A Fraught Reckoning

Exploring the History of Slavery at the University of Georgia

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"The voices of those enslaved therefore do not always exist where we would like."[1]

"And history is how the secular world attends to the dead."[2]

History completes me—at least that is one aspiration for my work. Archival research is mostly a solitary experience, but, as I work, my mind hardly ever strays from the public and personal meanings of my labor for the African American past and present. I have never thought about my intellectual work apart from its political relevance. So much of my graduate training focused on "silences" and "invisibilities"—now commonly invoked conceptual metaphors used to characterize what is not said and who is not represented in the historical record.[3] To be sure,

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[1] Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 14.

[2] Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 18.

[3] One of the earliest works is Darlene Clark Hine, "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silence: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom" in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 224–49. Other influential work from the period includes Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke," *Signs* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 610–33; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Beyond the Sound of Silence: Afro-American Women in History," *Gender & History* 1, no. 1 (March 1989): 50–67; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 251–74; Deborah Gray White, "Mining the Forgotten: Manuscript Sources for Black Women's History," *Journal of American History* 74, no. 1 (June 1987): 237–42; Deborah K. King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 42–72; Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 912–20; Anne Firor Scott, "Most Invisible of All: Black Women's Voluntary Associations," *Journal of Southern History* 56, no. 1 (February 1990): 3–22; Michele Mitchell, "Silences Broken, Silences Kept: Gender and Sexuality in African-American History," *Gender and History* 11, no. 3 (November 1999): 433–44.

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these scholarly challenges have not been unique to African American history but they seem to loom especially large for our thematic field because of parallel inequities in education and other institutions. It is the enduring legacy of racial and gender exclusion that created the silences in the first place.

The condition of relative absence has been a critical point of professional entry for generations of scholars, and in multiple ways for historians who are Black women. Those of us who finished our degrees in the early 1990s were just as curious as any other intellectuals to know for the sake of knowing, but we also knew that discovery and reclamation involved a process that was as much about hierarchies of power as it was the life of the mind. Who is authorized to speak? Is the eternal project of historical revision any different or more urgent for us? And how is our work complicated when public memory becomes the primary terrain for defining who and what gets to matter?

It takes a certain kind of reluctance or illusionary thinking to relegate scholarship to imaginary spheres of meaning and influence unrelated to the political context of our labor. Certain times will not allow such subjective denial. Currently we are living in one of those times as protesters fill the streets with demands for an end to police violence and for an unqualified reckoning with centuries of anti-Black racism. One historian has described this season as the "summer of pandemic and protest," a pointed acknowledgment of the disproportionate, unjust impact of COVID-19 on people of color.[4]

The spring and summer protests of 2020 have an analog in higher education, where numerous colleges and universities have been doing this existential work already. Although the pace has been fitful and scattered across numerous institutions, the effort stretches back more than fifteen years, beginning when the University of Alabama issued an apology for its use of enslaved labor and campus communities at Brown University, Emory University, and the University of North Carolina called attention to histories of Black subjugation at their respective schools.[5] Since then scholars, students, and community members have completed research projects and held public forums on the legacies of racism at other institutions around the US and across the globe, all places where the slave trade, slavery, and colonialism created generations of wealth and human devastation, the impact of which is still present. Most of these schools are now part of a movement called Universities Studying Slavery (USS).[6]

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[4] Tweet from Jessica Marie Johnson, July 19, 2020, https://twitter.com/jmjafrx/status/1284834186361176064?s=03; "The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus," *New York Times*, July 5, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/05/us/coronavirus-latinos-african-americans-cdc-data.html.

[5] Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy, eds., *Slavery and the University* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2019), 1–7; See also *Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* (2004).

[6] Other schools include: Georgetown University, the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, the University of Pennsylvania, Clemson University, Yale University, the University of Mississippi in the US. International schools include Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia,

For four and a half years, I have been part of this movement at the University of Georgia (UGA), where I coordinate an interdisciplinary team of twenty-two faculty, staff, and students researching the history of slavery at our institution. Organizing faculty collaboration for such a broad research endeavor is strenuous under any circumstance, but it is especially so in our case. Initially administrators refused to support a genuine effort to research our campus history, relenting only after a generous anonymous donor came forward to underwrite our efforts. The labor demands have tested me in ways that I could not have anticipated at the start. They have moved me to reflect on what it means to be an African American woman desperately searching for small fragments of information to revise an official account of the school's founding and expansion dating back to 1785, an account that erased people who looked like me.[7] The initial battle for funding left a mark on me that shapes how I have viewed this project and my role.

There are additional problems that have to do with the conservative culture of the academy itself. The administration is no longer obstructing our work as it once did, but a confounding burden remains. I am struggling to reconstruct a story that is largely about uncompensated Black toil and the brutal subjugation of Black people within a workplace that still undervalues our labor. UGA faculty, staff, students, and community leaders rightly directed our collective demand for a full accounting of the past at university administrators. But another kind of reckoning is due for the present. Our work should be viewed as central to every university's mission, and those who perform it must be fairly and adequately credited for doing both time-consuming original research and indispensable service work in collaboration with campus and local communities. This sort of honest accounting must take place among administrators and individual colleagues who deem themselves sympathetic allies. This sort of reckoning must also consider the personal and professional costs of doing such work for Black women scholars in particular. This work is not easy.

