

VICTIMS OR VICTORS? EXPLORING AMERICA'S SLAVERY ROOTS

A Dissertation

by

LINDA MBOMBOLO LELO

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2011

Major Subject: Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Victims or Victors? Exploring America's Slavery Roots. (December 2011)

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A large part of the tourism literature has focused on the phenomenon of slavery tourism, or the visitation of sites related to the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In the U.S. South, former plantation homes are popular sites of visitation, albeit very few studies have looked at African Americans' experiences there. The purpose of this qualitative dissertation is to understand both the politics of representation of slavery at slavery related sites (production side) and the different ways African American visitors make sense of these sites (consumption side).

The present study uses the case of the African Burial Ground National Monument, a former cemetery for enslaved and free Africans living in colonial New Amsterdam (today New York City) and now a National Park in Lower Manhattan, which exhibits a complex combination of "darkness" and "sacredness." The site exposes the public to its contentious process of development and reveals that African American visitors have mixed perceptions of slavery and the way it should be remembered and

represented on site (Africans as victims or as victors), as well as a range of motivations to visit, experiences and emotions attached to the site.

This research illustrates how slavery tourism sites choose to represent slavery, whether from the perspective of the White slaveholders, as it has traditionally been done, or from the perspective of enslaved Africans, as it is done at the African Burial Ground. Whatever the strategy they choose, this study demonstrates that there is a process through which these sites go in order to create the final product to be presented in the brochures, tour narratives, and exhibits. This study illustrates how visitors' relationship to the site influences their experience there, including the physical, spiritual, and psychological acts they exercise (volunteering, praying, pouring libations, communicating with the ancestors, etc.), and the meanings they attach to the site visited, whether it is pride, sadness, anger, or peace.

The significant insights from this study contribute to the current literature on slavery tourism, particularly the one on African American visitors' experiences, and suggest managerial propositions for the National Park Service and other institutions offering interpretive programs on slavery.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my ancestors, whose life and death was never acknowledged and whose sacrifices and prayers allowed me to be where I am today. I hope this humble effort gives them a voice and raises awareness about their contributions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Tazim Jamal, for believing in me and pushing me to be a better scholar year after year. Tazim, thank you for your dedication and the inspiration you gave me to produce quality work that can have positive impacts in this world. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Outley, Dr. Stronza, Dr. Yarak, for their support, guidance and feedback throughout the course of my research and my time at Texas A&M University in general.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research problem and purpose

Research in dark tourism has gained an increasing interest in the last decade, and a small but active group of scholars are making inroads into studying tourism related to sites of death and disaster. In contrast to other forms of tourism or heritage tourism, dark tourism requires tackling potentially unpleasant, often emotionally disturbing events and occurrences, ranging from war and genocide to assassinations and executions. While death is a dominant theme, other “dark” events and sites are also addressed by scholars of dark tourism, such as ghettos, and sites of enslavement. Researchers have also looked at slavery tourism, a particular type of dark tourism related to the visitation of slavery-related sites¹. Such sites include castles, plantations, museums, burial grounds, among others, and are located all around the major locations of the transatlantic slave trade: the coasts of Africa, the Caribbean, the U.S., and Europe. Numerous studies have found that many African Americans travel to West Africa (Ghana in particular) in search of their roots in the continent (e.g. Coles & Timothy, 2004; Finley, 2004; Holsey, 2004; Pinho, 2008; Reed, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004). A few studies have looked at African Americans tourists in U.S. based sites (e.g. Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Modlin, 2008) but the research is in preliminary stages

This dissertation follows the style of *Annals of Tourism Research*.

¹ The terms slavery-related sites and slavery heritage sites are used interchangeably.

and much is to be done to develop conceptual and empirical understandings in this area.

Both types of studies (travel outside and within the U.S.) have looked at the motivations to travel as well as the types of experiences and outcomes visitors sought after and gained during and following their visit. However, the research on African American tourists within the U.S. is very limited and studies looking at their experiences at U.S. slavery heritage sites and their reactions to the way “darkness” is being presented, marketed, and sold to visitors are especially lacking. What their relationships are to such sites, why they visit, what experiences they gain through the visit, how they respond to the representation of slavery on site, and what these experiences mean to them, are all important questions that have not been addressed yet. This study contributes to the literature of dark tourism generally, and slavery tourism in particular, by providing an in-depth interpretive exploration of these issues. I examine in this dissertation reasons why African Americans visit slavery-related tourism sites, the role and significance of such sites, and the politics of “darkness” -- the politics of representation of slavery history and heritage, and African Americans’ experiences in relation to the representations produced at slavery heritage sites.

1.2. Research questions

The main research questions that guide this study are:

1. Why do African Americans visit slavery-related sites?

- a. What is the relationship between African Americans and the slavery-related sites they visit?
- b. What are the reasons for their visit (as perceived by visitors)?

- 2. How do African American visitors experience slavery-related sites?**
 - a. How do African American visitors respond to the representation of slavery on the site?
 - b. What feelings and emotions do visits to slavery-related sites evoke?
 - c. What meanings do African American visitors attach to slavery-related sites?
- 3. How do slavery-related sites address the representation of slavery?**
 - a. Who are the key stakeholders in the development of slavery-related sites?
 - i. How involved are those whose heritage is being represented?
 - b. How is slavery represented on site?
 - i. How is the “darkness” of enslavement history being presented and negotiated on site?
 - ii. What is the role and significance of these sites to African Americans?
- 4. How does the consumption and production of slavery-related heritage occur at the African Burial Ground National Monument (ABG)?**
 - a. How do Research Questions 1-3 apply in the case of the ABG?
 - b. What insights does the ABG provide for the development of an analytical framework to study slavery tourism at sites such as ABG?

1.3. Significance of the research

While a small number of studies have looked at slavery-related sites in the context of tourism, they have very rarely focused on African American visitors at slavery related sites in the U.S. (see Chapter II). Moreover, previous studies have tended to use quantitative (or occasionally semi-structured interviews) surveys to gather visitor information and thus reported limited, numerical data such as the number of African American visitors, and brief categories of visitor motivations. Richness, heterogeneity and variety are lost in such studies that aim towards generalization, yet do not have a rich theoretical base from which to frame such studies. African Americans do not form a homogenous group and their heritage is highly complex and tensions are evident—less than 50 years have elapsed since the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. Their experiences and expectation from their visit to a slavery-related site like the ABG needs to be approached with care and concern. For this reason, an in-depth interpretive approach enabling personal interaction and dialogue was deemed appropriate to understand the experiences African Americans have at slavery-related sites and the representation of slavery on-site.

This study offers an understanding of the experience of 27 (18 women and 9 men) Black visitors aged 20 to 80 years, to a heritage site (the African Burial Ground National Monument) and attempts to examine the relation between visitors' perceptions and the representation of slavery and enslavement history on site. In-depth interviews on this relational aspect between experience and the object of experience (the African Burial Ground site and items related to it, including tour narratives, exhibit displays and

on-site film) in this study attempt to shed light on the perception of slavery from the victimizing side and from the uplifting side. It thus raises questions such as “how is slavery remembered?” “Do all African Americans remember slavery in the same way?” “How do slavery heritage sites present slavery?” “What is the role and significance of slavery heritage sites?” This study attempts to make a partial contribution to the knowledge base of heritage and tourism studies by tackling some of these questions, guided by the main research questions stated above.

1.4. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter I introduces the background of the study, its purpose, its significance, as well as the research questions that guided it. Chapter II is a review of the literature relevant to this study. It includes information related to the history of slavery in America, the process of identity formation for African Americans, the concept of collective memory and its application for African Americans, and major insights from the fields of heritage tourism, dark tourism, and slavery tourism. Chapter III looks into the research methodology of this study. Included here is information related to the design and setting of the study, the process of data collection and analysis, and a discussion on trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and reflexivity. Chapter IV presents interpretive insights related to the development of the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York City, representations of slavery on site, and how visitors feel about them. Emergent themes from the interviews, participants and other data analysis are provided in this chapter, along with a description of site development and the conflicts surrounding it. An in-depth examination of the

experiences of African Americans at slavery heritage sites such as the African Burial Ground is provided in Chapter V. The primary focus of the empirical study here continues to be the African Burial Ground. Chapter VI offers an integrative discussion related to the two previous chapters, and attempts to develop analytical as well as conceptual framework for studying sites like the ABG. In this critical chapter, propositions are offered to guide future research and practice at slavery heritage sites like the African Burial Ground. Chapter VII closes this dissertation with empirical and theoretical recommendations and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided in four parts. It briefly approaches to the history of slavery in America, the impacts of slavery on identity formation among African Americans, and introduces past literature on dark tourism and slavery tourism, along with pertinent concepts that may help to inform the findings of this study. The chapter will also address some of the existing studies on heritage tourism, dark tourism, and slavery tourism.

2.1. History of slavery in America

2.1.1. The Transatlantic slave trade

Various forms of enslavement had existed for centuries before the Portuguese arrived on the coasts of West Africa (Klein, 1999; Northrup, 2002). In Europe, two factors contributed to slavery; the first was the existence of expanding markets and the second was the limited labor available (Klein, 1999). In Africa, traditional types of enslavement already existed before European explorers came looking for gold. Not only the Europeans' prime interest to adventure to Africa was gold, not labor, but once they understood the value of buying enslaved Africans they had to integrate an existing African system of enslavement (Curtin, 1998). In other words, Europeans did not bring slavery onto the continent, but had to adapt to local networks of enslavement. In Africa, three factors produced slaves: warfare, raiding, and judicial enslavement and taxation of dependent people (Klein, 1999; Curtin, 1998). Northrup (2002) advanced that war,

kidnapping, famine, debt, and social oppression led to the enslavement of many Africans. Evidently, this pre-Atlantic trade had fewer impacts on local societies and was less intense than the transatlantic slave trade that began in the sixteenth century (Klein, 1999; Northrup, 2002).

The Atlantic slave trade was dependent on the development of plantations in the New World, and for that Williams (2002) argued that this form of hereditary bondage was fueled by the capitalistic argument to buy the youngest, cheapest, and most efficient labor available. Many authors agreed that race was not a factor in the choice of labor but economics (Klein, 1999; Northrup, 2002). Davis Eltis (2002), called for a cultural explanation to the choice of Africans as slaves, not a purely economic one. For him, it would have been possible and even cheaper to use Europeans as slaves to be sent to the New World, but what really deterred that possibility was the fact that Europeans would not enslave fellow Europeans, or anybody they considered their own. Thus, Africans fitted the profile of potential slaves as they were neither European nor Christians, and although not cheaper than European indentured labor at first, the standardized use of this labor was more affordable later on (Eltis, 2002).

2.1.2. Slavery in America

Contrary to popular belief, most enslaved Africans did not come from West Africa nor arrived in the United States. The database of almost 35,000 transatlantic voyages developed by Eltis and his colleagues shows that more than 45% of the slaves embarked from the region called West Central Africa and St. Helena (which includes today's Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola) and

that only 3.6% of those who survived the Middle-Passage were taken to Mainland North America (today's United States). However, by the 1810, the United States had a very large slave population (Eltis & Richardson, 2002).

The first enslaved Africans brought to British North America landed in the colony of Jamestown, Virginia in 1619. Between then and its abolition in 1865, the institution of slavery developed in various forms and scales. Slavery in America was dynamic both in time and in space. Berlin (2003) a generational research model to understand slavery in America in a way that reflects its diachronic nature. For the purpose of this research, northern slavery will be succinctly compared to southern slavery.

Berlin (2003) suggested five generations (*Charter, Plantation, Revolution, Migration, and Freedom*) during which social, economic, and political changes entailed. The first generation he identified is the *Charter Generation*, which is distinguished by the role of Atlantic creoles, “cosmopolitan men and women of African descent who arrived in mainland North America almost simultaneously with the first European adventurers” (Berlin, 2003, p. 6). It was relatively easier for these Africans to gain freedom as they were familiar with European languages and Christianity. Berlin (2003) argued that enslaved Africans of the *Plantation Generation* worked harder and died earlier than those of the preceding generation. While 17th century slavery in New York can be associated with the characteristics of the Charter Generation, 19th century southern slavery can be associated with the Plantation Generation during which the lives of enslaved Africans greatly degraded due to large-scale staple productions of rice,

cotton, and tobacco. Slavery on the South was different from that in the North mostly because of the establishment of the plantation system. One of the characteristics of southern slavery was the growth of staple crops, and by that, the establishment and development of plantations (Berlin, 2003). The third quarter of the 18th century witnessed the apogee of the plantation complex (Curtin, 1998). Knowing that, one of the main differences between northern “societies with slaves” and southern “slave societies” was the lack of staple crops to export from the former, and with that, the fact that their economies were not totally based on slave labor (Berlin, 2003).

In the 18th century, one third of all physical labor in New York City was performed by enslaved Africans (Davis, 2006). Interestingly, many White farmers worked alongside Blacks in northern states, since contrary to the south, very few Whites were exempt from work. This however does not diminish the contributions of slave labor in northern states like New York, where Africans built roads, ran errands, cooked, and cleaned, nor the brutality, violence, and overwork exerted on them (Berlin, 2003). While northern slavery in the 17th and 18th century was mostly urban, southern slavery in the 19th century was largely rural and characterized by the plantations system (Davis, 2006). In the first case, Whites owned a small number of slaves and these lived with them in attics or back rooms (Berlin, 2003). In the second case, White planters owned a large number of slaves who lived in separate quarters on one side of the property.

Nonetheless, in *The ruling race*, James Oakes (1982) reminds the readers that the slaveholding class in the United States was a very diverse population, and that contrary to popular thinking, “the ‘typical’ slaveholder did not necessarily own the ‘typical’

slave” given that most slaves worked on large plantations but that most slaveholders did not own more than five slaves (Oakes, 1982). He added that hundreds of thousands men owned slaves without necessarily being part of the planter class. In reality, the typical farmer was actually too poor to have slaves, land, and capital (Fogel, 1989).

2.2. Formation of African American identity

2.2.1. African American identity

African American sociologist WEB Du Bois is a major reference in the study of the African American experience. Du Bois always advocated the uplifting of black people and his words, originally written in 1903, are still relevant today in a society where Blacks usually know when to act “white” and when to act “black”. The author commented on that “double consciousness” resulting from the constant changes within our own contradictory selves:

One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Du Bois, 1915, p. 3-4)

It is important to remember that identity changes as we socially interact and it also determines the way we behave in the world (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). Even so, Cross (1998, p. 397), insisted that “having a black identity means that one’s group-

affiliation needs are met through one's sense of connection to black people and black culture." For him, those who feel connected to something (socially or professionally) that is not deeply affiliated to their blackness do not have a black identity.

2.2.2. Collective memory

The concept of collective memory, crafted by Maurice Halbwachs in his work *The collective memory*, refers to "the active past that forms our identity" (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 111). For him, all memories are collectives as they are formed under the influence of a social environment. In other words, for Halbwachs, "studying memory was not a matter of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind; memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated but are structures by social arrangements" (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 109).

Wertsch and Roediger (2008, p. 319) advance that the process of collective remembering "involves the repeated reconstruction of representations of the past" and similarly, Shackel (2001, p. 655) argues that "people develop a collective memory by molding, shaping, and agreeing upon what to remember, although this process may not be always consciously planned." Thus, the narrative tools used are shared across the members of a group (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008), and they may take the form of events, acts, or discussions as they provide a continued memory reinforcement (Britton, 2008; see also the notion of *totems* developed by Durkheim).

According to Eyerman (2002), the difference between history and collective memory is that while the former attempts to report objective facts, the latter takes into

consideration the present interests and needs of the group. As these needs and interests change with time and social circumstances, succeeding generations reinterpret and represent the collective memory around a specific event (Eyerman, 2002).

Figure 2.1 attempted to conceptualize the relationship between slavery and collective memory. The idea being that today, African Americans, as a cultural group, remember the event of slavery through the use of cultural tools like discussions, events, the arts (including the media), or sites like monuments. The representation of slavery through monuments will be the topic of Chapter IV, in which I shall explain how slavery and enslaved African New Yorkers are remembered and honored at the African Burial Ground National Monument; the latest National Park established in New York City.

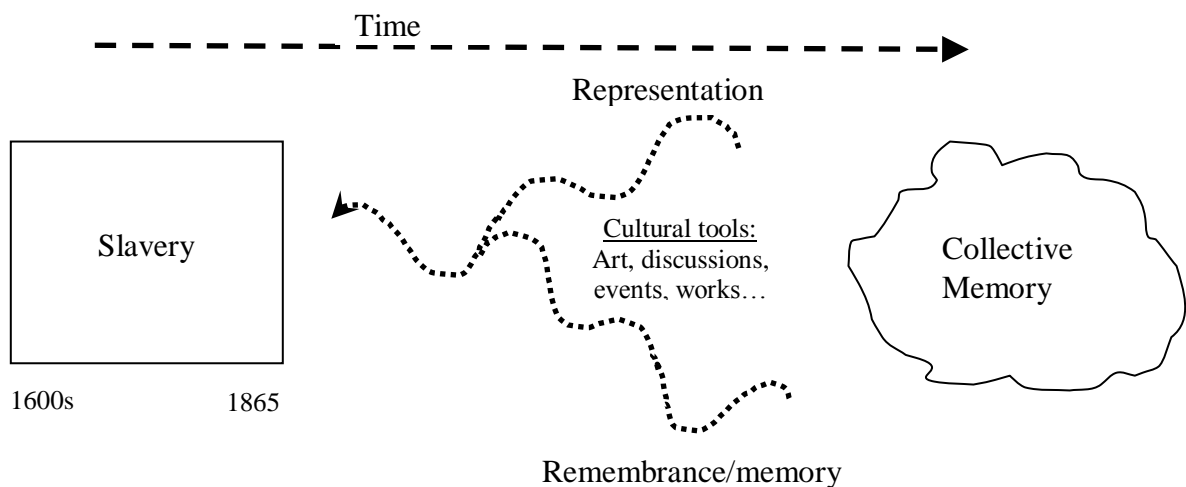


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Relationship Between Slavery and Collective Memory

2.3. Heritage tourism

The literature offers different definitions and approaches to heritage tourism. Heritage tourism “offers opportunities to portray the past in the present. It provides an infinite time and space in which the past can be experienced through the prism of the endless possibilities of interpretation” (Nuryanti, 1996, p. 250). Yale (1991) advanced that heritage tourism is tourism centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery.

The field of heritage tourism studies has gained increasing importance as it is the subject of various journals, conferences, and publications. The Journal of Heritage Tourism was born in 2006 and incorporates research exploring the links between heritage and tourism from locations around the world. Other journals like the International Journal of Heritage Studies (established in 1994) which embraces research from a variety of fields like sociology, anthropology, museum studies, history, and law, have included articles related to heritage tourism. Also, major tourism organizations such as the Travel and Tourism Research Association, (TTRA), the International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators (ISTTE), the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), increasingly welcome posters and presentations in the area of heritage tourism at their annual conferences.

The concept of *past* is central to heritage. Lowenthal (1985) noted that the past is necessary because without it we cannot get a sense of identity and we cannot make sense of the present. Although “not all heritage is about identity” (Graham & Howard, 2008, p. 6), a large body of the literature argues that “heritage is a symbolic representation of

identity” (Smith, 2006, p. 30). Heritage can be used to reinforce a sense of identity as it profoundly influences the production of collective constructs of identity like class, gender, ethnicity, and nationalism (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000). It has been indicated that while heritage reinforces identity, as well as nationalism, it also favors one group at the expense of another (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000; Graham & Howard, 2008; Howard, 2003). This means that the promotion of a specific interpretation of heritage advances the interests of a group and retards those of another (Graham & Howard, 2008). There is a noticeable link between memory, identity, and contestation (Olick & Robbins, 1998, p. 126). In this same context of contestation, Foucault (1977, as cited by Olick & Robbins, 1998) defined *counter-memory* as memories that differ from the dominant narratives. To add on that, Shackel (2001) argues that a collective memory can only become public when the group has the power and resources to promote a particular past.

2.3.1. Heritage tourists

Because the motivations to visit a site vary according to tourists’ relationship to a heritage, the perception of a site – as connected to one’s personal heritage or not – can determine tourists’ behavior (Poria, Reichel, & Biran, 2006a). In the example of Ann Frank House in Amsterdam, visitors who perceived a relationship between the site and their own heritage cited “learning”, “feeling an emotional involvement”, “connecting with the heritage”, and “bequeathing for children” as major factors influencing their visit (Poria, Reichel, & Biran, 2006b, p. 324). As a result, looking at the link between tourists

and the site rather than the site alone provides a better understanding of the tourists' motivations to visit a heritage site and their behavior there.

Poria, Butler, and Airey (2001, p. 1048) argued for the distinction between three types of heritage tourists whose "motivation for visiting a site is based on the place's heritage characteristics according to the tourists' perception of their own heritage," as illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Types of heritage tourists. Adapted from Poria, Butler, and Airey (2001)

Type	Site	Tourist
1	Considered a heritage site	Not connected
2	Not necessarily considered a heritage site	Connected
3	Considered a heritage site	Not aware it is a heritage site

The first type of tourists consists of "those visiting what they consider a heritage site though it is unconnected with their own" (p. 1048). This is illustrated by the many westerners travelling to Egypt because they acknowledge and appreciate the significance of the Egyptian civilization even if they do not relate to that heritage at a personal level. The second type represents "those visiting a place they deem to be part of their heritage, even though it may not be categorized as a heritage site" (p. 1048). Many people use "unofficial" markers for places that are of particular significance to them, like a tree under which a descendant was buried. The third type of heritage tourists includes "those

visiting a site specifically classified as a heritage site although unaware of this designation” (p. 1048), like a traveler going to a church for prayer, not knowing the place is a heritage site. For these authors, both motivation to visit and the perception of the site will determine the conceptualization of heritage tourism, rather than the attributes of the site alone.

2.4. Dark tourism

2.4.1. Characteristics of dark tourism

Terms like “thanatourism” (Dann, 1998; Seaton, 1996), “dark tourism” (Foley & Lennon, 1996; Lennon & Foley, 2000), and “dissonant heritage” (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996) are not synonymous, yet they refer to a type of tourism that is gaining more attention as a growing number of people visit places associated with death, atrocities, and violence (Dann & Seaton, 2001)². For Foley and Lennon (1996), the phenomenon of dark tourism is about tourism focusing on death and disaster. They later on refined their viewpoint arguing that the temporal dimension is significant as the death or disaster “should take place within the memory of those still alive to validate them” as well as “posit questions, or introduce anxiety and doubt about, modernity and its consequences” (Lennon & Foley, 2000, p. 12).

Seaton (1996) named the same phenomenon “thanatourism” (the travel dimension of thanatopsis) and defined it as the “travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but

² Although these terms differ slightly from one to another, I will use the generic term “dark tourism” all through my research.

not exclusively, violent death” (p. 240). For him, thanatourism is a behavioral rather than essentialist phenomenon defined by the characteristics of the site, and therefore proposed five motivations to visit sites of actual or symbolic death, which are:

- Travel to witness public enactments of death (e.g. public hangings or gladiators combats)
- Travel to see the sites of mass or individual deaths after they have occurred (e.g. Auschwitz or Ground Zero)
- Travel to internment sites of and memorials to the dead (e.g. the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial)
- Travel to view the material evidence or symbolic representations of death in locations unconnected with their occurrence (e.g. the Holocaust Museum Houston)
- Travel for re-enactments or simulation of death (e.g. American Civil War re-enactments)

Seaton’s perspective is much broader than Foley and Lennon’s as he considered dark tourism to have a long history.

Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have identified this same phenomenon as “dissonant heritage” where atrocity is at the center of the visited site. Before them, Chris Rojek (1993), characterized sites where celebrities or large number of people encountered sudden or violent death as ‘Black Spots’. With the influence of the media, many of these sites are highly commercialized and constitute major tourist attractions. It

is the case of Jim Morrison's grave at the Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris or the *Favelas* (slums) in Rio de Janeiro.

2.4.2. Visitor experiences

The diversity of the forms of dark tourism as well as the variety of motives for individuals to engage in dark tourism has made it difficult for categorizations and generalizations (Stone & Sharpley, 2008). Not only have scholars looked at various forms and sites of dark tourism like prisons (e.g. Strange & Kempa, 2003; Tunbridge, 2005; Wilson, 2008), graveyards (e.g. Blom, 2000, 2007; Seaton, 2002), battlefields (e.g. Seaton, 1999), museums (e.g. Alderman & Campbell, 2008; Foley & Lennon, 1996; Lennon & Foley, 1999), former plantations (e.g. Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Modlin, 2008), former concentration camps (e.g. Miles, 2002), former communist nations (e.g. Light, 2000; Miles, 2000), but they have also noticed a degree of *darkness*. Seaton (1996) advanced that “[t]hanatourism is not an absolute form but exists across a continuum of intensity according to a) whether it is the single motivation or exists with other motivations b) the extent to which the interest in death is person-centered or generalized” (p. 240). So for this scholar, travelling to experience death in itself is the “purest” form of thanatourism while traveling to places where one has a particular link with the dead is the least pure of the thanatouristic experience.

Similarly, Stone (2006) developed a dark tourism spectrum, or a “‘darkest-lightest’ framework of supply”, composed of seven types of dark suppliers (see Figure 2.2). He argued that although dark tourism is both an attraction-supply driven and a

consumer-demand driven phenomenon, it is important to look at the supply side before looking at the reasons people visit dark tourism sites. He identified seven different suppliers which are a) dark fun factories which “have an entertainment focus and commercial ethic, and which present real or fictional death and macabre events” (e.g. the London Dungeon); b) dark exhibitions which “essentially blend the product design to reflect education and potential learning opportunities” (e.g. Body Worlds); c) dark dungeons which “present bygone penal and justice codes to the present day consumer, and revolve around (former) prisons and courthouses. These product types essentially have a combination of entertainment and education as a main merchandise focus, possess a relatively high degree of commercialism and tourism infrastructure, and occupy sites which were originally nonpurposeful for dark tourism” (e.g. Robben Island); d) dark resting places like cemeteries or graves which are “acting as a romanticised, if not rather macabre, urban regeneration tool[s]” (Morrison’s grave); e) dark shrines which “essentially ‘trade’ on the act of remembrance and respect for the recently deceased (...) often constructed, formally or informally, very close to the site of death and within a very short time period of the death occurring” (e.g. floral displays at the Pont de l’Alma where Lady Diana’s car crashed, causing her death); f) dark conflict sites which “revolve around war and battlefields and their commodification as potential tourism products” (e.g. Waterloo); and g) dark camps of genocide which “have genocide, atrocity and catastrophe as the main thanatological theme” (e.g. Auschwitz-Birkenau death-camp) (p. 152-157).

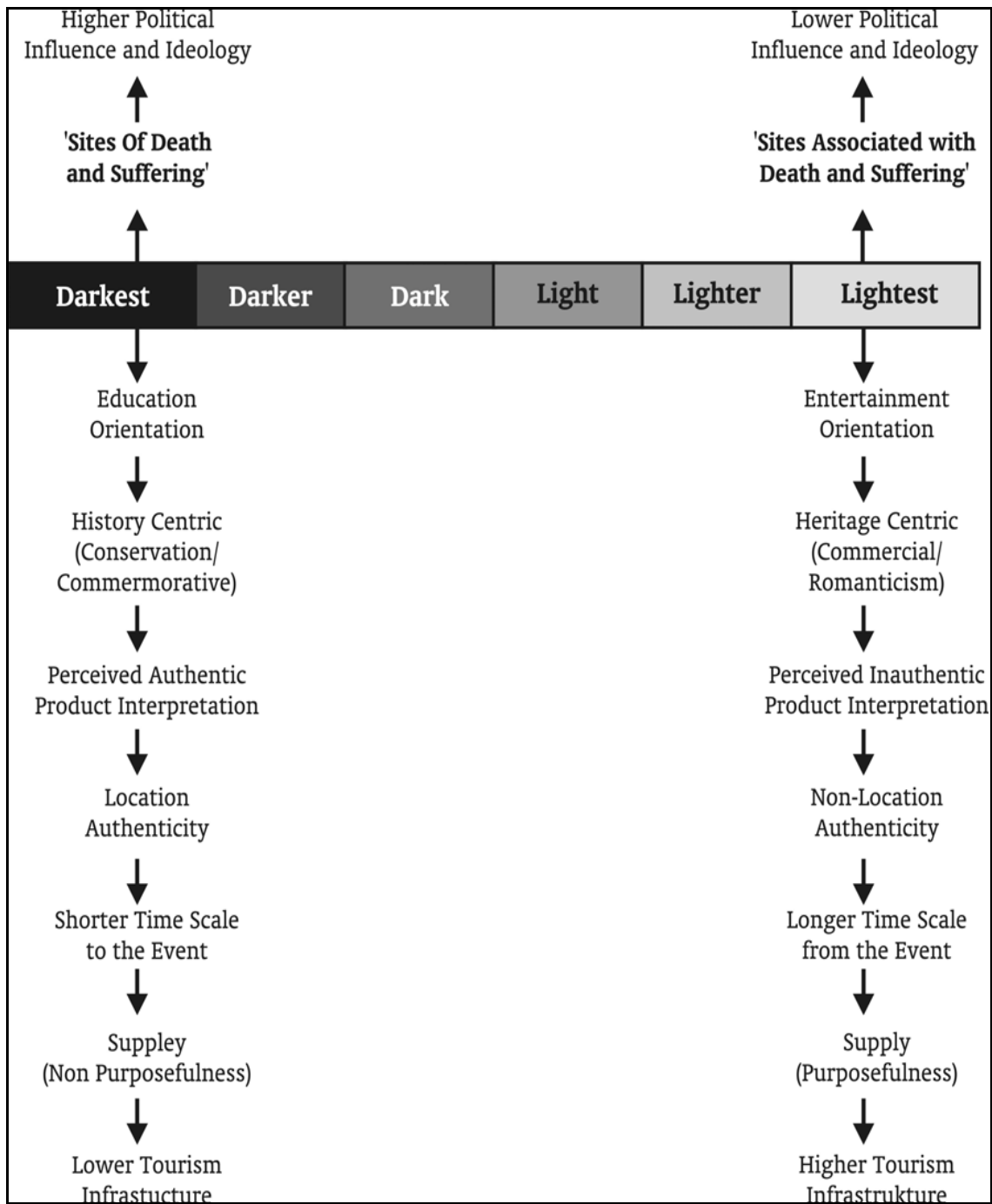


Figure 2.2: A Dark Tourism Spectrum: Perceived Product Features of Dark Tourism Within a 'Darkest-Lightest' Framework of Supply. Source: Stone (2006)

Other scholars like William Miles (2002) and Richard Sharpley (2005) also agreed with the idea of shades of *darkness* based upon a spatial-temporal dimension and a continuum of purpose respectively. Not only dark tourism has diverse shades, but there also exists a vast array of motives to engage in dark tourism.

2.4.3. Visitor motivations

In their study of visitors' motivations to participate in dark tourism, Preece and Price (2005) found three main reasons to visit the prison of Port Arthur in Australia. The first motivation was learning, the second was the historical interest in the site, and the third was of the fascination with the abnormal and the bizarre. Ashworth (2004) differentiated between the motivations of tourists, producers, and residents in relation to sites of atrocity linked to Apartheid in South Africa. For the first group, the author argued that curiosity for the unusual and unique attracts all human beings, and therefore tourists. Also, the search for identity and self discovery may be a motive to visit a site that is linked to one's personal or family history. In addition, humans have expressed a fascination for horrific events for many centuries and that voyeuristic behavior continues today.

Many tourists feel empathy towards the victims or the narrative at the site of atrocity and are then compelled to visit. This is the case of many British visitors to battlefield sites in France and Belgium who empathize with the British victims of World War I (Iles, 2008), or also the case of the Six Floor Museum in Dallas, Texas where many visitors empathize with the Kennedy family (Blom, 2000; Foley & Lennon, 1996).

The motivation of the “producers” (e.g., developers, managers, residents and NGOs involved) of sites of atrocities is, by contrast, generally quite political. In the case of local residents, they might be opposed to the flow of curious tourists coming to their towns but in the end they might see the economical benefits of welcoming these visitors. In the context of the Holocaust Museum Houston, Yuill (2003) found that remembrance and education were the two major motivations for visitors from a compiled list of other potential motivations such as guilt, curiosity, coping with death and dying, nostalgia, and novelty seeking.

2.5. Slavery tourism

2.5.1. Approaching slavery tourism

As a form of dark tourism, slavery tourism relates to sites associated with a history of enslavement (Buzinde, 2007; Dann & Seaton, 2001). In the case of Africans’ enslavement in America, these sites include plantations (e.g. Butler, 2001; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Modlin, 2008), museums (e.g. Hanna, 2008), and castles (e.g. Bruner, 1996; Reed, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004), among others. Based on Seaton’s (1996) argument on the “purity” of thanatouristic experiences, visits to sites related to the enslavement of Africans could be seen as not so “pure” because the “dark” event of enslavement occurred over a century ago. However, the personal connection some visitors have with those who were enslaved could characterize these sites as “pure”, in particular for African American visitors whose ancestors worked the lands and faced danger, mistreatment, and death on a regular basis. Poria et al.’s (2001) argument explained earlier on tourists’ perception of the connection

between heritage sites and their own heritage can be applied to the case of some African Americans who would fall into the second type of heritage tourists.

2.5.2. Representation of slavery in U.S. sites

A few scholars have looked into a specific form of dark tourism referred to as slavery or plantation tourism (e.g. Buzinde, 2007; Dann & Seaton, 2001; Modlin, 2008; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Montes & Butler, 2008). However, a difference exists between slavery and plantation tourism because slavery tourism can include plantations, but also other types of slavery-related sites. Adams (2007) wrote that plantations are popular tourist attractions among Whites because of the historic and distinctive architecture and the nostalgia of a romantic era. Mount Vernon is an example of such a place where most visitors have George Washington ‘the president’ in mind, not the ‘slave owner’ (Adams, 2007). Most studies on slavery tourism in the United States agree that the life experiences of African slaves living and working on the plantations are not acknowledged as much as the life experiences of their white owners (e.g. Butler, 2001; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Dann & Seaton, 2001; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Modlin, 2008). The literature shows how misrepresented or underrepresented are the roles played by the enslaved at the local, regional, and national level (Dann & Seaton, 2001). Dann and Seaton (2001) explained that many site managers do not want to offend their predominantly white visitors, as well as some of the few Black visitors who also find the history of slavery uncomfortable.

Butler’s (2001) widely cited article “Whitewashing plantations: The commodification of a slave-free antebellum South”, explored tourism brochures from

102 plantations in 12 states. The study consisted in a textual analysis of these brochures to determine how often the key terms “architecture”, “original owners”, “current owners”, “crops”, “slaves”, “furnishing”, “gardens/grounds/landscape”, “civil war”, and “heritage/politics/public office” were cited. Results showed that the words “slavery”, “slave”, “slave cabins”, and the like were cited the least (30 times in comparison to 80 times for “original owners” and 73 times for “architecture”). Interestingly, when slavery was mentioned, it was typically tied to the image of the white man’s generosity.

Two major studies conducted at the federally owned Congaree National Park (CNP) in South Carolina (Lockhart, 2006 and Lawton & Weaver, 2008) also confirmed the exclusion of the experience of the enslaved. Lockart (2006) argued that even though African Americans played an important role in the region – raising livestock and building cattle mounts which are still parts of the park’s landscape today – the legacy of the enslaved is under-represented. The author added that the legacy of the cattle mounts at CNP is not only relevant to the African American history but it is a part of the general American experience. Lawton and Weaver (2008) identified the factors associated with non-visitation to CNP. Their study concluded that non-visitors were more likely to be African Americans and that lack of awareness and other multiple constraints (such as park attractiveness and relevance) were the major explanations for their behavior. It is important to remark here that, as the closest city to the park, Columbia’s population is 46% Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).³

³ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-1.pdf> retrieved on February 11, 2009.

Eichstedt and Small (2002) surveyed 122 plantation museum sites in the states of Virginia, Georgia, and Louisiana between 1996 and 2001. Through participant observation and the analysis of brochures, tourist literature, as well as videos related to the sites, the authors classified the plantation museums into 4 major categories, or strategies, based on the degree of representation of slavery and of both free and enslaved Africans. Sites using the first strategy, identified as *symbolic annihilation*, would “ignore the institution and experience of slavery altogether or treat them in a perfunctory way. Such treatment suggests that slavery and the presence, labor, struggles, and contributions of people of African descent were not important enough to be acknowledged” (p. 10). The study showed that symbolic annihilation was the dominant strategy used by 55.7% of the plantation museums. Sites using the second strategy, called *trivialization and deflection*, corresponded with “sites in which slavery and African Americans are mentioned, but primarily through mechanisms, phrasing, and images that serve to demonstrate the benevolence of plantation owners and the affection of ‘faithful slaves’ for these owners” (p. 10). Twenty seven percent of the sites surveyed used that strategy. This finding is consistent with Butler’s (2001) results. *Segregation and marginalization* characterized the third strategy and consisted in sites “that include information about enslaved people but present it largely through separate tours and displays that visitors can choose to see or ignore, depending on their desire” (p. 10). Only 4.1% of the sites visited were reported in that category. The fourth strategy, *relative incorporation*, consisted in sites in which “the topics of enslavement and those who were enslaved are discussed throughout the tour” and represented 3.3% of the total sites visited. The

remaining 9.8% of the sites were classified under *in-between* and represented sites that “have moved beyond the first three categories but not yet fall into the fourth; they are still quite conflicted in their representations of enslavement and enslavers, incorporating more information than many sites but doing so in a way that still valorizes whiteness and trivializes the experience of slavery” (p. 11).

