 1990. References received after then will be listed in forthcoming newsletters. This is a good opportunity to make less widely distributed reports known to the public. Send submissions and references to Theresa Singleton.

### **Upcoming Conference**

"Recreating the World of the Virginia Plantation, 1750-1820" - May 31st to June 2nd, 1990, Charlottesville, Virginia. Multidisciplinary conference on Virginia plantations. Registration is \$95.00 and is due by May 15th. Registration forms and information available from: Conferences and Institutes, Division of Continuing Education, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 3697, Charlottesville, VA 22903 (Phone: (804) 924-7141).

### **Fieldwork Opportunities in African-American Archaeology**

The Smithsonian National Associates Program is sponsoring two research expeditions focussed on plantation archaeology in the Caribbean. Both relate to ongoing research at Galways Plantation in Montserrat. Galways was a sugar plantation and is a featured part of the Smithsonian's upcoming exhibit "Seeds of Change" that is planned for the Columbus Quincentenary.

In the first project, participants assist in an excavation on Montserrat of a slave cemetery to gather valuable health and diet

information. In the second, team members will work in New York City helping in the analysis of ceramics from earlier field seasons. Information about these and other Smithsonian Research Expeditions is available from Charlene James-Duguid, Ann Post or Ian Thompson of the Smithsonian at (202) 357-1350.

#### **Submissions and Mailing Information**

Send to: Theresa Singleton, Department of Anthropology, Museum of Natural History, MRC 112, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560.