I. Office Call

In mid-December 2015 I sat alone in my office taking stock of another long semester. Fifteen years running and the University of Georgia remained anything but a hospitable professional home for me. Still, in that moment, my outlook was clear and upbeat. I was on a rebound of sorts, and finally had considerable psychological distance from the agonizing memory of the previous year, when I taught the

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Canada, University of Manchester, Liverpool University, and the University of Glasgow. All of the schools belong to a consortium called "Universities Studying Slavery," which began as a collaborative working group of schools in Virginia. The University of Georgia joined these institutions in late fall 2019. The full list of USS partners is on the website for UVA's President's Commission on Slavery and the University, https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/.

[7] The University of Georgia charter was issued in 1785, but the school did not open for classes until 1801. The first date has allowed the school to make a claim about being the oldest land-grant college in the United States. This misleading detail remains a source of pride, but more fittingly belongs as school lore about its origins.

History of Georgia class for what I hoped would be my last time. Recurring conflicts with entitled students had drained me since I first began teaching the course in 2010. The difficult ones comprised about a third of the class, and their presence and simmering hostility made their numbers seem even larger. About a halfway through the semester, two of them expressed an affection for the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV); one student stood to proudly proclaim his direct family lineage. The others around him chuckled with a taunting knowingness about his revelation. On the final day of class meetings, he wore a wrinkled white t-shirt that bore the name of the organization and a fitted baseball cap bearing an insignia unrecognizable to me. Almost immediately after I posted grades for the class I faced a terrible backlash—rude e-mail messages, official complaints to the department head, parent phone calls to administrators, a grade appeals process, and an anonymous note that I turned over to campus police. Most relevant to my daily working life, I clashed with my department head after he scolded me in front of another colleague instead of defending me in the face of student misconduct. The provost at the time conveyed to him her displeasure about my refusal to answer student e-mails. By the time it was over, I was broken, vulnerable, enraged, and thoroughly disgusted. In time I repaired thanks to the political and social support of colleagues and friends elsewhere. But this experience was a painful reminder that the past is always present.

As I reflected on that horrible year and my eventual recovery, my office phone rang. Mr. Fred Smith, a revered local community leader in Athens and UGA alumnus, was on the other end. Although I had not known him for more than a year, I confided in him about the memory of the SCV student and how I was happy to put that behind me. I did not share the experience in detail, but I offered just enough to convey my pain and professional frustration. Mine was a familiar story, and his occasional, "yes, I hear you," was affirmation enough. I needed to be heard by "family." But "Mr. Smith," as many call him, provided something that was equally valuable: he offered historical perspective. He is a native Athenian who lived through segregation and the history of slavery was a living family memory for him.

Mr. Smith had called that day to discuss a specific concern involving the history of slavery at the University of Georgia. He had recently e-mailed a school official about a troubling discovery underneath the parking lot of Baldwin Hall, a north campus building that was home to the departments of anthropology, religion, sociology, and a few other units. The building was undergoing renovation. After tearing through the parking lot's blacktop pavement, a construction worker noticed part of a human skull and other skeletal remains.[8] Site supervisors notified authorities. Administrators immediately suspended the highly anticipated renovation of this historic building, named for the school's founder, a supporter of slavery and the slave trade.[9]

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[8] On the initial discovery, see "The Bodies at Baldwin Hall: UGA Uncovers 27 Graves During Construction Project," *The Guardian*, December 14, 2015. UGA's Franklin College Faculty Senate produced the most complete report of the discovery and subsequent developments. See Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall to the Franklin College Faculty Senate [hereafter cited as "Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall"], https://www.franklin.uga.edu/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Senate%20ad%20hoc%20committee%20report%204-17-19.pdf.

The discovery troubled many. Mr. Smith needed to know if the human remains belonged to Black people, specifically enslaved Athenians. He resolved to make the school reveal more. I requested, "Well, keep me posted on what you learn." He replied, "You know I will. And let that other stuff go. Keep your head up. We may need you." We hung up, but not before agreeing to speak again soon.

II. The Fight to Tell

From the start, school administrators were slow to address the discovery; the university waited three weeks before acknowledging it. The University of Georgia's associate vice-president for facilities, Gwynne Darden, expressed her surprise at the finding of human remains on the site, although she knew that Baldwin Hall was originally constructed on a portion of what had been the Old Athens Cemetery, the main section of which still existed beside Baldwin Hall. The main burial ground for Athenians prior to the Civil War, the cemetery was over two hundred years old. Many of the marked graves belonged to noted politicians, veterans of the American Revolutionary War, and Confederate soldiers. But there were also numerous unmarked graves that belonged to Black folks, Indigenous people, and poor whites who were unknown and certainly uncelebrated. Over time, as the university expanded the building, it removed some of the human remains and transferred them elsewhere, but clearly not all of them.