Modlin (2008) addressed how slavery is misrepresented during tours at several plantation museums in North Carolina. Using both content and discourse analysis as major methodologies, the author reported two major kinds of myths used to portray slavery at the plantation museums he visited. As the broadest themed myths, meta-myths “make blanket statements that deflect public attention away from the discussion of slavery” (p. 275). These meta-myths exist at the national, regional, state and local levels and are exemplified in statements like “slavery was rare in the North,” “slavery did not happen here,” or “slavery was unique (better) here” (p. 277). Meta-myths are produced by an assemblage of production myths which “tend to be more specific and many of them are simple statements, often thrown into the discourse on slavery in a way that does not encourage the visitor to ask for further detail or clarification” (p. 276). Production myths are exemplified in statements like “some free blacks, included former slaves, were slave holders,” “life was hard for everyone,” or “the good master” and “the faithful slave” (p. 277). Eichstedt and Small’s remarks on plantation life not being completely and justly represented at museum sites were confirmed in Modlin’s study.

Montes and Butler (2008) undertook a content analysis of comments posted to the New York Times (NYT) article “Reaping what was sown on the old plantation”

which was part of “The how race is lived in America” series. This article described how Magnolia Plantation in Louisiana offers two different tours, operated by two different entities: the descendant of the first owner of the property and the National Park Service. On one hand, the owner of the plantation house provides tours of the mansion and mostly tells about the life of the former owners, the architecture of the house, and the chapel in the house. On the other hand, park rangers tour the slave cabins and offer more slave-centered narratives. The content analysis demonstrated that out of the 32 topics mentioned, the top 2 were “Black and White relations” and “Slavery should be discussed” (p. 308). The article proved “how feelings of resentment or guilt may shape how critical accounts of slavery are included or excluded from plantation narratives” (Crutcher, 2008, p. 375).

Christine Buzinde has published multiple articles tackling slavery tourism, or as she calls it, plantation tourism. As in the case of the Hampton Plantation in South Carolina, she discovered that the life conditions of the enslaved were not truly presented and that most tourists seemed to accept that simplified and distorted version of history. Again, most of the discourses were related to the architecture of the mansion and the owners (Buzinde & Santos, 2008). In addition, production myths were used during tours like “they [the enslavers] were good to their ‘servants’” or “some days they [the enslaved] showed up for work some day they didn’t, and it was okay” (Buzinde, 2007, p. 233; Buzinde & Santos, 2009). Buzinde (2007) also worried that about theses misrepresentations in a state property, as she expressed that “[t]here is indeed need for concern when such sites of national historical turmoil are rearticulated through

harmonious, pure, romanticized narratives and are elevated to symbols of national heritage through the awarding of federal endorsed accreditations” (p. 233-234). The consequences of such misrepresentations on a state property can be disturbing and as the author mentioned, “[b]y embracing these myths, Americans are allowed the opportunity to imagine their society as a cohesive cultural community” (p. 239).

2.5.3. Understanding “darkness” in slavery tourism

In the context of black heritage sites that relates to slavery, one can ask about the elements of the site and the visit that might qualify the experience as “slightly dark” or “very dark”. The studies above that have shown the underrepresentation of slavery and the lives of the slaves in plantation brochures or narratives could be qualified by some African American visitors as “very dark”. In this case, the misrepresentation and lack of representation are the elements that make that visit a “dark” experience. To that effect, many black visitors feel cheated because many of them come to look for their own family history (Thompson, 2000). In the case of Magnolia plantation, while the elements of slavery are missing from the owner’s version of the tour, these are ever present in the National Park Service version of the tour. The NPS ranger encourages visitors to put themselves in the shoes of the slaves and to use their imagination for their experience to be more personal. This strategy can be perceived as negative and thus disturbing for some African Americans who do not want to visit sites portraying shame, pain, and atrocity (Shipler, 1997). In this second case, what constitutes “darkness” is the negativity attached to slavery.

The degree and the elements of what constitutes “darkness” remain ambiguous and differ between sites and experiences (whether the site is dark because it misrepresents slavery or because it only presents the painful aspect of slavery). It is necessary to situate “darkness” in a particular context in order to comprehend it. It will be useful to understand the degree of darkness African Americans attach to my particular site of research, including the elements that contribute to that level of “darkness”. For instance, the presence of a memorial and the opportunity for libation could be perceived positively and visitors would then perceive the site as “slightly dark.” Alderman and Campbell (2008) demonstrated the significance of artifacts in the remembrance of slavery as

[t]hrough the act of holding and carrying slave chains, a seemingly ordinary museum environment is converted into an emotionally and politically charged memorial space ... the physical engagement of visitors with the slave chains allows for more concrete and personal relationship with the history of slavery and its legacy. It is a bodily form of commemoration that allows any number of emotions and thoughts about the past and present to surface depending on one’s identity and background. (p. 351-352)

2.5.4. African American visitors within the U.S.

The available literature on African Americans domestic (U.S.) tourism experience is scarce (Butler, Carter, & Brunn, 2002; Philipp, 1994; Pinho, 2008). In the general field of tourism, a few scholars like Jonathan Goodrich and Steven Philipp have provided valuable, although insufficient, data on African American tourists’ preferences. Goodrich’s (1985) study asked African Americans on the countries outside the United States they would like to visit the most, the reasons for their choice, the criteria for selecting a vacation destination outside the United States, the reasons for and against

travel, the satisfaction from travel, the magazines they read, and finally some of their demographic information. The study showed with no major differences between the choices made by African Americans and other Americans, other than their high interest in visiting African countries as possible vacation destinations (Goodrich, 1985, p. 28).

Steven Philipp (1994) took a similar quantitative approach to investigate racial differences in tourism preferences between Whites and Blacks. After analyzing 213 surveys (with 45% Blacks and 55% Whites), the author showed that both groups had different tourism preferences, which, according to the author, might be due to historical and social factors. For example, Blacks preferred to be part of a large group, to have every minute occupied with activities, to have planned stops, to eat at well-known restaurant chains, to be on streets they know, and to stay at motels and hotels they have heard about. The author associated these findings to possible effects of prejudice and discrimination towards Blacks in the United States (Philipp, 1994).

In 1998, the Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs at Clemson University issued a report on African American travelers. In terms of the factors influencing African American travelers' destination choice, the top five motivations were (a) being together as a family, (b) having fun, being entertained, (c) seeing as much as possible in the time available, (d) traveling to places where I feel safe and secure, and (e) getting a change from a busy job. The bottom three motivations were (a) meeting people of the opposite sex, (b) going places my friends haven't been, (c) doing nothing at all (Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs, 1998). These findings are consistent with Philipp's about African Americans preferring

travelling in groups and going places they feel secure and comfortable. Another important point from this report was that when it came to cultural and historic issues, African Americans felt very strongly that (a) by learning more about their heritage, Black Americans can develop a stronger ethnic identity, (b) they have a preference to visit Black historical sites, (c) more laws are need to protect Black historical landmarks from being destroyed, (d) it is interesting to visit places where famous Black Americans lived in U.S. history, and (e) for too long Black have overlooked the richness of their heritage (Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs, 1998, p. 14). Goodrich's (1985) results are in a way consistent with these latter statements.

More recently, the Travel Industry Association of America published "The Minority Traveler" which showed that 44% of African American trips are "taken for the primary purpose of visiting friends or relatives" which is a little over the overall travelers with 40 % (TIA, 2003). The study also reported that African Americans are three times more likely to travel in groups than the overall American traveler.

In the context of plantation tourism, Butler, Carter, and Dwyer looked at the affinities of visitors to Laura Plantation in Louisiana. Based on a previous study undertaken by Butler (2001), this one used surveys to profile the typical visitor to the plantation as well as his/her perception of slavery and need to learn about certain facets of slavery. The authors found that Whites were more interested in the already dominant discourse of the architecture, civil war, furnishing, landscape and heritage, than other groups. Surprisingly, Black visitors were not necessarily more interested in the

narratives of slaves compared to other groups of visitors. The authors speculated that Blacks might be attracted to sites depicting a more positive image of slavery.

Again, most of the research on African American tourists in the U.S. compares this ethnic group to others in terms of behaviors and preferences. This current research specifically looked at the experience of African Americans to slavery-related sites.

2.5.5. Slavery tourism outside the U.S.: Roots tourism⁴

Roots tourism related to Africa

Since the 1950s many African Americans have been attracted to the African continent and to Ghana in particular. One reason is Ghana's the highly publicized achievement of its independence in 1957, as the first sub-Saharan country to do so. Another reason is that Ghana's new president, Kwame Nkrumah was very involved in the Pan-African Movement which encouraged solidarity between Blacks in the United States and Blacks in Africa through the travel of African American professionals to help build the then new nation of West Africa (Holsey, 2004). In the 1970s and 1980s the media played an important role in African Americans' desire to visit Africa. Both *Roots* – a television miniseries broadcasted in 1977 based on Alex Hailey's book – as well as *Beloved* – Toni Morrison's novel published in 1987 – recreated the history of slavery in the American's imaginary and accelerated the flow of tourists visiting West Africa (Finley, 2004; Holsey, 2004; Pinho, 2008; Reed, 2004). Ghana gained international

⁴ For the purpose of my research, travel to visit sites related to slavery outside the U.S., such as the slave castles in Ghana will be referred to as roots or diaspora tourism.

recognition for its unique heritage when the UNESCO awarded both Elmina and Cape Coast castles the designation of World Heritage Monument in 1972 (Finley, 2004).

In recent decades a large number of tourists have engaged in travels to places they consider their motherland. In the literature, this phenomenon is often called “roots tourism” (Finley, 2004; Pinho, 2008), “diaspora tourism” (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Bruner, 1996), “genealogy tourism” (McCain & Ray, 2003; Meethan, 1996), or “personal heritage tourism” (Timothy, 1997), and for tourists it consists in “travel to countries, regions, and villages from which their ancestors migrated” (p. 753). Finley (2004) characterized roots tourists as people who “seek a return to an ancestral homeland often made visible by the idea or racial memory of Africa as a place of familial origin in the transatlantic slave trade” (p. 114).

African American tourists to Ghana, as well as in Bahia (Brazil) tend to travel in organized groups and to follow a precise itinerary (Pinho, 2008). Most of these trips are organized by travel agencies offering destinations like West Africa and catering to the needs of African American tourists who prefer to travel along other black tourists through that emotional journey to places where people will look like them and are the majority, and where they feel like they belong (Pinho, 2008). In terms of demographics, Bruner (1996) indicated that most African American visitors to Ghana are class-privileged as they have more leisure time to travel and have a higher level of education.

Roots tourists’ motivations

The primary motivation for African Americans to engage in roots tourism is “to find the ‘same’” and reconnect to their African cultural (through traditions) and familial

(African Diaspora) roots (Pinho, 2008, p. 72). Timothy and Teye (2004) indicated three main reasons for travelers (including African Americans) to experience roots tourism. The first one is the feeling of nostalgia, as one yearns some past conditions that no longer exists, the second is the search for identity as people need to know where they came from before understanding where there are going, and the third is the desire to see relatives to solidify relationships with close and distant family members. It has been claimed that visiting Africa is not simply a vacation but a spiritual journey unique to the black race (Austin, 1999, as cited by Timothy & Teye, 2004), and because of that, roots tourism can be seen as a pilgrimage given its spiritual component consisting of a ‘personal connection to one’s spiritual self’ (Timothy & Teye, 2004, p. 111. See also Reed, 2004).

The African diasporic world is large as it does not include Africa only, but other places in South America or Europe. African American tourists’ motivations to visit West Africa (e.g. Ghana) are different from the ones to visit Brazil. Ghana is considered “the place of origin” where some of their ancestors were separated from their families to embark on a horrific journey through the Atlantic. Brazil is considered “the place to find preserved traditions” where tourists joyfully learn how numerous African traditions have been maintained since the Middle-Passage (Pinho, 2008, p. 76). There also exist differences within Africa where Ghana is interpreted as the “place of origin” and separation while Egypt is seen as the “place of Black pride”, where the black civilization was thriving before the Greek and the Roman (Pinho, 2008, p. 76). Pinho (2008) thus showed that each location in the African diaspora, or in the “map of Africanness”, has its

own meaning, attracts African American tourists for different reasons, and generates different emotional experiences for visitors: pride in Egypt, pain and anger in Ghana, and joy and jubilation in Brazil. In their study on African Americans' experiences at Elmina Castle in Ghana, Timothy and Teye (2004) analyzed the various entries in the guest book and identified seven themes: grief and pain, good versus evil, revenge, forgiveness and healing, coming home, in memory of our ancestors, and God and holy places. These major themes demonstrate how deeply personal and emotional these journeys are for African Americans.

Identification with the motherland

Visiting slavery-related sites like Elmina Castle in Ghana provides many African Americans with a sense of identity and belonging. The African continent, commonly referred to as "the motherland," represents a place of pride, a place of beginning and harmony for many African American visitors as many of them decide to make Ghana their new permanent home (Bruner, 1996). Also, most African American visitors to Ghana book their trip with travel agencies that cater to black tourists and participate in activities that are exclusive to Blacks like the "Through the Door of No Return – The Return" which reenacts the capture of African slaves and the return of their descendants to Africa (Bruner, 1996). For many, participating in these activities (reenactments, libations, prayers, songs, dances, and so on) enables them to feel more connected to each other and to the land of their ancestors (Bruner, 1996).

The term "Sankofa" is an Akan (Ghana) term meaning "go back and take it" or in other terms it expresses the necessity of looking back to the past in order to move

forward. Numerous African American visitors to slavery-related sites practice exactly what Sankofa is: they go back to their roots to learn about their ancestors and the land they came from for the purpose of better understanding their identity as descendants of African slaves in America. In that root-seeking process, many African Americans take ownership of the slave castles like Elmina because of what they represent to them (Bruner, 1996). In this study, I learned also how the African American New Yorkers I interviewed took ownership of the African Burial Ground National Monument (in different ways, e.g., a spiritual place for some, a space to visit, commune with or pay homage to ancestors for others), and how visiting the site reinforced a sense of identity and belonging for many.

2.5.6. Key aspects of African Americans' experience at slavery heritage sites

The literature review above reinforces the justification for this study; there is a desperate need for research to be conducted on slavery-related sites, and on African American visitors to such sites within the U.S. Most of the studies on their experiences at slavery-related sites consist of sites abroad, mainly in Ghana, West Africa. Further research will provide better understanding of the motivations to visit slavery-related sites like plantations, museums, or burial grounds. Additional research will also facilitate the understanding of the diverse experiences and outcomes African Americans seek when they engage in slavery tourism. Although the available literature presents a few outcomes sought after by these tourists, this research reveals other types of experiences and outcomes African Americans look for at slavery heritage sites. Table 2.2 summarizes African Americans' experiences at slavery heritage sites and shows that

further research is needed at U.S. slavery sites. A more comprehensive table of past studies is included in the Appendix section.

Table 2.2: Summary of the type of experiences African Americans look for at slavery heritage sites

Location of the slavery-related sites	U.S.	Abroad (e.g. Ghana)
Experiences and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Uplifting, positive image of slavery (Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008) -Learning from the site (Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs, 1998) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mourning/ grief (Timothy & Teye, 2004) -Celebration (Pinho, 2008) -Search for identity (Timothy & Teye, 2004) -Remembrance (Timothy & Teye, 2004) -Healing/ forgiveness (Timothy & Teye, 2004) -Sacredness/ pilgrimage (Bruner, 1996; Reed, 2004; Timothy & Teye, 2004) -Belonging (Bruner, 1996; Pinho, 2008) -Roots seeking (Pinho, 2008)

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodological process followed in the study and is divided into eight parts: (1) Research design, (2) Research setting, (3) Data collection, (4) Data analysis, (5) Trustworthiness of the study, (6) Ethical considerations, and (7) My reflexive journey.

3.1. Research design

In this research, I examined the process of development of dark tourism sites, as well as the experiences of African American visitors at these sites and the reasons for their visit. I also attempted to examine the representation of “darkness” at dark tourism sites. While the study is situated within this broader context and the existing literature, the research questions shown in Chapter I are specifically examined through an extensive case study of one slavery tourism site in the U.S.: the African Burial Ground National Monument in New York City. Past research on slavery tourism has looked at sites ranging from museums, castles, monuments, to plantations. Alderman and Campbell (2008) took the case of the Slave Relic Museum in Walterboro, South Carolina, and explained how visitors are involved in the process of excavation and memory recovery through the tactile relationship between visitors and artifacts like shackles used on enslaved Africans. Authors like Bruner (1996), Finley (2004), Reed (2004), and Timothy and Teye (2004) investigated the experience of tourists at Elmina and Cape Coast, slave castles along the coasts of Ghana. Some of these studies have

compared the experiences of African American visitors and visitors from other ethnicities or nationalities. Alderman (2005) explored the interpretation and commemoration of slavery into the coastal heritage in Savannah, Georgia, by discussing the significant debate and heated tensions around the erection of a slave monument that recognized the historical importance of enslaved Africans in the region. Most of the research on slavery tourism in US sites has focused on plantations in the South (e.g. Butler, 2001; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Modlin, 2008) and has showed not only that most of the visitors were high income, highly educated Whites, but that these plantations tended to favor discussions on the houses' architecture and their owners, and to strategically exclude discussions about slavery and the lives of the enslaved. Missing from the literature is an understanding of sites like the African Burial Ground whose complex history and development offers a valuable opportunity to contribute to the research on heritage tourism and dark tourism, as well as to the sparse knowledge base on the experience of African American visitors, what meanings these sites offer to them, why they visit these sites, how they perceive the representation of enslavement history, etc.

3.2. Research approach

A qualitative research approach informs this study, which is among the first of its kind with respect to visitation to slavery related sites in the US. Very little research has been conducted on slavery sites in the US (see Chapter II) and none on burial grounds like the African Burial Ground (hereafter ABG). Theory and empirical data is scant on visitation and visitor experience at African American sites, and an exploratory,

qualitative research approach is deemed appropriate (see Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). My primary interest was to understand visitor experience at these sites, particularly, African American experiences; secondarily, I explored how the “production” and “consumption” of slavery related history and heritage are mediated and negotiated by various key stakeholders. This holistic and “integrated” approach to examine the intersection of production and consumption helps to shed light into what is being produced for African American visitors to experience (see Jamal & Kim, 2005 on an integrated approach to heritage tourism research). Qualitative research is particularly appropriate when one wishes to understand social behaviors in their natural settings as this type of inquiry is “pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe four general interpretative paradigms within qualitative research: positivist and postpositivist, constructivist-interpretative, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), and feminist-poststructural. Each of these paradigms is guided by ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Basic beliefs of alternative inquiry paradigms. Source: Guba & Lincoln (1994)

Item	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theory et al.	Constructivism
Ontology	Naïve-realism – “real” reality but apprehendable	Critical realism – “real” reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism – virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	Relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/ objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/ community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/ subjectivist; created finding
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypothesis; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypothesis; may include qualitative methods	Dialogical/dialectical	Hermeneutical/ dialectical

My position as a researcher is situated within the constructivist paradigm in Table 3.1, following Guba and Lincoln (1994). The purpose of constructivism – originally described by these authors as the naturalistic paradigm⁵ – is to describe and interpret some human phenomenon (Bowen, 2008). This naturalistic/constructivist paradigm is an alternative to the traditional positivist paradigm and favors relativism,

⁵ It is worth noting that Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba have changed their terminology from “naturalistic paradigm” to “constructivist paradigm” because of the former’s association with the realist ontology to which the authors are highly opposed. The term “naturalistic” is widely used in current scholarship as a reference to methods selected (research conducted in a natural setting in opposition to a controlled lab) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

subjectivism, and a hermeneutical/dialectical methodology (with an inter-subjective approach). I believe that there exist multiple realities related to African Americans visiting slavery-related sites and that the meanings and knowledge presented in Chapters IV and V were constructed through the dialogic interpretive efforts and interaction between me, as the researcher, and the African American visitors as well as other stakeholders who participated in this study. The primary methods I used to generate the data were face-to-face in-depth interviews, participant observation, as they allowed for meaningful constructions and interpretation between me and my participants. I also conducted a broad theme analysis of rangers' tour narratives, brochures and a film/video shown on site at the ABG, as a secondary effort. I identified the ABG as the focus of an in-depth interpretive case study after an extensive on-line search of slavery sites, past research as well as a personal visit to slave plantations in the south, including an in-depth tour of the ABG in 2008 (see further below on site selection and justification). Interpretive case studies can be used to gain an in-depth understanding of how different experiences and representations of slavery offer insights into a slavery-related tourism site. Yin (1994) defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). In this research, I investigate the visitation of slavery-related sites within the context of the African Burial Ground National Monument. Thus, the emerging product of this study is bounded to this specific context and while it cannot be generalized to the larger context of slavery sites and dark tourism, the knowledge I gathered can be used to inform related issues at other

similar sites (this follows Guba and Lincoln's (1994) principle of *transferability* – see further below).

Due to the dearth of literature on African Americans' experiences at U.S. slavery-related sites, I drew heavily on the available literature on heritage, dark, and slavery tourism to provide guidance for this study. This resulted in Research Questions 1 and 2, which are more general and address African Americans' visits to, and experiences of, slavery-related sites. They include **reasons/purpose of the visit, perceptions, and experiences** at the site. The third research question tackles a related point, which is the “object” of experience, and how this object is presented to the visitor. Research Question 3 thus addresses the **representation of slavery** at slavery-related sites. I use a hyphenated word, *representation* sometimes to emphasize the constructed aspect of such representation, i.e., the reproduction of history and heritage. This fits with many political and critical perspectives on heritage provided by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996), and Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge (2000), who define heritage as being an appropriation of the past into the present, and emphasize how turning it into an economic commodity engenders potential “dissonance” and conflict—heritage is a contested and political construct (as these authors state). The little past research that exists suggests that slavery and the lives of enslaved Africans are often misrepresented and/or underrepresented at plantation sites (Butler, 2001; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Dann & Seaton, 2001; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Modlin, 2008). It has been noted that African Americans are not interested in visiting sites that do not include the stories of their ancestors, but neither are they

strongly interested in visiting sites where slavery is associated primarily with shame and atrocity (Shipler, 1997).

The above three research questions guided Research Question 4 and the data collection and data analysis (see Chapter I); the interview protocol, the documents I chose to collect, the observations I intentionally made and the coding process used. This fourth research question is more specifically oriented to the **case study of the African Burial Ground National Monument**.

Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 are exploratory in nature and help to orient the larger study picture, which aims to offer an integrated, relational exploration of the production and consumption of “heritage” at slavery sites, specifically, a burial ground in this case. Its purpose is to guide understanding in rich detail on how these experiences and representations are enacted and negotiated at the ABG. The burial ground and the Dutch colony, New Amsterdam, are the historical spaces on which modern day New York City emerged.

3.3. Research setting

3.3.1. Brief historical overview of New Amsterdam / New York

Even though the African Burial Ground is not a former plantation but a cemetery, it is still closely linked to the history of Africans’ enslavement in colonial New York. Hansen and McGowan (1998) explain that the European presence in present-day New York grew from 1613 when Dutch merchants (occupying today’s Albany, New York) engaged in fur business with local Native Americans, the Manhattans. The first Africans (eleven of them) to arrive in the new colony were brought by the Dutch West India

Company in 1626 (Hansen & McGowan, 1998). They were used as farmers and workers to build up New Amsterdam and started families as the colonists brought in more women. Many Africans were granted land outside the city limit of New Amsterdam (New York under Dutch rule) and many also petitioned for freedom. Although their freedom was granted, free Africans' rights were very limited as they remained bounded to the Dutch West India Company. The limited freedom that Africans could enjoy vanished when the British took over New Amsterdam in 1664 and renamed it New York (Hansen & McGowan, 1998). As the British brought more Africans into the colony, the population (free and enslaved) continued to grow and to benefit from very restricted rights. The authors add that because they were not allowed to be buried in the land of Trinity Church, African New Yorkers buried their dead outside the city limits in "a place for outcasts and dumping ground for the refuse from the nearby pottery kilns, where ceramics were manufactured" as early as 1690 (p. 34). The "Negros Burial Ground," as it was spelled in the 1754 Maerschalk Plan, closed in 1796 and was covered with landfill as the city expanded.

3.3.2. Re-discovery of the Burial Ground

In 1991, during the pre-construction tests of the Ted Weiss Federal Building, workers discovered human remains. After the excavation of 419 burials, the scientific analysis of the remains was appointed to a team of researchers at Howard University (Washington D.C.). This scientific work started in 1993 and ended in 2003, when the remains were brought back to New York City for a ceremonial re-burial. Of the estimated 15,000 to 20,000 existing burials in that area of Lower Manhattan, 419 were

excavated, of which more than 40% were of children under the age of 12 (National Park Service, 2009).

In 1993, the site was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior, and selected as a National Monument by President George W. Bush in 2006. Before the plans for the design of a memorial were approved in April of 2005, the U. S. General Services Administration (GSA) and the National Park Service (NPS) engaged the community through listening sessions, public meetings, visitor experience workshops, and a research roundtable (National Park Service, 2009). In 2004, the park solicited public input through four open houses to get the community involved in the crafting of the Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground (expected to guide the site for 15 to 20 years). The site first opened to visitors in February 2006, with a temporary interpretive center on the first floor of the Ted Weiss Federal Building. Later in October 5, 2007 the outdoor memorial was inaugurated. In February 2010, driven by an effort to enhance visitors' experience and the quality of the interpretive work, the African Burial Ground National Monument inaugurated its new visitor center (www.nps.gov/afbg). It includes four exhibit areas, a 40-person theatre for the screening of a short documentary film ("Our Time at Last"), a small library/research room, and a store for books and artifacts.⁶

⁶ <http://www.nps.gov/afbg/index.htm> retrieved on March 22, 2010.

3.3.3. Case setting and location

The National Park Service identified four major areas of significance of the African Burial Ground National Monument (ABG), which are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Significance of the African Burial Ground National Monument. Source: National Park Service (2009)

Significance 1	Significance 2	Significance 3	Significance 4
<p>The African Burial Ground in Lower Manhattan is among the oldest, and is the largest known urban burial site of enslaved and free Africans in the United States. The site is one of the most significant archeological discoveries in the twentieth century—with an estimated 15,000 burials—and challenges the public perception that there was very little or no chattel slavery in the north.</p>	<p>The Burial Ground attests to the extent of slavery in New York City, one of the most important northern cities—geopolitically, culturally and financially—in the eventual formation of the Nation. The site highlights and explores the considerable contributions—physically and culturally—of Africans and Americans of African descent in this influential city from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries.</p>	<p>Skeletal remains and associated archeological artifacts demonstrate the extent to which Africans struggled to maintain and adapt traditional African cultural and ceremonial practices even under threat of physical and other forms of harm. These adapted practices continue in African American communities today. Bio-skeletal studies reveal the harsh labor regime and environmental conditions that Africans endured, and the high rates of infant and child mortality, as demonstrated by the preponderance of graves of persons under age sixteen.</p>	<p>The African Burial Ground National Monument is a site where the history and implications of the African Diaspora can be studied, contemplated and discussed; it is a site that redefines and makes accessible to all the history and contributions of Africans in the building of the Americas. The National Monument is an active place of commemoration, contemplation, ceremony and celebration of the defiance, courage, endurance and flourishing of an oppressed people beyond all odds. As a final resting place for thousands of free and enslaved Africans, the National Monument is a place for the continued reclamation of both lost individual stories and the rich and compelling history of a people.</p>

My early explorations indicated that the ABG faces numerous challenges as a “new” product. One of them is advertising; many residents of New York City do not know about the existence of the park and what it represents. A limited budget restrains the park to communicate through an email distribution list to people who were previously involved in the development of the site, as well as visitors who leave their contact information in the guest book. The superintendent expressed a wish for more exposure to both locals and tourists through magazines, guides, and other forms of advertisement.⁷ As of the writing of this research, the park had not yet collected detailed information about its visitors,⁸ except during previous open houses. The database being developed from the above sources is used by the NPS to send out semi-annual newsletters that are also available to the general public on the ABG’s website.

Park rangers tally count visitors at the visitor center and the memorial daily, and give guests the opportunity to sign in the guest book with their name, their hometown, and any other information and comments they have about their visit (this is added to the database). Based on observations during my first visits in October 10-11, 2008 and May 17-June 11, 2010, it appeared that visitors to the ABG are diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity. During both visits, I encountered school groups (children ranging from around age 7 to 15) of predominantly black students, as well as other smaller groups and individuals.

⁷ Personal communication with then park superintendent.

⁸ Personal communication with then park superintendent.

While publicity and news on the ABG has been covered in general media like television⁹ and newspapers,¹⁰ the available academic research (including dissertations and journal articles) is mostly archeological and anthropological (e.g. Goode-Null, 2002; Mathis, 2008; Wedel, 2006) and as of the writing of this research, no studies have been conducted on visitors' experiences, until now. In addition, the African Burial Ground has a Facebook page and a very active Twitter account.

As shown in Figure 3.1, the head offices of the ABG are located in Lower Manhattan at 290 Broadway Avenue.¹¹ The site comprises an outdoors memorial, a commemorative art gallery, and a visitor center. The memorial is located on the eastern part of the Ted Weiss Federal Building, bordered by Duane and Elk streets. Figure 3.2 provides an aerial view of the memorial and the adjacent federal building. The commemorative art gallery is located inside the federal building and the entrance to the visitor center is situated on the west side of the same building, on Broadway Avenue. Figure 3.3 captures the locations of the memorial, the art gallery, and the visitor center within the site.

⁹ http://www.ny1.com/5-manhattan-news-content/top_stories/114401/new-visitor-center-opens-at-manhattan-s-african-burial-ground retrieved on May 7, 2010.

¹⁰ See Rothstein (2010) or The Associated Press (2007).

¹¹ This is the official address of the Ted Weiss Federal building.

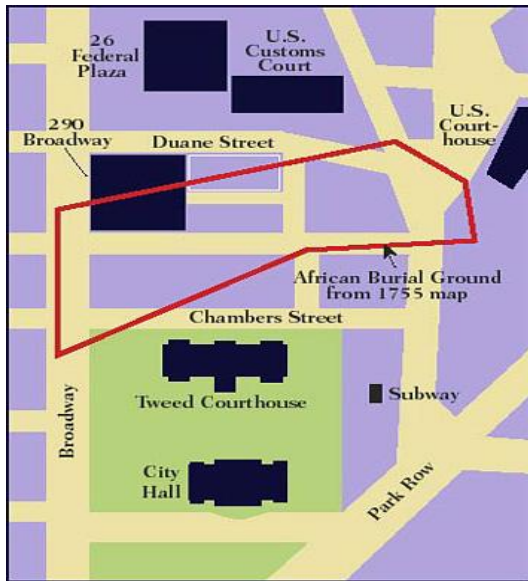
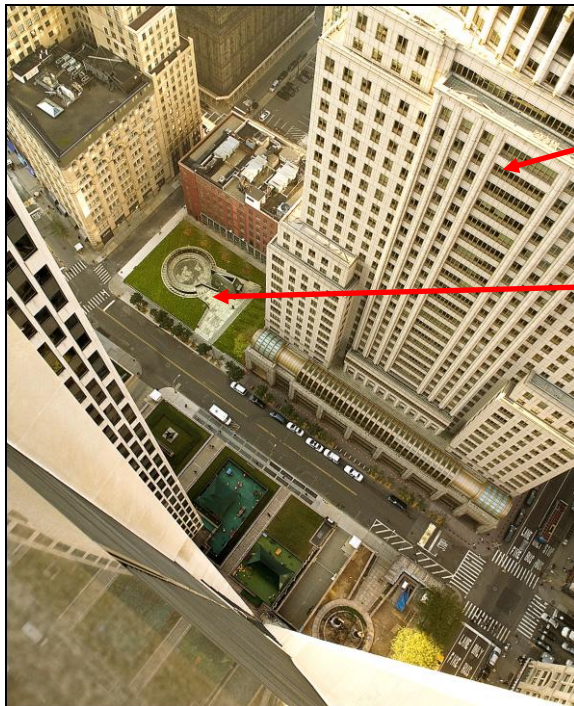


Figure 3.1: Map of the African Burial Ground, Located in Lower Manhattan, NY. Source: The Archaeological Institute of America



Ted Weiss Federal Building

Memorial

Figure 3.2: Aerial View of the Memorial. Source: Preserve America

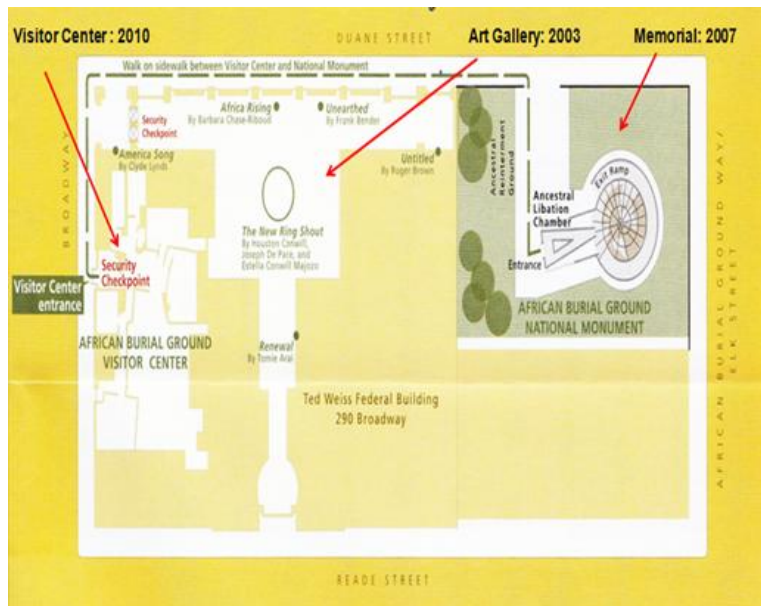


Figure 3.3: Map of the African Burial Ground National Monument. Source: nps.gov/afbg

Visitors to the ABG can tour the site on their own or be guided by a ranger. The park offers four types of ranger-led tours:

- Ranger-led tours in the visitor center, where a ranger first suggests that the visitors watch a 20-minute film to set the exhibits in context. After that, the ranger leads visitors to the core exhibit area where life-sized wax figures represent a burial scene presented in the film. There, visitors are given an overview of the history of the ABG. The ranger indicates the location and content of the other 3 exhibits areas that visitors can explore on their own.
- Ranger-led tours at the memorial, where the ranger leads visitors through the “Ancestral Chamber of Libation” and around the “Circle of the Diaspora” while telling them about the design of the memorial and the symbolisms attached to it.

- Ranger-led tours of the commemorative art in the lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building, where rangers comment on the several pieces of work that GSA commissioned for the ABG.
- Ranger-led walking tours in Lower Manhattan to explore and understand the presence of Africans in early New York, where visitors are taken on a 90-minute tour of Lower Manhattan that highlights a variety of locations related to the lives of the free and enslaved African (e.g. slave market, slave house, location of slave riot, location of slave tortures, stop of the underground railroad, and many more).

3.3.4. Site selection and justification

The ABG shows numerous commonalities and differences with the sites studied by previous researchers. Overall, its unique characteristics as summarized in detail below and the lack of research on burial sites like this lend support for comprehensive, in-depth research attention:

(i) While numerous studies on slavery-related sites have shown that very few African Americans came to visit,¹² the ABG records a large number of African American visitors.¹³ The ABG is widely visited by African Americans (and/or people of African descent), including school groups, family reunion groups, tourists, and other individuals. Yet, why they visit, how they experience the site, what its significance is to them, so far is unknown.

¹² See Buzinde (2007) with Hampton Plantation in South Carolina, Lawton & Weaver (2008) with Congaree National Park in South Carolina, or Butler et al. (2008) for the Laura Creole Plantation in Louisiana).

¹³ Personal observation during my visits to the site in October 2008 and Summer 2010.

(ii) The ABG is uniquely situated in the heart of the administrative district of New York City, close to City Hall and Ground Zero, and is accessible by multiple reliable modes of transportation. Unlike many other sites of black heritage that are located outside of urban areas (e.g. Cane River Creole National Historical Park in Louisiana or Booker T. Washington National Monument in Virginia), the ABG is located in a dynamic center of a large metropolis. During their visit to the ABG, visitors learn that the renowned Broadway Avenue used to be a narrow path broadened by enslaved Africans. They also learn that Wall Street gets its name from a wall once built by enslaved Africans to protect the city from Native Americans.¹⁴

(iii) An important difference between the ABG and other sites is the way slavery and enslaved Africans are represented to the public through exhibits, brochures, film, and rangers' narratives, is the third difference from many other sites. As a "dark" tourism site, the ABG presents the history of slavery in colonial New York and attempts to interpret how it may have been like for free and enslaved Africans to live in the colony. It is meant to be perceived as a sacred ground, where the life and death of free and enslaved Africans are remembered, honored, and celebrated (as demonstrated through the exhibits the memorial, the tour narratives, and on-site events such as Juneteenth, Kwanzaa, Black History Month, Emancipation Day, and Youth Week. One of the ABG's stated objectives is to teach the public about the African cultural origins of the enslaved and about their life conditions in New York (see Draft Management

¹⁴ Tour narrative of Ranger Erwin.

Recommendations for the African Burial Ground). How well it does this will be explored in the next two chapters.

(iv) The ABG is located in a region people do not necessarily associate with slavery. Yet, historical information indicates that New York had the largest urban slave population in mainland North America during parts of the 17th and 18th centuries (Berlin & Harris, 2005). The presence of this site is important to inform public understanding of slavery in the North. Slavery in colonial New York differed from slavery in the South; rather than plantation work, city-like constructions were primary tasks: clearing paths, building roads, unloading ships, installing water pipes, building fortresses, etc. But the intensity and harshness of the work were similar: enslaved Africans were beaten, tortured, killed in New York just like they were in the South.¹⁵

(v) Given its mandate to care for the environment, preserve history, revitalize communities, and invite stewardship,¹⁶ the preservation of the ABG and what it represents is well within the National Park Service's (NPS) agenda. However, it should be noted that the ABG project arrived to the NPS under unique circumstances. The unearthing of a 17th century cemetery during the construction of a federal building moved local New Yorkers to fight for its preservation and for the memorialization of the estimated 15,000 free and enslaved Africans buried there. The ABG was born from a strong grassroots movement that led to Presidential Proclamation as a National Monument.

¹⁵ Tour narrative of Ranger Erwin.

¹⁶ http://www.nps.gov/americasbestidea/templates/encouraging_historic_preservation.html retrieved on March 3, 2011.

(vi) Finally contrary to many of the sites examined by previous studies, the ABG was a multi-functional site: a cemetery, a place of reverence, respect and honor, a sacred ground; one of the only places where Africans could gather without the presence of slaveholders.¹⁷ A rare bit of past research (see Chapter II) has looked at sites where enslaved Africans lived their daily lives and engaged in their daily duties, such as plantations and slave quarters, but none have included places for the deceased, like burial grounds.

3.4. Data collection

3.4.1. Research methods

My first three research questions are broadly framed towards understanding the reasons why African Americans visit slavery-related sites, their experiences at such sites, particularly in regard to representation of slavery and the enslaved, and what these sites meant to them. The fourth research question is aimed at exploring the three research questions above in the context of the ABG, derive insights to help develop an analytical framework to study such sites of “dark tourism”, and contribute to better understanding the notion of “darkness” attributed to visits to sites of death (or disaster). The fourth research question will be addressed in Chapters IV and V, while the first three will be explored in Chapter VI.

In-depth interviews and participant observation were my primary research methods. In-depth interviews are most appropriate when the researcher wants to “find out what is on people’s minds and to access the perspective of others” (Henderson, 1991,

¹⁷ Tour narrative of Ranger Erwin.

p. 71). Moreover, as Dewalt and Dewalt (2002, p. 93) explain, “the use of participant observation allows for greater rapport, better access to informants and activities, and enhanced understanding of the phenomena investigated using other methods.”

Participant observations can help contextualize and support the interview process, as “the investigator will be engaging in conversation and informal interviewing [and] because researchers always have their research questions in the back of their minds, they are likely to consciously or unconsciously direct interactions toward their interests” (Dewalt & Dewalt 2002, p. 124) During my field work I interacted with park rangers on-site and asked formal as well as informal questions related to the behaviors of African American visitors they had observed. I also paid attention to facial expressions and actions of visitors of African descent entering, touring, and exiting both the visitor center and the monument.

Secondary methods that I used to assist in addressing my research questions included review of past literature, park-related documents, on-site exhibits and the on-site film/video that is shown to visitors. The documents I relied on consisted of park policies and related ABG reports, park-produced promotional brochures of the ABG, the transcript of the film shown in the visitor center’s theatre, and the transcripts of rangers’ tour narratives. While I was provided the official transcript (script) of the film by the staff, I personally transcribed the tour narratives. As Yin (1994) states, “if the documentary evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory [to other sources of data], the case study investigator has specific reason to inquire further into the topic” (p. 81). The use of documents as a source of data allows an exploration of “official”

messages received by visitors – the ABG offered visual, auditory and interactive texts for the visitor to engage with on-site. In addition to the (visual) exhibits, I drew on official documents and narratives that the site chose to share with the general public written or orally, i.e., through brochures, film, and rangers’ narratives. While I did not do an in-depth content analysis or discourse analysis of these various texts, I examine them for general themes, and drew on them during interviews in order to gain an understanding of how these various texts mediated visitor perceptions, feelings and experiences.

Table 3.3 summarizes the methods that I used for this study based on the initial research questions. All the methods and specific sources of data are described in detail and expanded upon in the subsequent sub-sections.

Table 3.3: Summary of the methodology adopted

Data		Collection		Analysis
Type	Characteristics	Method	Justification	Method
Interviews (Experience: Research Questions 1 and 2)	Face to face (25) Skype/phone (2)	Used direct and referred recruitment	In-depth and personal accounts on the experiences of past African American visitors	Transcription Translation (1) Uploaded into ATLAS.ti Coding process: codes, categories, themes
Documents (Representation : Research Question 3)	Brochures (2)	Picked up at the visitor center	#1 2008 version #2 2010 version Looked at the main information given out to the public – including those who do not visit the site	Copied content into a Word document Uploaded into ATLAS.ti Coding process: codes, categories, themes

Table 3.3, Continued

Data		Collection		Analysis
Type	Characteristics	Method	Justification	Method
	Tour narratives (2)	Recorded when participated in tours (ranger-led), Tour 1: adult group (with a few younger)/ Movie, VC, and Art Work Tour 2: teachers group/ memorial, ring shout	Looked at the information provided to adult visitors and see how it is delivered: see how visitors are engaged through dance, singing, greetings...	Transcription Uploaded into ATLAS.ti Coding process: codes, categories, themes
Participant observation (Representation and experience: Research Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4)	During tours, during interviews, at the visitor center, at the art exhibit, at the memorial + observations at other places around the city (subway, Harlem, library...)	Took notes whenever necessary and convenient before, during, and after the interviews, at the visitor center, the memorial, and the art work, during tours, and during down time dedicated to general observations	My observations (notes and reflections) were important to support or contradict any information I acquired through interviews and documents.	I read through all three of my journals and placed a <i>post it</i> on every page or section of the page I touched on a specific topic, whether it was the behavior of school groups at the visitor center, my impressions of the interviews I conducted, the challenges I incurred during my fieldwork, the description of visitors going through the security check point at the entrance of the visitor center, or theoretical reflections.

3.4.2. Entering the field

I experienced a setback almost immediately upon entering the field in May 2010. I had hoped the park superintendent and her staff could introduce me to the major community stakeholders who had contributed to the development of the ABG, including

key players in the open houses leading to the ABG site development. However, I was informed that the park was unable to provide information other than that available on site to the general public. The reason was my status as an independent researcher. The park superintendent and I jointly signed the Scientific Research and Collecting Permit, which stipulated the details of my information gathering on site. Nonetheless, the staff supported me to the extent of their capability. Overall, I was able to get access to all public information, participate in tours, spend research hours in their library, enter volunteer hours, and converse with the staff and volunteers on a daily basis. In addition, I was fortunately able to share government housing for approximately three months with a former ABG employee (Nicole¹⁸). She not only shared inside information about the site, but most importantly, she referred me to several people she knew I could talk to. In the way Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that gatekeepers can facilitate an easier access to potential participants, Nicole was of tremendous assistance for the recruitment of 4 of my participants.

3.4.3. Description of the four phases of data collection

I started data gathering in October 2008. My research unfolded through four phases of data collection from Fall 2008 to Fall 2010, as described below. Table 3.4 summarizes the phases and tasks accomplished over this two year period.

¹⁸ All the names used in this report are pseudonyms.

Table 3.4: Summary of the four phases of data collection

Phases	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Phase 1: October 10-11, 2008	-None	-Made basic observations as a visitor and participated in a dance workshop	-Collected brochures -Took pictures
Phase 2: May 27-June 11, 2010	-Discussed list of potential participants with Chief of Interpretation and Education and Cultural Resources and Nicole (former Chief of Interpretation, Education and Cultural Resources who was my roommate during my stay in NY) and possible methods of recruitment	-Participated in ranger-led tours (visitor center and walking tour) -Observed visitors' behavior, interaction between rangers and visitors... -Reported my thoughts in a reflexive journal	-Started collection of documents (brochures and reflection cards) -Discussed with the Chief of Interpretation the possibility of using reflection notes and videos, and audio-recording of ranger-led tours
Phase 3: June 18-August 28, 2010	-Conducted 25 face to face interviews -Identified broad themes	-Continued observations and reflections -Reviewed reflexive notes	-Collected additional documents needed (film transcript and reflection videos), transcribed when needed, and started the identification of broad themes
Phase 4: Fall 2010	-Transcribed all interviews -Conducted two additional interviews over the phone and Skype -Started coding all interviews	-Reviewed reflexive notes	-Transcribed all tours -Started coding all documents

Phase 1: First site trip, October 10-11, 2008

The purpose of this trip was to attend the symposium “Slave Routes: Resistance, Abolition and Creative Progress” at New York University. I had an interest in slavery tourism, and this event gave me the opportunity to interact with scholars in African-American and critical race studies whose works influenced my choice of research topic

and direction, such as John Thornton, Ana Lucia Araujo, Saidiya Hartman, Paul Lovejoy, Sylviane Diouf, and Maya Angelou. While the ABG was not mentioned during the three-day seminar, it was featured in a Lonely Planet New York City guide I had brought to New York to sightsee, since this was a first and short visit. I went to the ABG two days in a row, spending more time on the second visit to take pictures of the memorial and participated in a dance workshop.

Phase 2: Participant observation and background information gathering: May-June 2010

On the day after my arrival in New York City for my second trip, I met with the Chief of Interpretation, Education and Cultural Resources to discuss my research interests. She showed me around the site and introduced me to all the staff. Since I was still waiting for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval I was unable to either record the tour narratives, or start my formal interviews. During these two weeks I spent most of my time observing visitors and the rangers, taking notes related to my observations and my own reflections, accompanying rangers on their different tours, and getting familiar with the site, its history, its staff, its challenges, and so on. This phase was particularly important as I got acquainted with gatekeepers like Nicole, and commenced gathering and reviewing park documents.

Phase 3: Conducting on-site interviews June- August 2010

I went back to New York for two and a half months in June 2010. During that phase, I conducted most (25 out of 27) of my interviews and I continued both observations and document gathering. I also started the process of analysis during this

phase. The exploratory nature of this study allowed for flexibility in the strategies I used to recruit my participants, and I adjusted both my approaches and my interview questions as information (and challenges) emerged.

One major challenge in the recruitment of participants was the inability to solicit visitors on site for potential interviews. As I observed visitors going through the exhibits, some of them thought I was another visitor and shared some of their first impressions of the site. On one occasion I provided my contact information to two ladies who were eager to participate in my study, but I never received their call. I then realized that I should get visitors contact information directly, instead of handing out my business card with the hope of receiving a call. So, while it was clearly challenging to recruit participants on-site, I was able to recruit participants through other means:

- Recommendations from my roommate, Nicole. I recruited **4** participants this way.
- Recommendations from park rangers and volunteers: I asked them if their friends or family had visited the site and were available for an interview. I recruited **6** participants this way.
- Recommendation from participants (snowball technique). I recruited **4** participants this way.
- Call for participants sent through email distribution lists (or listservs) associated with Africana Studies departments and/or cultural events in New York City. I recruited **5** participants this way.

- Call for participants posted at churches (including insertion in one Sunday service bulletin), libraries, restaurants, museums, cultural centers, and other public places predominantly frequented by African American. I recruited **1** participant this way.
- Announcement at a play and book signing. I did not recruit any participant this way.
- Direct face to face solicitation.¹⁹ I recruited **7** participants this way.

Phase 4: Fall 2010

When I left the field and returned to Texas, I continued reading my reflexive journals in order to keep my experiences fresh in mind. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined a reflexive journal as a kind of diary in which the researcher records a variety of information about self and method on a daily basis or as needed (p. 327). Thus, I also added notes regarding my adjustments outside of the field, back in my academic environment. I interviewed two additional participants who were unavailable during the summer. They agreed on an interview through Skype and by phone. Fortunately, both agreed on being recorded and the quality of the recording was satisfactory.

During that fourth phase I transcribed all the interviews as well as the tour narratives. I saved each interview and tour narrative file under a folder on my laptop and made backup copies on an external hard drive, just in case I lost any data. To transcribe the data I played segments of the file on Windows Media Player repetitively and typed on a Word document file. I did not use any speech recognition software like Dragon

¹⁹ This was mostly the case for volunteers : I made sure to be at the site during their volunteer hours in order to ask them directly if they would be interested in participating in my study

Naturally Speaking because I felt like it would take me longer to train it for the recognition of my voice and to edit the errors after each completed transcription. On average, it took me eight hours to transcribe one hour of audio recording, and even more for the interviews conducted in public places like coffee shops and restaurants due to background noises (fourteen of my twenty-seven interviews had some background noise, which made the transcription process more challenging but manageable—the voices and words were clear).

3.4.4. Data collection techniques

Interviews

I used a purposive sampling to recruit participants best suited to answer my questions (Creswell, 1994). This sampling strategy focused on the selection of information-rich cases, study of which illuminates the research questions (Patton, 2002). I sought to interview at least 25 past African American visitors to the ABG. While arbitrary, I felt 25 participants would be a large enough group to ensure an “inter-generational participant base of older and younger men and women. I set out to interview at least 5 older men, 5 older women, 5 younger men, and 5 younger women: “older” all participants 50 years and older (those born in and before 1960 would have direct memories of Civil Rights Movement’s struggles of the 1950s and 1960s) and “younger” participants those who heard about the days of segregation without experiencing them directly. The older generation experienced various degrees of psychological (and possibly physical) trauma, witnessing the beatings, the marches, the boycotts, and the police brutality through television and radio or even in person (Latif &

Latif, 1994). Those 50 years and older may experience the ABG in different ways than younger visitors.

The number of participants in my study was limited by park's regulations and by the time spent in New York City. I kept in mind that the quality of the information collected was more important than its quantity (Hycner, 1999). I initially aimed to select the participants based on the following criteria:

- They were 18 years and older.
- They considered themselves African Americans.
- They had visited the African Burial Ground National Monument since the opening of its new visitor center on February 27, 2010.
- They were willing to participate in a face to face in-depth interview and a possible follow-up session.²⁰

I began my selection process by discussing potential participants with Nicole. She had several contacts of volunteers and friends who had visited the site. Table 3.5 presents the 27 participants in this study, including their assigned pseudonym (pseudonyms are used throughout the study to facilitate anonymity and confidentiality), age range, gender, the interview location, and recruiting method.

²⁰ My research committee as well as ABG staff suggested that I include park volunteers and those who were part of the site's development research team. Seven participants were volunteers and five were directly involved in the process of development of the site, at least from its discovery in 1991 to the reinterment of the remains in 2003.

Table 3.5: Profile of the study participants

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
1	Fiona	62	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from South Carolina	Administrator	ABG Memorial during her lunch break (Lower Manhattan)	Asked her in person when she was volunteering at the ABG
2	Sam	69	Male	African American ²¹	New York	Writer	Part 1: ABG Memorial (Lower Manhattan) Part 2: his car (Lower Manhattan)	Recommended by Nicole
3	Barbara	27	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Ohio	Financial manager	Starbucks (Manhattan)	Recommended by Melanie ²²
4	Karen	59	Female	African American	New York	Retired	(Harlem)	Recommended by Elizabeth
5	Wanda	48	Female	Franco-Cameroonian (Black)	Lives in New York Previously lived in France and Cameroon	Designer/teacher	(Harlem)	Recommended by Nicole
6	Leila	29	Female	Canadian (Black)	Canada	Student	Part 1 and part 2 at Starbucks (Lower Manhattan)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserve

²¹ See Sam's profile further below

²² Park ranger

Table 3.5, Continued

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
7	Danielle	66	Female	African American	New York	Retired accountant	ABG Memorial (Lower Manhattan)	Asked her in person when she was volunteering at the ABG
8	Elisabeth	67	Female	African American	New York	Retired/business owner	Schomburg Center (Harlem)	Asked her in person when she was volunteering at the ABG
9	Katrina	43	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Los Angeles	Professor	Part 1 and part 2 at La Perle Noire Cafe and Bakery (Harlem)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserve
10	Stanley	47	Male	African American	New York	Clergyman	Starbucks (Lower Manhattan)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserve
11	Lance	41	Male	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Ohio	Professor	Abyssinian Baptist Church (Harlem)	Asked him at Abyssinian Baptist Church after the service
12	Isaac	80	Male	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Atlanta	Clergyman	House of the Lord Pentecostal Church (Brooklyn)	Recommended by several people
13	Sylvia	72	Female	African American (originally from Togo, West Africa)	New York	Retired professor	Her place (Harlem)	Recommended by Nicole

Table 3.5, Continued

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
14	Natasha	65	Female	African American	New York	Retired professor	ABG library (Lower Manhattan)	Asked her in person at the ABG when she was doing research there
15	Helen	68	Female	African American	New York	Educator	Her place (Manhattan)	Recommended by Natasha
16	Brandy	29	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Minnesota	Program manager	Brooklyn Historical Society (her office)	Recommended by Natasha
17	Francis	20	Male	African Indian American	New York	Student worker	Starbucks (Lower Manhattan)	Expressed interest to be a study participant. Student employee at the ABG
18	Tamara	28	Female	African American	New York	Manager	Starbucks (Brooklyn)	Recommended by Vanessa ²³
19	Kandace	58	Female	African American	New York	Artist	Interchurch Center (Columbia University area)	Recommended by Wanda
20	Pattie	68	Female	African living in America ²⁴ (Black)	New York	Educator	Part 1 and part 2 at Sankofa School Academy (Brooklyn)	Recommended by Karen
21	Kendra	20	Female	African American	New York	Student	Golden Krust Restaurant (Staten Island)	Asked her in person as she worked at the ABG

²³ Park ranger²⁴ See Pattie's profile below

Table 3.5, Continued

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
22	Erika	36	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Pennsylvania	Youth programs manager	Schomburg Center in Harlem (her office)	Recommended by Elizabeth
23	Fred	59	Male	African American	New York	Documentarian	His car (Harlem)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserve
24	Donna	29	Female	African American	New York	Manager	Starbucks (Queens)	Recommended by Vanessa
25	Damon	66	Male	African American	New York	Educator	Spoonbread Restaurant (Harlem)	Recommended by Nicole
26	Terence	34	Male	Caribbean British-American	United Kingdom /New York/Trinidad	Instructor	Skype	Replied to listserv
27	Derek	46	Male	African American	New York	Historian	Phone	Recommended by many

The framing of the interview guide I used (see Appendix A) was guided by the literature on heritage, dark, and slavery tourism, and by background information about the ABG. Although I started the interviews with a set of prepared questions, I was sensitive to the need to be flexible and open to emerging questions as the conversation advanced, and adjusted as I went along. As Erlandson et al. (1998, p. 88) suggested, “the

researcher must be careful not to be bound or overly structured to those questions and to allow them to naturally emerge over the course of the interview.”

The first research question was to understand the reasons African Americans visit slavery-related sites. Thus I formulated specific questions related to how this major question is approached in the tourism literature. During the interviews, I asked questions like: “What slavery-related site have you visited?” “How do you relate to these sites?” “What were your main reasons to visit these sites?”

The second research question was to understand the experiences African American visitors have at slavery-related sites, and for that I followed the same logic and asked questions such as: “Can you tell me about the feelings you had during your visit?” “What are some of the aspects of your experience that you would change?” “What did you like most about your visit?”

The third research question referred to the role of slavery-related sites and their politic of representation of slavery, and led me to ask questions similar to: “how was slavery talked about during your visit?” “Was there anything on-site that made you uncomfortable?”

The fourth and final research question explored the above specifically in the case of the ABG. The interview questions included: “How important was it to visit the ABG?” “What does the ABG mean to you?” “How different was your visit to the ABG from your visits to other slavery-related sites?” “How has your visit to the ABG influenced your visits to other black heritage sites?” “What part of the visitor center did you like the most?” “Was there anything in the ranger’s narrative that surprised you?”

The interviews ranged from less than 1 hour to about 2.5 hours, with the average between 1-2 hours long. Four of the participants were interviewed twice, which gave me the opportunity to follow up on questions, to clarify points, and to have more time for discussion. The second interview was done within the same week with two participants (one day and three days later), the follow-up with the third participant was done 12 days later, and it was 16 days after the first interview when I followed up on the fourth.

Interviews were generally lengthy and personal; I met with the participants at locations that were convenient and comfortable for them. These included their residences, coffee shops, restaurants, and churches. I mostly asked open-ended questions so participants' answers could be as elaborate as possible. When the conversation diverted, I tried to subtly get the participant back on track. In addition, I probed as much as I could for clarifications, more details, or simply more elaborations. Twenty five of the total interviews were conducted face to face in New York City, between July and August 2010. I conducted the other two through phone and Skype on my return to Texas. Although I did not initially plan to conduct these interviews after I left New York, this allowed me to combine my data analysis with my data collection by asking questions to fill in gaps in my existing data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). I interviewed 18 females and 9 males. The age of the participants ranged from the early 20s to the early 80's: 4 of the participants were "older" men, 9 were "older" women, 5 were "younger" men, and 9 were "younger" women (Table 3.6 shows the exact ages of the participants). Their occupations included student, reverend, professor, retired accountant, musician, and journalist, among others.

Table 3.6: Summary of interviews

	Gender		Age range				Interview location		Duration of the interview (in hours)			Number of sessions	
	M	F	Older		Younger		Face to face	Phone/Skype	< 1	1-2	>2	1	2
Characteristics			M	F	M	F							
	9	18	4	9	5	9	25	2	10	13	4	23	4
	27		27				27		27			27	
TOTAL	27		27				27		27			27	

All the participants signed the consent forms and agreed to an audio recording. I assigned pseudonyms to all the participants to ensure confidentiality even if only one preferred not to be identified in any publication. I took notes during all interviews mostly regarding non-verbal cues (e.g. participant tearing up, winking at me...), gestures (participant pointing towards a building, showing me a book or pictures...), or important names and locations brought up during the conversation.

While I did not promise any compensation for participating in the study I offered a \$5 Starbucks gift card to my first 10 participants as a token of appreciation at the end of the interview. Unfortunately my budget did not allow for the purchase of additional cards. Even though the compensation was modest, participants received it with surprise and appreciation.

After each interview I noted my reflections about what I liked, disliked, needed to change, and the general feelings I had during the conversation. For instance, after my interview with Leila, I wrote:

The interview with Leila wasn't that good...for many reasons:

- Leila's answers were very short.
- Leila hasn't visited the new visitor center so there were a lot of questions I couldn't ask her.
- There wasn't much for me to probe on.
- At times I felt she was uncomfortable to be there so I felt self-conscious about my appearance...
- It was destabilizing for me because I knew it wasn't a productive interview. Mostly in comparison to the one I had hours earlier with Katrina.
- [...] Sometimes I couldn't find my words and express myself in a good way.
- There was awkwardness at times (I felt like it) because I was looking at my protocol for questions to ask her and I paused, hesitated, "hummed"...
- The interview was short, around 40 minutes.
- Because she didn't elaborate, many times I talked about my life and experiences or my own opinions about the ABG. I felt like it was that or being silent.

August 8, 2010

The following journal entries reflect a contrasting impression after my interview with Katrina:

Katrina is really cool, passionate [...] I learned a lot from her and I look up to her for inspiration as a black female faculty teaching on issues of race and diversity. She's very supportive of my research.

[...] I am glad she was very talkative. I made a conscious effort to stay alert, concentrated on what she was saying, and to probe appropriately. I am getting better at it and feeling more comfortable doing it. Mostly because I don't always have to take long notes, but key points so I can listen and understand much better. Thank God for recorders!

August 8, 2010

My interview with Francis was quite difficult for me not only because I was very sleepy, but mostly because I received devastating personal news a few hours earlier. It was hard to stay alert and focus on the participant. I scribbled down the following notes during the interview:

J'ai sommeil grave [...]. Je rêve. Ma tête n'est pas là.

I am way too sleepy [...] I am daydreaming. My mind is not here.

Je ne savais pas s'il pausait parce qu'il avait fini sa phrase ou juste pour pauser.

I didn't know if he paused because he was done talking or just to take a breath.

Je bouge beaucoup et regarde partout pour rester éveillée.

I am moving a lot and looking around just to stay awake.

Je ne probe pas beaucoup parce que je n'écoute pas trop ce qu'il dit. J'ai trop sommeil et je me demande comment je vais survivre l'autre interview.

I am not probing much because I am not really listening to what he's saying. I am too sleepy and I wonder how I'll survive the next interview.

August 25, 2010

I sometimes made entries in my reflexive journal at the location of the interview once the participant left, but more often I took notes while riding public transportation on my way home, to the ABG, or to the following interview. Before each meeting I reviewed my notes and identified points that I had missed, questions that had been misunderstood, and areas that needed further discussion. Some of my notes were in French, others in English, depending on my mood and state of mind. Most of my notes were in English but I usually used French when I was tired and when I wrote personal notes. As a citizen of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and native of Morocco, French is my native language, which I mostly use in conversations with my family

members. I feel more comfortable using English when talking about my research because I progressively framed my research interests through the English language. In other words, when it comes to talking about my Master's and PhD studies, which I did in the US, I use English, because it was the language I used the most in these contexts.

A small number of participants did not meet the initial criteria of selection, yet, the data gathered was important enough to include in my study. All the participants contributed to the research in a unique way, bringing a different point of view that enriched the study. It was only fair that their contribution be included in this dissertation. For instance, Leila was not African American but Black Canadian. She was studying African American literature in New York City and her unique perspective enriched the data. Although she had not visited the new visitor center before our interview, we decided to do a second interview the following week after she had visited the new visitor center. This allowed me to get a fresh account of her experience and to have her compare both of her visits. So, even though I was initially hesitant to interview her, Leila provided valuable information to this study.

The emerging nature of field work, and in this case interviewing, fostered the rephrasing of a number of questions. I changed the order of some questions based on the general feel of the interview, such as the tone of the participants' responses and the additional information they provided (the planned questioning order was, of course, modified by participants themselves as well, depending on what they wanted to share or issues they felt strongly about). I added the question "What does it mean to be African American?" because it usually generated deep, personal, and long responses from

participants. I adjusted this question based on how participants identified themselves. I quickly realized that some did not identify with that term. So instead, I asked: “What does it mean to be black African” or “You defined yourself as an “African living in America”, what does that mean to you?” It was important to use the same term they choose to identify themselves. This was certainly the case for a white participant who identified himself as African American and Black. Asking participants about the meaning of their racial/ethnic identity was necessary because it enabled me to understand the individuality of each participant and to avoid generalizations. The answers to this question provided for specific insights on the concept of identity formation, which was one of the themes that emerged from the data (see Chapter V).

Another modification from the initial expectation was the opportunity to conduct one interview in French. Wanda (pseudonym) and I both felt more comfortable speaking in our native language before the interview, so most of our discussion was in French (I did resort to English occasionally, when I felt it important to follow the technical sense of an interview question that I might have lost in translation).

Participant Observation

I made observations of visitors at the memorial, the art gallery, the visitor center, and during tours. I paid attention to visitors’ behaviors, reactions, and the questions they asked the rangers. Some of these behaviors included touching the exhibits or taking photographs. I noticed that children tended to spend more time touching the full size wax figures (the clothes, hands, faces...), and also interacting at the different stations. One of these stations encouraged visitors to push a replica of barrels enslaved Africans loaded

up and down the ships (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). Another station invited visitors to pick up phone receivers and listen to other visitors' reactions to their visit. The reactions ranged from surprise, dismay, to comfort. Visitors asked many questions in relation to the ways of resistance and rebellion of the enslaved, to the scientific work conducted on the bones, as well as to the development of the site from the unearthing of the bones to the current accomplishments. I did not observe any of my participants on site as their visits occurred prior to our interview.²⁵



Figure 3.4. Interactive Station with Barrel to Push

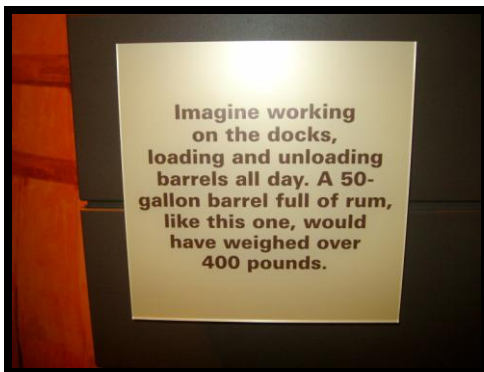


Figure 3.5. Information Posted at the Interactive Station

²⁵ Except the case of Leila with whom I did a pre and post visitor center visit interview. Although I was onsite during her visit to the visitor center, I did not observe her behavior.

At the visitor center, I usually stood at the front desk with the rangers. From that location I was able to see visitors entering the site, going through the security check-in as well as their first interaction with the staff. I was able to see if visitors consisted of school groups, college groups, family reunions, families, group of friends, foreigners, tourists, and so on. Even though I did not wear any uniform or identification while on site, many visitors assumed I was part of the staff and directed their questions to me on several occasions. Visitors were not aware of my position as a researcher (observer) unless we engaged in a conversation during which I would tell them the purpose of my presence on site.

At various points during the fieldwork, I made “structured” observations of visitors entering the visitor center. This consisted in entering information related to their group size, age range, gender, race and ethnicity in an Excel table sheet. I did this exercise for a few days, but I stopped because it was tiring and time consuming as visitors came in at irregular times: sometime no visitors came through the doors for a long period of time (noted in my journal entry of July 7, 2010). I chose not to count the number of people coming in to the site every day since the rangers already took care of that.²⁶ I could just ask them at the end of each day how many people had come in, or even check the figures reported in the daily log.

I went on two walking tours with two different rangers. Unfortunately, no other walking tour was scheduled after I received my IRB approval. However, one of my

²⁶ Using tally counters – one at the visitor center and one at the memorial – rangers count the number of people coming in the visitor center and the memorial. Some rangers also count the people they give brochures to, even if they do not step inside the memorial.

participants (Sam) was a volunteer guide at the ABG and took me on a walking tour, similar to the ones led by the park rangers. Each ranger can personalize their tour, although there is essential information to dispense and landmarks to identify, point, comment on, and stop at during all tours.²⁷ I came to learn that there is not a standardized training that rangers must go through at the ABG. Instead, rangers are given a certain amount of time to learn the material but there is not a script or a consistent outline.²⁸ For example, Ranger Melanie was provided Ira Berlin's *Slavery in New York* and Leslie Harris' *In the Shadow of Slavery* to learn the historical context. Rangers also watch videos about effective interpretation (NPS productions) as well as a video about the NPS sites that highlight lesser known histories. Also, much of the "training" is shadowing other rangers, thus all rangers' presentations sound similar. However, each ranger usually takes a liking to one aspect of the story or has his or her own way of presenting it. For example, Ranger Melanie was most interested in the rediscovery to the present, so she researched it more and tended to highlight in her presentations. Ranger Erwin was good about really engaging the group of visitors in a more performance rather than one sided presentation. Unfortunately, much of the in depth knowledge comes out more if the ranger has a passion or self-directed desire to delve further into the story, but it is not required by the ABG administration. Melanie went on to say that she used websites like nps.gov/afbg or africanburialground.gov in

²⁷ At the time of my fieldwork, only two (male) rangers had received the training to conduct walking tours.

²⁸ Email conversation with Ranger Melanie

addition to a series of history books at the ABG library, and the reports²⁹ (history, biology, and archaeology) produced by the scientific team to build up her narratives.

On my first visit to the ABG (October 10-11, 2008), I conducted general observations and walked around the site more in the spirit of being a curious visitor than a researcher (I had not yet selected the AFB as my main research site). It was “Youth Week,” during which the park organized various activities for school children (arts and craft, dance, storytelling, and tours). On that day, I noticed that most visitors (both adults and children) were black. During the second phase of data collection (May 27-June 11, 2010) I engaged mainly in informal conversations with the rangers and long periods of participant observations: getting familiar with the exhibits, observing the interaction between rangers and visitors, looking at the type (ethnicity, gender, age range) and number of visitors touring the visitor center, the memorial, the commemorative art gallery and the walking tours, and looking at their behaviors on site, documenting various acts I observed.

During the third phase (June 18-August 28, 2010), I continued my observations on site and on the tours to see how people reacted to the exhibits, interacted with each other, and experienced the site in general (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Observations should allow the researcher to produce thick descriptions of the site’s environment and the narratives and objects presented (Geertz, 1973). I recorded all corresponding notes in my reflexive research journals, including a daily schedule of my activities in the way

²⁹ http://www.africanburialground.gov/ABG_FinalReports.htm retrieved on August 14, 2011.

advised by Patton (2002). My initial observations helped to influence the shaping and refining of my interview questions.

Documents and narratives

I had the opportunity to record four ranger-led tours (on-site). These tours were between 1 hour 3 minutes and 1 hour 11 minutes of duration and included visits of the visitor center (exhibits, movie, and book store), the art work in the Ted Weiss Building lobby, and the memorial. The audience of these tours comprised school children and adult educators. For the purpose of this study, I decided to only look at the tours conducted for an adult audience since the interviews focused on the experiences of adults. In order to compare what past visitors learned about and perceived the site, I examined the discourse used by the park for adult visitors, not school kids. Thus, I chose not to analyze two of the four tour narratives I had recorded. The two tours I kept were led by Ranger Erwin.³⁰ The tour Sam took me on was much more detailed and much longer than the tours generally conducted for the general public; it lasted 2 hours and 36 minutes and included the visit of the visitor center (excluding the movie and the book store), the art work, and the memorial. The average duration of the other tours I recorded was 1 hour and 7 minutes.³¹ I opted not to include the personal tour because I believe that the information that was shared with me was more elaborate than the one generally shared with visitors because I was not on any time restraint.

Tour 1 included the viewing of the film, the visitor center, and the art work.

Because most ranger-led tours also include the visit of the memorial, I included a part of

³⁰ Pseudonym

³¹ Mean of all 4 other tours

Ranger Erwin's second tour for a group of teachers. Tour 1 was mainly composed of adults with a few young visitors.

Before audio recording a tour, I asked the rangers for permission. Upon their verbal approval, I grabbed my reflexive journal and digital recorder and followed the group around, trying to be the closest to the ranger to ensure the quality of the recording, while trying to minimize my disturbance to the group of visitors. I found it useful to record and transcribe the rangers' narratives during their on-site tours as from these emerged major recurring themes.

I collected two types of brochures at the site: the 2008 and 2010 versions. In addition, the Chief of Interpretation, Education and Cultural Resources provided me with a transcript of the documentary film. In the 20-minute film, the viewer follows a young enslaved girl who attends the funeral of her father and her infant cousin in the outskirts of the city. The narrator speaks about the lives of Africans in early New York and explains the process of re-discovery of the African Burial Ground until the completion of the new visitor center in 2011.

The last exhibit area provides a section for visitors to reflect on their visit. Visitors are invited to write their thoughts about their visit on note cards of different colors that they then drop into a box on the side. Many of the notes are posted on the wall and include comments of appreciation and enjoyment of the site. Further to the right in this interactive station, visitors can sit and videotape themselves reflecting on their experience or they can also view the videos of previous visitors. Visitors are encouraged to reflect on their experience by answering three different questions: "What does the

African Burial Ground mean to you?” “What would you say if you could meet someone buried here?” and “Today, I visited the African Burial Ground, and I...” Due to the long process it took to receive the research permit, I only had time to browse through the hundreds of reflection cards on my last week at the site. It was then impossible to digitize all these data before leaving the field.

Data from the interviews, observations, and documents were combined during the process of analysis for emerging codes, categories, and themes that informed the conceptualization of the experiences of African Americans at slavery-related sites and the representation of slavery at these sites.

3.5. Data analysis

3.5.1. Interviews and documents

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), my coding process started with some general themes issued from the background literature, to which I added themes emerging (i.e., that I identified) from the data collected. This means that as a researcher “you have a general idea of what you’re after and you know what at least some of the big themes are, but you’re still in a discovery mode, so you let new themes emerge from the texts as you go along” as Bernard, (2006, p. 494) also says. The literature in heritage, dark, and slavery tourism, as well as background information on the ABG influenced both my data collection and analysis.

The analysis of the empirical material started as soon as I entered the research setting (following Erlandson et al., 1993). I was able to adjust my research and interview questions as my data collection and analysis unfolded, and engaged in a

reflexive exercise with my research process and data. At the end of each day I consciously asked myself questions like: “What did I learn from this participant that will shape my questions for the next one? What emerging questions suggest additional questions, respondents, or a follow-up session with the participant? How could I change my observational techniques to amplify, extend, or shift my research questions?” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 114).

The process of data analysis I used was not grounded theory, as I was seeking to *understand* visitor experiences and identify themes, issues, actions, related to the development and use of the ABG. I drew on the data gathering and analytical techniques suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), to help me code and categorize a large amount of data. The steps I undertook are summarized as follows:

Step 1: Open coding

Open coding is the “process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). I conducted open coding to the 27 interview transcriptions, two tour narratives, two brochures, and the film script after I uploaded them into ATLAS.ti; a computer software that helps sort and visualize data. I read all the data line by line to identify unit as they came to my mind (fragments of information or ideas), then assigned codes to groups of units that has similar meaning (or idea). During this first step I tried to be as flexible as possible while asking questions like “What is this data a study of?” in order to generate codes that intuitively related to my initial research questions. There is no set rule on how broad the open codes should be and for that, my codes consisted of one word at times or

a full sentence at others. At the end of step 1, I counted 3,658 units gathered under 231 codes from the three data sources combined: interview and document transcripts (tour narratives, brochures, and film script).

Step 2: Selective coding for core categories

After going through the same process for all the transcripts, I used ATLAS.ti to create families (or categories) under which I assigned each one of the codes. For instance, I grouped the initial codes “hearing about the community protest” and “been involved with ABG committee since 1992” under the larger category “community involvement.” At the end of step 2, I had gathered the 231 broad codes and 3,658 units into a manageable set of categories through selective coding and clumping. For example, as I went through the data units, I selectively coded and then grouped the data related to *trauma* and *healing*, collapsing the two categories *trauma* and *healing* under a broader *healing* category. Erlandson et al. (1993) explained this process of emerging category designation through five major stages: 1) reading the first unit of data (or code) and assigning it under the first category; 2) reading the second unit of data and either place it under the same category or create a new one; 3) continuing the same process until all the units have been assigned to a category; 4) creating category titles and/or descriptions; and 5) starting the process all over again to allow for adjustments in the assignment of units and for the emergence of new categories.

Step 3: Development of patterns and themes

Similarly to the previous step, I then identified major themes under which I grouped the categories. At the end of step 2, general patterns emerged from the properties of the

existing categories; with properties being the characteristics of a category, or “the delineation of which defines and gives it meaning” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101).

The emergent themes are able to tell a story. These themes include, but are not limited to community protest and involvement, understanding and telling the history of New York, contribution of enslaved Africans, connection with the ancestors, homage and respect of the ancestors, pride and strength, learning, are presented in a table format in both Chapters IV and V.