The university hired a local company, Southeastern Archaeological Services, Inc. to begin exhumation and identification using DNA analysis. The first conclusion based on "visual inspection" was that the remains belonged to individuals of European descent. Significantly, the firm determined that they did not belong to Native Americans. State law required a more scrupulous and considered process for the protection of "Indian burial sites." Downplaying the significance of the finding, administrators instead focused on a timeline for resuming renovations: "We're anxious to get back to work," remarked Darden. "We also want to follow all the protocols. We'll get back to work as soon as we're able to do so," she added.[10]

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[9] Baldwin was one of four Georgians to attend the constitutional convention of 1787 and one of two to sign the United States Constitution. It is not known whether he enslaved Black people. Our team continues our search of his personal papers and other records. However, he distinguished himself at the convention by advocating for the three-fifths compromise to determine congressional representation and for the continuation of the international slave trade for an additional twenty years after ratification. R. P. Brooks. "Abraham Baldwin, Statesman and Educator," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (June 1927): 171–78; E. Merton Coulter, *Abraham Baldwin: Patriot, Educator, and Founding Father* (Arlington, VA: Vandamere Press, 1987), 100–101.

[10] "Remains found on Baldwin Hall Construction site; Work Temporarily Suspended, *UGA Today*, December 11, 2015; "The Bodies at Baldwin Hall."

In his e-mail to the university, Mr. Smith had asked if the remains belonged to enslaved people. When school officials later claimed that the remains likely belonged to individuals of European descent, he knew better. Mr. Smith was a descendant of enslaved people and he knew his history, including the history of the school, the cemetery, and the history of slavery in his state. He pressed on. A man of faith and deep loyalty to his community, past and present, he wanted to make sure that the remains were handled with care and dignity. He asked that there be a reburial ceremony that included a minister and other members of the community.[11]

After multiple exhumations, an osteological study, and a DNA analysis, officials announced on March 1, 2017, that the results revealed maternal African American ancestry for twenty-eight out of the thirty individuals from whom DNA could be recovered. In sum 105 gravesites had been identified. In the same news release, UGA officials announced its stunning decision to reinter the remains in Oconee Hill Cemetery, a location that had its own troubled history.[12] A ceremony was planned for the reburial. Administrators took a series of actions that involved one ethical violation after another. There was no community consultation or campus involvement, and school officials ignored a request that reinterment take place in one of the historic Black cemeteries in Athens.[13] The ceremony would feature carefully selected individuals from the campus and wider community, individuals who distinguished themselves for their institutional loyalty and personal regard for the university president. There was a clear attempt to avoid criticism or any other input that might have been helpful to decision-makers. Many of us held the view that administrators acted hastily out of embarrassment and a need to get back to business as usual. In the process, they caused considerable harm. There was one development in particular that shocked and angered members of the local community.

The reinterment ceremony was scheduled for March 20, 2017. Unknown to all but key administrators and a few employees involved, the university reburied the remains in Oconee Hill Cemetery without providing notice to members of the wider African American community or the campus community. This had happened on March 7, during UGA's spring break. Mr. Smith was secretly informed that the remains were being transported. He immediately arrived at Oconee Hill Cemetery, where he noticed a "rental box truck" with several boxes of remains inside. The gate to the cemetery was locked. When he repositioned himself to see more clearly, the truck moved to block his view.[14] The following day, March 8, the school announced that the remains were reinterred at the new location. We had

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[11] Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall, 103.

[12] Statement on Baldwin Hall from the University of Georgia History Department, *Flagpole*, April 2, 2018, https://www.onlineathens.com/news/20180402/statement-on-baldwin-hall-from-university-of-georgia-history-department; Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall.

[13] Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall, 5–6.

[14] Marc Parry, "Buried History," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 25, 2017.

mistakenly assumed that the reinterment ceremony would include the actual reburial. As they would do on more than one occasion to defend their actions, UGA officials would claim reliance on the guidance of the state's Archaeologist's Office.

On March 25, 2017, UGA faculty, staff, students, and Athens community members assembled at a public forum. Over 350 attendees packed the Richard Russell Special Collections Library, named after the state's long-serving US Senator who did everything in his power to keep the country segregated and to oppose the creation of an anti-lynching law. Most of us learned later that an unnamed administrator had directed Toby Graham, associate provost and university librarian, to deny our request to use the library.[15] A diverse group of panelists shared their reflections on the developments of the previous year and a half. The atmosphere was palpable; rage mixed with sadness and a sense of relief. A handful of administrators attended this first public gathering. They sat silently as participants voiced their disappointment, shock, and outrage at how poorly the school's leaders had bungled their handling of the remains and any effort to begin a conversation about the school's past. Where was the compassion, where was the sense that so much more was owed to the descendant community, the campus community, and other many dozens who witnessed the travesty? Some of the observers were just plain embarrassed for the school and its touted traditions.