Throughout the three steps of coding I interacted between the data and the literature related to my research questions in order to better inform the analysis. Towards the end of the overall data gathering and analysis process, it was clear that several key categories identified through literature review and discussion with experts seemed to be appropriate as an analytical framework to study dark tourism (Jamal & Lelo, 2010). They were interwoven into my research questions during an iterative process of going back and forth with the literature review. Guided by my research questions, I observed and asked questions around Relationships (R), Acts (A), Intentions (I), Site (S), Agent (A) (visitor, experience, perceptions, etc.) and regularly reported my thoughts and assumptions in my reflexive journal. The RAISA framework is discussed further in Chapter V.

3.5.2. Example of participant observation notes and a “typical” tour

Large groups (10 members and up) visiting the ABG must make a reservation in advance in order for the site to accommodate for their number. Smaller groups or individual visitors can walk in at any time of the day during operating hours. The

entrance of the visitor center is located on Broadway Avenue along Ted Weiss Building's wall but it does not have any clearly visible signage that draws the attention of passersby. I noted that:

- The door is along the wall of the building which gives the impression that it is a side door for the building, not a separate entrance to a different site.
- The door remains closed, so no one can really see what is inside unless they come in
- Although there is the inscription “African Burial Ground National Monument” and “National Park Service” above the door, there is no inviting sign that grabs the attention of passersby that shows that this is a space open to the public (see Figure 3.6). Instead, that entrance can be easily mistaken with the entrance to any other administrative building of Lower Manhattan.



Figure 3.6: Entrance to the ABG Visitor Center

The section below presents a picture of a “typical” visit at the ABG, based on my observations at the AFB. The visit by Mary (a fictional visitor I create for the purpose of this illustration) starts with her entry into the site, continues with a tour of the visitor center, and ends with her touring the outdoor memorial that is around the corner, on the North East side of the Ted Weiss Federal Building.

Once Mary opens the entrance doors of the visitor center, security makes her go through an airport style check in which consists of: removing all metal objects and coats, having her bag searched (which will all go through an x-ray machine), stepping through the metal detector, and also being pat-down. The security guards also remind Mary that food, beverages, and gum are not allowed on-site. After she collects all her belonging and steps into the lobby, the ranger covering the front desk adds one more visitor to the tally counter. Mary is welcomed by another park ranger at the front desk area who gives her a general overview of the site (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7: Rangers Greeting Visitors at the Front Desk

The ranger offers her a brochure a brochure about the ABG, tells her about the film shown in the theatre every 15 minutes, and explains that she can either watch it now or after she tours the exhibit area. Mary decides to start with the film as she hears it sets the context of the core exhibit area. Once the movie starts, one ranger counts the number of people seated in the theater during that viewing.

At the end of the 20-minute film, Mary walks to the exhibit area: first, spending some time at the main area where she realizes that the life-size wax figures displayed resemble some of the characters in the film. Like most visitors, she takes the time to meticulously look at the wax figures, from the faces, hands, and the detail of the clothing (see Figure 3.8).



Figure 3.8: Life-Size Wax Figures

Mary then goes around the other three exhibits areas where she learns about: 1) the scientific work conducted between the discovery of the bones in 1991 and their reinterment in 2003; 2) the African origins of the enslaved and their daily lives in early NY under the slave codes; and 3) the involvement of the community during the

development of the site. Mary converses and asks questions to a ranger on rotation in that exhibit area. To finish exploring all the exhibits she stops at the reflection station where she fills out a reflection card and records a short reflection video on her impression of the site.

At the end of her visit, Mary provides her personal information and comments on the guest book at the front desk. Lastly she visits the gift shop before heading out to the memorial. While there is no admission fee to visit the ABG, donations are welcome.

Mary arrives at the memorial, she is welcomed by another ranger who gives her a brief overview of the memorial and then invites her to walk through it. On guided tours, rangers take the visitors through the memorial and describe all the elements of the site. However, most visitors who come alone tour the memorial on their own. Mary steps to the right and stops in front of the seven mounds where the remains were interred back in 2003, to say a prayer and meditate for a moment (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10). Then she enters the gray granite Ancestral Chamber, whose structure was inspired by those slave ships crossing the Atlantic Ocean from Africa to the New World. After that, she walks down the stairs, as if exiting the ship and arrives in the Circle of the Diaspora where she looks at the map of the world with the African continent at its center engraved on the ground. She hears and sees the water fountains that give her a feeling of serenity and peace (see Figures 3.11 and 3.12). Finally, Mary makes her way up the Circle as she takes a look at the different spiritual symbols engraved on the black circular granite wall (see Figure 3.13). These symbols are Akan, Christian, Muslim, and Native American, among others. Once she is back up on the street level, Mary seats on a bench to take it all

in and meditate once more before she leaves the memorial and goes about her day (see Figure 3.14).



Figure 3.9: Memorial – Ancestral Chamber

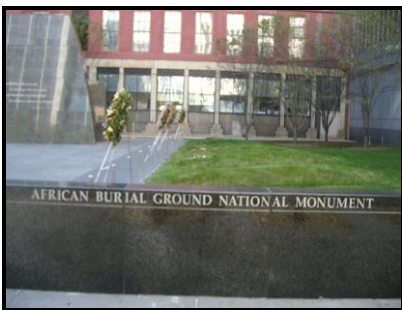


Figure 3.10: Mounds at the Memorial



Figure 3.11: Entrance to the Ancestral Chamber



Figure 3.12: Exit to the Ancestral Chamber



Figure 3.13: Circle of the Diaspora



Figure 3.14: Visitors at the Memorial

3.6. Trustworthiness of the study

When it comes to determining the quality of a research study, the standards to evaluate qualitative research depend on the assumptions made about the research and

how these play out throughout the study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). This qualitative research study was conducted based on a social constructivist approach as advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These authors called for trustworthiness and argued for a substitution of the positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity for the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in constructivist research. Table 3.7 compares the criteria for trustworthiness in both traditional and constructivist research, and provides an illustration of constructivist techniques for each criterion to be met.

Table 3.7: Establishing trustworthiness: A comparison of conventional and naturalistic inquiry. Source: Erlandson et al. (1993) adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Criterion	Conventional Term	Naturalistic³² Term	Naturalistic³³ Techniques
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility	Prolonged engagement Persistent observation Triangulation Referential adequacy Peer debriefing Member checks Reflexive journal
Applicability	External validity	Transferability	Thick description Purposive sampling Reflexive journal
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability	Dependability audit Reflexive journal
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability	Confirmability audit Reflexive journal

³² Constructivist

³³ Constructivist

Credibility consists of the compatibility between the constructed realities of participants and those attributed to them by the researcher. In that way, credibility has to be established with the participants of the study. Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, member checks, and reflexive journal are constructivist techniques that can be used to attain credibility. In this study, I used actions such as the following:

- Spent approximately three months in the field (combining phases 2 and 3) collecting and analyzing data.
- Engaged in daily observations (9 am-5 pm) and reported my reflections in my journal.
- Used multiple sources of data (observations and interviews conducted at different times and different locations) and methods (interviews, observations, and documents).
- Took photographs and videos which provided additional background meaning to support the main data.
- Engaged in discussions with my advisor, committee members, peer debriefer and fellow doctoral students all along the process of this research.
- Shared the transcripts of the interviews with the participants so they could verify their contents.
- Kept personal journals, in which I reflected on my biases and thoughts and reported my diverse observations, as well as more theoretical reflections on the research questions, the methodology and the epistemology that guided this

research. I also reflected on my position as a researcher in the field and reported all the steps I took during the research process such as the scheduling of interviews, activities engaged in daily, or place and time of observations.

Transferability is the extent to which findings of one study can be applied to another research context. Guba and Lincoln (1989, as cited in Erlandson, et. al, 1993) argued that “in a naturalistic study, the obligation for demonstrating transferability belongs to those who applied it to the receiving context” (p. 33). Thick description, purposive sampling, and reflexive journal are constructivist strategies that can help attain transferability. The thick descriptions of research setting, interviews, observations, documents provided in this report should allow the reader to see things through my eyes and transfer my research to his or her own context.

Dependability guaranties that, with a similar context and respondents, the findings of a study can be replicated. This can be achieved through tools like dependability audit (audit trail) and the reflexive journal. I kept my records clear and in order so that any auditor (advisor or committee members) would be able to find and understand the information.

Finally, **confirmability** ensures that the findings are the results of the focus of the inquiry instead of the researcher’s own biases. In order to achieve confirmability, I also used constructivist techniques such as confirmability audit (audit trail)³⁴ and a reflexive journal to enable me to habitually engage in reflexive thought about my work, my

³⁴ I kept detailed records of the process of data collection and analysis. These include but are not limited to the method of recruitment of the participants, the time and location of the interview, the choice of pseudonyms, the choice of the onsite tours to record, transcribe, and analyze, methodological and theoretical notes, and the coding process.

positionality and my own “biases” (note that terms like confirmability and biases in a social constructivist approach have to be approached from an inter-subjective, constructivist stance). Reflexivity, I would argue, is a better criterion to address under trustworthiness, and I have provided a detailed account of my reflexive journey further below.

3.7. Ethical considerations

The constructivist nature of this research entailed the intrusion into peoples’ lives as well as the different settings I found myself in during the fieldwork. This realization compelled me to ensure that ethical considerations were on the forefront of my research.

This research study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board – Human Subjects in Research at Texas A&M University prior to the commencement of the interviewing process. I was also granted a permit from the National Park Service to conduct this research in relation to the African Burial Ground National Monument. Before starting any interviews, I explained to each potential participant the purpose of the study and if they were interested in participating and they gave me their informed consent. The consent form informed participants about the purpose of the study, the use and storage of the data, and their rights to confidentiality, and withdrawal from the study. I informed all my participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview or the study at any time without any consequences. Also, as mentioned earlier, I assigned a pseudonym to each of the participants. Pseudonyms were used in the transcripts of the interviews, the notes, the text and audio files, as well as in this dissertation. All the data resulting from this

research was kept in a secure location and was only accessible to me and my committee chair. In addition, I sent all participants a copy of the transcript of our interviews to give them the opportunity to check for parts that needed clarification or that needed to be removed from the transcript. I also offered participants the opportunity to receive the final findings of this research if interested. In order to reduce the disturbance to participants' routines to a minimum, the interview dates, times, and locations were selected in accordance to participants' preference and comfort. During my observations on site, I was thoughtful about the potential disturbance of my presence to the visitor experience and generally tried to engage in conversation if a visitor initiated it.

3.8. My reflexive journey

My interest in research on African American tourists grew out of my initial interest in tourism in Africa. Being exposed to the ethnic diversity in the U.S. increased my curiosity and the covert connection I feel with African Americans. During my first months in the U.S., starting from the fall of 2004, I noticed (through observations and informal conversations) several cultural similarities between myself and the many African Americans in my social circle. I also noticed numerous differences, and in order to understand what separated and tied me to this group, I attempted to educate myself on African history, the transatlantic slave trade, and the experience of African Americans during slavery, lawful segregation, and today's America. I strove to gain a better understanding of African Americans: sharing my interest with my African American in-laws and engaging them in dialogue, attending seminars and workshops organized by the Africana Studies and History departments at Texas A&M University, watching

documentaries, television programs, and movies related to the history of African Americans (e.g. “Sankofa,” “Slavery and the Making of America,” and “Eyes on the Prize”), and so on. This increase in knowledge led me to be more critical of the context when I watch commercials, watch music videos, listen to black celebrities, or even talk to other black students or black faculty. I strongly believe in the importance of education and I am aware of my responsibilities as a scholar and as a citizen of the world.

I do not consider myself African American, but I feel I can relate to some of their experiences because of my “race” and my African origins. Henderson (1998) claimed that any researcher can do research with a different ethnic or cultural group if the work is done with the proper strategy. She stressed the importance of communicating to the participants the purpose and use of the research, as well as the final report. I was careful not to generalize the behaviors and thoughts of one participant to the entire group and to avoid stereotyping. For that, the use of member checks and peer debriefing was fundamental. Additionally, I made the effort to consistently record in my journal and reflect on my biases, feelings, and thoughts regarding my position in the field. Wolf (1992) indicated the importance of reflecting on power in research. As my study was embedded in the context of race and ethnicity, I remained aware of the power relationship between me and my participants. I have mentioned in Chapter II and again in this Chapter III that there is very little information on African American tourists. During my field work, I reflected on this fact in relation to the lower economic, social, and political position of African Americans in the U.S. today.

I understood that my personal interest in the topic of my research as well as my position of authority influenced my role in interpreting my participants' narratives (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001). I was aware of the ways my background – as a female, foreigner, and educated researcher – guided my research process as well as how my experiences in the field shaped my sense of self. As a matter of fact, it was not until my third trip to New York (June-August 2010) that I felt a personal connection to the ABG. At first, I perceived the ABG as an “African American site” that had barely anything to do with me, as an African. However, as I spent more time reading about the history of the site and the lives of the enslaved buried there, I came to feel a sense of ownership. I realized that one of the first 11 Africans brought to New Amsterdam could have been my direct ancestor. It touched me even deeper once I learned that one of them was named Simon Congo. During the transatlantic slave trade it was common for slave traders to give Christian first names to the Africans and last names that related to the area they embarked from. Simon is my father's first name and I am from the Congo. How odd. Or maybe not. Either way, since then I perceived the free and enslaved Africans buried in that burial ground as “my people” at a level that was much more personal than just a racial connection.

The time I spent on the field was not always as rewarding as developing my sense of connection to my ancestors, but rather frustrating and lonely at times. It was mostly frustrating when things did not go according to my plan; e.g. not having as much support from the park as I expected, not finding as many participants as I anticipated, not finding the right time to meet with ABG staff, or not having enough financial resources.

To cope with the feelings of loneliness I took days “off” from research to stay home or to engage in activities that kept my mind away from the study: shopping/window shopping, sightseeing, attending musical events, going to parks, and spending time with visiting friends and new acquaintances.

I believe that in some instances my identity influenced the conversations I had with my participants. I felt that participants opened up to me because of my gender (female), race/ethnicity (black), faith (Christian) and origins (D.R. of the Congo, Africa). In fact, one of my participants admitted that she would have still talked to me if I were a white girl but not as openly because, according to her, a white girl would have twisted her words and published something inaccurate. Another participant told me that he could not tell my origins based on my accent over the phone. He actually thought I was white, and said he was happily surprised to see that I was Black. I did not know what to make of these comments but I was glad both participants felt comfortable enough to talk to me. I felt a particular sense of comfort and belonging during my interview with Damon when he spoke about what his dreadlocks meant to him:

This is what my locks look [touching his hair] I’m a lion. I’m the mane but I’m a panther. But this is my mane. This shows off **my pride, my skill**. This is me.

Damon. August 27, 2010

A member of the Black Panthers, Damon wears his dreadlocks with pride and care. I was very glad my hair was braided and neither relaxed nor weaved as he went on to describe the beauty of braids:

[...] But this is my locks. **This is my pride** [touching his hair]. This is to show them [white people]. **I am proud** of this here. This [his hair] is beautiful. If you go back to ancient culture, we had that. This [dreadlocks] is what they [ancient Africans] had. In Egypt this is what they had; they

had braids. [I pointed at my own braids], Yes! You look at their [ancient Africans] Queens, they had braids. They were beautiful.

Damon. August 27, 2010

I also felt I gained access to some places because of my skin color. On my way to Abyssinian Baptist Church (here after Abyssinian) for the 11 am Sunday Worship service, the subway line was disrupted and a lot of tourists on board did not know how to get to their final destination. I met a white French family on the subway who also planned to attend that church service.

Abyssinian is one of the oldest churches in Harlem and is featured as a major attraction in tourism guides of New York City because of its history, architecture, and talented gospel choir. Abyssinian's administrators are well aware of the popularity of the church among tourists as they posted a "Tourist Policy" on its website for first time visitors. The document stipulates that "Worship at The Abyssinian Baptist Church IS NOT A GOSPEL PERFORMANCE or entertainment of any kind" and adds guidelines such as dress code, use of photography, time of visit, size of the group visiting, duration of the service, and the expected wait outside of the church [emphasis in the original] (The Abyssinian Baptist Church, 2010).

As the family and I arrived to Abyssinian, there was already an extremely long line of tourists waiting to enter the church. The line went down several blocks. I did not have a "reservation" to attend the service as a visitor but because my visit had a dual purpose (attend church and recruit potential participants), I had no intention to wait outside and risk not getting in. I went up to the usher to ask him how long he thought it would take us to get in. He replied that most of the people in line would likely not get in

because there were already too many visitors and added that he was not racist, but that I was “fine,” I could get in. I said my goodbyes to the family and as I proceeded in the church, I could not help but feel like he let me in just because I am black. While I did not intentionally try to identify people of color waiting in line, it was clear to me that most of the visitors were white. This feeling I had was confirmed to me by Helen, one of my participants and often visitor at Abyssinian, who told me that she was bothered by the line of tourists coming to churches in Harlem and added that because I am black I can just walk right in Abyssinian Church.

Also, during the service, I noticed how most of the lower level of the church was seated by the black congregation (and visitors like me) and how most of the balcony was seated by white tourists. During transition times in the service, ushers led visitors to available seats in the balcony. Although this was not too distracting to those of us seated on the lower level, it was certainly noticeable. At the start of the service, the lead Pastor acknowledged visitors and reminded us of some of the guidelines to follow, including not to take pictures, audio/video recordings, or to leave the service before its conclusion. Another indication that Abyssinian is aware of the high attendance of tourists in the services was revealed in the weekly bulletin as the information regarding donations was featured in 5 different languages (Spanish, French, German, Swahili, and Korean). For that matter, the translated versions were longer than the original English version as they expanded on the purpose of tithes and donations, the financial independence of the church from the state, and the church’s use of donations.

CHAPTER IV

PRODUCTION AND REPRESENTATION OF SLAVERY HERITAGE

This chapter focuses on the production and representation of slavery heritage at dark tourism sites like the African Burial Ground National Monument. The first part includes background information in reference to the process of development and management of the burial ground, from its use around 1696 until 2011. The second part shows how slavery is represented and interpreted in different areas of the site and how the participants of this study react to that representation.

4.1. Development and management of the African Burial Ground

In order to address the process of development of the African Burial Ground, this section will first examine the history of the site and second, its management, including the key stakeholders involved. In other words, this section covers the first part of the forth research question: “What is the history of the development of slavery-related sites? - How involved are those whose heritage is being represented?”

The information offers insights into the politics involved in the development and management of the site, such as public participation in the development process. This is especially of interest as the ABG differs from other NPS sites in that was established out of a grassroots movement within the New York community, which expressed an interest in preserving the land and honoring those buried there. To fully understand this process, we must explore the full history of the site.

4.1.1. History of the African Burial Ground (1690s -1794)

The Dutch were the first Europeans to settle in today's New York in 1625³⁵. Initially the Dutch engaged in trade with local Native Americans, and eventually took ownership of the southern tip of today's Manhattan to establish New Amsterdam (Hansen & McGowan, 1998). The first eleven enslaved Africans arrived in New Amsterdam around 1626, brought by the Dutch West India Company, only one year after the Dutch settled in the area. These were owned by the Company, not individuals (Harris, 2003). The work of these Africans included clearing land for farms, planting and harvesting farms, broadening Indian trails, building the forts, mills, and houses. In other words, enslaved Africans were colony builders in New Amsterdam just like they were all around the Americas and the Caribbean. The African workforce was also used to build two major protective walls to protect the colony from Indian and British invasions. These two walls were erected where Wall Street and Chambers Street are today.

In 1644, the governor of the colony granted enslaved Africans their petitions for freedom and allotted them plots of land outside of the city. However, this freedom was partial ("half freedom") as the children of free parents were born into slavery and "belonged" to the Dutch West India Company (Berlin & Harris, 2005; Harris, 2003). Moreover, freed Africans were obligated to provide a portion of their harvest to the Company and could be called at any time to work in the city (Berlin & Harris, 2005, p. 9). In spite of such limitations, these Africans managed to develop livelihoods, owning land and expanding their farms (about thirty farms) to form what was then called "The

³⁵ However the first non-Native American to settle in Manhattan Island was Jan Rodrigues, a free man and sailor of African and possible Afro-European descent, from a Dutch vessel (Harris, 2003, Moore, 2005).

Land of the Blacks,” spanning from today’s Chinatown up to Greenwich Village (Berlin & Harris, 2005).

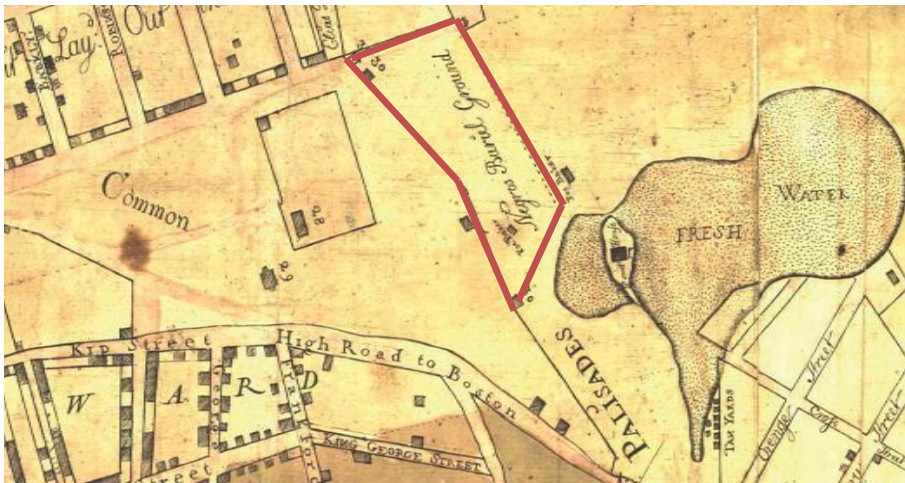


Figure 4.1: Maerschalck Plan. Source: The African Burial Ground Project. The “Negros Burial Ground” is clearly labeled and delimited in red.

The land was not granted to the blacks out of generosity but from a strategic standpoint: if there were an attack (from Indians or the British) the blacks would be the first victims and the city would have time to form its defense (Hansen & McGowan, 1998). Therefore, the land of the blacks served as a “buffer zone” (Berlin & Harris, 2005, p. 8). Table 4.1 presents the enslaved population in the colony between 1627 and 1664, which was during British rule.

Table 4.1: Blacks in New Amsterdam. Sources: Hodges (1999) and Berlin (1998)

Date	Total population	Free blacks	Enslaved blacks	Percentage of population enslaved
1627	300	0	11	4%
1638	300	0	100	33%
1664	1,500	75	300	20%

By the time the British took control of New Amsterdam in 1664, many Africans had accepted Christianity, and by law, being Christian and baptized allowed them to be free. However, colony administrators looked by for ways to justify slavery as slave labor greatly supported the development of the city (Harris, 2003). By 1655, the Dutch church had already stopped converting Africans and in fear of insurrections, the colony administrators imposed a series of laws and regulations on the lives of enslaved Africans as their number grew. One way in which freedom was curtailed was by minimizing enslaved Africans' baptisms and conversions to Christianity. In 1706 a law was passed stating that baptizing enslaved people would not grant them freedom (Hansen & McGowan, 1998; Harris, 2003).

In terms of religious practices, not only were Africans converted to Christianity and baptized, they also attended church along white settlers and buried their loved ones in a cemetery located in the gardens of the Dutch West India Company, in a section of a family plot if they were domestic servants, or in Trinity Church cemetery. In 1696, the

British passed a law that forbade Africans to be buried within the limits of the city.³⁶ Free and enslaved Africans had no choice but to bury their loved ones in the undesirable plot of land outside of the city that was used as a potter's field, "a burial ground where outsiders in a village and very poor people [were] interred. It was a place for outcasts and a dumping ground for the refuse from the nearby pottery kilns, where ceramics were manufactured. Yet the African Burial Ground gave Africans and people of African descent the opportunity to retain an important element of their African past – funeral and burial customs" (Hansen & McGowan, 1998, p. 34).

Just like the white population, blacks were divided in their allegiance to the British Army or the Continental Army during the American Revolution. Many were attracted to the British Army because of promises of freedom. Those who joined the loyalist forces, in a way, believed in the notion of freedom that loyalists were fighting for, in the hope of receiving their own as well. Although numerous black men were granted freedom for their service with the Continental Army, the slave laws remained in New York for many years after the end of the Revolution. Nonetheless, the slave system was eventually abandoned as the population of free blacks increased. According to Freeman (1994), there were 1011 free and 2369 enslaved African Americans living in New York by 1790. Ten years later, the number of free Africans reached 2868. Slavery in New York was finally abolished in 1841.

As the city developed and the need for available land increased, the African Burial Ground officially closed in 1794. The site was covered with landfill and forgotten

³⁶ This law also applied to Jews and Catholics.

until its re-discovery in 1991 during excavation work for the construction of a federal building in Lower Manhattan. The next section shows the contemporary picture of the ABG (1991-2011), and explores how history is being presented or, rather, represented at this site.

4.1.2. Discovery and development of the African Burial Ground (1991-2011)

Description and chronology of major events

In 1987, the General Services Administration (GSA) sought to buy a plot of land in Lower Manhattan to build a federal court building, an office tower with an adjacent pavilion, and a parking lot. However, before the GSA could initiate the construction, it had to comply with a series of legislation, including section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, which states:

The head of any Federal agency having direct or indirect jurisdiction over a proposed Federal or federally assisted undertaking in any State and the head of any Federal department or independent agency having authority to license any undertaking shall, prior to the approval of the expenditure of any Federal funds on the undertaking or prior to the issuance of any license, as the case may be, take into account the effect of the undertaking on any district, site, building, structure, or object that is included in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The head of any such Federal agency shall afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation established under Title II of this Act a reasonable opportunity to comment with regard to such undertaking.³⁷

In addition, Section 110 of the same Act requires the GSA to not only initiate a process of analysis of the property but to include the interested community in that process, as stated in the following extract:

³⁷ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (2008). <http://www.achp.gov/docs/nhpa%202008-final.pdf> Retrieved on August 4, 2011.

[...] provide a process for the identification and evaluation of historic properties for listing in the National Register and the development and implementation of agreements, in consultation with State Historic Preservation Officers, local governments, Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, and the interested public, as appropriate, regarding the means by which adverse effects on such properties will be considered.³⁸

Thus, in March of 1989, the GSA and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that outlined the GSA's responsibilities for the protection of any potential historic resources in the area. Although the Environmental Impact Statement³⁹ mentioned the presence of the "Negros Burial Ground" based on existing maps and historical facts, experts doubted they would find any remains as the cemetery had been covered and built on since the end of the 18th century.

The GSA contracted with Historic Conservation and Interpretation (HCI), an archaeological firm, to survey the land. In early 1991, HCI uncovered intact human burials which, with the help of the Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team (MFAT), were transferred to the labs of Lehman College in the Bronx in September of the same year. Figure 4.2 is a contemporary map of the burial ground, showing the historic burial ground boundaries as identified and proposed by the National Park Service in October 1992.

³⁸ Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (2008). <http://www.achp.gov/docs/nhpa%202008-final.pdf> Retrieved on August 4, 2011

³⁹ Federal agencies are required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in order to meet the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which "requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions" <http://www.epa.gov/oecaerth/nepa/index.html>. Retrieved on August 24, 2011

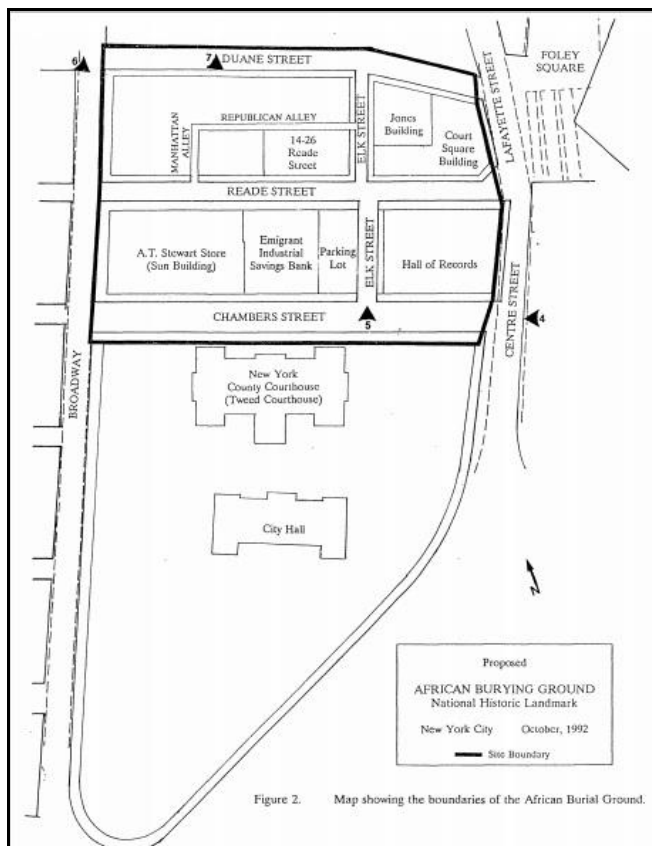


Figure 4.2: Contemporary Map of Lower Manhattan Showing the Boundaries of the ABG

Not until multiple burials were excavated did the word circulate in the African American community about the existence of an African burial ground being uncovered in Lower Manhattan. Indeed, some members of the community, like Derek, one of my participants who took the initiative to inform the media in September 1991, had heard about the significant discovery as early as July 1991. However, the GSA only made its public announcement of the discovery on October 8, 1991, that is, 8 months after the first human remains were found.

Participants in this study who protested the excavation of the graves explained how outraged they were by the way the GSA had handled the situation, especially the disrespectful removal and storage of the bones, and the lack of community inclusion in the process, as mandated by section 110 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. They felt like the African American community in NY should have been informed from the beginning, before the exhuming of any remains. Similarly, such incidents of exclusion have been recorded at other historic and sacred sites (see National Historic Preservation Act of 1966⁴⁰).

According to Derek, the GSA “hustled” to organize a press conference to announce the discovery of the human skeletons once word spread in the community.

Derek has vivid recollections of that period of time:

[...] we informed the NY Times “that’s what was happening”. Then a week passed and no stories came out about it and then I got kind of a panic call the last week of September: the archaeologist said they heard that the government was about to do what is called “the coroner’s method,” which is that they were gonna stop the nice meticulous excavation and start using shovels. So just shovel the remains in bags and then figure it out later, you know. They wanted to make the project go faster, you know. So, anyway, I got in touch with a news reporter from a television station in NY called Fox TV, channel 5, and she convinced her editor that it was a good story and sent the camera crew down, with me and the camera crew. And they ran the story. I think it was October 3rd or 4th on a Friday evening. And that broke the story. And the GSA scrambled that weekend. So they made the announcement. It was on around the 7th or 8th. It was a Tuesday, it was a sort unveiling, you know, “there was a cemetery here and they’re finding bones” and it just built from that point on.

Not only were the bones unearthed without the community’s knowledge and approval, they were wrapped in newspapers and stored in a basement at Lehman

⁴⁰ <http://www.achp.gov/docs/nhpa%202008-final.pdf>

College. Michael Blakey commented: “we intervened in time to prevent the potential for further deterioration, such as the spread of mold in the skeletal remains due to inadequate environmental controls, and improper storage of skeletal materials on top of fragile bone.”⁴¹ This lack of scientific and cultural sensitivity toward the remains was perceived as scandalous by members of the African-American community, who organized protests and vigils during from late 1991 until mid 1992. By July 1992, at least 390 burials had been exhumed and the GSA showed no willingness to stop, despite pressure from the African descendent community. It was not until Congress held a hearing during that same month, threatening not to fund any other GSA projects until construction stopped, that excavations were halted.

The MOA from 1989 was later amended and signed by the GSA, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. The amended version required the GSA to:

- Develop and implement a research design for the cemetery and other archaeological sites within the project area
- Sensitively remove all exposed human remains
- Analyze the human remains and associated grave artifacts
- Reinter the human remains and associated artifacts
- Develop a memorial, site interpretation, and a public outreach program.⁴²

As the project grew beyond the capacity of HCI, the GSA contracted a more experienced archaeological firm, John Milner Associates (JMA), to take over the project

⁴¹ <http://www.archaeology.org/online/features/afrburial/> retrieved on August 8, 2011.

⁴² NPS (2005). Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground.

administration. The latter worked with the team of scientists at Howard University led by Dr. Michael Blakey to develop a research plan for analyzing the remains. Also in 1992, the GSA opened Foley Square Laboratory at the World Trade Center where all field records and artifacts were stored.

A number of committees and task forces were simultaneously created to keep a watchful eye on the GSA's actions. One of these was a two-year Federal Advisory Steering Committee that Congress required the GSA to create in October 1992 to supply recommendations for the burial ground. This included (1) the review of proposals regarding the human remains on the Pavilion site, (2) the analysis, curation and reinterment of remains removed from the African Burial Ground and (3) the construction of a memorial or other improvements on the Pavilion site. The Steering Committee served as an intermediary between the GSA, the scientific team, and the African American community of New York City, who unlike its enslaved ancestors, was able to speak for itself (LaRoche & Blakey, 1997, p. 96). It was also the Steering Committee's responsibility to approve the research design proposed by the scientific team at Howard University. A few days later, President George H. W. Bush signed Public Law 102-393 ordering the GSA to abandon construction on the planned pavilion site, and approving the appropriation of up to \$3 million for modification of the pavilion site and appropriate memorialization of the African Burial Ground (African Burial Ground, n.d.).

By November 1993, all the remains had been taken to Howard University, the leading Historically Black College and University in Physical Anthropology. The Steering Committee, representing the interests of the African American community in

New York City approved of the transfer of the bones to Howard because it believed the scientific analysis and findings would not be distorted by Eurocentric views there.

Nonetheless, it is important to note here that not all members of the Steering Committee agreed with the decisions and direction for the burial ground, as particularly illustrated in the interviews with Pattie and Karen. Indeed, it would be a mistake to assume that the African descendent community in NY is a homogenous group with identical interests and priorities.

The archaeological firm, John Milner Associates' (JMA), also managed, staffed, and operated the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) as an intermediary between the scientific team and the community in order to report progress of the findings and to provide educational programs. Housed in the World Trade Center and headed by Dr. Sherrill Wilson, OPEI was formed in March 1993 and arranged tours, volunteer trainings, lectures, and other educational programs until October 2005.

In 1994, the construction of the federal building at 290 Broadway was completed, and in that same year, the Federal Steering Committee was disbanded by the GSA. Then, in 1996, the GSA hired architect Peggy King Jorde as a consultant for the memorialization of the ABG project. By 1998, the GSA opened an international competition for the design of the outdoor memorial. The jury was composed of professionals and scholars in architecture, planning, arts, and preservation.

When tragedy struck on the morning of September 11, 2001, the Foley Square Laboratory was destroyed in the attacks. Fortunately, most of the material was recovered

from the rubble. A new laboratory and OPEI were set up at two new locations in Manhattan.

In early 2003, the Schomburg Center was contracted by the GSA to organize and execute the reinterment ceremony. The activities surrounding the reburial commenced on September 30, 2003, in Washington, D.C., and ended on October 4, 2003, at the African Burial Ground in New York City, the final resting place of the human bones. The remains of one man, one woman, one boy, and one girl were taken on a procession between Washington and NYC, passing through Baltimore (MD), Wilmington (DE), Philadelphia (PA), and Newark (NJ); commemorative events were held at each stop. This six-city week-long celebration named the *Rites of Ancestral Return* led to the reinterment of all 419 remains placed in hand carved mahogany coffins lined with kente cloth from Ghana.⁴³ In fact, the total number of coffins was 420, as the last one contained all the artifacts exhumed in addition to notes, drawings and offerings from community members (Wilson, 2005). The seven mounds and seven trees on the grassy south side of the Memorial mark the location of the reinterred remains, as illustrated in Figure 4.3. Although the remains were set to be reinterred by 2000, delays by the GSA prevented the reburial from occurring until October 2003 (Blakey, 2010). Around 10,000 people attended the ceremony in New York City, including poet Maya Angelou, actors Cicely Tyson (*Roots*), Phylicia Rashad (*The Cosby Show*), Avery Brooks (*Star Trek*), Delroy Lindo (*Malcom X*), and Sidney Poitier (Wilson, 2005).

⁴³ NPS (2008).



Figure 4.3: View of the Mounds at the Exterior Memorial

In September 2003, the GSA and the National Park Service signed an interagency agreement as the latter was called to assist the former in the selection of the design. In 2005, Rodney Léon's design was recognized as the winner of the competition; it was inaugurated in 2007. In 2006, the African Burial Ground was proclaimed a National Monument and the NPS gained full management of the site. In February 2006, a temporary interpretive center opened on the first floor of the Ted Weiss Federal Building, pending the opening of the new visitor center in February 2010. In February 2011, a bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives to establish the African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Education Center in a building adjacent to the current African Burial Ground National Monument in NY.

A long series of events have therefore occurred in the contemporary history of the burial ground since the re-discovery of the burial ground in 1991. Table 4.2 summarizes these events chronologically. Some were more significant than others and are repeatedly reinforced on site, such as the discovery of the bones in 1991, the

designation of the site as a Historical Landmark in 1993 and as a National Park in 2006, the reinterment ceremony in 2003, the opening of the memorial in 2007 and of the visitor center in 2010. Consequently, these milestone dates are highlighted here in bold.

Table 4.2: Chronology of major events. Adapted from Howie (2011) and the African Burial Ground National Monument (n.d.)⁴⁴

Date	Critical events
March 15, 1989	The United States General Services Administration (GSA) purchases two plots of land in Lower Manhattan from the City of New York for the construction of a federal court building and an office tower.
February 1991	Archaeological fieldwork begins.
October 8, 1991	Press conference held by the GSA at burial site. African American community expresses outrage at being uninformed about the ABG site and demands a role in the decision making process.
July 29, 1992	Excavation on pavilion portion of site officially terminated by the GSA. An estimated 410 burials are retrieved from the site prior to suspension. Another ten or eleven remains are left exposed, and then eventually removed. An estimated one to two hundred burials remain undisturbed.
August 9-10, 1992	Twenty-six-hour vigil held on the burial ground site; continuous drumming accompanies performance tributes and spiritual rituals to honor the ancestors.
September 6-7, 1992	Two-hour vigil held at the African Burial Ground site. Participants paying homage to ancestors interred in the burial ground call for the site to be designated a landmark. The event is marked by music and dance, and by prayers led by several religious leaders.
October 9, 1992	Excavation of exposed burials completed and site closed down.
October 26, 1992	The Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground (FSC) created by Congress to provide recommendations for the African Burial Ground Project.
February 25, 1993	The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designates the African Burial Ground a New York City landmark.
March 1, 1993	The Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) established in the Customs House at 6 World Trade Center as the educational liaison for the burial ground project.
April 19, 1993	The African Burial Ground is designated a National Historic Landmark by the United States Secretary of the Interior.
September 8, 1993	Prayer vigil at 26 Federal Plaza commemorates the official transfer of ancestral remains to Howard University.

⁴⁴ http://www.africanburialground.gov/OPEI_Documents/OPEI_Project_Chronology.htm retrieved on July 14, 2011.

Table 4.2, Continued

Date	Critical events
December 1994	The federal office tower at 290 Broadway opens.
1998	A competition opens to select the design for a monument commemorating the African Burial Ground.
September 11, 2001	Foley Square Laboratory reduced to rubble during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.
Early 2003	The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture contracted to plan and execute the reburial ceremony.
September 2003	The General Services Administration and the National Park Service sign an interagency agreement in which NPS officiates the selection of designs for the external monument and interpretation exhibitions and draft recommendations for future management.
October 3-4, 2003	The remains of 419 disinterred ancestral African New Yorkers laid to rest again during the Rites of Ancestral Return Ceremony.
January-March 2004	The National Park Service holds a series of Listening Sessions to introduce itself and its role in the African Burial Ground to the African descendent community in New York.
April 29, 2005	A jury selects Rodney Léon's design for the monument for the African Burial Ground.
October 2005	OPEI ousted. The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture assumes educational services of the African Burial Ground.
February 2006	Temporary interpretive center opens on the first floor of the Ted Weiss Federal Building.
February 27, 2006	President George W. Bush declares the African Burial Ground a National Monument.
November 1, 2006	The National Park Service assumes the responsibility of visitor services of the African Burial Ground National Monument.
October 5, 2007	The monument to the African Burial Ground dedicated in a ceremony well attended by NPS officials and the public.
February 2010	The new African Burial Ground National Monument visitor center, which includes an exhibition, theater, bookstore, multi-purpose room, and interpretive staff offices, opens in the lobby of the Ted Weiss Federal Building.
February 17, 2011	HR 784 introduced in the US House of Representatives to establish the African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum and Education Center. Shirley McKinney is appointed new superintendant of Manhattan Sites. ⁴⁵
March 2011	The African Burial Ground National Monument absorbed into the Manhattan Sites of New York Harbor when its first superintendent, Tara D. Morrison, leaves for another post.

⁴⁵ The Manhattan Sites of New York Harbor include Federal Hall National Memorial, Castle Clinton National Monument, Theodore Roosevelt Birthplace National Historic Site, General Grant National Memorial and Hamilton Grange National Memorial in the Borough of Manhattan, and Saint Paul's Church National Historic Site, located in Mount Vernon, New York.

Major scientific findings

Three technical reports (one emphasizing the historical context of the cemetery, one analyzing the biological anthropology of the African Burial Ground and the individuals interred therein, and one discussing the archaeology of the site) were produced by the scientific team at Howard University in collaboration with noted scholars and researchers, and are available to the general public at the ABG and online.⁴⁶

As stated earlier, the skeletal remains were taken to the W. Montague Cobb biological Anthropology Laboratory at Howard University in 1993, under the supervision of anthropologist Michael Blakey. According to Blakey (2010, p. 64), “more than 200 researchers, thirty specialists with doctoral degrees, nine laboratories and collaborating universities, twelve years and 6 million dollars were required to complete our work.” In addition, Michael Blakey claimed that GSA was not respecting its engagement and that the funding was not consistently awarded to the scientific team to finish the analysis and lay the remains back in NY in a timely manner. In his interview with magazine *Archaeology*⁴⁷ he advanced:

But with the African Burial Ground we found ourselves standing with a community that wanted to know things that had been hidden from view, buried, about who we are and what this society has been. And in order to do that we found ourselves having to wrestle with a giant government agency [The General Services Agency (GSA), the federal body that owned the land where the African Burial Ground was discovered] that was dismissive and arbitrary.

For ten years we've had a large and complex and interesting scientific project that involved hundreds of skeletons, lots of disciplines, and lots of people. There was careful work that had to be done, lots of interfacing

⁴⁶ http://www.africanburialground.gov/ABG_FinalReports.htm retrieved on August 14, 2011.

⁴⁷ <http://www.archaeology.org/online/interviews/blakey/index.html> retrieved on August 8, 2011.

with the public that had to be done--that's really important. We're doing research on what is the earliest and largest bioarchaeological colonial archaeology population in the Americas and doing it in a way that's more interdisciplinary than usual. That requires resources. And we had to wrestle with the GSA for the simplest things; for funding, for them to be consistent with their agreements about the scope of the project.

The scientific research was guided by four main topics, or inquiries, voiced by the African descendent community during public meetings facilitated by the Federal Steering Committee. They included: 1) the cultural background and origins of the burial population; 2) the cultural and biological transformations from African to African American identities; 3) the quality of life brought about by enslavement in the Americas; and 4) the modes of resistance to enslavement (Perry, Howson, & Bianco, B. (2006).⁴⁸

The analysis of the skeletons at Howard University proved that Africans in colonial New York came mainly from West and West Central African societies, with intensive importation from Madagascar during a short period of time. These findings were supported by historical documents, cultural artifacts, and genetic data (Blakey, 2010). Also, Africans who died in childhood tended to be born in colonial New York and had high levels of lead in their teeth while those who died in adulthood tended to be African-born and had lower levels of lead.⁴⁹ With that said childhood development defects were more frequent in Africans born in the Americas than those born and raised in Africa (Blakey, 2010).

Although the religious background and practices of those interred at the burial ground are difficult to identify, researchers argue that most corpses were wrapped in

⁴⁸ http://www.africanburialground.gov/FinalReports/Archaeology/ABG_Ch01FEB.pdf retrieved on August 8, 2011.

⁴⁹ Lead is a chemical material that was unique to Colonial European materials like soldered pipes and pewter cups.

white linen, as it was traditionally done in several parts of Africa. The burial ground was located close to a water pond as well and most bodies had the head oriented towards the West. Historians advance that in many African cultures, the dead were buried close to water as it is believed it helped souls' transition to the next life in peace (Perry, 1997). Moreover, many African peoples believe in burying their dead in an East-West orientation so that when they rise, their head would face the rising sun (The New York Preservation Archive Project, 2010).

Contrary to popular belief, slavery in the North was harsh and violent toward African adults and children, and New York was no exception. Under Dutch rule, Africans were allowed to own land outside of the city, but once the British took over the city in 1644, they enforced more severe slave codes to control all social aspects of the enslaved lives, that not only prohibited Africans from owning land, but also from burying their loved ones within the city. Yet, the nature of the work was different in New York as enslaved labor had to clear land, build structures, load and unload cargo at the port, install pipes for the water system, cater to domestic duties, run errands, and so on (Berlin & Harris, 2005). As a result, scientists suggest that over one-third of the children buried in the burial ground died within the first two years of life and that 40% of the remains were children under 12 (Blakey, 2010).

Scientists identified numerous signs of malnutrition, stress (possibly through punishment), and hard labor on adults as well as children, which show how ruthless labor was for Africans. Blakey explained that the evidence of heavy work was a clear indication that Africans were pushed to the limits of human biomechanical capacity.

Comparing with data records from the British graveyard at Trinity Church, Africans were about eight times less likely to live past the age of 55 than were the British who enslaved them (Blakey, 2010). In fact, from the bone pathology data, it is argued that the Africans were “worked to death” and that the enslaved born in New York exhibited more lesions, suggesting that the daily hardships of slavery in the New World were more pervasive than those from daily life in Africa. It is estimated that one third of the enslaved population in colonial New York was born in Africa (Shabazz, 2000).

Furthermore, the exhumed graves are a testimony of Africans’ resistance. Because of the restrictive slave codes that prohibited enslaved Africans to gather in groups of 12 or more, funerals were way they defied their enslavers by burying their loved ones with the dignity and respect that was due. Although funerals were prohibited after sunset, Africans took the risk of punishment to bury the dead according to African traditions. Many included artifacts such as buttons, coins, beads, pipes, and pendants.

Findings also pointed out that the woman in Burial 25 was possibly killed by a musket ball found in her ribs. The woman was between 20 and 24 years of age and as the archaeological report states,

Bone fractures suggest that she also had had a blunt-force trauma to the face, and that her lower right arm had been fractured by being twisted and pulled. A small trace of new bone around the fractures suggested that she lived for a short while after the fractures occurred (no more than a few days).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ <http://www.africanburialground.gov/FinalReports/Archaeology/abgvol2afeb.pdf> retrieved August 8, 2011.

During site visits, Ranger Erwin shares some of the findings with the visitors and tells the story of *The woman in Burial 25* with deep passion and emotion as illustrated in his narrative below:

Burial number 25 was a woman. She's about 25 years old and buried in her stomach, in her rib, they found a musket ball or a bullet. The woman had been shot. They later discovered that the woman's wrist had been broken possibly from trying to resist: "No! No! No!" And it broke.

Ranger Erwin – Tour narratives

4.1.3. Management of the African Burial Ground

The process of development of the ABG was long and complex as it involved different agencies and groups with a variety of interests and preferences. The main objective of this section is to present the major stakeholders in the development of the site, in addition to the manifestations of cooperation and conflict between these entities. Particular emphasis will be placed on the community's participation in the process of development and decision-making. Table 4.3 summarizes the major stakeholders, their date or period of involvement, and the role they played in the process of development of the ABG. The information compiled in this table is based on the interview data⁵¹, the brochures offered on site, the film, and the tour narratives. It is highly based on personal communication with the ABG staff, in addition to archival searches (on site⁵² and online⁵³). It is important to note that some of these stakeholders had greater roles than

⁵¹ Including a letter dated on April 2004 sent by the Committee of the Descendents of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground sent the GSA administrator to raise their concerns about the reinterment ceremony

⁵² Reading through the archives at the ABG library, which included multiple OPEI newsletters, newspaper clipping, meeting minutes

⁵³ I conducted Google searches related to the ABG, and retrieved general background information about the ABG

others and that some had been involved for longer than others. For instance, the NPS entered the process of development in 2004, while the African American community of NYC was involved since the beginning in 1991. Although it took the effort of all the stakeholders below to develop and manage the ABG properly, the role of the African American community in NYC is central to the *raison-d'être* of the site. If it was not for the community's organization and persistence, most of the other stakeholders may not have been involved. For that, I specifically focus on this group in the following section.

Table 4.3: Major stakeholders involved in the process of development of the ABG

	Stakeholder	Date of involvement	Role
1	General Service Administration (GSA)	1989-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnered in the interagency agreement with NPS⁵⁴ - Financed the scientific work - Constructed the federal building at 290 Broadway
2	African American community in New York City⁵⁵	Since 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The general public, especially the local African descendent community (essentially all local people of African descent – e.g. African Americans, Caribbean Americans, African immigrants), either as individuals or as members of local organizations; - Organized protests and vigils - Urged Congress, Senate, and New York Mayor's Office to intervene
3	National Park Service	Since 2003 and 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assisted the GSA in organizing the Memorial design competition and selection. - Took over the visitors experience programs - Assumed full control of the ABG in 2006⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The National Park Service Conservation Study Institute (2010)

⁵⁵ Also referred to as "African descendent community"

⁵⁶ Since the Visitor center is located on the first floor of Ted Weiss, NPA pays GSA rent for occupying that space.

Table 4.3, Continued

	Stakeholder	Date of involvement	Role
4	Congress – (then) Congressman Gus Savage Federal Steering Committee (FSC)	1992-1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exerted political pressure on GSA to halt excavations and constructions - Funded the \$15 million project to study, memorialize, and publicize the African Burial Ground - Provided recommendations for the African Burial Ground Project. - Created as the intermediary between GSA, the community, and the ABG project scientist: demands and concerns raised during public meetings were transmitted to the project team - Oversaw GSA’s work at the ABG
5	Senate – (then) Senator David Paterson Task Force for the Overseeing of the ABG	December 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversaw GSA’s work at the ABG
6	The City of New York – (then) Mayor David Dinkins Mayoral Advisory Committee on the ABG	April 1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversaw GSA’s work at the ABG
7	The African Burial Ground Project team	1992-2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team of scientists and scholars led by biological anthropologist Dr. Michael Blakey - Conducted scientific analysis on the human remains - Produced reports available for the community and other stakeholders
8	Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI)	1993-2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up by GSA to assume the educational functions of the ABG - Produced newsletters to announce special events and to report findings from the project team
9	The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (part of the New York Public Library)	2003 and 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned and executed the reburial ceremony of October 2003 - Took over the educational role from the OPEI

Table 4.3, Continued

	Stakeholder	Date of involvement	Role
10	Committee of the Descendents of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground.	Early 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committee members included some participants of this study: Isaac, Karen, and Pattie. Other members included Reverend Al Sharpton. - Some supporting organizations included the Nation of Islam, National Action Network, and Patrice Lumumba Coalition - Oversaw and pressured GSA to make sure terms of the agreements were respected
11	Friends of the African Burial Ground	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community organization - Oversaw and pressured GSA to make sure terms of the agreements were respected
12	The White House (then) President George W. Bush	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proclaimed the ABG as a National Monument

Community outrage and criticism

The African descendent community became involved in the development of the ABG after the discovery of human remains in 1991; these local and area-based residents were outraged by the GSA going forward with the exhuming of the graves. For the community, the burial ground was a cemetery, a sacred ground where ancestors were laid to rest in peace. Because the GSA demonstrated no willingness to stop excavations for the construction of a 34-story federal office building and adjacent pavilion, the community relentlessly organized meetings, protests, and vigils at the site. Also, the GSA did not respect the mandate to consult and include the community, upon the discovery of the African cemetery. As the GSA persisted with excavations, several burials were disturbed and destroyed by backhoes (Blakey, 2010). Several participants in

this study noted that, to make matters worse, the skeletons were wrapped in newspapers, boxed, and stored in a basement at Lehman College. Derek, one participant in this study who had been very close to the site's development since July 1991, explained that the GSA urged the contracted archaeology firms to expedite the excavation by opting for the "coroner's method." Participants who were involved in the protests said that in spite of pressure from the Mayor's office, the GSA did not pay attention to their outcry and pressing demands.

As a result, the African descendent community was highly critical of the GSA and the archaeologist teams, asserting that the remains were treated with great disrespect. Participants in this study who were involved in these protests testified of the GSA's arrogance and insensitivity towards both ancestors and descendents. Three of my study participants accessed the excavation area: journalist and historian Derek, clergyman Isaac, and educator Pattie. The latter described this experience as nerve-racking because she saw how archaeologists manipulated the remains:

But when I got down in that burial site and I realized, all these people down on their knees with little like toothbrushes, picking all around the bones, I got hysterical. [...] How dare they? They're vultures, they're grave robbers. How can they not leave these people in peace? They had no peace in life and now, even in death, they have no dignity. They were uncovering the bones and I mean-when I think about that day particularly right now, it's still so upsetting to me. [...] And I swore to that day, if God would give me the strength that I would fight to bring dignity in the lives of those that were killed.

Pattie – Black female in her 60s

The powerful quote illustrates one of the recurring issues in this study and was classified under the theme "disrespect of the ancestors." After 419 intact burials had been disinterred, GSA finally ceased the excavation by order of Congressman Gus

Savage in July 1992. During community meetings organized by the Federal Steering Committee, the public recommended that the human remains be taken to Howard University for further analysis under the scientific supervision of Dr. Michael Blakey. Yet, not all members of the descendent community agreed with this transfer of the bones. Participants like Pattie and Karen, who were quite vocal about their disagreement with the decisions of the Steering Committee, felt the best thing to do was to reinter the remains immediately as they had been disrespected enough. Pattie shared with me that she was against keeping the bones out for a long period of time but finally consented to their transfer to Washington D.C. because at least Howard University was a black university and there would be a higher chance that the scientists analyzing the bones would be black:

It was a struggle to get them from Lehman College, to send them to Howard University, which I didn't feel they should, but the majority of the Federal Steering Committee said they should. These were black folks, so you know. I felt they should be put back in the ground immediately, never to be touched again. But they said, "Well, since the bones are already out, just send them to Howard University."

Pattie – Black female in her 60s

All the accounts I examined indicate that dealing with GSA was not easy for the community or for the scientific team at Howard University. To avoid possible distortions of African history, the African descendent community in New York insisted that the team of scientists analyzing the remains and interpreting the presence of Africans in colonial New York be cognizant of, respectful of and sensitive to African cultures (Perry, 1997). Ensuring the spiritual, cultural and inspirational significance of the site and its contents was a paramount concern to this group. Past research shows that

“[e]urocentric distortions of Africana history have been viewed not as accidental flaws of individual researchers but as politically motivated and systemic means of social, intellectual, and cultural control” (LaRoche & Blakey, 1997, p. 90).

Between 1992 and 1993, much detailed information was available in reference to the current events. But from 1994 to 1999, although the OPEI was still in charge of documenting and archiving events, no formal or large community meeting was called. In this climate of “silence,” the Friends of the Burial Ground came to be an advocate for the site. After all, OPEI was an arm of the GSA in a way and the Friends of the Burial Ground was a separate entity that could push for reinterment.

Community activism was manifested through a number of coalitions of artists, architects, religious leaders, lawyers, and journalists, among others, who organized amongst themselves and collectively with the rest of the community. They exerted pressure on the GSA and pushed for abandoning the initial plan to build a pavilion (LaRoche & Blakey, 1997).

Politics of heritage and ethnicity

Despite the fact that the community was represented by a variety of groups and organizations, there were existing tensions between some of these groups. For instance, the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground was quite critical of The Friends of the Burial Ground because the latter group had not been involved at the beginning of the process. The politics of heritage and ethnicity is a major issue in cultural and historical contexts, especially ones where diverse groups and inequities are present (Fees, 1996). Understanding power relationships during the

process of development of the ABG is a complex endeavor. The GSA had financial and decision-making power, while the African descendent community held at least “spiritual power” through ethnicity and heritage. The National Park Service entered the development process in 2003 per the GSA’s request for technical assistance with the administration of the site. NPS went through and studied all records in reference to public comments gathered since 1991. These records included the Memorandum of Agreement for the African Burial Ground with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, the recommendations of the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground, the work of the Office of Public Education and Interpretation, and the scopes of work and process identified by the GSA, especially regarding development of the interpretive center and memorial competitions (National Park Service, 2005, p. 18). Therefore, since 2006, the NPS emerged as the sole entity with decision-making power.

Civic engagement

In 2004, members of different organizations were invited to provide their recommendation for the Draft Management Plan published the following year. NPS employed civic engagement to incorporate public input for the Plan and defined it as “a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels that reinforces public commitment to the preservation of heritage resources, both cultural and natural, and that strengthens public understanding of the full meaning and contemporary relevance of these resources. The foundation of civic engagement is a commitment to building and

sustaining relationships with neighbors and communities of interest” (National Park Service, 2005).

Civic engagement was obtained through four public involvement mechanisms: 1) listening sessions; 2) public meetings; 3) visitor experience workshops; and 4) a research roundtable. Five listening sessions were held between January and March 2004 and included OPEI volunteers, Friends of the African Burial Ground, individuals specifically invited by OPEI director, and the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground. These listening sessions were instrumental for NPS in order to consult those who had significant interests but also to introduce its staff and role, and clarify any questions or concerns raised by participants of the meeting.

The purpose of the two public meetings held in May 2004 was to determine the meaning, significance, and character of the site. Among other things, participants in these public meetings proposed that the ABG:

- Acknowledge that Africans in New York persevered and managed to hold onto their traditions despite all the abuse
- Show that Africans had made considerable contributions to New York
- Insist that the desecration of the graves is a horror understood in multiple cultures
- Explain that the treatment of Africans in colonial times was echoed into their treatment when they were exhumed in 1991
- Present itself as a place for dialogue, healing, remembrance, and prayer

- Expose slavery as a crime against humanity and present faith, joy, and hope for the future.⁵⁷

As part of the public meetings, five public forums were organized by GSA and NPS between June 12 and June 17, 2004. During these forums, the public was invited to share thoughts and comments concerning the five finalist designs for the memorial. Participants reiterated the need for the memorial to “be treated as a sacred place, one that both demonstrated and required respect, dignity, and reverence,” and “to honor all African ancestors (not just those interred on-site), and be seen as a powerful symbolic expression of their endurance, cultural identity, and contributions to New York City and the nation” (National Park Service, 2005, p. 20).

While the discussions during the first visitor experience workshop (August 2004) aimed at “the identification of potential targeted audiences, challenges to interpretation, concepts and ideas for developing interpretive themes, and desired visitor experience, the second workshop focused on OPEI volunteers, the desired audiences, the desired visitor experience, and the challenges to interpretation (National Park Service, 2005, p. 22).

Finally, the research roundtable held in Philadelphia in November 2004 brought scholars together to discuss a range of scholarship issues related to the ABG, from the role African Americans played in the development of New York, to ways in which the site can help tell the story of African contributions to the city. During that roundtable, the group of scholars from Howard University and other institutions considered what

⁵⁷ Draft Management Plan http://www.africanburialground.gov/ABG_FinalReports.htm retrieved on August 8, 2011.

stories were best illustrated by the burial ground, the meanings of the site for people today, and the reasons it was nationally and internationally significant (National Park Service, 2005).

Although all visitors can relate to the ABG, the initial targeted audiences consisted of:

- African Americans and the larger African descendent community
- Educators and students of all ages
- New York City metropolitan area population
- Tourists, business travelers to Manhattan, and tourism industry employees
- Opinion leaders in the community, media, and politics (National Park Service, 2005, p. 55).

Accordingly, the NPS Draft Management Plan of 2005 stated that the ABG should provide visitors with opportunities for inspiration, reflection, commemoration and celebration. The ABG would,

- Honor and encourage a spirit of Sankofa⁵⁸
- Acknowledge the emotions that accompany a thorough telling of the story
- Encourage a sense of pride in the role played by all who helped build New York City, and honor those who endured the harsh realities of discrimination and inhumanity
- Facilitate visitors' need to celebrate or leave remembrances

⁵⁸ Sankofa is an Akan symbol from West Africa that represents the importance of learning from the past. The idea of Sankofa is that we need to go back in the past in order to make sense of our present. <http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra/sank.htm> Accessed September 16, 2011.

- Encourage audiences to record their reflections Provide visitors with access to trained staff who are able to personalize the stories associated with the burial ground.
- Encourage the celebration of cultural practices linked to the burial ground
- Use all appropriate means of cultural and artistic expression – including storytelling, oral history, music, and dance—to enliven and advance the burial ground stories, exploring connections between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century life and today’s culture (National Park Service, 2005, p. 58).

In the end, the African descendent community was able to accomplish a series of goals, as claimed by Sam during our interview:

Let me summarize the five things that the community achieved. First, was to stop the desecration; secondly, to assure that there would be a comprehensive plan of study to study the remains that had been exhumed; thirdly to assure that that study would be implemented by scientists with the expertise to adequately interpret African remains which is why they went to Howard University; fourthly at the completion of that study, in fact in 2003 the remains were returned and re-entered; and lastly that the sight would be memorialized. So those were the achievements of the community.

Sam – Black male in his 70s

A close look at the ABG’s development process shows that it was long and contentious. It started in 1991 under the control of the GSA, then transferred to NPS in 2006 when the site was proclaimed a National Monument. The development was challenging as a diversity of stakeholders was involved, some since 1991, and others later in the progression. A significant part of this developmental phase was the involvement of the community in the selection of the memorial as well as determination

of the meaning, significance, and character of the new visitor center. So, members of the community had a say in the representation and interpretation of New York slavery in the new National Park. When the NPS entered the process, it did not come to impose a specific direction for the site, but instead, offered a sincere invitation for all New Yorkers to provide some input. With this strategy, the community was finally able to take part in the decision-making in reference to the site they viewed as their own. Many participants in this study stated that they did not need some type of paperwork to tell them who owned the land; for them, it was obvious--these were Africans, so they belonged to us.

The following section will delve into the representation of slavery at the site and visitors' interpretations of such representation.

4.1.4. History and representation of the ABG (1991-2011)

In this section, I explore how the history of the ABG is being represented on site. For that, I have analyzed the site's material, including the film shown at the theatre, the brochures handed out to visitors and passersby (two different brochures), and the narratives from the ranger-led tours (2).⁵⁹ The previous chapter (Chapter III) explains the methodology followed for both data collection and analysis.

⁵⁹ The content of the exhibit areas is described and analyzed in the second part of this chapter under "How slavery is represented on site"

Brochures

Brochure 1 (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5) was printed in 2008, and is divided into multiple sections: “Link to the past,” “African origins,” the “Rediscovery,” and ways to plan a visit to the site. **Brochure 2** (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7) is bigger and longer than Brochure 1, was printed in 2010, and is divided into sections: “Africans in early New York,” the cemetery as “sacred ground,” “Rediscovery, Reinterment, Remembrance,” and information on ways to visit the site.



Figure 4.4: Front Side of Brochure 1



Figure 4.5: Back Side of Brochure 1

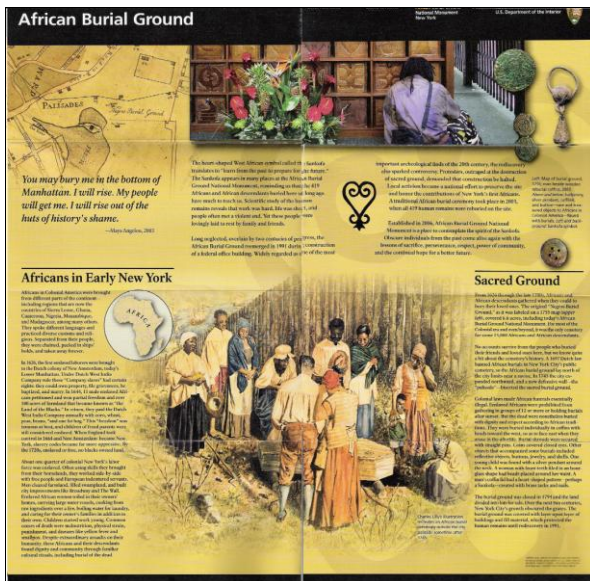


Figure 4.6: Front Side of Brochure 2



Figure 4.7: Back Side of Brochure 2

In both brochures, the front page is dedicated to the colonial history of New York and the burial ground, while the back pages of the brochures show the ABG’s contemporary history, starting with the re-discovery in 1991. The back pages also contain information for visiting the site, such as directions, hours of operation, and contact information to schedule tours. Table 4.4 summarizes the major dates and events highlighted in each brochure.

Table 4.4: Major events highlighted by brochures 1 and 2

Date	Event	Brochure 1 (2008)	Brochure 2 (2010)
1626	The Dutch West India Company brought in the first eleven Africans	Yes	Yes
1644	The first 11 Africans granted conditional freedom and land	Yes	Yes
1664	The British take over New Amsterdam and rename it New York	Yes	Yes
1697	Burials of Africans banned within New York	No	Yes
1720s	The British prohibited Africans from owning land so no black families lived in the Land of the Blacks	Yes	Yes
1712	Slave revolt	Yes	No
1741	A rumor of a slave revolt resulted in the execution of 2 white men, 2 white women, and 30 black men	Yes	No
1745	As the city expanded, a new defensive wall bisected the burial ground	No	Yes
1755⁶⁰	Maerschalc Plan	Yes (“18 th century, no exact year)	Yes

⁶⁰ The brochure states 1755, however archives use the date of 1754. The map was depicted in 1754 and published in 1755.

Table 4.4, Continued

Date	Event	Brochure 1 (2008)	Brochure 2 (2010)
1785	The New York Manumission Society to end slavery founded	Yes	No
1787	The first African Free School opened	Yes	No
1794	Burial ground closed	Yes	Yes
1827	New York became the next to last northern state to abolish slavery	Yes	No
1991	Human remains uncovered during excavations for a federal building on 290 Broadway	Yes	Yes
1992	Community protests proved successful as Congress acted to temporarily stop the construction	No	Yes
1993	Remains taken to Howard University for scientific work; site designated a National Historic Landmark	No	Yes
2003	The 419 human remains reinterred during a ceremony	Yes	Yes
2005	Design of the Memorial selected	Yes	Yes
2006	Presidential Proclamation made the African Burial Ground the 390 th National Park	Yes	Yes
2007	Outdoor Memorial inaugurated	Yes	Yes

The major themes covered by brochure 1 are summarized in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5: Themes included in Brochure 1 and 2

Themes	Number of occurrence
Development process of the site	6 in Brochure 1 3 in Brochure 2
Understanding the history of New York and slavery	6 in brochure 1 6 in Brochure 2
Contributions of African Americans to New York	6 in Brochure 1
Community involvement	3 in Brochure 1 3 in Brochure 2
Significance of the site today	3 in brochure 1
Excavation and scientific work	3 in Brochure 1 3 in Brochure 2
Characteristics of the burial	2 in Brochure 2
Humanity of the Africans	3 in Brochure 2

Both brochures consistently cover the contributions of Africans in New York, the significance and development of the site, the community's involvement, the compelling findings of the scientific research, and the need to understand the history of slavery in New York.

Film

“Our Time at Last” was written, produced, and directed by Madison D. Lacy, owner of the firm FireThorn Productions and associate professor of film and media studies at the University of Kansas (The University of Kansas, n.d.). Lacy has won several Emmy's for his documentaries. His work includes two episodes of the documentary *Eyes on the Prize* and the PBS documentary series *Jazz* in collaboration as

a consulting producer to Ken Burns.⁶¹ In 2006, Lacy was commissioned to produce the film.

Table 4.6 shows the major themes I identified in the film. These themes are evident throughout the film, and the dominant rhetoric includes the idea that slavery was about work more than about violence, that Africans found ways to resist and by that were able to maintain their humanity in the midst of abuse and brutality, and that Africans were instrumental in the foundation and development of New York. Scholars and other personalities featured in the film also comment on the significance of New York's African American community's involvement throughout the development of the ABG. Table 4.6 also features quotes from the script that illustrate the film's themes.

Table 4.6: Major themes and corresponding quotes from the film

Themes covered	Quotes
Slavery was about work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slaves were the primary laborers for the colony. The Lenape, Native Americans, were the first inhabitants with their farms and homes and trails. And Africans were the next major labor force. - It's a world of work. Slavery is about work. Many people like to think of slavery primarily about violence. - Violence did enforce the limits of slavery, but slavery was about work. - And all children were expected to work. -As soon as a child could pick up a broom and sweep, that child became valuable. -As soon as a child could run errands, and they did at a fairly early age, they became valuable to the owner. -One of the things that slavery did was to cut childhood short. Very few slaves had any childhood. As soon as they were able to fetch, they were at work. - They're living lives in constrained and ugly circumstances, being worked beyond their endurance. It's a life of pain and suffering, not simply psychic and emotional. And physical pain and suffering. -New York is like these other places in which the conditions of slavery are very harsh, in which people are worked to death, because they are in a sense, disposable.

⁶¹ http://www.pbs.org/jazz/about/about_credits.htm retrieved on July 14, 2011.

Table 4.6, Continued

Themes covered	Quotes
Africans found ways to resist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Although their lives were harshly controlled, Africans in New York actively resisted enslavement. -The fact that that [brutality] was imposed on people doesn't mean that they accepted that. Those who were enslaved, at every possible moment sought to give voice, give action to their humanity, to show forth their humanness, to reach out to the humanity of others.
Africans contributed to the development of New York and the Americas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -These are the people who built Broadway, they built the wall. From Albany to Argentina this is the story of how African labor helped to shape the Americas, the Caribbean. - I just believe that this burial ground is so important to understand the enslavement of millions of Africans, because we're not often thinking of enslaved Africans being the ones who are clearing the land. They're the colony builders. If there's a word that should be synonymous with "slave," it's "colony builders," because that's what they're doing in New York. - African people laid the foundations for virtually everything that we know about the Americas during the 17th and 18th centuries.
Africans never ceased to claim their humanity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The burial ground became a place where enslaved Africans expressed compassion for one another and buried their dead with respect. - One could no more deny those Africans in New York the burial of their dead than deny them the right to speak, to stand and walk erect on two legs, to use tools, to be human. - It was very important for Africans to assert and reaffirm their humanity to themselves and to one another.
Community's involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think those of us who gathered there in that period felt shut out of something that we felt we should have been part of. - Outrage and disgust arose from the cavalier manner that GSA administrators sought to treat the unearthing of the remains. -Community members staged numerous protests against the building's construction. - For many, this struggle echoed the experiences of their enslaved ancestors. - In time, a compromise was struck. The government would finish its construction but adjacent to the building, a memorial would be built where the graves were first discovered. - The one question people really wanted to know was, you know, are there really bones there? I mean, you can really see the bones. They would say are you going to show the bones, and the way I interpreted the question really was to say, I want you to make this real for me. The significance of that ground, it being a burial ground, that's the tangible reminder, that's what makes it real for us.

Table 4.6 shows that the film's script is consistent with the brochures' content, as they all have similar themes. This means that the NPS has made a significant effort to present the same message throughout these two major forms of communication. The

next section demonstrates the consistency between the film, brochures, and tour narratives. Even though there are similarities in the content of these media, the form of delivery is different. The brochures and film talk about the resistance of the enslaved, but the visual format makes the information more dramatic than in written format. This dramatization is made possible through the use of fictional characters--the young enslaved girl Amelia, her mother, and other enslaved Africans represented in the film who prepare for and attend the funerals of Amelia's father and cousin. This dramatization was criticized by Derek, who is a writer and poet, but it was gladly enjoyed by participants like Erika, a youth program coordinator. Clearly, for historians and those more interested in historical facts than in the reenactment of history, the film is perceived as overly entertaining. However, for those who appreciate the visual reproduction of history, the film helps put things in perspective. Since most visitors do not have a history background and may not know about slavery in New York, presenting a film that is both educational and entertaining is a good strategy to help visitors envision what New York was like under slavery.

Tour narratives

Similar to the film, a series of recurring themes are touched upon by rangers during their tours at the memorial, art exhibit, and visitor center. I participated in more than half a dozen tours at the visitor center, art exhibit, and memorial, in which I followed the group for about 45 minutes. Although there is no specific rule on the number of tours the rangers deliver each day, group tours must be scheduled in advance to ensure availability of the staff. The recurring themes brought up in one tour I followed

were the brutality of slavery, findings about specific burials unearthed, the relentless protests of the African descendent community, Sankofa, and the contributions of Africans. Table 4.7 reveals these themes -with a few corresponding quotes from a park ranger during a tour of the visitor center, where he described the burial ceremonies.

Table 4.7: Major themes and corresponding quotes from the tour narratives

Themes covered	Quotes
The brutality of slavery	<p>-Because New York passed laws, enslaved people, you work all day. When you finished working, then you go out and bury your own, just before dark. So it's dusk. It's a sunset. So we're put here in a setting for a reason. 1722, New York passed that law.</p> <p>-And in 1731 New York passed another and said, "No more than 12 of you enslaved Africans can gather together at a funeral. And if there are more than 12, you're going to be whipped. You're going to be punished."</p>
References being made to scientific research and history	<p>-So when you see the coffins in this position, one on top of the other, this suggests that one person died and one died later so the coffin was placed on top possibly a family member. But in actuality when the two coffins were found, 326 and 374, the smaller child's coffin was on the ground beside it. So they're beside each other. So that lets us know that these two most likely died during the same time, and they were buried together. So it's a lot you can learn from history. There's a lot you can learn from the past.</p> <p>-And it is amazing what they can find out from studying bones of people who have died hundreds of years ago. They still could determine in many cases if it was a boy, a girl, man, woman, the approximate age, even causes of death.</p> <p>-They found evidence, that ladies from carrying heavy objects on their heads, these objects crushed their skulls. Men and little boys were being worked to death, constantly lifting heavy objects that caused the muscles to pull away pieces of bones leaving holes or cracks. They found evidence of torture and abuse.</p>

Table 4.7, Continued

Themes covered	Quotes
Community's involvement	<p>-So people were upset. And people came together. There were school children, the elderly, all the adults that could come out and they protested. They stood for hours and for days and days for a year and a half. They wouldn't listen.</p> <p>-And then finally, my family, this side here is dedicated to the spirit of the people. You know if it wasn't for the people who weren't afraid to fall for something. They stood for someone, but they weren't afraid to fall, you see. And they just stood, stood, stood on solid ground protesting for a year and a half. For it weren't for them, this would not be.</p>
Contributions of Africans	<p>-The first homes, roads, ports, all were erected or built by the enslaved Africans.</p> <p>-So that's why this site is important. So people can know the contributions of enslaved and free Africans to the development of New York City.</p> <p>-Wall Street gets its name, because of a wall built by enslaved Africans.</p>
Sankofa	<p>-Our motto, what do you think about that thought? Word of encouragement today is "Sankofa," S~A~N~K~O~F~A.</p> <p>-Here you will see the "Sankofa" symbol. San S~A~N means return. Ko K~O means to go back. And Fa F~A means to fetch or go get it. Go back and fetch it. Go back and get it.</p> <p>-The area here before you is dedicated to Africa. I dare you to go back and get it. I challenge you to learn. I dare you to go back and get it. "Sankofa." Learn from the past. I challenge you, go back to Africa.</p> <p>-We have more time to spend together, but right now it's your turn. Your turn to "go get it." So if you just move throughout, interact, look at the exhibits, wherever you would like to begin and I'll call everyone together, I guess, in about 15, 20 more minutes. And then we'll go out to see the memorial site. All right. Again, I'm Ranger Erwin. Enjoy your visit.</p>

4.2. Representation and interpretation of slavery

The background and development process of the African Burial Ground are largely described in the above section. The information shows that the main purpose for creating the ABG was to honor the lives of the Africans of early New York by highlighting their contributions as well as their struggles. This section explores the representation of slavery at the site, in particular, how the ABG presents slavery through the exhibits and various communication media, and how participants perceive and react to the enslavement history represented at this site.