After the public forum, many of us held numerous meetings and communicated individually across several departments and academic units. Eventually I and four colleagues from the Institute of African American Studies, the College of Environment and Design, and the Department of History formed the "Working Group Studying Slavery and the University of Georgia." We felt that we were most qualified to take the leadership on a collective research project because we had published books and taught courses on slavery, the South, and African American history. In my case, I had also taught the history department's Georgia history course (1700s to the present) several times.

III. The Measure of My Labor

My involvement in UGA's research project evolved over time. Reluctantly I became the coordinator of the working group the fall of 2019, after our original coordinator departed the university and another coordinator decided to discontinue his role. I was concerned about replacing them because it was clear to me that momentum and interest in the project were waning among the faculty, staff, and students. Some members of the community remained focused and determined, but the school had treated them so poorly that it became obvious that any effort to bring this history to light would happen slowly, if at all. Most importantly, the university ignored the ethical course of action: it never did a proper community consultation.[16] Many of the most vocal students had graduated and those who remained were not as public in expressing their discontent, although the students who took my courses continued sharing their anger and embarrassment at the administration's shameful responses.

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[15] Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall, 15.

[16] Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Baldwin Hall, 12–15, 28.

I had other considerations that gave me pause about agreeing to lead the working group. After nearly twenty-five years in the profession, I knew enough to be wary about race-specific service assignments, and that was how this work was regarded. I was under no illusion that this type of service would count the same as other assignments, including and especially labor-intensive job search duties, and, in our department, assignments related to running undergraduate studies and graduate degree programs, both of which offered course release time and additional pay. Academics, like other employees, become acculturated to certain workplace norms and ideas about the legitimacy and value of what we do, but we should recognize that the worth we put on different kinds of work stem from cultural, racial, and gender beliefs. I have had countless conversations with Black women colleagues on other campuses who had done corrective work to address problems that were not of their making. To a person, we concluded that this is unfair and that this reflects another aspect of institutionalized racism.[17] Once in a fit of anger directed at a white male colleague, I referred to this as "White folks break shit and then expect Black people to do the repair work."

I cannot accept that organizing a history of slavery research group should be less important or less valuable to my department or our school than other forms of research and university service. Yet the attitude of most of my colleagues, including the previous department chair, seemed to be that the work was thankless with little reward. Besides, they suggested, this should be one area where Black people should take the lead. So from the very start, I struggled with bitterness and anger about what I perceived to be the constant devaluing of race-specific service work. I wanted to do this necessary work, but I was concerned about the conditions of my labor.

During my first year as coordinator, I was granted one course release for the year. I soon discovered that the time I spent on the history of slavery project far exceeded what I spent teaching a single course, even a new preparation. After discussions with my new department head and other colleagues, I became more certain about my perspective: working on a campus history of slavery might result in another instance of undervaluing Black academic labor. The obstacle was not only the more obvious one of unsympathetic administrators focused on protecting the school's reputation but also a certain unacknowledged perception held by other academics who, in many respects, had been valuable allies in our struggle to tell an elusive story about our campus.

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[17] Professional journals and social media accounts are full of discussions about this experience for Black women academics. See, for example, Debra A. Harley, "Maids of Academe: African American Women Faculty at Predominately White Institutions," *Journal of African American Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 2008): 19–36; Caroline S. Turner, "Incorporation and Marginalization in the Academy: From Border toward Center for Faculty of Color?," *Journal of Black Studies* 34, no. 1 (September 2003): 112–25.

I concluded that it was not that my department head and colleagues did not value the history of slavery. They had invested time in joining all of us in pressuring administrators to see the value in countering the official lies that our school tells about itself. But I knew they had not gone as far as I had in my thinking: this work should be just as important as any other work we do in our unit, and if higher administrators were not prepared to accept this, then we needed to appeal to them from another perspective.

It dawned on me that they just had not calculated the true cost of actually doing this kind of difficult history. They, too, had spent their careers in the same institutions that regarded "minority duty" or "race work" as something their Black colleagues should be expected to do. One senior colleague asked me, "Well, Chana, if you don't do this work, then who will?" Yet, there was a contradiction in this ambivalent regard for researching campus histories of slavery. It was considered separate and extra from an academic department's ordinary business. There was a kind of Jim Crow thinking about racialized academic labor. My history of slavery work was not considered as vital to the ordinary mission of a department. To raise the question of why this sort of work could not be a department priority was not foolish, naïve, or unreasonable. To those who would say that is just not how it works, I respond then we are not ready to think about a sincere reckoning with white supremacy. We make room for and give support to what truly matters. Recognizing this is what has moved millions to hit the streets during a "summer of pandemic and protest."

A fair of measure of my labor also considers the qualifications and experiences that have prepared me to undertake such difficult research. In other words, what I am doing should be regarded in the same way as any other scholarly research. Further, if my institution and others are serious about the reckoning process, we must be willing to acknowledge that researching the histories of enslaved people and their enslavers produces long-lasting emotional and psychological fatigue for descendant scholars and others with a particular connection to this experience.