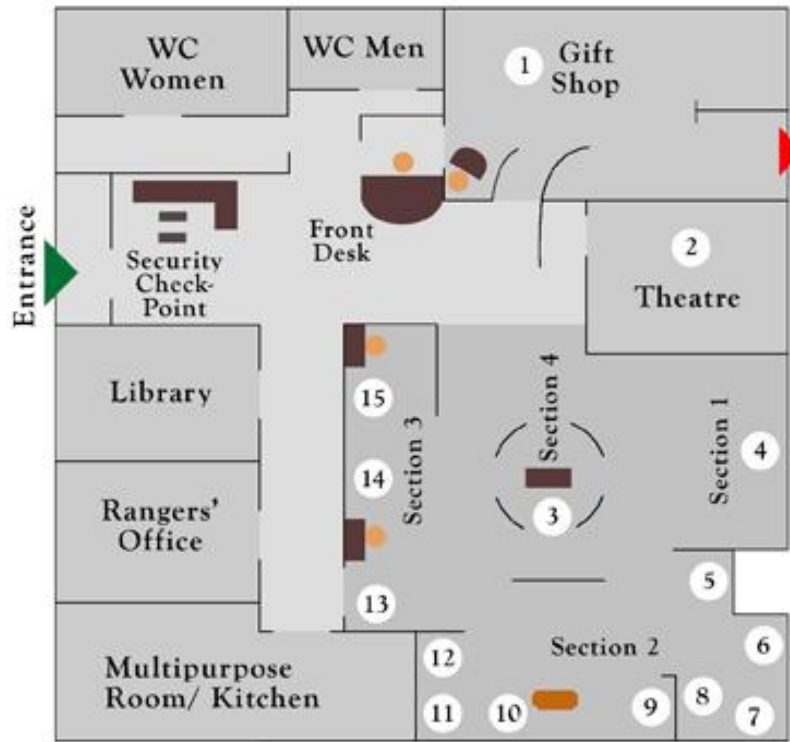
4.2.1. Representation of slavery on site

The African Burial Ground has gone through multiple phases of development during which different stakeholders collaborated. These include the General Services Administration, the National Park Service, the scientific team at Howard University, and the Schomburg Center for Research. When visitors come to the visitor center, they typically start by viewing the film in the theatre and then head to the different exhibit sections. Rangers are present to inform them that there are four main sections in the exhibit area that can be toured in a circular fashion. The first section on the left hand side relates to the scientific work conducted on the human remains, the second section in the back of the visitor center relates to the lives of the enslaved in colonial New York and their African origins, the third section on the right hand side relates to the community's involvement, or "Spirit of the people," since the unearthing of the bones, and the fourth section at the center is a reproduction of a burial scene with life-size wax figures.

Figure 4.8 shows the various sections, facilities and key features of the visitor center. The exhibits are described to provide a context for the subsequent section(s) of this chapter that examine some visitors' reactions to the representation of history at the ABG.

In **Section 1**, visitors learn about the graves that were unearthed, the scientific research conducted on the remains, and the resulting findings. Some of these findings reveal the age range of those buried, the cause of death, and the variety of objects found buried along with them like buttons, silver pendants, or beads. The first mural entitled "Reclaiming our history: The African Burial Ground in New York" informs visitors that they are standing on sacred ground, where thousands of Africans brought to New York from the Caribbean and Africa, and who contributed to the building of the city, were put to rest between the 1690s and 1790s. The 1754 Maerschallck Plan of New York, on which the design of the ABG is based, is also posted on this wall. The mural implies that the scientific work was conducted under the spiritual guidance of the African ancestors.

Map of the Visitor Center



Access to Ted Weiss Building

- 11. Lives of the enslaved: Pieter San Tomé
- 14. Community involvement: Timeline
- 15. Community involvement: Reflection stations
- 8. Lives of the enslaved: Mary
- 12. Lives of the enslaved: African Artifacts
- 13. Community involvement: African culture in NY
- 9. Lives of the enslaved: Belinda
- 10. Lives of the enslaved: Andrew Saxon & barrel
- 6. Lives of the enslaved: Slave codes



1. Gift Shop



2. Theatre



3. Burial scene



4. Scientific work



5. Lives of the enslaved: Peter Williams, Sr.



7. Lives of the enslaved: Cuffee

Figure 4.8: Map of the Visitor Center

On the next wall entitled “The African Burial Ground is revealed,” visitors read about the halt to the excavations in 1992 by Congressional order and the fact that tens of thousands more human remains are still buried underneath one part of the ABG and that area of Lower Manhattan today. A picture of the position of the exhumed graves supports the idea that the burial ground had been used for many years and that some burials were found on top of or next to each other. Graphs also tell about the proportion of children among those unearthed and the high mortality rate of Africans in comparison to white inhabitants of colonial New York.

Next, visitors come across a montage of pictures of all 419 graves that were unearthed. This striking wall-sized screen is accompanied by the following description:

Approximately 15,000 people are buried in this ground.

The remains of 419 men, women, and children were uncovered when the site was excavated in 1991 and 1992. All were reburied with honor in the Rites of Ancestral Return ceremony in 2003. These remains were just a fraction of the burials in the African Burial Ground. If every burial were excavated, this wall of photos would wrap the entire gallery.

The power of the last sentence is notable and as a result, can make visitors reflect not only on the significance of this site but on the reality of slavery.

On the wall that follows, visitors learn more about the team of scientists at Howard University as several pictures show some of its members during their work, in addition to a group picture. Also, there are two touchscreens with Q&As that visitors may scroll through. Further down the wall are drawers with replicas of objects found alongside some skeletons, as well as a replica of the coffin of the “Sankofa man”--a man

whose coffin lid was topped with a heart-shaped symbol, which researchers speculate could be the Sankofa symbol.

The **second section** of the exhibit deals with the Africans themselves: their origins, their lives, their work, and the pain they endured. As visitors access that area, the wall on their left features drawings of Africans chained and tied together by the neck, others seated on the deck of a slave ship, and others thrown overboard a vessel by two white men. The mural further to the left presents the timeline of the African presence between the 1500s and the 1800s. This shows visitors that contrary to popular belief, Africans were in New York as early as the Europeans were.

On the next wall, visitors become acquainted with Peter Williams, Sr. (1749-1823), the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Born into slavery, Williams worked off his purchase price and founded his church in 1796. His son, Peter Williams, Jr., went on to become an influential church leader in the early 1800s. Two portraits of Williams Sr. are presented. The purpose of this wall is to inform visitors about the opportunities for freedom of which many enslaved Africans took advantage. In fact, the mural also states that by the end of the 1700s, New York had, for the first time, more free than enslaved Africans, and during that time, numerous Africans emerged and took action. Indeed, the American Revolution (1775-1783) gave Africans opportunities for freedom; demographics were clearly affected after the war as many Africans were granted freedom in exchange of their service in the conflict.

As visitors make another left turn, they reach a part of the section dedicated to the slave codes devised to control the lives of enslaved Africans. The “Laws affecting

Africans in New York,” passed between 1681 and 1742, cover two full walls, from top to bottom. Some of these stipulations include:

- No slaves shall gather on the Sabbath or at any other time at any place, in groups of four or more. Punishment is public whipping.
- No slave over the age of 14 may be out after nightfall without a lantern by which they can be plainly seen.
- Black funerals must be held during daylight hours.

Today, these laws sound horrific and even ridiculous to be applied to one group of people, but this was the reality of slavery in New York and all around the Americas. Since New York was a Northern state, few New Yorkers may realize that slavery existed there. However, the presentation of the slave codes uncovers the dark past of the state. Also, one part of the wall is a picture of a “runaway” notice like those popularly printed in newspapers of that era.

As visitors turn to the right, they read about the ways Africans rebelled and resisted, while white inhabitants’ fears of rebellion led to harsher control over the enslaved. The mural mentions the revolt of 1712 and the rise of hostility towards Africans. To that effect, visitors are introduced to Cuffee, an enslaved African who was accused of starting a fire and as a punishment was burned alive on May 30, 1741. The grand jury accused him of “wickedly, voluntarily, feloniously and maliciously conspiring with Quack and diverse other Negroes, to kill and murder the inhabitants of this city” and recommended to “hang him or burn him, [as] he would set fire to the town.” Visitors learn more personal details about Cuffee: he was literate, he played the

fiddle, and he understood Spanish. Regardless of the laws, enslaved Africans in New York found ways to come together as they managed to visit family members and even frequented taverns at night.

Further to the right is Mary, an enslaved African who lived on a farm in Brooklyn. She is a testament of the hard work enslaved women did, like cooking, baking, cleaning, caring for their slaveholder's children in addition to their own, along with other tasks. On this wall, visitors also learn about ways Africans connected with each other while running errands in the city for their slaveholders. It was not uncommon for enslaved women to sell goods at the market and bring back the revenues to their slaveholders (Berlin, 2003). For many women, going to the city on their own was an opportunity to escape.

The next wall touches on the difficult and heavy domestic duties that enslaved women and children undertook. Belinda is presented here as an enslaved African who was sold by her owner and who happened to be a great cook and servant. Part of the mural reads:

The women pumped, carried, and boiled water, ground meal, churned butter, and lifted heavy iron pots all day. They did laundry, cared for all the children, cleaned, sewed, and spun. There was always work to do in the garden or tending the animals, at night they put the house in order for the next day, when it all begun again.

As visitors arrive at the center of Section 2, they approach an interactive station where they are asked to put themselves in the shoes of those enslaved Africans who loaded and unloaded barrels from ships. Visitors can try to push an empty 50-gallon barrel and experience how heavy it is. I have observed both adults and children attempt

to push the barrel up, some with great difficulty. Close to the barrel stands the following sign:

Imagine working on the docks, loading and unloading barrels all day. A 50-gallon barrel full of rum, like this one, would have weighed over 400 pounds.

Next is a mural dedicated to the first 11 Africans brought to New Amsterdam in 1626 by the Dutch West India Company. The mural explains how they petitioned for freedom and were granted “conditional freedom” and farm land. One of them, Pieter San Tomé is showcased as one of those Africans who were granted conditional freedom, which means that he could be called to work for the Company on demand, that he had to pay the Company in crops and livestock, and that his children were born into slavery and remained the “property” of the Company.

The last part of Section 2 highlights the cultural diversity of enslaved Africans brought to the New World. Here, visitors learn about the types of toys, artifacts, and fabrics used in Africa and the skills the Africans brought with them. A map of Africa shows in bold the name of the peoples from which captives taken to the Americas came. These include the Asante of today’s Ghana, Yoruba and Hausa of today’s Nigeria, the Fang of today’s Gabon, and the Boma of today’s Democratic Republic of the Congo. On top of this area are a few flags of nations who were involved in the slave trade, including the flags of Argentina, Morocco, and the Bahamas.

The last two walls in Section 2 include a map of the “triangular trade” that shows how trade goods were moved from Europe to Africa, with raw materials, cash crops, and captives taken from Africa to North and South America, and finished good, raw

materials and cash crops transported from North America back to Europe. The other wall presents a painting of captives seated tightly against each other in a slave ship, as well as replicas of shackles that restrained the captives in the ships, and metals and beads used by slave traders as currency.

At the beginning of the **third section** is a montage of pictures of New Yorkers, entitled “African presence enriches the culture of New York.” This mural reinforces the idea that since they were brought to New York as captives, Africans have had a great influence in the development of the city, and that this diversity of cultures contributes to the richness of the city today.

In the third section, which relates to the community’s involvement since the discovery of the human remains, visitors are invited to look through newspaper articles that followed the development of the site. They can also interact with a touchscreen that gives voice to different personalities who have been involved with the development of the site, including educators, administrators, and a clergyman. A large mural shows pictures of school children who celebrated and honored the ancestors during the 2003 reinterment ceremony. One can see a young black man holding a sign that reads “African brothers and sisters we honor you!” Below the pictures is a timeline of the major events at the burial ground from 1991 (the unearthing of the bones) to 2010 (the opening of the new visitor center). Another screen presents highlights of the reinterment ceremony. Visitors are welcome to listen to the sounds through a telephone receiver they can pick up below the screen.

The last part of Section 3 is a reflection area where visitors are encouraged to write their thoughts about their experience visiting the site. After they write their comments on note cards they can deposit them in a box. Also, visitors can sit in front of a computer equipped with a video camera, in order to video tape their reflections or to browse other visitors' reflections, which they can also hear through a telephone receiver.

Finally, in **Section 4**, the core of the exhibit area (as presented by rangers to visitors), is the burial scene reproduced with life-size wax figures. The burial scene is surrounded by four circular water paintings that represent the possible view for the four corners around the burial ground, including a water pond and the outside walls of the city. This burial scene is depicted at the end of the film shown in the theatre, so in a way the film sets the context for the exhibit. Some sound effects featured in the film are also played in the main exhibit, such as footsteps, thunder, birds, and a cow bell, and most important is the voice of the main character, a woman, who leads the ceremony by calling on all those present at the funeral. In that way, visitors touring that section have a multisensory experience that includes seeing and touching the clothes on the wax figures, hearing the background sounds, and feeling oneself transported in time to be part of that funeral. Ranger Erwin⁶² brought this to the attention of his group of a dozen visitors during a tour on July 27, 2010, where he refers to the film:

There are also various sounds. So we can listen at this point. Hear the birds? Shh.... There are footsteps, someone's coming. Listen. There are circular panels here and they are part of this exhibit [ranger pointing at the four circular panel paintings surrounding the burial scene]. Look at them [the panel paintings]. It seems like they're shading. The sun could possibly be setting. So it's [the panel painting] giving an idea of the time of the

⁶² Pseudonym

day. [...] So it's dusk. It's a sunset. So we're put here in a setting for a reason.

[...] The blessing of the dead [Background voice says "Ago, are you here today?"]. Yes! I'm here today. You all noticed this lady spoke in the movie, a wax model of the woman you saw in the movie.

Let's listen now. The dead had been blessed. You hear the cow bell. Listen. Sound is so faint. Storm is brewing. Thunder? So that storm is upon them and they are now leaving the burial area. There you hear the storm.

This excerpt from Ranger Erwin's narrative contains key words that show he wants his audience to be sensitive to the sound effects as they help imagine how funerals for enslaved Africans took place in colonial New York. Throughout the exhibit area, there are powerful quotes from members of the community, the scientific team, or renowned personalities, like Maya Angelou. These quotes are elevated at the top of the different exhibit sections and include:

"We wanted to know things that had been hidden from view, buried, about who we are."

Michael Blakey, Scientific Director, November 20, 2003

"They are us. They are me; they are you."

Kadiatou Diallo, October 4, 2003

"Some of those bones are my mother's bones. Come together to rise and shine..."

"Some of those bones are my sister's bones. Come together to rise and shine..."

Anonymous

"You may bury me in the bottom of Manhattan, I will rise. My people will get me. I will rise out of the huts of history's shame."

Maya Angelou, October 4, 2003

The last quote by author, poet and activist Maya Angelou is inspired by her famous 1978 poem “Still I rise” whose first premise states:

You may write me down in history
 With your bitter, twisted lies,
 You may trod me in the very dirt
 But still, like dust, I'll rise. (Angelou, 1978)

In summary, the exhibit areas touch on multiple topics. The major themes I identified in each section are presented in Table 4.8, along with a summary of the mechanisms used to convey (represent) the information.

Table 4.8: Major themes in the exhibit area

Sections				
Themes	1: Scientific work	2: Lives of the enslaved	3: Community involvement	4: Burial scene
	Contributions of the enslaved	Resistance and rebellion	Richness in the diversity of the community	Resistance and rebellion of the enslaved
	Brutality of slavery	Brutality of slavery	Importance of the voice of the community (even today through their reflections)	Humanity and dignity of the enslaved
	Dignity in burials	Cultural diversity of the enslaved	Long process of development of the site	Brutality of slavery
	Sacredness of the ground	Skills brought from Africa by the captives		
		Organization of the transatlantic slave trade		
		Initiatives taken by the enslaved		
		Contributions of the enslaved (through their works)		
Mechanism used to convey themes/info	Theme analysis of the exhibit content			

All the themes above were conveyed through an analysis of the written content at each section. The content consists of plaques describing a picture, map, or artifact in one or two paragraphs. I compiled all written inscriptions on all four sections of the exhibit area and then read through every single one of them to identify themes. In the end, I put together all the themes from all inscriptions and identified the major ones based on a count of their recurrence. Thus the themes presented in Table 4.8 represent those with the highest count.

A general picture of the mechanisms of representation used by the ABG can be drawn off the themes emerging from the exhibit area, as described above. Out of the four exhibit areas, or sections, three are directly related to the historical background of the site, while a fourth one is related to the present African American community of NY who protested to make this site possible. The fact that so much emphasis was placed on the contributions of the community may not come as a surprise. The first part of this chapter on representation already dealt with the struggle of the African American community and the long development process of the ABG to the type of site it is now. There are two important political messages that can be taken from that section; one obvious and clearly presented and another one more subliminal. The first message pulled from this section is that the ABG exemplifies the works of US democracy. The site intends to “prove” that democracy works as the African American community in NY came together to fight for what it believed, and no matter how long it took, its strength and resilience paid off. So, the ABG is a tangible proof that the democratic system works indeed. In that ways, the ABG, under the umbrella of the NPS, presents the greater good

of the nation, the American dream, the ideal of American democracy where everyone, even minorities or descendant of enslaved Africans, has the right to justice. Most participants in this study, and presumably for most visitors to the site, believe that ultimately, justice prevailed and proper recognition was given to colonial Africans and the current African American community in New York City. Thus, it would appear that most visitors leave the ABG with the message that the injustice of the past has been paid for, through the presence of the ABG.

A small number of my participants (Pattie being at the forefront), perceive a second political message at the ABG. Pattie, an Afrocentric in her 60s, warned that by praising the ideals of American justice and democracy, the ABG turns away from addressing the current social issues faced by African Americans in New York and the nation. In other words, for her, the establishment of the ABG did not eliminate racism and discrimination against Blacks, nor did it challenge the public to discuss these issues.

Pattie highly criticized the Federal Steering Committee of which she was part of, as well as the ABG because she strongly believes that the compromise that was made did not benefit Black people, but, to the contrary, undermined their fight for social justice. She attributed that compromise as the “kiss of death” and claimed: “I’m not willing to sell my ancestors for 30 pieces of silver.” Pattie refuses to visit the site because she does not want to dignify it. She calls the memorial a “monstrosity” because she believes it is not respectful of the ancestors and shies away from the pressing issues that initially motivated her to protest and get involved. Chapter VI will discuss this double message further as well as the role of the NPS. Propositions will also be presented.

4.2.2. Visitors' perceptions and reactions

Chapter V provides an in-depth examination of visitor motivations and experiences at the ABG. The following section, however, attempts to identify some of the perceptions and reactions of visitors to the site's representations of slavery.

Mindfulness and truth-telling:⁶³ sanitizing history

Some of the participants with an interest in black history shared that, when visiting a black heritage site, they pay particular attention to how black history, or slavery, is represented. Lance mentioned that he is always mindful of how people talk about slavery, not just because he teaches history at a local university, or because he is interested in black history, but mostly because he is black. Because of that, he feels that the stories told must be “truthful.”

Lance: [...] but I'm always very mindful of how people talk about slavery.

Linda: Is it because you're a historian or is it because-

Lance: Because I'm black and because I know the people working were slaves. And the white people benefited from it and a lot of times it's a white person doing the talking [at historical sites], unable to acknowledge the fact that they benefited from that. And so by saying servants, that dismisses the cost that we paid and that they benefited from. So I'm always kind of interested in how they are going to handle this [telling the story]... And I have a friend who is much more involved in historical sites than I am... And he, as a black person often works with white people at sites, and tries to push them to have their language reflect the truth. Even though it may be difficult for them, but it needs to be honest, be truthful.

⁶³ As a constructivist, I would rather use the terms “fair” or “fairness” instead of “truth” or “truthful,” as I do not believe there is an existential notion of “truth.” However, when the word “truth” was used by my participants, I reported it as is.

[...] now when I'm looking at sites, or if I'm visiting places-also just to see what's interesting, but particularly now that I'm in the profession [as a history professor], I am interested in how people present the story. Because there's a lot of different stories that can be told. Then think about why did they choose that story? How are they telling it? What's the evidence? What's the argument they're making? Those kinds of things are in the back of my head...

Lance – Black male in his 40s

Natasha also shared with me that as she reads more about the history of free and enslaved Africans in this country, she is more critical of the ways their stories are presented, as she claimed that:

[...] the more I understand the critical role that the Africans played in the life of the colony, the less patience I have with versions of history that leave that out.

Natasha – Black female in her 60s

Natasha explained that with the diversity of visitors coming to the ABG, the narrative must be adapted to the audience. Although she does not know if it is done at the site, she finds it essential to deliver the same message to everyone but adjust the language level to the types of visitors. For instance, rangers should use simpler vocabulary when leading a group of high school students and most of all, present the history in a context with which they are familiar. Natasha insisted that including familiar landscapes (e.g. the New York City Supreme Court featured in the opening credit of the series *Law and Order*) will help visitors make present-day sense of the ABG's history.

Expecting fairness in the representation is also very important for Tamara; that's what she expects from black heritage sites. She also expects mindfulness in presentation of the story, in terms of logical presentation in the exhibits. In other words, she wants to

feel like she can trust the content presented to her, based on the staff's level of knowledge and the overall presentation of the information. Tamara felt she could trust the content of the exhibit and felt like the rangers were knowledgeable of the history of slavery and the ABG.

What are my expectations? You know my real expectations are, truth, I guess I will say truth and logic, if that makes sense. Like if you're gonna present to me what was going on or artifacts or something, I like to make sure that it was really truthful. I really like to make sure I have the truth.. And then logic in meaning like, logic I guess in terms of how it's set up. So if I walk through the door, what's the first thing I'm gonna see when I walk through the door? Like how you're going to start this presentation of depicting whatever is going on? Those are two main, those are things I look for, I guess. Like I said I look for truth...

Tamara – Black female in her 20s

Pattie also mentioned that she has issues with sites where the life of free or enslaved Africans may possibly be mis-represented⁶⁴. She cites the example of Harriet Tubman's estate managed by the National Park Service in Auburn NY and notes how black history is repeatedly sanitized. Harriet Tubman was a black woman born into slavery, who worked hard to free other slaves after she received her freedom. She is credited as one of the "conductors" in the *Underground Railroad* (see <http://www.harriettubmanstudy.org/>). Pattie says:

[The] Park Services [is] getting ready to take over the Harriet Tubman estate there in Auburn, New York. I got serious problems with that. Because I am so weary, that our history is always worded down, it's always sanitized, to make others comfortable.

For Pattie, it is important to tell the "truth," even if it hurts. She explains that everybody needs to know how badly Africans were treated

⁶⁴ In this case, according to Pattie, the NPS puts too much emphasis on a minor detail in the life of Harriet Tubman (her husband's betrayal) instead of focusing on more significant events in Tubman's life.

under slavery and how this discrimination carries on today. She claimed that history cannot be sugar coated just for the sensibility of visitors; to the contrary, all must know the “truth.” This shows that Pattie has no problem with the ABG presenting a darker side of slavery, a side which according to her, must be presented no matter what.

Negative portrayal of Africans as counter productive

Several participants in this study expressed that they try to avoid watching movies that present enslaved Africans being beaten. Isaac gave the example of Steven Spielberg’s *Amistad*, and explained that just showing the negative is counter-productive, but a site like the ABG can inspire for change. He felt:

So it can be a powerful education, you know, but it’s gotta be done in a way that when our children leave there, they feel proud. They feel inspired and feel like they want to go and do something. But if it’s just- if it’s just gonna show, you know, dead bones buried, and you know, it’s- it’s going to be counter-productive. I don’t even now go to these movies where they want to just show the slave being treated so badly, you know.

On the same note, Kandace explained that she dislikes watching movies that portray African Americans as victims and added that many African Americans would not visit the ABG because they perceive memorials as negative places that make you angry instead of proud:

Kandace: I don’t like seeing a lot of things, like I won’t see movies when I know they are going to show slaves getting beaten up again. It’s just *depressing* and it’s like that’s just going to make me want to go *fight* somebody, why am I going to do that?

Linda: But something that would show the accomplishments of people of African descent...

Kandace: Yeah and to show the heights that we reached at the time. That would be something to go to see. As opposed to the memorial at least in my mind or in most Americans I know or African Americans, when you think memorial you think you're going to see something sad

Kandace and Isaac argued that constantly showing Africans as victims is neither useful nor attractive to visitors. For Kandace, the negative connotation she associates with memorials (sadness) deters her from visiting these sites. However, for a site like the ABG, which has an additional space where one learns about the accomplishments of Africans, is rejuvenating and attractive to her. So, contrary to Pattie, who claimed that the "truth" must be told regardless of the discomfort it may bring, Isaac and Pattie prefer sites that portray a more positive side of slavery not usually mentioned in the popular media. The ABG showcases both the realities of slavery (brutality, violence, etc.) and the accomplishments of colonial Africans. However, greater emphasis is placed on the latter and the side that presents slavery is not really teaching anything new about slavery other than it existed in New York. In other words, the ABG does not present any shocking or uncomfortable revelations about the reality of slavery in New York, but reiterates aspects of slavery that are usually known to the general public (e.g., Africans taken from their home in Africa, many Africans died during the crossing of the Atlantic, Africans were forced to work and their lives were regulated by laws and restrictions)

Static displays of docility and victimization versus freedom of outdoors

Similar to the previous point, Wanda expresses strong feelings about the "static" side of the museum's indoor exhibits in contrast to the freedom of the outdoors memorial area. For her, the wax figures in Section 4 (indoors) do not portray the sense of

life and humanity of enslaved Africans; rather, they denote a sort of docility or victimization of Africans. As an artist, Wanda perceived the wax figures (as lifeless individuals) to be too still and not representative of the need to move on from the negative images associated with slavery (e.g. Africans in pain, suffering, being beaten down, being abused, ect.) and to live life to the fullest, in complete freedom. By contrast, the outdoors memorial creates that feeling of liberty and joy.

[...] maintenant le musée, mais ce côté statique des figurines, autant le monument qui est à l'extérieur est une ouverture à la liberté, à la vie et tout, autant ça, pour moi c'est une image qui est tellement blanche américaine, de voir les esclaves avec cette douleur, ça me fait chier, ça me dérange à 100%. [...] l'esclavage c'est quelque chose qui a existé, qui continue à exister, mais il faut, il faut s'ouvrir à la liberté, il faut s'éclater. Garder cette image, je supporte pas. Et c'est le côté statique du musée que je trouve inintéressant.

[...] now the museum, but this static aspect of the figures, while the monument that is outdoors is an opening to freedom, to life and all, this here [wax figures] for me is an image that is so white American, to see the slaves with this pain, it pisses me off, it bothers me 100%. [...] slavery is something that existed, that continues to exist, but we have to open up to freedom, we have to have fun. , To keep that image, I can't stand it. It's this static side of the museum that I find uninteresting.

Wanda – Black female in her 40s

Inaccurate interpretations

A small number of the participants in this study were dissatisfied with the ABG and its interpretative content. Yet, this dissatisfaction typically focused on a specific aspect of representation rather than the whole site (e.g. dramatization through film and the life-sized figures, no finger openly pointing at those who exploited Africans, and oversimplifying the realities of enslaved Africans by presenting them in pristine clothes and shoes).

When asked what he liked the most about the site, Fred explained that he appreciates the overall effort to tell the story of the free and enslaved African who lived in early New York, but there were significant inaccuracies in the interpretation on site:

[...] The fact that there is an attempt being made to give an enlarged picture of who those original Africans were in New York and in this country and the roles that they played, the significant role that they played. So I am gratified that there is an attempt. I could pick faults and find all kinds of things, about the accuracy of some of their statements on who they were and what they were, how long they were there because we know they're [calling?] 1712 or 1715 as the start of that burial ground officially [Fred later on confirmed that the site uses 1712]. That is so ludicrous it's beyond description.

[...] It's just totally inaccurate. How can you say a burial ground starts in 1715 were there from 16-actually the first one probably there in 1613;...the working African, the half freed, when the Africans half enslaved Africans were there from 1624, '25, '26 and all the way through-do you think it would take them until 1715 to start to bury their dead? It doesn't make sense. The fact that you have an African Burial Ground in Harlem that's documented as having begun in the 1660s...the Africans and the Dutch were in Lower Manhattan before they were in Harlem.

[...] But as I said, I don't want to nitpick because at least they're trying to tell the tale. Maybe at some point we can get them to correct the actual information about when that burial ground actually began.

Fred – Black male in his 50s

After the interview, I checked these dates both in the rangers' narratives and the history books, and learned that under Dutch rule Africans were buried inside the city and it was not until 1696, when the British passed a law that forbade Africans to be buried within the city, that Africans' burials occurred outside the city limits.⁶⁵ Free and enslaved Africans had no choice but to bury their loved ones in an undesirable plot of land outside of the city that was used as a potter's field. Without a doubt, one of the most

⁶⁵ This law also applied to Jews and Catholics.

surprising reactions I received regarding the interpretation of slavery at the ABG came from Sylvia. She argued that the land used to be a dumping ground, not a burial ground, because people were not buried there with any human dignity, but thrown there next to garbage. In her own words, Sylvia commented:

I used to hear a lot of black people say, “That’s where our people used to stay. That’s where they used to dump us.” So I’ve always heard it. There was this dumping ground where black people were taken, dumped, because it was like a garbage dump. That’s what it was, outside of the municipality, all around that area. It was a garbage dump.

Sylvia – Black female in her 70s

Sylvia was the only person who called the burial ground a “dumping ground” that had no elements of sacredness. I was surprised by Sylvia’s comments as nothing at the ABG revealed anything close to what she was claiming. Indeed, all the narratives at the site emphasize the sacredness of the burial ground, as the only place that Africans could gather and find dignity. However, Hansen and McGowan (1998) argue that free and enslaved Africans buried their loved ones outside of the city limit, in a swampy land, along other discriminated groups like Jews and Catholics. It was “a burial ground where outsiders in a village and very poor people are interred. It was a place for outcasts and a dumping ground for the refuse from the nearby pottery kilns, where ceramics were manufactured. Yet the African Burial Ground gave Africans and people of African descent the opportunity to retain an important element of their African past – funeral and burial customs” (p. 34). In 1696, a law forbidding Africans to be buried within the city was passed. Until then, enslaved Africans were buried in the church’s cemetery established in the colony (Trinity Church).

Rangers tell visitors about the 1696 law that prevented Africans from being buried within city limits, but they do not tell them that the land was a dumping ground. To the contrary, Ranger Erwin insisted that it was definitely not a dump and that enslaved Africans were buried in individual coffins with dignity. In the excerpt below, Ranger Erwin warns visitors not to believe that it was a place where Africans were simply dumped:

[...] most of the Africans buried here, over 90%, were buried in coffins; so don't let anyone try to influence or convince you that this was some dumping ground where they just threw the bodies. The majority was buried in coffins, the majority was wrapped in sheets or cloths known as shrouds, and pins were used to fasten these shrouds around the body.

Ranger Erwin – Black man in his 40s

So, while the historical accounts report that the land was a dumping ground for pottery refuse, they do not say that Africans were “dumped” there as well. This constitutes a small nuance but it has significant meaning. On one side historical facts state that the land was a dumping ground for pottery refuse, not human beings. On other side, visitors like Sylvia are convinced that Africans were dumped there without any sort of dignity. Finally, the NPS presents the ground as sacred, testifying that Africans were buried with dignity and that contrary to some beliefs, they were not dumped but properly interred. However, the NPS does not mention that the land was a dump for pottery refuse, this could be to avoid the site being perceived as a dump as well, and through that, exposing other atrocities of New York slavery. Thus, it seems like there was a conscious effort from the NPS to sanitize part of the context of the burial ground, so that its essence would not be associated with garbage but with sacredness.

Clean, pretty, and happy slaves: sanitizing violence

Sanitization occurred not only in the written interpretations, but also by use of the various exhibits and the film. “Clean,” “pretty,” and “happy” were three aspects noted by various respondents. Karen, for instance, was highly critical of the wax figures in Section 4. In her case, the concern was not that they add a dramatic factor (as claimed by Brandy and Sam), but that they present a clean, “happy” picture of the enslaved that is totally in discord with historical fact. Karen illustrates this below, and her words show her close identification with being one of the enslaved --note her use of “we were not happy,” “I didn’t sign and say I want to be your slave”:

...if you go and look at those pictures down there ...we got on nice clean aprons, pretty dresses. ...show me one [enslaved African] that they dug up that was dressed like that! They’re acting like we enjoyed being enslaved. That’s the impression that they give me. We have this big smile in our face and I’m smiling at my so-called captor and I’m looking so happy. We were not happy to be enslaved... I didn’t sign and say I want to be your slave. I didn’t fill out no application. You sold me on the block. You enslaved me. And you said I was less than you.

Karen – Black female in her 60s

Ranger Erwin touched on this issue during his tour, where he reminded visitors that slavery was violent and that the enslaved certainly did not wear clothes as nice as those on the wax figures. While he appeared to discuss the “severity” of punishment, his reference to dress remains cursory. “Some,” he said, have worn and torn clothes, but no mention of dirt or squalor, or raise the question of how they might have felt about wearing Dutch clothes—his comment refers to remembering the Dutch influence—a historic point rather than the condition of the Africans:

[...] people actually comment on how human they [wax figures] look; not only from the eyes, but to the hands. And then look at the clothing, so it gives us an idea of the dress of the early enslaved, the Dutch influence, even after the British had captured this area. Yet we know that all enslaved people were not dressed like this; of course not. Some, their clothes are worn and torn and remember many of them were beaten;

Ranger Erwin – Black man in his 40s

So, while the exhibit presenting a “clean” version of slavery with the wax figures, a slightly different discourse is operating through the medium of the guided tour, where visitors are told not to be “fooled” by the appearances of the life-size figures. Note, though, that Ranger Erwin’s account of the wax figures is also partial—it addresses violence, but only briefly points to the “Dutch” dressing and “worn and torn” outfits of “some.” Moreover, it should be noted that not all visitors may take the opportunity to interact with a ranger, so they would miss this attempt to revise what appears to be a recognized and acknowledged misrepresentation. I observed that most visitors came as individuals, with family or friends, and not as part of an organized tour.

Edutainment and dramatization of history

As a volunteer at the ABG, Sam takes visitors on both off- and on-site tours. Usually, he is contacted directly by interested visitors who know him or have heard about him and his talent as a tour guide and story-teller. In the exchange below, Sam explained to me that the historian in him is not attracted to the idea of the wax figures but that he understands that there is something to which the general public is receptive. This raised the notion of “edutainment:” visitors to educative sites like museums expect to be entertained at the same time. For that, sites include interactive stations, sound and video stations, and sometimes games. Sam suggested that the ABG is mixing the

dramatic with the historical to provide this edutainment effect for visitors. This was evident, he noted, in the film and in representations such as the wax figures:

As a historian I'd be much more comfortable with straight history rather than the dramatization, but I recognize that that is not necessarily the focus that would make the strongest contribution to the visitor experience.

During our first interview, I asked Sam about his views on the film played in the theater. He felt it emphasizes the dramatic over the historic, which perhaps the general public may prefer:

I am still and I understand it and I appreciate the resonance that it creates for many people, but the video [film] and the core are they in many ways, for me privilege the dramatic over the historic. And I recognize it for many people that's the way that they will hear it and that I recognize it's just my bias.

Sam – Black male in his 60s

Sam also compared the current film to the one that played at the former visitor center and said that the older film, which focused more on the archaeological and anthropological work at the site, was titled “Unearthing the Slave Trade” and was an episode of the series “Archaeology,” produced by New Dominion Pictures Inc. This 28-minute film was produced in 1994 and featured actor John Rhys-Davies as the narrator. The reason that a more historical film was replaced by one entitled “Our Time at Last” was to provide for a better visitors’ experience with a newer and livelier video. The new video is different as it shifts focus between the fictional story of Amelia (an enslaved girl who assists her mother and other elders in the preparation for her father and cousin’s funerals), the accounts of a variety of scholars and artists (including artist Maya Angelou, politician Governor David Paterson, scientific team members Michael Blakey

and Warren Perry, and historians Chris Moore and Sherrill Wilson), and the narrator. For Sam, going into detail about the story of Amelia was too dramatic because it was based on fictional characters and was presented as a movie: the introduction of the characters (Amelia and her mother), the sequence of events (Amelia called by her mother to run errands, the procession of Africans walking toward the burial ground, the funeral ceremony, and the departure of the procession), and the ending of the story (coffins are left to be buried and the procession leaves the ground). In that way, for Sam, the fictional part of the film could have been left out as, according to him, it is more entertaining emotionally than it is educating with historical facts.

CHAPTER V

CONSUMPTION AND EXPERIENCE OF SLAVERY TOURISM

5.1. Participants' profile

This chapter addresses emerging themes, along with insights into visitor experience and the meanings that slavery-heritage sites like the African Burial Ground hold for them, as well as their reasons for visiting such sites. The chapter commences with a profile of each participant of this study, which helps situate and understand the relationship between site and individual in the context of slavery heritage. The profiles below are presented in the order the interviews were conducted and include the process of recruitment, highlights from each interview showing aspects such as how they felt about the site and why it was important to them, plus demographic information about each participant.

As summarized in Chapter III, 18 of the 27 participants were females and 9 were males. Among the women, 9 were under the age of 50 (6 were under 30 and 3 were between 31 and 50) and 9 were older. I also interviewed 5 men under 50 (1 was under 30, 4 were between 31 and 50) and 4 were over 50. In terms of occupations, they included students, journalists, professors, ministers, and managers, among others. All participants were African American, with the exception of Wanda, who is Franco-Cameroonian, Leila, who is Canadian, and Terence who is Trinidadian British American. All participants live in New York; however, Terence shares residency

between Trinidad, the UK and the US (New York), and some participants were originally from other states: Minnesota, Ohio, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and California.

The participants in this study appear to fall into three broad categories: the “curious visitor”, the “serious visitor” who engages in repeat visits (see Kim & Jamal, 2007), and the “guardians” those who were involved at some point in the development and management of the site (e.g., protestors, volunteers.). Many who were involved since the discovery of the burial ground feel a sense of ownership toward this site they fought to protect. The discussions with these participants suggested that they see themselves as *protectors* of the site and what it represents, in the name of their ancestors (see interview with Sam, for example). Table 5.1 summarizes the profiles of the 27 participants in this study.

5.1.1. Interviews

Interview 1: Fiona

I was both excited and nervous about the interview with Fiona because it was my first one. Now in her 60s, Fiona is one of the volunteers at the ABG. I asked her in person if she would be interested in participating in this study by telling me about her experiences when visiting the ABG and other heritage sites. She agreed to be interviewed during her lunch break since she worked around the area of the ABG. When I explained the purpose of my study, she automatically suggested places I could go to recruit participants, like Saint Paul Baptist Church, which has a museum (the MAAFA Museum) and holds the commemorative MAAFA (African Holocaust) event every September.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ For more information on the Maafa, see <http://www.africanholocaust.net/>

Table 5.1: Profile of the study participants

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
1	Fiona	62	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from South Carolina	Administrator	ABG Memorial during her lunch break (Lower Manhattan)	Asked her in person when she was volunteering at the ABG
2	Sam	69	Male	African American ⁶⁷	New York	Writer	Part 1: ABG Memorial (Lower Manhattan) Part 2: his car (Lower Manhattan)	Recommended by Nicole
3	Barbara	27	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Ohio	Financial manager	Starbucks (Manhattan)	Recommended by Melanie ⁶⁸
4	Karen	59	Female	African American	New York	Retired	(Harlem)	Recommended by Elizabeth
5	Wanda	48	Female	Franco-Cameroonian (Black)	Lives in New York Previously lived in France and Cameroon	Designer/teacher	(Harlem)	Recommended by Nicole
6	Leila	29	Female	Canadian (Black)	Canada	Student	Part 1 and part 2 at Starbucks (Lower Manhattan)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserv

⁶⁷ See Sam's profile further below

⁶⁸ Park ranger

Table 5.1, Continued

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
7	Danielle	66	Female	African American	New York	Retired accountant	ABG Memorial (Lower Manhattan)	Asked her in person when she was volunteering at the ABG
8	Elisabeth	67	Female	African American	New York	Retired/business owner	Schomburg Center (Harlem)	Asked her in person when she was volunteering at the ABG
9	Katrina	43	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Los Angeles	Professor	Part 1 and part 2 at La Perle Noire Cafe and Bakery (Harlem)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserv
10	Stanley	47	Male	African American	New York	Clergyman	Starbucks (Lower Manhattan)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserv
11	Lance	41	Male	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Ohio	Professor	Abyssinian Baptist Church (Harlem)	Asked him at Abyssinian Baptist Church after the service
12	Isaac	80	Male	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Atlanta	Clergyman	House of the Lord Pentecostal Church (Brooklyn)	Recommended by several people

Table 5.1, Continued

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
13	Sylvia	72	Female	African American (originally from Togo, West Africa)	New York	Retired professor	Her place (Harlem)	Recommended by Nicole
14	Natasha	65	Female	African American	New York	Retired professor	ABG library (Lower Manhattan)	Asked her in person at the ABG when she was doing research there
15	Helen	68	Female	African American	New York	Educator	Her place (Manhattan)	Recommended by Natasha
16	Brandy	29	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Minnesota	Program manager	Brooklyn Historical Society (her office)	Recommended by Natasha
17	Francis	20	Male	African Indian American	New York	Student worker	Starbucks (Lower Manhattan)	Expressed interest to be a study participant. Student employee at the ABG
18	Tamara	28	Female	African American	New York	Manager	Starbucks (Brooklyn)	Recommended by Vanessa ⁶⁹
19	Kandace	58	Female	African American	New York	Artist	Interchurch Center (Columbia University area)	Recommended by Wanda

⁶⁹ Park ranger

Table 5.1, Continued

Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residency	Occupation	Location of interview	Method of recruitment
20	Pattie	68	Female	African living in America ⁷⁰ (Black)	New York	Educator	Part 1 and part 2 at Sankofa School Academy (Brooklyn)	Recommended by Karen
21	Kendra	20	Female	African American	New York	Student	Golden Krust Restaurant (Staten Island)	Asked her in person as she worked at the ABG
22	Erika	36	Female	African American	Lives in New York Originally from Pennsylvania	Youth programs manager	Schomburg Center in Harlem (her office)	Recommended by Elizabeth
23	Fred	59	Male	African American	New York	Documentarian	His car (Harlem)	Contacted me after receiving email through Sam's listserv
24	Donna	29	Female	African American	New York	Manager	Starbucks (Queens)	Recommended by Vanessa
25	Damon	66	Male	African American	New York	Educator	Spoonbread Restaurant (Harlem)	Recommended by Nicole
26	Terence	34	Male	Caribbean British-American	United Kingdom/ New York/Trinidad	Instructor	Skype	Replied to listserv
27	Derek	46	Male	African American	New York	Historian	Phone	Recommended by many

⁷⁰ See Pattie's profile below

Before our interview, I prioritized the questions in order to get the most out of the short interview time. With her family originally from South Carolina, Fiona is a first generation New Yorker, but none of her children or grand-children live in New York City. She volunteers at the ABG because she feels it is her responsibility to watch over her African ancestors. I found it interesting how she took ownership of the site and how close she felt to it. She heard about the burial ground when it made the news back in 1991. She then got involved with the Black community through the protests to halt the disrespectful unearthing of the human remains. When asked the reasons she got involved in the protests, Fiona became emotional and explained that she does not know where in Africa her ancestors originated from, and that the ABG helps fill *that gap* because she feels a connection there:

[...] because [of] that connection. See, I am getting emotional [laugh]. Like you know our ancestors are from Africa but you can't directly trace your roots because of slavery and the other stuff that was done. [...] but you still feel that connection, like how Europeans can say what part of Europe they are from. And it's like we have no connection, so if you don't know where you come from, to me, I feel empty. A part of me is empty without that knowledge but here, I feel still sad but happy. The ancestors are here.

Fiona went on to say that doing research about her family history in addition to reading and watching videos about slavery helps her fill this connecting gap and that she truly feels the presence of the ancestors at the ABG. Overall, the interview with Fiona went well. Like all the participants, she appreciated being asked to be interviewed and to share her personal opinion. As our conversation developed, Fiona made me realize how rich, significant, and important a site like the ABG can be for African Americans.

Interview 2: Sam

My interview with Sam was peculiar because it took place after we had already established a rapport. My roommate Nicole, a volunteer and ranger at the ABG, recommended that I speak to Sam. I was told he was also a volunteer and very involved with the ABG. After Sam and I exchanged a few phone calls, we met at the visitor center for what we thought would just be an introductory meeting. He was supposed to give a tour to a visitor who cancelled it. So Sam and I actually spent the whole day together. We started with a meeting in the ABG library to discuss his background and his relationship with the site, then continued the conversation over lunch, before coming back to the site for a personal guided tour of the visitor center, the art gallery, and the memorial. Over dinner, Sam shared some of his poetry, including a poem about the procession of the remains to the ABG during the reinterment ceremony in 2003. He gave me a list of potential participants for my study, including current and past volunteers. This long day spent with Sam allowed me to get to know him much better than a simple meeting could have not. Also, my relationship with Sam was unique in comparison to that with the other participants because we spent time together on a regular basis attending social events to promote the ABG⁷¹ and discussing my study and research progression.

We scheduled a formal interview at the memorial to be held four days after we first met. Sam is a native New Yorker who began his activism with the student Civil Rights Movement in the 60s. He inherited his love of New York (NY) history from his

⁷¹ As a volunteer, Sam always takes a stack of brochures to events he attends, for an opportunity to publicize the ABG and attract potential visitors.

father and he came to understand the distortions, omissions, and contradictions that existed in the history he was taught at school. As a result, he set out to seek truer versions and was introduced to Africana Studies. Sam was also involved with the ABG during the community protests and then started volunteering at the Office of Public Education and Interpretation, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (hereafter the OPEI and the Schomburg Center respectively),⁷² and the ABG.

Anyone looking at Sam would assume that he is White, I included. I was puzzled when he used “we” when talking about black people or African Americans. In addition, he took the time to say “Namaste sister,” “Namaste brother,” or just give a little nod to all black men and women that passed us by in the street. During our interview, we discussed the issue of personal and cultural identity:

[...]I was in my 50s and after 15 years of psychotherapy, I was truly able to come to a point where I could say unequivocally that issues of my racial life identity were not my problem but somebody else’s.

I’ve finally reached the point where I’m sufficiently comfortable in my own skin that what you see is what you get. If you can’t deal with it, fuck you, I’m busy.

It’s taken me a long time to get there. And that’s not to say there aren’t moments that that gets shaken to some degree.

Linda: So, when you have to fill out census papers, what box do you check?

Sam: Oh, African American! No question. On that level it’s never been an issue, at least not since I was real young.

Meeting and interviewing Sam was highly valuable for my study. He sent my call for participants to the distribution list (listserv) “Cross Posts Information Exchange”

⁷² The Schomburg Center is a research unit of the New York Public Library located in Harlem. nypl.org/locations/schomburg

which he maintains to share daily information about cultural and political events relevant to the African Diaspora community in New York and around the world.⁷³ I was subsequently contacted by three people interested in being study participants.

Interview 3: Katrina

Katrina contacted me after receiving my call for participants through Sam's listserv. After exchanging a few emails we decided to meet at a coffee shop in Harlem. We had a second interview at the same location three days later to continue our conversation. Katrina is an adjunct professor of Africana and African American Studies in several schools in NY and was very supportive of my research. I looked to her for inspiration as a black female faculty member teaching issues of race and diversity. She is in her 40s and originally from Los Angeles. She first heard about the ABG in 1993, while finishing up her master's at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), through a blurb about the community protest against the construction of the federal building over the burial ground. She heard nothing more about the site as she kept her focus on her PhD studies. Ten years later she found herself in NY, remembered the site and decided to visit in 2006. She described an emotional visit to the site as well as the way she uses that history in her classrooms:

[...] I was completely emotionally overcome to see this site because I know the significance of African presence not just in the Americas but globally. And so to actually have this historical site that recognizes the African presence here in New York City, what I read was that it's going to radically change the historiography of the Americas. I've read extensively about the African contributions to the world, and then I began to

⁷³ Cross Posts Information Exchange – “A list for African American and Diaspora cultural, political, community and literary information in New York City, elsewhere in the US, and occasionally, Africa and England” <http://groups.google.com/group/cpie/about> retrieved on August 15, 2011.

incorporate this in my classes [...]. But I actually broadened it and talked about the various ways of how all different social groups are incorporated and helped shape the U.S. And I basically began to incorporate this literature into my curriculum, which blew students away because they have a totally different conception of enslaved black people.

I learned a great deal both interviews with Katrina because the conversation extended beyond the ABG to issues such as how to deal with being a minority in education and, shifting language in black and white spaces (addressed further below and in Chapter VI), plus her travel experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America.

Interview 4: Leila

Leila e-mailed me in response to a call for participant she received through her school. My first interview with Leila was very challenging. I was not quite satisfied with the development of our conversation due to the fact that Leila was giving me brief answers instead of the long and elaborate ones I expected. My inability to articulate the questions adequately and to probe at the right moment greatly influenced the dynamics of the first interview.

Leila is a Black Canadian student working on her PhD in English in NY and she heard about the ABG while searching for something interesting to do in Manhattan related to her research interests. She felt the ABG would be an interesting site to see so she visited one day on her way to class. During our first interview, I came to realize that Leila had not visited the new visitor center. In fact, Leila had visited the ABG back in 2009 and, at the time of our first discussion, she was not aware of the existence of the new visitor center. So I encouraged her to visit it at her earliest convenience and suggested that we meet again afterwards.

I felt much more comfortable during our second conversation and Leila provided longer answers to my questions. Our second discussion was more constructive and allowed us to develop more themes than in the first one. Leila shared her satisfaction with the visitor center mostly because of the interactive displays and the details of the scientific work conducted on the human skeletons. Leila also explained how differently slavery is talked about in Canada, compared to the US and how some people perceive Canada as the place where enslaved could find full freedom:

It's rarely talked about at all, and when it's talked about, it's talk about as something that happened specifically in the United States, and Canada is where slaves went to become free. That is as far as it goes.

Interview 5: Stanley

Stanley also contacted me after receiving my call for participants through Sam's listserv. We met at the memorial and decided to conduct the interview at the closest coffee shop. I found it quite interesting that on our walk to the coffee shop, Stanley "quizzed" me on the ABG to see what I knew about it. After I answered all his questions, he deemed my knowledge of the site to be adequate and added that there was more I did not know that he was going to tell me about. I was glad I passed Stanley's "test" and that he felt comfortable enough to share his experience with me.

Originally from upstate New York, Stanley is an ordained and licensed Baptist minister who was involved in the community protest of the 1990s after the discovery of the remains. Until it folded after 9/11, Stanley owned a company that offered African American historical tours in NYC. The ABG was a major stop on his tours and he said

he learned more about the history of NY because he had to present relevant material for his African American clients.

Because his father taught him the importance and need for connectedness between people of color, Stanley explained that it is important for him to be around and meet people who look like him:

Each one teach one. And I think there's a need to educate and to share and to get us to reconnect. Because we are the sleeping giant and if we wake up and realize our potential and our responsibility to contribute to the world, with our leadership, our skills, and abilities. So I think it's important to make those connections. And so I look at me, I come from a dominantly white environment. I was raised and educated around Caucasians, but the fact of the matter is when I became a man, I realized the need for us [Black people] to be able to fellowship and communicate in particular with people of color. It's important.

Stanley was not the only participant who expressed the necessity to connect with other black people on a regular basis. At least eight other participants (Pattie, Karen, Natasha, Brandy, Sylvia, Katrina, Erika, and Helen) argued that it is critical to go against white imperialism and to rise as Black people.

Interview 6: Danielle

Danielle is another volunteer at the ABG. I saw Danielle working at the front desk several times before and after I asked her to participate in my study, to which she kindly agreed. While talking to Danielle, I noticed she was quite reserved and not very talkative. However, as our interview conversation progressed, Danielle opened up and shared her personal experiences. Our interview lasted about 45 minutes and was conducted at the memorial. A native New Yorker, Danielle is in her 60s, and recently retired from an accounting position in a government office. She first heard about the

ABG when the media covered the story in 1991. She explained that she had the desire to volunteer with the ABG because of her interest in history and that she felt an obligation to spread the word about the site and encourage others to visit. When I asked her how important the site was to her, Danielle said that she strongly believes that all must know about the site because it is important for everyone, not just African Americans:

Personally, this is important information that we all should be aware of, that we all should know, not just African Americans, just people in general, Americans in general because this is not just black history, African American history. This is part of American history, part of world history, and so as far as I am concerned, it's information that everybody should be aware of.

Interview 7: Sylvia

My roommate Nicole recommended that I speak with Sylvia, a writer and poet of West African origins who has been living in Harlem since 1957 when she came to study music. Sylvia invited me to her apartment where we discussed her experiences with heritage sites in both Africa and the U.S.

Unlike most of my other participants, Sylvia was told by historian colleagues before the burial ground was uncovered in 1991 that the area once belonged to. Sylvia was very firm in her perception of the burial ground and she insisted that people should know that it was not an organized cemetery but a dumping ground and garbage dump since Africans could not be buried inside the city alongside the white population:

When the African Burial Ground came up, it wasn't in fact called an African burial ground. It was a dump. It was a dumping site. It was where you threw garbage. I mean it was garbage. So black people, dead black people were garbage.

But they [black people] also had to live in that. So they had to live with garbage and decomposed bodies. This is what they [white people] did to our people.

It's terrible. I mean if there's anything you can convey in your story, you really have to make people understand that *burial ground* suggests a cemetery and some kind of order. [...] That you organize the space and that this space is for dead bodies and it's sacred. [...] That's not what this [the ABG] was. This was a waste. This was a dump.

Because of the harsh conditions Africans had to live in back then, Sylvia recognized their strength and resilience, and she deplored the cruelty of humanity and the wrong done to Blacks. Her quote above also indicates there is a need for the public to understand the deplorable “dumping site,” “waste,” and “garbage”--like conditions that existed, rather than the overlay of “order” and “sacred” cemetery setting presented by the ABG. As she states, black people were treated like the garbage and waste they had to live amidst.

Interview 8: Isaac

Isaac is a well-known reverend and activist in the black community in NY and for that reason, many suggested that I speak to him. For our interview, I met Isaac at his church office in Brooklyn. Now in his 80s, Isaac was directly informed by Derek⁷⁴ about construction workers loading trucks with human remains from the site to continue the building's construction. Isaac went on to explain how the pressure from the African American community, led by the late Sonny Carson,⁷⁵ and the intervention of Congress were able to halt the diggings:

⁷⁴ Derek is another participant in this study and is reportedly the person who notified Fox News about the secretive unearthing of the human bones on the construction site.

⁷⁵ Sonny Carson was a Black nationalist, activist and community leader based in Brooklyn, NY.

So we [the African American community] knew we had to stop that [the diggings]. And then we tried to appeal to the authorities that this was sacred ground and it needed to stop, but they [workers] proceeded on. Then we had to take more drastic measures of saying that if these big vehicles moved, then they'd move over us and they might as well prepare us a grave. Brothers like Sonny Carson. You may not hear too much about him because he was the radical one that people in authority didn't like at all. Yeah, because he said straight up he don't like no white people. [...] And it [the fight] was necessary. That's what got them to stop [the excavations and construction].

Isaac shared that fighting for the preservation of sites like the ABG is consistent with his belief in and defense of Pan-Africanism. Since his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, Isaac has collaborated with major figures of the Black community, like Reverend Jesse Jackson and Reverend Al Sharpton.

Interview 9: Barbara

Barbara was recommended by Melanie, one of the rangers at the ABG. Barbara is originally from Ohio; she attended Howard University, and is now working in NY. She briefly heard about the controversy in the 1990s, then again through one of her professors who was part of the scientific research team at Howard University, and finally through her friend Melanie, after Melanie started working there as a ranger.

In her late 20s, Barbara expressed how she felt a connection to the ABG even though it was not a tangible one:

I think it's complicated. I mean on the one hand I feel like, there's this sort of connection but there's no real connection [laugh]. As weird as that sounds. It's like I know that this is a part of me and I know that it's like hugely important to me but at the same time there's no way that I can pinpoint and say "Okay, these are my people" do you know what I mean? And that's kind of frustrating but at the same time I still hold on to that because it's all that I have. So, in that way I feel like it's a part of me and that there's a connection there but at the end of the day it's not a tangible one.

Barbara was the first female African American under 50 (she was 27) that I interviewed and I was eager to know how she related to the ABG and similar sites, as well as what being African American meant to her. The interview was additionally enjoyable as Barbara and I compared our experiences visiting and living in Morocco, London, and New York City. Being able to connect with Barbara on a personal level made our conversation more comfortable and allowed us to learn about each other in ways that help inform this study.

Interview 10: Natasha

I met Natasha at the library of the ABG while she was doing research for her book on the burial ground. We discussed our research interests and after I explained my reasons for being there, I asked her if she would be interested in participating in this study. Without hesitation she agreed and we set a time for our discussion. Natasha is a retired history professor in her 60s who has lived in New York City since 1965.

She first heard about the ABG in 1993 when the human bones were sent to Howard University. She shared her experiences of going to the offices of the ABG with her students back when they were located at the World Trade Center and how she has been hooked on the site since her first visit. Natasha's experience with the ABG is different from most people's because the primary objective of her visits is not simply to tour the site, but to do research: browsing through the archives to find information relevant to her own research.

When discussing the lack of publicity on the ABG around the city of NY, Natasha was the first participant to advocate that celebrities and politicians could help promote the site:

Leaders. So when I said that, I was thinking of social leaders and government leaders, but I am also surprised how often I return to athletes and entertainers as vessels for getting the public to pay attention. It's like, "A-Rod is going to the African Burial Ground. For real, A-Rod?" [...] And why shouldn't he. For all we know A-Rod's relatives, his ancestors, may be buried in the African Burial Ground. We don't know that they're not. I mean, 15,000, they could very well be. So if Amar'e Stoudemire, the new acquisition for the Nicks, or if Jay-Z could understand that the city that he sings about was built by his ancestors, see, I think Jay-Z could bring a whole lot of people to the African Burial Ground. He's a New Yorker, why shouldn't he?

Interview 11: Lance

During my regular tours of churches around Harlem to recruit potential participants for this study, I stopped at Abyssinian Baptist Church. I had spotted the name of that church in the archives of the ABG so I added it to a list of potential churches to visit. The staff at Abyssinian told me to come at the end of one of their Sunday services to approach potential participants. Lance was one of the names suggested. I met with him the following Sunday after the service and exchanged contact information to set an appointment for our interview. The interview was conducted at the church and lasted a little over one hour.

Lance is in his 40s and a native of Ohio, has been living in New York since 1982, and is now a faculty member in African American Studies. Lance has always been interested in history, so when he heard about the ABG in the 1990s, he was curious about it and somewhat followed the development of the grassroots movement.

Like many other participants, Lance stressed the importance of language when talking about slavery and the Africans who were enslaved. He explained that he has always been mindful of how people talk about slavery and that the words we choose can create opportunities for dialogue about slavery and its legacy. In other words, Lance believes that dialogue is a powerful tool to address and understand difficult events like slavery:

I think for people visiting, what is going to make this story powerful is the number of graves, but to humanize them [the remains]. Even if it's fictional, which we know this is, but it's based on fact. And that's really why people have moved away from calling people "slaves" to a lot of times saying "enslaved Africans", and from saying "slaves" to "African Americans." Because when we're saying "slaves", they're not individuals to some extent. So we don't really think about what their lives were like. And it's the same thing when I was talking about the plantations: in those situations when people were able to say that they were "servants", that just wipes away all of the struggles and the difficulties. I think the burial ground kind of forces that discussion.

Interview 12: Wanda

I heard about Wanda through Nicole. I quickly noticed her French accent when we set the appointment for our interview. Most of our discussion was in French. We only used English when we could not find the right terminology in French.⁷⁶ I met Wanda at the Art Horizons Studio in Harlem where she holds art workshops for children. Wanda is Franco-Cameroonian: she lived in France before she moved to NY nine years ago. She was trained in anthropology and today she is a designer and teacher. Wanda has always

⁷⁶ I found it quite interesting to conduct this interview in French because I very rarely have the occasion to discuss my research with French speakers. Even with my family members, I either talk about my research in English (or some sort of "Franglish") or I oversimplify it in French.

had an interest in African American culture, so when she arrived in NY, she started doing research at the Schomburg Center and stumbled upon documents about the ABG.

Since then, Wanda has led a variety of workshops for adults and children at the former visitor center of the ABG. However, when asked about her impressions about the current visitor center, she expressed her dislike:

Au mémorial, c'est vraiment m'asseoir, méditer, c'est vraiment un lieu que j'aime énormément. A l'intérieur, j'aime pas du tout, j'aime pas ce cote "federal building" parce que ca me gêne.

At the memorial, it's really to sit down, meditate, it's really a place that I like tremendously. Inside, I don't like at all, I don't like this "federal building" feel because it really bothers me.

Interview 13: Elizabeth

I met Elizabeth during her volunteering time at the ABG. She gladly accepted to participate in this study and agreed on conducting the interview at the Schomburg Center. Now in her 60s, Elizabeth was born and raised in Harlem, NY. She has traveled a considerable amount all around the world and today, she spends most of her time volunteering and guiding tourist groups through NYC.

Elizabeth encouraged me to contact those opposed to the chosen design of the memorial. She suggested I get in touch with Karen to schedule an interview. Karen was a member of the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground and believed the unearthing of the remains to be a total disrespect of the African ancestors. There were also disagreements about the design of the memorial and the nature and location of the visitor center. Indeed, some members of the community

considered the winning design to be too intrusive,⁷⁷ others believed the visitor center should have its own independent location, and not be in a federal building. In the end, it looked like certain groups who were involved in the process detached themselves from the rest as they disagreed with the proposed direction for the ABG and refused to compromise.

Interview 14: Helen

Natasha recommended I speak with Helen as she was an educator who had brought student groups to the ABG in the past. I met Helen at her apartment, which somehow had a very familiar childhood smell that made me feel at home. Now in her late 60s, Helen was born and raised in Harlem. She shared many of her experiences with racism as a child visiting Chicago and Oklahoma City. After she graduated from college in 1964, she faced the dilemma of joining the Peace Corps or the Civil Rights Movement in the South. She chose to go to Africa with the Corps because back then, she said, nobody went to Africa. Upon her return to the U.S., she drove south to Mississippi to join the Civil Rights Movement.

As an educator, she also addressed the importance for students to learn about their history and the “truth” about slavery. For that, she regretted the simplistic view children have of slavery and the lack of appropriate teaching about slavery in schools:

For the students who know nothing at all about their background, know nothing at all about slavery in New York or any place else, you know, they just know that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. They still talk about George Washington Carver and the peanut.

⁷⁷ Pattie claimed that for the memorial’s construction, further digging where remains were initially found was required.

[...] Especially with the black kids, knowing their history, knowing what their forefathers and foremothers did and had to go through, and seeing how important they thought it was to get an education, that is so important.

Interview 15: Karen

I did not know what to expect from my interview with Karen. I was told by my roommate Nicole and by Elizabeth that Karen was one of the members of the African American community who disagreed with some of the decisions made relating to the development of the ABG. However, I did not know exactly what her disagreement was, but I was eager to get her point of view.

When I met Karen, I noticed she was wearing an African headdress, which, according to her, shows pride in her heritage: as she said, she is the “mother of creation” (as an African American woman). During our conversation, she elaborated on the importance of her heritage and the significance of her headdress to remind her and everyone else of who she is.

Linda: So what does it mean to be African or African-American?

Karen: It means that I have a lot to be thankful for. It means that I’m part of the first civilization. It means that I am the mother of creation. Nobody would be here unless they have to come through us [Africans]. That’s what it means.

[...] That’s why I wear this [referring to her headdress]. There is a studio museum over here [in Harlem] I was there and three white people walked in and they spoke “Oh what is this? What’s all of this?” I didn’t let them touch it. “What’s all of that?” I said, “This means that I’m your mother.” They heard it and walked away from me. I’m your mother!

Linda: How do other people react to that, even black people?

Karen: Well I’ve got something like “this is very intimidating, why do you have to wear that and why do you have to wear all of that?” I just said, “You’ll never understand. If you have to ask me, you’re not going to

understand it. I don't have time to explain. When you get some pride and like yourself and care about who you are, you'll know. You'll know why I do it."

[...] I don't go to the garbage can without my crown in my arm. I might meet somebody out there that might try to hurt me... It's my protection.

The above excerpt of the conversation with Karen illustrates how proud this woman is of who she is and her ancestors' origins. This exchange, like several other parts of our discussion, also denotes how distrustful she is of white people, who she claims might want to hurt her, even when she takes her trash out.

Interview 16: Brandy

Originally from Minnesota, Brandy moved to New York in the year 2000 and worked part-time at the ABG between 2001 and 2003. At the time, the public interpretive programs were overseen by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) until 2003, then by the Schomburg Center, and finally by the NPS starting in 2006. Brandy holds a master's degree in History and is currently in charge of developing educational programs for NYC public schools, specifically in Brooklyn.

Brandy was referred to me by Natasha, who was her former professor and who took her to Bahia during one of her research trips to Brazil. During our interview, Brandy shared her experiences visiting sites of African heritage in Bahia as well as numerous other sites in the U.S.

Interview 17: Francis

During the summer of my fieldwork, Francis was a second-year student worker at the ABG. Francis and I saw each other almost daily and discussed our academic learning in Africana Studies in our respective universities. After I shared with Francis

the purpose of my presence at the ABG and the objectives of my research, he expressed an interest in participating in the study. At first I did not know if I should include him as a participant not only because he was employed at the site but also because I was not sure if he identified himself as African American. Francis has Guyanese and African Indian heritage ancestry. As I asked him how he identified himself in the 2008 Census, Francis explained that if there were an “other” ethnicity category on the census, he would pick it and if he could go into more details, he would check “African-Indian descent.”

Interviewing Francis was not only an opportunity to get the perspective of a young black male who has a passion for black history in general, but who was also very knowledgeable of the site, its development and management.

Interview 18: Tamara

Tamara is a 30-year old African American woman, from Brooklyn, New York. She first heard about the ABG through her mother, but not until her close friend and park ranger (Vanessa⁷⁸) started working there and encouraged her to visit did she decide to go. She subsequently came twice to the ABG site, once before the new visitor center opened and then again after the inauguration. Her main motivations were interest in history and in “real” representations of slavery, as she explained:

I’m very, very, very interested in my history and in reality. I think a real depiction of what was really going on, how African slaves were treated, what are the little things that were a part of our culture that were lost or lost in assimilation and in integration or just trying to fit in and not be ostracized. I just thought it would be a great opportunity to see what was really going on in New York.

⁷⁸ Pseudonym

I was interested in interviewing Tamara in order to get the viewpoint of a young, educated, African American professional New Yorker. Plus, Vanessa had recommended I speak with Tamara as she had visited the ABG and would be interested in participating in a research study such as mine.

Interview 19: Kandace

I contacted Kandace through Wanda, the Franco-Cameroonian participant in this study. Kandace works in many areas: she is a performer, a writer, a teacher of conflict resolution, team building and permeation, and an owner of a tourism company. A native New Yorker, Kandace first heard about the ABG through the local Fox News television channel when the site was discovered. Like Wanda, Kandace has held art workshops at the ABG.⁷⁹

As a performer and professional in the tourism industry, Kandace provided her own perspective on black travelers in general and particularly in New York City. Based on her experience, she believes that, in general, New Yorkers do not go out to discover their city, but tend to stay in their own boroughs. For instance, people who live in Harlem tend to stay there and not go to events taking place in Manhattan, Brooklyn, or the other boroughs of New York City. Kandace made an interesting point as she suggested that black people are more likely to go to events organized by their church than to any other social events. She added that even her own family did not come to see her performances until recently:

⁷⁹ Kandace and Wanda led a variety of workshops (e.g., dance, craft) at the ABG years before it opened its new visitor center.

For the longest time there weren't many African Americans in theatre so that's why it never became a thing for us in general. And then eventually when the *Tyler Perry's* and the *Barbershop's* and that kind of stuff started being produced then they would go but then, still, it was basically the church groups. If it wasn't the church organizing it then they wouldn't have gone and that's mostly what you've got.

Concerning the ABG, she added that none of her travel clients (mostly White and foreigners); have requested to visit the site.

Interview 20: Pattie

After my interview with Karen, she recommended that I speak with Pattie, a dear friend of hers. She referred to Pattie several times during our discussion as one of those who disagreed with the direction the site was taking. Before we formally started the interview, Pattie said that she was concerned with the consent form stating "African American" as she does not identify herself as such:

[...] my only concern is that I was born here in America. But I don't identify myself as an African American. [...] I'm an African born in America. [...] And you'll see I'm very touchy when it comes to clarifying those types of racial things [...] Because the struggle would not exist if I was an American. [...] I would automatically be treated as one.[...] So recognizing that, I then say that I'm an African born in America.[...] So I was thinking about it: if I have to struggle and fight for every little thing, then that means that I have no citizenship. I'm just here. [...] Most people that speak with me will find that I'm very sensitive about certain areas, so that's one.

Pattie is the director of a small private school in Brooklyn that emphasizes the study of African and African American history to instill a sense of identity in children. In other words, it is important for Pattie to provide an afro-centric education for young students so that they can nurture pride and love for who they are and what they came

from. She believes that children who know they come from kings and queens will behave accordingly:

When I look at our young people, many of them walk around like they have no future. Many of them walk around feeling that they won't live past the age of 30. I've had some of them say that to me, that there is no hope. It's because they have not been introduced to who they are, who they really are.

We gave civilization to the world. We built the pyramids. Yes, it was all taken from us. [...] Because once we do understand who we are, I don't believe our young people will do any of the negative things that they're doing.

It was important to include Karen's and Pattie's stories and opinions, which contradicted those of other participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that "negative cases" in data collection can be very important and helpful for better understanding a phenomenon. In addition to this, I felt it was my ethical responsibility to convey as fairly as possible the voices, feelings and opinions of my participants.

Interview 21: Kendra

Kendra worked at the ABG when I met her, but not as park ranger. Again, I was a little hesitant to interview her because she was part of the staff, not a visitor. However, Kendra started her work at the ABG during my fieldwork and was not familiar at all with the process of development and decision-making at the site. At the time of our interview, Kendra was 23, a college student and part-time laborer at the ABG. The native New Yorker had never heard about the ABG until she was hired in the summer of 2010. In our conversation, Kendra shared how she learned increasingly more as she came to work every day, and how this made her want to learn even more:

I had to do my own exploring. [...] And gradually the more I came back at the African Burial Ground the more I knew about every little thing and what it represented and what it meant. [...] One thing I did have a feeling was that I want to know more, I want to know more, I want to know more, I want to know more.... I would look into everything. I don't care about seeing it 14 times.

Kendra's perspective was that of a young lady who had a general interest in history and who had a passion for learning. Her experiences at the ABG testify to the transformative impacts the site has on some visitors. For Kendra, the ABG started as a work place but it ended up being a place of revelation and discovery of the past and of herself.

Interview 22: Erika

Erika is in her 30s and originally from Pennsylvania, but has lived in New York since 1991. She heard about the ABG when the news emerged that year and became more familiar with it when the Schomburg Center became involved with the reinterment ceremony. Erika is a Public Education Programs Manager at a local research and education institution where she focuses on youth programs. She is also an adjunct professor of education in a private institution in New York City where she trains teachers in program development. One of her responsibilities as a Public Education Programs Manager includes outreach to schools in the surrounding boroughs in order to raise youth awareness and participation in events like the re-enactment of a ring shout⁸⁰ for children.

As our conversation unfolded, Erika stated that she has been to the burial ground a couple of times but not to the new visitor center. Her explanation was that she wants to

⁸⁰ African religious ritual consisting of dancing and singing in a group circle.

visit the site on her own (just with her son), during her personal time, not with a group of students during her “teaching” time. She added that visiting the ABG was very personal for her, like going to the family cemetery, and it was very private—she could be just concerned with herself, as she explained:

I’m kind of waiting for it to be a private moment. Not a moment where I’m a part of a group. I have such a personal connection. I think it’s very personal. [...] It’s different because then I don’t have to have that educator’s perspective, like to answer the questions and to fill in the gaps for my students. I can just be concerned with myself.

Interview 23: Fred

Fred was one of the participants who contacted me directly after receiving my call for participants through a listserv. A documentarian in his 50s, Fred has a special connection with the burial ground. A colleague told him about the site back in 1991. At that time, Fred had set up an independent production company and heard that the General Services Administration (GSA) wanted to do a documentary about the uncovered burial ground. Fred described how unreceptive the GSA was to his intention to submit a proposal for the documentary:

We [Fred and his associate] showed up to get briefed on the General Services Administration plan for the documentary. And their first question was, “why are you here and how did you find out about this?”

[...] We looked at each other to say, “What kind of question is that?” I said, “We’re here because you’re looking for documentarians to do your documentary.”

[...] But they were surprised that two black male individuals walked into their room. They expected nothing but white producers and documentarians. We’re talking about an *African* Burial Ground. And they’re surprised that black producers would show up. And so I said, “It doesn’t matter how I know about it. I’m here. So do you have some

problems with that?” “No, no, no. But you’ll have to make your bid right now on the spot.” I said, “Do you think I’m an idiot? Things don’t work that way”. But we went through the process. We made a bid through the normal process of making bids the way you should, get the criteria, etc. But to make a long story short, we didn’t get awarded the contract.

Fred went on to explain that although he did not get the contract with the GSA, he was determined to make a documentary regardless, because he felt a strong connection to the site and its history, and so he did. I did not have the chance to purchase Fred’s documentary, but have listened to parts of it online, where he has made it available to the general public.⁸¹

Interview 24: Donna

Donna is a 29-year old native New Yorker who, like many New Yorkers, first heard about the burial ground through the media at the time of its discovery. Ranger Vanessa⁸² recommended that I speak with her as she had visited the new visitor center and she and Vanessa were friends. Donna acknowledged during my discussion with her that she did not know what the burial ground had become until Vanessa started working there and telling her about it.

Donna explained how different her experience at the memorial was from the visitor center. While she left wanting to know a lot more after she visited the memorial, she was happy to receive a significant amount of information about the history of the site and the lives of the enslaved during her tour of the visitor center. In her opinion, the visitor center had more of a museum feel and should be named as such. Donna added

⁸¹ The audio documentary is available for free listening at <http://www.wbgo.org/ondemand/category/I%27ll+Be+Free+To+Travel+Home>

⁸² Pseudonym

that during her first visit she toured the memorial alone and only made it to the visitor center on her second visit. She admitted that the reason she went for a second visit was mostly to support Vanessa:

It really was Vanessa. I've kind of done the outdoor part so I felt like that was the main section of it [the site]. I said "Okay, I've been". But Vanessa was really excited and really proud of what was done there. So I was curious and I went. So I'm glad that I did go but it wasn't anything more than me trying to support my friend.

Interview 25: Damon

I heard about Damon through several volunteers at the ABG, as he is a volunteer there, too. My roommate Nicole also recommended I speak with him because of his involvement with the site. Damon is in his 60s, a member of the Black Panther Party, and native New Yorker who became very conscious of his culture beginning in his 20s. Like many participants, he first heard about the burial ground in 1991 and kept a close eye on it. He personally became involved after the reinterment of the remains in 2003, along with his Panthers comrades. He stated that his engagement with the ABG was consistent with his character as a Black Panther: a protector of the interests of his community, as he described:

I called members of the Black Panther Party and I was speaking to some of my comrades who told me this is what we as Panthers should be involved in and that these [Africans buried at the site] are our people. And as warriors and protectors of our people, serving our people, that is our role to serve them even in this situation of their death and [we should] not let them be desecrated by anything no more.