IV. The "College Servant" and the Archive[18]

To receive support for our research on the history of slavery, our team submitted a successful proposal funded at $100,000. The university held a competition among the faculty instead of promoting cooperation in the form of a presidential commission, as other schools had done. There are specific restrictions on spending these funds. Our research cannot take us beyond 1865, so the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras are off limits. We are restricted to "documenting the role of slavery and enslaved people in the institution's development from its founding in 1785 through the end of the Civil War in 1865."[19] Because of this we cannot use the money to work with descendant community members to do oral histories, genealogies, or any other research activity that would help our exploration of slavery.

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[18] Informed by the scholarship of others who regard repositories as a historical problem for critical examination in their own right, I use the singular "archive" to refer to the history and politics of documentary collections. Scholars of slavery and archivists have written critically of the historicity of the archive and the debates over such a claim. See, for example Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1–14; Stephanie Smallwood, "The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Enslaved," *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 117–132; Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); and Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*; Terry Cross, "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape," *The American Archivist* 74, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 600–32; Alex H. Poole, "The Strange Career of Jim Crow Archives: Race, Space, and History in the Mid-Twentieth-Century American South," *The*

The history of slavery at the University of Georgia is a story of the decades-long use of forced, uncompensated labor to build and operate Franklin College (as the school was commonly known in the antebellum period), and to support the lives and livelihood of generations of white Georgians who wielded enormous influence over the state and nation long after the Civil War. These alumni continue to haunt our present through countless namesakes: streets and counties; school buildings and campus dormitories; chaired professorships, scholarships, and teaching awards; state and federal office buildings; and, of course, horrid monuments. The history of slavery at UGA is more than just the history of 1785 to 1865.

Enslaved Georgians built the earliest structures, including the storied College Chapel, the original administration building, and faculty houses. Everything that required doing, enslaved people did the work: they dug wells and carried water, hauled wood to build fires, maintained campus gardens, and transported university personnel to various locations throughout the county and beyond. One task that may seem quaint and charming to some was still forced labor: the bell-ringer for the chapel was usually an enslaved man.

UGA used the "hire out" system, a profitable practice of effectively renting or loaning enslaved persons to the institution at an agreed upon price paid to owners, including female enslavers such as Sarah H. Harris, who did regular business with the school beginning in 1836 and registered a complaint after one of her enslaved persons died during the 1845 school year.[20] Some enslaved laborers were owned directly by UGA faculty or administrators themselves. In the meeting minutes for the main governing bodies of the university (the Board of Trustees and the

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American Archivist 77, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2014): 23–63. Historian Leslie M. Harris reminds us that there are no perfect archives, no matter how complete some collections may seem. See "Imperfect Archives and the Historical Imagination," *The Public Historian* 36, no. 1 (February 2014): 80.

[19] David Lee, PhD, Vice President for Research, e-mail to the UGA Research Faculty Listserv, August 7, 2019.

[20] Vol. III of Minutes of the Trustees of the University of Georgia, p. 22 [August 1, 1836], University Archives, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Georgia (hereafter cited as Hargrett Library); Minutes of the Prudential Committee, 1834–1857, p. 16 [December 17,, 1842], Hargrett Library; Minutes of the Prudential Committee, 1834–1857, p. 39 [November 28, 1845], Hargrett Library. On white women slave owners and hiring out, see the excellent work of Stephanie E. Jones-Rodgers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (Yale University Press, 2019).

Prudential Committee), there are countless expenditure notations for enslaved laborers listed a "College servant" or "Negro hire," often for amounts that ranged from $75 to $300, usually per year.

Often trustees authorized expenditures on behalf of school presidents: "Resolved, that the President be allowed the sum of Fifty dollars for the use of a servant to sweep out the college &c. &c."[21] The expectation that enslaved laborers perform this duty to the satisfaction of administrators was subject to strict oversight and, in the case of student rooms, the costs be covered by individual students:

> That frequent scouring of the rooms be required of the College servant, and in case he should be incompetent to perform all such duty, that over servants may be employed to perform such service at the expense of the occupants of the room requiring it.[22]

The work was onerous and continuous for enslaved persons, as administrators deemed their labor to be essential given the general state of the campus and the unclean habits of the student body:

> The state in which rooms are kept by their occupants, in the minds of Your Committee, is a matter of just reprehension. The charge of want of cleanliness is universal and may be well maintained, against every room in both buildings, as well those occupied by students, as those reserved for purpose of recitation. In many instances, this want of cleanliness is extended to a want of decency, and filth is found to have accumulated, of such sort and in such quantities as to be offensive and doubtlessly injurious to health. Your Committee observe that a college servant is maintained at the expense of your treasury. His services are greatly needed in cleaning the buildings.[23]

In addition to cleaning rooms and cooking meals, some enslaved individuals were assigned "to wait, on the students, clean their shoes and boots, to make their fires . . . for the payment of whom there shall be an additional assessment of one dollar per ann. on each student residing in College."[24]

We have also found extensive evidence of abuse. It is the individual acts of student cruelty that have affected me the most. The appearance of these incidents in the archival record underscores enslaved people's anonymity and their status as "non-human human beings," as some historians characterize their condition.

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[21] Vol. I of Minutes of the Trustees of the University of Georgia, 1794–1817, p. 119 [July 5, 1806], Hargrett Library.

[22] Vol. II of Minutes of the Trustees of the University of Georgia, 1817–1835, p. 161 [circa July 31, 1826], Hargrett Library.

[23] Ibid., p. 160.

[24] Vol. II of Minutes of the Trustees of the University of Georgia, 1817–1835, p. 186 [circa August 4, 1828], Hargrett Library. Regarding student costs for use of enslaved laborers, see Vol. IV of Minutes of the Trustees of the University of Georgia (November 6, 1858–August 1, 1877), p. 33 [November 3, 1859]: "The Expenses shall be for Tuition $50.00, Room Rent $15.00, Servant hire $10.00."

Student violence appears in the record as a pronouncement of disciplinary action, first and foremost:

> Whereas John Clark has upon his own Confession been convicted of highly improper conduct in violently assaulting and maiming a negro without provocation . . . and whereas the said Clark with John Scott, Robert Ware, & Thomas Ware, have upon the same grounds been convicted of cruel and barbarous treatment to a poor deranged negro man on Sunday the first of the month of June as well as of the [words missing from transcription] and that during morning service in the Chapel from which they were illegally absent and whereas the said Clark was detected in several instances of provocation.[25]

The abuse of someone else's property often brought consequences for precisely that reason. In this particular case, the outrageous assault on the "poor deranged negro man" resulted in a punishment that hardly seemed commensurate with the harm caused by his assailants, whether school officials deemed him "deranged" before the beating or as a result of the beating: "Resolved that the President do at the next convocation of the students in the Chapel, publicly reprehend and admonish said Clark, Causing him to stand in the middle of the aisle." His accomplices were placed on probation until commencement.[26]

From the start of the project, I knew that I would not limit my examination to the working lives of enslaved Athenians, although I knew how defining this experience was for them. How could it not be? But I also imagined a fuller representation of their worlds, including evidence of how they regarded their lives on and off campus and for how they negotiated their subjugation. I've noticed a peculiar longing that comes with this work: the search for individual names and stories. There are two that continue to appear in connection with UGA. Our team is just beginning to evaluate the diary, slave bills of sale, and tax records for John C. Greer and Francina Greer, his wife. John was the son of Thomas Greer, who used enslaved labor to create the bricks for the first campus building, Old College. Of those enslaved persons that we have been able to trace in the Greer family records are Pompey, an older man of fifty, and thirteen-year-old Milly (whom we also believe appears as "Matilda" in later records). Everywhere we have located Pompey after 1850, we have also found Milly/Matilda. Milly was sold to satisfy a mortgage claim of Edward P. Clayton against Philip Clayton, both whom were UGA alumni. Pompey was purchased at the estate sale of James Jennings. We are intrigued and haunted by the bills of sale that mark the beginning of Pompey and Matilda's lives with the notorious Greer family and their subsequent appearance in other records after emancipation.[27]

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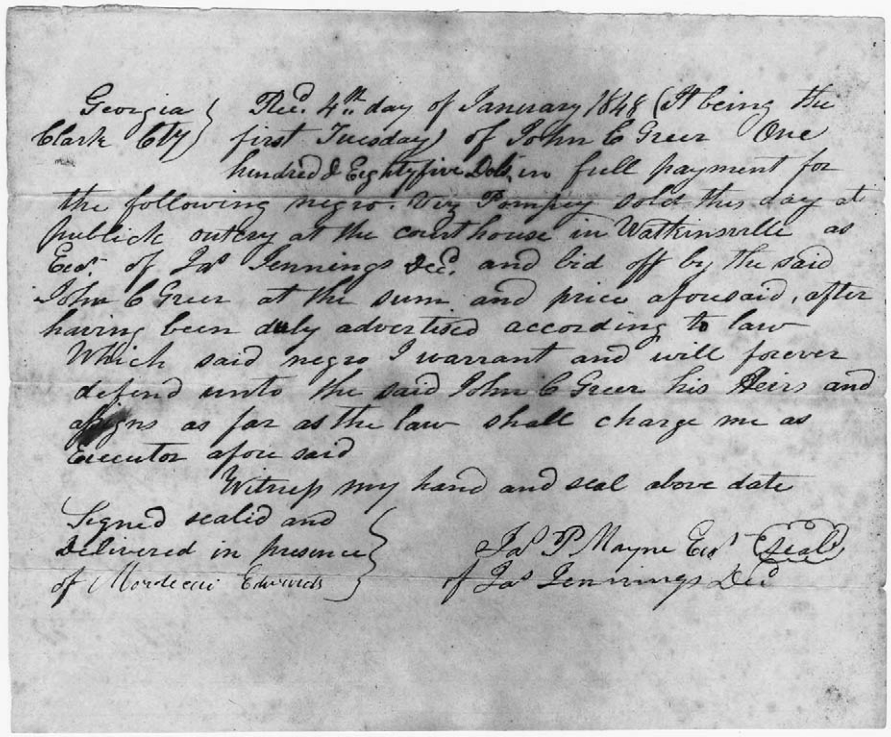
[25] Faculty Minutes and Records, Vol. 1, p. 15 [June 23, 1823], Hargrett Library.

[26] Ibid.

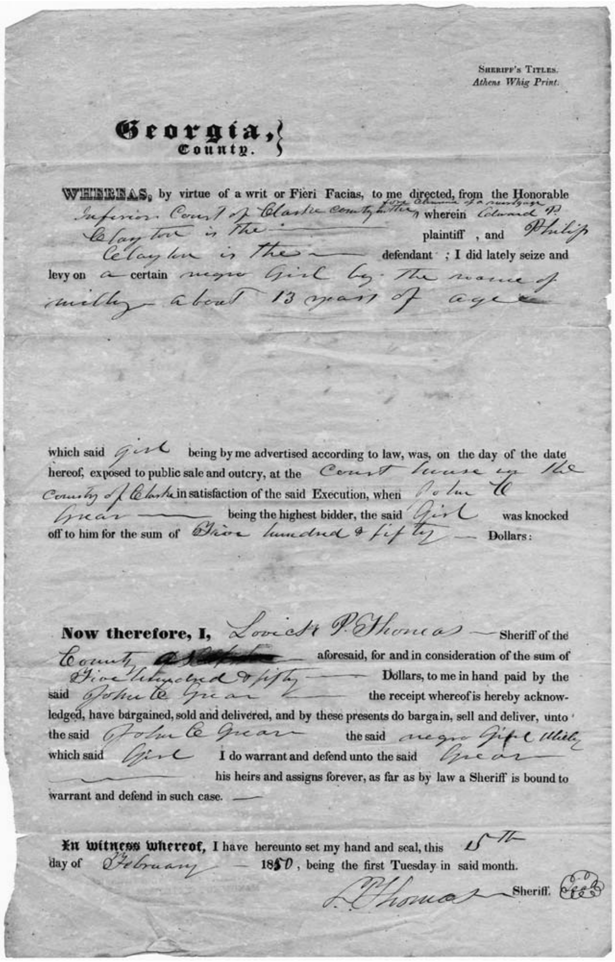
[27] Mary Levin Koch, "The View from Chalky Level: Francine Elizabeth Greer and the Plantation World of Clarke County," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 28–31; Bills of sale for enslaved people, Pompey and Milly, folder 1, box 1, MS535, Hargrett Library.



Georgia } Recd 4th day of January 1848 (It being the
Clark Cty } first Tuesday) of John C Greer One
hundred & Eightyfive Dols in full payment for
the following negro. Viz Pompey sold this day at
publick outcry at the courthouse in Watkinsville as
Exr. of Jas Jennings Decd. and bid off by the said
John C Greer at the sum and price aforesaid, after
having been duly advertised according to law
Which said negro I warrant and will forever
defend unto the said John C Greer his Heirs and
assigns as far as the law shall charge me as
Executor aforesaid
Witness my hand and seal above date
Signed sealed and
Delivered in presence
of Mordecai Edwards }
Jas P Mayne Exr (Seal)
of Jas Jennings Decd

Slave bill of sale (1848) for Pompey, a 50-year-old man. (Courtesy Hargrett Library, University of Georgia)
Transcript:
Jas P Mayne [Eed] of Jas Jennings [Dec'd]
Rec'd 4th day of January 1848 It being the first Tuesday of John C Greer One hundred & Eighty five Dols in full payment for the following negro. Viz Pompey sold this day at publick outcry at the courthouse in Watkinsville as [Eed.] of Jas Jennings [Dec'd] and bid off by the said John C Greer at the sum and price aforesaid, after having been duly advertised according to law which said negro I warrant and will forever defend unto the said John C Greer his heirs and assigns as far as the law shall charge me as Executor aforesaid
Witness my hand and seal above date
Signed sealed and delivered in presence of Mordecai Edwards

An especially distressing aspect of this work involves coming to terms with the unknowable, which is true for all historical research. But there is something particularly disturbing about the paucity of information for Black Athenians compared to the countless volumes of information about enslavers and other men and women whose lives are so well documented in one of the Special Collections Libraries on campus, the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library. To a person, the staff members there have been tremendously helpful to our team, especially the director, Katherine Stein ("Kat"). They have supported us in extraordinary ways. But the collections were developed with maintaining a certain kind of history in mind. Archives are not neutral ground. They reflect the times, and so much of the history of the University of Georgia is reflected in the library's



Sheriff's Titles.
Athens Whig Print.

Georgia,
County.

WHEREAS, by virtue of a writ or Fieri Facias, to me directed, from the Honorable Inferior Court of Clarke County on the fore closure of a mortgage wherein Edward P. Clayton is the plaintiff, and Philip Clayton is the defendant; I did lately seize and levy on a certain negro Girl by the name of milly about 13 years of age

which said girl being by me advertised according to law, was, on the day of the date hereof, exposed to public sale and outcry, at the Court house in the County of Clarke in satisfaction of the said Execution, when John C Grear being the highest bidder, the said Girl was knocked off to him for the sum of Five hundred & fifty Dollars:

Now therefore, I, Louis P. Thomas Sheriff of the County [illegible] aforesaid, for and in consideration of the sum of Five hundred & fifty Dollars, to me in hand paid by the said John C Grear the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have bargained, sold and delivered, and by these presents do bargain, sell and deliver, unto the said John C Grear the said negro Girl Milly which said Girl I do warrant and defend unto the said Grear his heirs and assigns forever, as far as by law a Sheriff is bound to warrant and defend in such case.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 5th day of February 1850, being the first Tuesday in said month.

L. Thomas Sheriff.

Slave bill of sale (1850) for Milly, a 13-year-old girl. (Courtesy Hargrett Library, University of Georgia)

Transcript:

Whereas, by virtue of a writ or Fieri Facias, to me directed, from the Honorable Inferior Court of Clarke County [on the foreclosure of a mortgage] wherein Edward P. Clayton is the plaintiff, and Philip Clayton is the defendant, I did lately seize and levy on a certain negro girl by the name of Milly about 13 years of age

which said girl being by me advertised according to law, was, on the day of the date hereof, exposed to public sale and outcry, at the court house of the county of Clarke in satisfaction of the said Execution, when John C Greer being the highest bidder, the said girl was knocked off to him for the sum of five hundred & fifty Dollars:

Now therefore, I, Louis P. Thomas Sheriff of the County aforesaid, for and in consideration of the sum of Five hundred & fifty Dollars, to me in hand paid by the said John C Grear the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have bargained, sold and delivered, and by these presents do bargain, sell and deliver, unto the said John C Grear the said negro girl Milly which said girl I do warrant and defend unto the said Grear his heirs and assigns forever, as far as by law a Sherfiff is bound to warrant and defend in such case.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 5th day of February 1850, being the first Tuesday in said month.

L. Thomas Sherriff

donations and acquisitions. There is relative silence on the lives of Black people for much of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The source material that does exist is highly mediated, of course. Those who held power over nineteenth-century Black Athenians still speak for them, whether it be their actual enslavers and their descendants, "beneficent" educators or private collectors.[28]

On June 23, 2020, the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH) issued a rare statement of acknowledgment that left me thinking about how academic libraries and state archives have implicated themselves in the history of white supremacy. ADAH admitted to contributing to Lost Cause mythology by building its collections with this sort of history in mind, and this practice included refusing to acquire materials that documented the African American presence in Alabama's history.[29] I asked Kat Stein whether this practice was true for Hargrett and Georgia history. Our conversation focused on the history of Hargrett's collection development and other practices, such as the highly offensive practice of displaying the Confederate Constitution every Confederate Memorial Day on April 26. The last time the former director did this appears to have been in 2013. Kat ended the practice when she became director. The document is now displayed among other items for select occasions.

Even though we have had tremendous support from Hargrett, I recently experienced some shock and disappointment when I learned that the library did not bid on a set of letters belonging to an enslaved woman who worked for Alexander H. Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy and UGA alumnus, whose extensive papers are owned by the library. Letters of formerly enslaved individuals are truly rare. This was a missed opportunity for the library and for our project. Dora Stephens would have been a child during the Civil War and the auction gallery description suggests she was a rather complicated person with outward sympathies for her enslaver. But we do not know what details about other enslaved people are mentioned in the ten or more letters identified on the gallery's webpage. And we may never know unless we locate some of her letters elsewhere, as a private person purchased the auctioned letters. This is a case in which institutional support from our library could have contributed directly to our project. We learned that no donor offered to help with the purchase (approximately $25,000), but we remain unclear about the library's

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[28] Telephone conversation with Katherine M. Stein, Director, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia, July 23, 2020. UGA historian E. Merton Coulter along with Georgiana collector and library namesake, Felix Hargrett, were instrumental in developing the library's holdings.

[29] Statement of Recommitment, June 23, 2020, Alabama Archives and History, https://archives.alabama.gov/docs/ADAH_Statement_Recommitment_200623.pdf. In its remarkable acknowledgement, ADAH, admitted the following: "For well over a half-century, the agency committed extensive resources to the acquisition of Confederate records and artifacts while declining to acquire and preserve materials documenting the lives and contributions of African Americans in Alabama."

internal process.[30] These letters were important enough to add to the library's enormous holdings on Alexander Stephens. But our work continues. We hope to locate Dora somewhere else.

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[30] Swann Auction Galleries, Printed & Manuscript African Americana, May 07, 2020 - Sale 2534, https://catalogue.swanngalleries.com/Lots/auction-lot/(FAMILY-PAPERS)-Papers-of-two-parallel-Stephens-families-the?saleno=2534&lotNo=260&refNo=766895.