For Damon, volunteering gave him the opportunity to watch over his ancestors and to fulfill his responsibilities. For him, it was important to be involved because he felt he had that obligation as an African.

Interview 26: Terence

Terence contacted me by email after receiving my call for participation through a listserv. He was not in the U.S. during my stay in New York so we scheduled a Skype interview after my return to Texas. Terence is in his 30s and has a very strong interest in Black culture, whether from Africa, the U.S., or the Caribbean, where he has lived for many years. Terence is originally from Trinidad and has also lived in both the U.S. and the U.K.

After Terence heard about the discovery of the burial ground and the black community's protest, he was so touched by the dedication and perseverance of the grassroots movement that he decided to get involved. As our discussion advanced, Terence felt comfortable sharing his personal experiences when visiting Black heritage sites throughout the African diaspora. Terence also felt that the (democratic) process that enabled this site to become a national monument made it additionally significant; his American friends might take for granted the opportunity to fight for and celebrate their African heritage, but that was not so common in the UK:

The other reason [the ABG] is important, is the fight that people did to make this site a national monument site and okay, maybe because I'm not a full-blooded American and lot of brothers, full-blooded Americans might get upset when I say this, but to me it shows the best of America, the American constitution and American government. When people get up and make noise and [the government] says, "okay, all right, our mainstream idea was that you people were dogs, which is why we buried dogs near where we buried you, but you're right, we're gonna look at this, and you want to take the bones back to the motherland, you want to have this, you've made enough noise." That would never happen in England. No, never!

Interview 27: Derek

Because Derek was on vacation during my stay in New York and only to return after my fieldwork, our interview was enacted through Skype. It was a “must” for me to interview Derek, even if it meant doing it over Skype from Texas, because all the participants involved with the ABG acknowledged that he was the one who informed the media about the unearthing of human remains from the burial ground.

Derek described the circumstances under which he came across the burial ground. On a summer morning in 1991, he was on his way to a job interview when his Native American family members asked him to check on a construction site in Lower Manhattan because they knew the area had a family cemetery and they wanted to make sure a Federal Building was not being built over it. At first, Derek was hesitant to make a stop on his way to his interview, but decided to abide with his family’s request. Derek described how he learned that human bones were dug up from the site, which led him to inform the press.

I went down to Duane Street and I still had my media ID press card, so I was able to make my way into the excavation area. I got in and was able to ask the government people what they were doing, what they were finding, and they said they wouldn’t know for sure for a couple of months. I asked some of the archaeologists and they pretty much said the same thing “we don’t know if there’s a cemetery but we’ll know in a couple of months”. And as I was leaving, two workmen pulled me aside, and said “you wanna know what we’re finding? We’re taking truck loads of bones out of here”.

Derek went on to explain how close he is to the burial ground because he has no doubts his ancestors were buried there, as he is not only of African ancestry, but also of Dutch and Lenape ancestry. Now in his 40s, Derek never regretted his decision to make

that stop in Lower Manhattan instead of going to his interview as that experience was life-changing.

Some participants (both male and female) got emotional during our interviews. This was usually the case when they explained what the ABG meant to them, their experiences during the Civil Rights Movement, or the responsibility they feel they have as African Americans. During these moments, I empathized with the participants and attempted to provide space and time before continuing the conversation.

5.2. Relationship to the site

The first research question for this study was “Why do African Americans visit slavery-related sites?” One insight that emerges from the literature and from the interviews, as seen above, is the importance of understanding the relationship African American visitors have with slavery-related sites like the ABG. In part, this involves understanding their past—their history and heritage---and how it relates to the present (the ABG), from their perspective. This section begins with exploring this relationship, both with respect to historic relationships and current relation (interaction) with the site at the time of this study. Further below, I examine their experiences at the site, the acts they engage in, their intentions and their motivations to visit the ABG.

Table 5.2: Participants' relation to the ABG

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Ethnicity	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG
Fiona	62	Female	Administrator	African American	Volunteers and protested	Going to the ABG is like going "home" to Africa
Sam	69	Male	Writer	African American ⁸³	Volunteers and protested	Joined the Civil Rights Movement
Barbara	27	Female	Financial manager	African American	Visited once. Friend of a ranger	Member of the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Studio Museum in Harlem
Karen	59	Female	Retired	African American	Refuses to visit	Member of the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground
Wanda	48	Female	Artist	Franco-Cameroonian (Black)	Comes often to the memorial	Originally from Cameroon (and France)
Leila	29	Female	Student	Canadian (Black)	Visited twice	Parents are originally from the Caribbean
Danielle	66	Female	Retired accountant	African American	Volunteers	Parents are originally from the Caribbean
Elisabeth	67	Female	Retired/business owner	African American	Volunteers and protested	Has done social work in South Africa

⁸³ See Sam's profile above

Table 5.2, Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Ethnicity	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG
Katrina	43	Female	Professor	African American	Visited several times with students	Has traveled in East and West Africa
Stanley	47	Male	Clergyman	African American	Visited several times	Travelled to Africa more than 17 times. Teaches MLS's philosophy of non-violence
Lance	41	Male	Professor	African American	Visited several times	Family lived in a farm in Alabama since the end of slavery
Isaac	80	Male	Clergyman	African American	Protested	Pan-African activist
Sylvia	72	Female	Retired professor	African American (originally from Togo, West Africa)	Visited several times	Originally from West Africa
Natasha	65	Female	Retired professor	African American	Uses the ABG library regularly	Goes regularly to Bahia (Brazil) to do research on enslaved Africans
Helen	68	Female	Educator	African American	Visited several times with students	Went to Africa with the Peace Corps
Brandy	29	Female	Program manager	African American	Visited once. Friend of a ranger	Engages in church activities related to history. Visited historical sites in Bahia, Brazil
Francis	20	Male	Student	African Indian American	Student worker	Parents are originally from Guyana
Tamara	28	Female	Manager	African American	Visited twice. Friend of a ranger	Mentors inner-city kids ("Big Brother-Big Sister" type program)
Kandace	58	Female	Artist	African American	Visited several times	Performs Afro-Cuban dancing

Table 5.2, Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Ethnicity	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG
Pattie	68	Female	Educator	African living in America ⁸⁴ (Black)	Refuses to visit	Member of the Committee of the Descendents of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground
Kendra	20	Female	Student	African American	Student worker	Mentors youth on HIV AIDS prevention
Erika	36	Female	Youth programs manager	African American	Visited several times with students	The ABG is as close to her as her family cemetery
Fred	59	Male	Documentarian	African American	Visited several times. Made his own documentary on the ABG	Originally from Panama. Has produced a documentary on the ABG
Donna	29	Female	Manager	African American	Visited once. Friend of a ranger	Family is originally from Georgia
Damon	66	Male	Educator	African American	Volunteers and protested	Member of the Black Panthers Party
Terence	34	Male	Instructor	Caribbean British-American	Volunteered	Originally from Trinidad
Derek	46	Male	Historian	African American	Visited several times. Has done considerable research on the ABG	Can trace his family history to Lenape, Dutch, and Africans of colonial New York

Table 5.2 presents the relation each of the 27 participants have with the ABG, and Table 5.3 shows that four general categories can then be identified with respect to these participants' current relationships with and interactions with the site: a) those who were mainly visitors; b) those who volunteer at the site; c) those who were involved in

⁸⁴ See Pattie's profile above

the protests; and d) those who work(ed) or offer(ed) workshops at the site. Nine out the 27 participants were visitors⁸⁵ at the site, 6 volunteered at the site,⁸⁶ 12 were involved in the community protests, and 5 worked or offered workshops at the ABG.

Table 5.3: Participants' primary contact with the African Burial Ground

Current relationship/interaction with the African Burial Ground	Number of participants	Pseudonyms
Visiting (for various reasons —see below)	9	Tamara, Barbara, Lance, Helen, Natasha, Sylvia, Katrina, Leila, Donna
Volunteering	6	Danielle, Elizabeth, Fiona, Sam, Damon, Terence
Involvement in initial protests and meetings (this includes 5 volunteers: All but Danielle)	12	Derek, Fred, Pattie, Karen, Isaac, Stanley, Sam, Damon, Elizabeth, Fiona, Terence, Erika
Working / offering a workshop	5	Kendra, Francis, Wanda, Kandace, Brandy
Total participants	27⁸⁷	

5.2.1. Visiting

Nine of the 27 total participants fall into the category of “visitors.” They were not involved in the community protests and they came to the ABG because they were interested in viewing the site out of interest or curiosity (Leila, Lance, Natasha, Helen, Katrina, and Sylvia) and, for some, because they knew someone who worked there. This

⁸⁵ These were strictly visitors, meaning that they were not involved in the development of the site, nor did they volunteer, or work at/for the ABG.

⁸⁶ One of these 6 is Terence, who is not longer a volunteer as he now lives in the UK

⁸⁷ Here the total does not equal to 27 because some participants fall into multiple categories.

was the case for Barbara who was referred to me by Ranger Melanie, and Tamara and Donna who were referred by Ranger Vanessa. Usually, these visitors only came to the site once although Donna and Leila visited twice as they only toured the memorial on their first visit. The various acts engaged in by these visitors, and their intentions are discussed further below.

5.2.2. Protesting

For many of the participants in this research study, the ABG as a National Monument represents the achievement of years of struggle and fight against the General Services Administration. All the participants in this category, except Stanley, are “older,” born in 1960 or before. The 12 participants involved in the community protests remembered and provided firsthand accounts about the discovery of the remains and the African American community uproar. They recognized the sacredness of the burial ground and the need to halt the unearthing of the remains and the construction over the burials.

Whether they were involved or not, all participants acknowledged the resiliency of the community to fight against the GSA. This acknowledgement is also emphasized on site as a full section of the exhibit is dedicated to the black community and its efforts, without which the ABG as a National Monument would not exist today. In fact, during one of his guided tours, Ranger Edwin tells the group about the significance of that side of the visitor center. This shows that one purpose of the visitor center is to inform the public about what it took to get the site.

And then finally, my family, this side here is dedicated to the spirit of the people. You know if it wasn't for the people who weren't afraid to fall for something. They stood for someone, but they weren't afraid to fall, you see. And they just stood, stood, stood on solid ground, protesting for a year and a half. For if it weren't for them, this would not be.

Ranger Edwin

Interestingly, not all participants deemed such acknowledgement necessary.

Donna understood the critical role of the community for the existence of this site but she explained that a whole exhibit in the visitor center was not necessary. She suggested that visitors like her do not want to know about the politics behind the site because that is not what they came to learn. Instead, Donna believes that visitors are only concerned with the content of the site. Although she understood that those who fought for the preservation and memorialization of the burial ground should get credit, because, thanks to them, we can all visit the site, Donna did not enjoy having a whole section of the exhibit dedicated to the efforts of a group of people:

When you walk in to the right there's a timeline of the African Burial Ground that felt really political to me. It felt like "we have to put this in there. We have to give credit where credit is due." It wasn't enough that it was there. "We want to make sure you understand how difficult it was for us to get there" and I understand that but it's almost not necessary. They're trying to highlight those who were important in the struggle. They we're trying to make sure that everybody gets their credit. I understand that that's important but it could've been on a plaque on the side but it was a whole section.

Donna – Black female in her 20s

Regardless of the need for acknowledgement, those who were involved in the community protest did so with determination and for the clear purpose of protecting what they considered theirs (i.e., part of their African heritage).

5.2.3. Volunteering

All volunteers except Danielle were involved in the community protests. Danielle explained that she wanted to be involved but at that time she was constrained by family issues. These volunteers shared that it was important for them to be part of the development of the ABG. Fiona, Sam, and Elizabeth, expressed that the sense of responsibility they felt pushed them to volunteer. Damon even suggested that he felt it was his duty to protect the ancestors from any possible desecration of their resting place. The African American community claimed that the human remains of their African ancestors were highly disrespected through the unethical manner in which they were exhumed, manipulated, and stored since their discovery in 1991. As our conversations progressed and participants opened up, I sensed that some of them approached volunteering as a calling; a direct calling from the ancestors as implied by Sam: “I realized that I was charged by the ancestors to be here, if not physically, at least certainly to be about honoring them.”

5.2.4. Working/offering a workshop

Two participants in this study have held workshops at the ABG. Wanda and Kandace have offered art and performance classes for youth and adult groups and even assisted in each other’s workshops. Because of disagreements with the administrative staff, both no longer hold workshops at the ABG. However, Wanda explained during our interview that she enjoys going to the memorial because there, she finds peace and solace. In that way, her broken relationship with the staff did not taint or end her relationship with the site as she feels connected to the African ancestors buried there.

Francis, Kendra, and Brandy also fall into this category as past and current workers at the ABG. The first two were student workers there, while the third was a part-time employee. As a college student majoring in Africana Studies, Francis was very proud of working at the ABG and eager to go back to school after that summer to combine his professional and academic learning. For Kendra, working at the ABG transformed her at a personal level. She argued that after learning about the life conditions of her New York ancestors, she tries not to take for granted the freedom she has as an American citizen. Finally, Brandy worked under the OPEI for close to two years until she pursued a full time position somewhere else. Brandy applauded the efforts to recover materials and documents from the debris after 9/11, and like everyone else, she was relieved to learn that the remains were still at Howard University in Washington, DC, and that other important artifacts and documents were not at the World Trade Center offices at the time of the attacks.

5.3. Acts

This section draws from my observations on-site, as well as interview information to identify and discuss the range of acts engaged in by visitors to the African Burial Ground, as well as other acts of protesting and volunteering (engaged in by more than half the study participants).

5.3.1. Spiritual / psychological acts

Act of connecting to the past: Sankofa

The 2005 Draft Management Recommendations for the ABG reports that one objective of the visitor center is to offer interpretive programs that facilitate and honor a

spirit of Sankofa, an Adikran symbol that suggests one must go back and learn from the past in order to prepare for the future. Consistent with the site's vision, Ranger Edwin urges visitors to practice exactly what Sankofa calls for, through the exploration of the different exhibits:

The area here before you is dedicated to Africa [referring to the fourth exhibit area on the origins and lives of enslaved Africans]. I dare you to go back and get it. I challenge you to learn. I dare you to go back and get it. "Sankofa." Learn from the past. I challenge you, go back to Africa. Go and see the wonderful fabrics, the wonderful toys that were played by the children. So "Sankofa" Go back and get it.

Ranger Edwin

Act of communication with the ancestors

Several participants in this study stated that they go to the ABG on a regular basis to communicate with their African ancestors, and to "pray" and remember, as more than one participant put it. Through these communications, these visitors claim they receive solace and even answers to questions. The architecture of the memorial provides space for visitors to engage in these acts: the memorial features benches in two areas (at the entrance and behind the Chamber of Libation) to allow visitors to sit and take the time to meditate and let it all sink in. Also, once down in the Circle of the Diaspora, the elements (sounds of water running and cancellation of the street noises) provide for a relatively quiet and calm environment that facilitates these communications.

Wanda explained that the memorial is a place where she can go to meditate, pose questions and feel heard by the ancestors, that is to say, to have a sense of connection with her past that enables answers to emerge through this relationship:

Pour moi c'est un endroit où, s'il ya des réponses, y'en a peut être une la, pour moi. Mais en même temps c'est pas une réponse écrite, c'est une réponse qui est aussi ma démarche pour aller vers un endroit ou je vais me poser la question. [...] C'est-à-dire je vais la, je médite, et s'il ya une réponse par rapport a ce que je fais et ma connexion avec les ancêtres, avec toute cette, je dis pas histoire, mais bon, tout ce qui a pu se passer, il y a peut être une réponse. C'est un lieu de réponses. Ou de questionnement.

To me it is a place where, if there are answers, there is maybe one there, for me. But at the same time it's not a written answer, it's an answer that is also my reasoning to go towards a place where I'll ask myself the question. This is to say that I go there, I meditate, and if there's an answer in relation to what I do and my connection to the ancestors, with all this, I am not saying history, but well, everything that might have happened, there's maybe an answer. It's a place of answers. Or of questioning.

Fiona concurred with this sense of connectedness and communion (or communication) at the memorial as well as the possibility of leaving tokens of love on the mounds. In this place, she can talk to her ancestors, because, as she said, they listen to her when she comes before them:

[...] like sometimes you have stuff built up in you and then when you see it [the ABG] you got a place to release it. Even if stuff are going crazy at the office you can come here and just be with the ancestors and, talk to them, and they listen. You do not actually want to get anyone to answer you back but you just want to get that out and let them know.

Fiona – Black female in her 60s

The seven mounds at the memorial that denote the location under which the remains were reinterred back in 2003 are comparable to graves in a cemetery. Visitors stand in front of the mounds the same way they stand in front of the grave of a deceased loved one at a cemetery. They deposit flowers, food, objects of affection, they pray, meditate, and communicate with those who passed, in the same way they do at a family

cemetery. Erika, a youth program specialist explicitly declared that she sees the ABG in the same way she sees her family cemetery in Pennsylvania:

It's personal [the ABG], it's like family. It's very personal. And so there's a part that's like your family's cemetery. So the parallel is at home in the cemetery where my actual relatives are buried.

Erika – Black female in her 30s

Erika actually added that, to her, the 2003 reinterment ceremony of the human remains resembled a procession to the funeral for a family member.

Act of homage and respect

Whether they entail rest, peace, or even healing, spiritual acts at the ABG are encouraged by the park personnel and widely practiced by visitors. These concrete acts include prayers, meditation, offerings, communication with the ancestors, libations, and are mostly conducted at the memorial. It is not uncommon for visitors or passersby to deposit symbolic objects at the memorial. During my fieldwork, I observed a family (African American father with his two children) deposit flowers on the mounds at the memorial. Ranger Edwin shared with his group that he had witnessed how people pay respect to the ancestors through diverse offerings such as food (fruits), toys, candles, and by pouring libations (alcohol or water). Acts of homage to the ancestors, paying respect, remembrance and spiritual connection (via prayer, etc.) were evident from my interviews with Fiona and Elizabeth, two volunteers at the ABG:

It's [the memorial] so nice, peaceful, and calm. You can come and meditate. They have the seven mounds, so you can leave flowers or other stuff for the ancestors, where you can pay your respects.

Fiona – Black female in her 60s

People can pray, people can bring flowers. So we can pay homage to these people, remember how they made their journey.

Elizabeth – Black female in her 60s

5.3.2. Physical acts

Act of protesting

As mentioned in Section 5.2, 12 of the 27 participants were involved in the 1990s protests. Once the Black community got word that the GSA was exhuming human remains from an African cemetery in Lower Manhattan for the purpose of building a federal building, it mobilized and made its request loud and clearstop digging the human bones out of the burial ground. Since bones were already exhumed by the time they got involved, the community demanded that the GSA respect the mandate of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, which required the GSA to consult with the African descendant community regarding the handling of the remains. Members of the community were outraged by the GSA's pursuit of the building construction and made their voices heard to Congress, who finally put enough pressure on the GSA to stop all work at the site.

The black community not only protested against the disrespect and disregard for consultation with the community, but also the lack of proper scientific handling of the remains, by the architecture firm contracted by the GSA. Participants in the protests and vigils argue it was necessary to stand up to protect what was theirs, the final resting place of their ancestors.

Act of volunteering

Also evoked in Section 5.2, most volunteers at the ABG were initially involved in the community protests. These volunteers felt that they needed to continue their involvement with the ABG in another fashion. Volunteers take it upon themselves to protect the site, to promote the site, and to facilitate visitors' experiences. Volunteers participate in monthly training sessions related to the history of NY and the ABG, the handling of the front desk (answering the phone, greeting visitors, addressing visitors' questions, etc.), and any other duties that volunteering entails. Volunteers are also called on to assist during special events at the site, like the Youth Ring Shout, or Passing the Torch.⁸⁸

The volunteers who participated in this study emphasized that, for them, volunteering is a way to give back to their ancestors, a way to acknowledge the sacrifices they made centuries ago under slavery, and to show their appreciation, homage, and respect for them in the place they are laid to rest.

Act of active participation

During one of my observations, I noted that one of the rangers always got visitors involved in the tour by shouting, chanting, clapping, and even dancing at times. The excerpt below illustrates how the Ranger Edwin engaged visitors through repetition and shout:

Ranger Edwin: [...] with that greeting: Ago, spelled A~G~O. It's African, from the Akan people. Ago is simply said at the start of something to get everyone's attention. I'm basically asking "are you listening? Do I have

⁸⁸ These are two programs organized annually for the youth.

your attention?” And your response is Ame, A~M~E which basically means “Yes I am listening, I hear you, you have my attention.” So Ago?!

Group of visitors: Ame!

Ranger Edwin: Good! Welcome family. Welcome home to the African Burial Ground.

Ranger Edwin uses sound (voice) and physical gestures to engage visitors in dialogue and learning, aided by various items and spaces on site. These lively exchanges typically occur after the film viewing, when the group of visitors gathers in the core exhibit area from where Ranger Edwin provides an overview of all four exhibit areas. Not only does Ranger Edwin use repetition of greetings to engage visitors, he also uses chants. Once he gathers his group of visitors in the main exhibit area, Ranger Edwin makes references to scenes in the film and encourages his group to sing along with a dynamic chant they heard during the viewing.

Table 5.4 summarizes the physical and spiritual/psychological acts associated with the ABG for participants of this study.

Table 5.4: Acts exercised at the ABG

Acts	Examples
Physical	Protesting Volunteering Active participation Interaction with the exhibits
Spiritual / psychological	Connecting to the past: Sankofa Communication with the ancestors Homage: Offerings and libations

5.4. Visitor experiences and meanings

5.4.1. Feelings and emotions on site

Pride

Participants were often surprised by the extensive range and content of the visitor center. It does not seem to be a very large place when one goes inside, but the architects and designers included a variety of rich exhibits. Tamara's first visit to the ABG raised various emotions, including feeling overwhelmed but also proud:

Tamara: Full of pride if you will say funny enough because it's like "oh my gosh this whole thing is dedicated to slavery!" And not so much slavery but history of slavery. So it was overwhelming though because I have to go back, there's no way I can take all that at that time. And plus it was also, I went in the opening day so there was also like a performance and so a whole bunch of stuff going on

Linda: So it was overwhelming not because of the content, because of the amount of things to see and do?

Tamara: Yes, exactly. Not the content, I mean the content is emotional, you know it's emotional for someone, well for me because obviously that's my history at the same time they were not specifically in New York in terms of my family but emotional to read and see what young kids were going through, the life span of the people there. So my first reaction like I said was pride though that this was done and this was done well and done with an enlightened foot to make sure that this center was developed with respect and really represents a real representation of the people whose lives were buried here and were forgotten basically.

Tamara – Black female in her 20s

Francis felt happy on his first visit to the ABG to see the comprehensive visitor center, developed in a way that played with the imagination (he refers to the replicas, water colors, paintings, sounds, film), enabling visitors to use their "imagination" to

learn about this powerful cultural element in a way that showed that it was “not a fictional story at all:”

I guess feelings would be definitely, like, I guess, a sense of happiness because you can finally have this full range visitor center that allows the visitors to really go back and to use their imagination ...because a lot of times history can be disconnected from ...this is not a fictional story at all, but a very powerful cultural element that’s found throughout Africana cultures in the world or narrated and also folklore.... So when you come in and you see the center, the court, and you see the replicas of the ancestors in a sense and the characters and the film are kind of last that really gives them a sense of how it may have been back then and really plays with your imagination. And also the paintings around, you know, the water color painting [...] and then also the sounds.

Francis – Black male in his 20s

Highly emotional, overcoming /overwhelming

Several of the participants described their first visit to the new visitor center as emotional. In fact, some of them shared with me that they cried during that visit. Katrina commented on the significance of the site due to its original size (6.6 acres) and its nature (cemetery, thus sacred ground), so she described her first visit to the ABG as being emotionally overcoming (see also Tamara above, who described her experience as “overwhelming” [in a good way] with respect to the amount of material presented on slavery):

I think there was a shift when I began to understand like people shared with me that it wasn’t just that small spot that was the burial ground. And in fact there were bones all throughout like it’s six acres, right. And so I realized, now this is like a sacred site. It’s a cemetery. It’s just that we haven’t acknowledged it as cemetery. It was very emotional. I think I cried a little bit.

Katrina – Black female in her 40s

Barbara was amazed by the site and also expressed that she felt overwhelmed, because experiencing the site brought back memories of her late father and help her realize the amount of work and dedication that was put into the development of the site:

I was really overwhelmed by it because I thought about, I recently lost my father and it's just like I think about that one life, like how much impact that had on me. And so, it was just really, really overwhelming for me especially when I saw those mounds where the bodies were. And it made me think back how many people dedicated their energy doing the archeology and all the stuff and digging them. And I was like, of course they got paid for it but that's a labor of love too. And so, I was kind of overwhelmed too by just the thought that people would want to dedicate, I mean, I know people how professors at Howard dedicated most of their career to this.

Barbara – Black female in her 20s

Helen also remembered how touched she was during her first visit, especially by the burial scene of the main exhibit:

As a matter of fact I did go to the opening, the ceremony, you know, I don't know if they called it inauguration. And I was moved to tears when I saw the tiny casket that they had of the infant.

Helen – Black female in her 60s

For Erika, it was the film that moved her to tears as she explained how emotional she got because it showed her how much the community had accomplished since the protest:

And that's why now, the film, I just saw the film [...] that they produced. I cried the whole time. Because going from having nothing [...] And just orating the story, which is also part of our tradition [...] to having drawings, to having events and commemorations and dramatizations to having this film. It's awesome.

Erika – Black female in her 30s

Fiona had similar thoughts in regard to the community's involvement as she shared with me when I asked about her first impression about the visitor center:

Fiona: "WOW!" First view was "wow". You got emotional because it's been a long struggle. The community has been fighting a long time to have something put in place.

Highly emotional: sense of justice and honor to ancestors

Damon explained that he was very happy about the new visitor center because, although small in size, it was very rich in content, and he believed the elders would have been pleased as well:

I was like, at first I was like, "Okay, Visitors Center." We don't even have a place where you come in and sit down. I looked for it to be mundane. I didn't look for it to be like it was. I cried. I cried. I cried because again, and I still get emotional thinking about it, the elders⁸⁹ should've been there to see this, because they would've been pleased. I know they would've been pleased. It gives justice to that long fight.

Damon – Black male in his 60s

Although Karen made the decision not to go to the new visitor center as a sign of disagreement, she explained to me that she feels great when she comes by that location because she feels the presence of the ancestors:

Oh, I feel wonderful. I feel like they're watching my back. I stand on their shoulders.

Karen – Black female in her 50s

Stanley concurred with this idea of feeling the presence of the ancestors in that area; however for him, the feelings are mixed:

⁸⁹ Members of the African American community in NY who passed away by the time the site was completed

I shared this before, it's like a power pack, walking through this area, it does not just bring on sorrow, but it brings on joy, and honor.

Stanley – Black male in his 40s

In addition to the participants in this study who I interviewed, anonymous visitors have written reflection cards to express their thoughts about their visit. The following two statements reflect the positive emotions some visitors have had at the ABG:

I was touched and felt my ancestors here with me

And,

I think this is a very well done and made, it made me feel as if I was there. It was very touching

Anonymous – Reflection cards

But not everyone felt so “touched” by the site as the above participants. A full-time student, Kendra visited the ABG for the first time on the day she started working there as a surface manager. Interestingly, Kendra explained to me that she does not remember having any particular emotions, but she certainly remembered wanting to know more about the history that was presented on site:

One thing I did have a feeling of was that I want to know more, I want to know more, I want to know more, I want to know more. It just made me wanted. I would look into everything. I don't care about seeing it 14 times. I really looked around more and more.

I wanted to know more. Even in the library, I wanted to read books. So I started taking out books and I started reading. And even if it was non-fictional or fiction, I would still wanted to read because then you'll have more of a feeling of what was really going on.

But I didn't feel like I wanted to cry or anything. I felt like I have so much in my head, I can't. I just felt that I wanted to know more.

Kendra – Black female in her 20s

Danielle acknowledged that there could be both positive and negative feelings for those visiting the ABG:

I see it could be this mixed feelings, you know, at the African burial grounds, definitely mixed feelings. There could be some sadness when you think about what the ancestors went through, no question about that. Some sadness, there could be anger, resentment, but you know I don't want to get into bitter, get into bitterness. On the other hand there could be maybe a sense of pride because they did leave a legacy. It may have taken years to find it, but they did leave a legacy behind us. So it's like mixed feelings with the African burial ground.

Danielle – Black female in her 60s

Emptiness

Wanda made a clear distinction between her experience at the outdoor memorial (which represented an avenue to liberty and life) and her experience at the visitor center. She enjoys the former and always looks forward to experiencing it, but she dislikes the latter, describing it as “static” and disconnected /unmoving.

[...] Mais ce cote statique des figurines, autant le monument qui est à l'extérieur est une ouverture à la liberté, à la vie et tout, autant ça, pour moi ça représente, c'est une image qui est tellement blanche américaine, de voir les esclaves avec cette douleur, cette -force et tout que ca me fait chier, ça me dérange à 100%. [...] Mais ya pas eu niveau culturel quelque chose qui permette d'apprendre des choses. [...] C'est mon point de vue mais c'est mon point de vue, c'est vraiment personnel. Je veux dire, ce que je trouve au mémorial, à l'extérieur, je le ressens pas à l'intérieur. [...] ça me fait aucun effet mais c'est à moi que ça ne fait aucun effet.

[...] But this static feel of the figures, while the outdoors memorial is an opening to liberty, to life and all that, this here for me represents- it's an image that is so white American, to see the slaves in their pain, this- it

pisses me off, it bothers me 100%. [...] But there wasn't anything at the cultural level that allowed me to learn something. [...] It's my personal point of view, it's really personal. I mean, what I find at the memorial, outside, I don't feel it inside [...] it doesn't have any effect on me but that's to me, personally.

Sadness

When I asked Helen if there was anything on site that made her uncomfortable during her first visit, she replied that it was not really about discomfort but about sadness. She added that she expected to feel sad when visiting the site because it was a cemetery after all.

Not uncomfortable, just sad, just sad. Not- I can't say it made me feel uncomfortable, no.

The only feeling is sadness, that's all I can say. Overwhelming feeling of sadness, I guess because, you go to other places and this is a monument, this is a statue, but this [the ABG] is where these persons [enslaved Africans] lived but to know that these people are actually, buried, that this was a burial ground where they were actually buried it's like any cemetery you go to, you're sad, you're sad, you're sad.

Helen – Black female in her 60s

An anonymous visitor also expressed sadness in his/her reflection cards as it read:

It brought tears to my eyes and sadness to my spirit

Anonymous – Reflection card

Frustration and anger

A major element that influenced visitors' experiences is the security screening, due to the location being inside a federal building. All but one participant were very critical of that and explained not only how it needed to be changed, but how it negatively

influenced their experience at the ABG. Wanda described how frustrating it was for her to go through that screening:

“Visitor center : no emotion”, okay [rises]. A l’intérieur je sens rien. Je veux dire, je traverse, je n’attends qu’une chose, c’est qu’on me laisse passer, que la sécurité me laisse passer - rires- ca m’énerve, les ¾ du temps je suis énervée [rises] Ils m’embêtent - rires- pire que ca même. Et donc j’ai pas - je veux dire, « it’s just like okay, i go and... »

“Visitor center: no emotion” okay [laugh]. Inside I don’t feel anything. I mean I go through- I only expect one thing, it’s that they let me in, that the security guards let me in [laugh] It irritates me, 3 times out of 4 I am I am irritated [laugh] They annoy me [laugh] even worse than that. And so I don’t have – I mean, it’s like okay, I go and-

[...] Bon je vais souvent dans des bâtiments fédéraux, c’est un des pires! Je veux dire, chaque fois que je donne un cours, c’est carrément la bagarre, je suis obligée de téléphoner a quelqu’un qui est a l’intérieur pour venir me chercher parce que - c’est un des rares endroits où je me suis vue faire enlever mon bonnet sur la tête, mes chaussures.

[...] I often go inside federal buildings; this is one of the worst! I mean, every time I held a workshop, it’s downright a fight, I had to call someone inside to come get me because – it’s one of the rare places where I had to take my hat off my head, and my shoes.

Wanda – Black female in her 40s

Along the same lines as Wanda, Kandace admitted how infuriated and annoyed she was by the security screening she had to go through, but ironically noted that it only made her “enjoy” the building:

It was really nice once you get in but it’s so annoying having to go through that security being in the building that’s it in, it’s infuriating. And I happened to be one of the people- I wear jewelry so it took forever I had to take off everything. And I was trying to get there at a specific time so that just held me up and I wasn’t expecting that and there were a lot of people there that day so it just took forever. So I entered rather annoyed, you know into the site, pretty annoyed. And because I had to rush because I had to spend so much time going through security I really didn’t pay much attention to what the site was you know the entrance and all that

stuff. The statue that's outside, the monument that's in there, the lobby, that nice piece, didn't even see it. You know just to get to where I was. And then as it turned out the workshop was way upstairs so I just enjoyed the building [laugh].

Kandace – Black female in her 60s

The discussion above shows that the experience can be highly emotional, and evokes highly complex feelings, including a sense of justice and honor being paid to the ancestors.

5.4.2. Other states of mind

Some other states that visitors experienced at the ABG involve closure, sense of peace, and a sense of personal (rather than abstract) identification with a difficult past.

Closure

One day, as a black couple ended their visit of the visitor center, they stopped by the front desk, and with watery eyes, the man simply said that experiencing the site was a real closure for him. He thanked the ranger and me for such a powerful site and left with his wife. I can only speculate about how he felt deep inside, but him saying that the site gave him closure was in itself a great accomplishment.

Peace

Several of the participants described how peaceful they felt at the memorial because of the nature and architecture of the site that favored that state of mind. This was the case for both Wanda and Katrina:

Ca m'est arrivé quand j'avais des choses à faire dans le temps, d'aller juste m'asseoir dans le monument parce que je trouve ce monument extraordinaire et en plus c'est "peaceful", c'est reposant, j'aime beaucoup...

It has happened when I had things to do back then, to just go sit at the monument because I find this monument extraordinary and it's also peaceful, it's relaxing, I like it a lot...

Wanda – Black female in her 40s

[...] Sometimes I just end up and I'm just there. [...] I'm just there. And I enjoy. I feel at peace

Katrina – Black female in her 40s

As a matter of fact, Wanda contrasted her experience at the visitor center with the one at the memorial, stating that she did not enjoy going to the visitor center and describing what exactly created that sense of peace at the memorial and makes her come back to the site every time she needs it:

Je pense que c'est l'architecture même du monument, peut être le choix de ce marbre gris, c'est l'eau. Enfin, c'est tout un ensemble. Pour moi c'est vraiment une réussite sur un plan humain, au point de vue architecture. Ya quelque chose de très fort et le choix des symboles représentant tous ces signes, toute cette symbolique au niveau des signes. C'est vraiment beau. Je pense aux autres, je ne suis pas seule, et je trouve ça extraordinaire.

I think that it's the architecture of the monument, maybe the choice of the grey marble, it's the water. Well, it's the whole thing. For me it's really a success at a human level, from the standpoint of the architecture. There's something very strong and the choice of symbols representing all these signs, all this symbolic of the signs. It's really a beautiful. I think about the others [ancestors], I am not alone, and I find this extraordinary.

Wanda – Black female in her 40s

In the above excerpt, Wanda explains how knowing that she is in the presence of the African ancestors grants her peace. This is also supported by the architecture of the site itself, through tactile and visual elements like the cold grey granite, and auditory elements like the water flowing.

Personal embodied experience

Throughout the visitor center, whether with the film or the exhibits, visitors are given opportunities to relate to the Africans who lived in New York. Several of the exhibits highlight particular characters like Cuffee, Belinda, or Pieter San Tomé, by relaying their occupation, possible origins in Africa, ways they rebelled, and also when and how they died. Although we may never know the names of the 419 unearthed in the early 90s, numerous available archives reveal information about Africans who lived and worked in colonial New York. These efforts at providing an embodied experience through personal stories and various media techniques helps to transcend what might otherwise be an abstract relationship with a difficult and painful story and segment of American history. Visual media such as the film and the murals, for instance, show what Black New Yorkers may have looked like. Donna explained how she felt personally affected when she visited the site:

[...] having the biographies of individuals that they did highlight was impressive. Really taking situations like the revolts. You know in a museum you read about it and it's really impersonal but really tying people to it and helping us understand how this happened and the direct effect on a specific person. Do you know what I mean? That was unique and I don't think I've seen that really at any other museum. So I think that's why for me it was more personal. And then just reading the number of women and children that were affected by it, being a woman of course I was affected by that as well.

Donna – Black female in her 20s

Second, visitors can relate to African New Yorkers by putting themselves in their shoes and imagining what life was like for them. The barrel in Section 2 of the exhibit area (see Chapter IV) is a perfect example as visitors are encouraged to push it up and

try to imagine how Africans did this on a daily basis, but with full ones. On their tour, visitors are asked to situate themselves back in time and try to understand how life was then.

Third, visitors can relate to the African New Yorkers when they understand the history of the city, since the colonial past is connected with familiar markers such as buildings, streets and neighborhood names. Indeed, rangers inform visitors that today's famous Broadway Avenue was back then an Indian path "broadened" by African labor. Also, on today's Wall Street, a wall built by Africans to protect the city from enemies used to stand. Visitors also learn that the Land of the Blacks extended all the way up to today's South Central Park and included the areas of Chinatown and Greenwich Village:

Neighborhoods here in New York today were once part of The Land of the Blacks. So if you're visiting these areas think that the land first belonged to Blacks. These neighborhoods or communities are Greenwich Village, Little Italy - anyone shopping down at Chinatown? How about Washington Square Park? There are festivals and markets up in 14th Union Square. Land extended to 34th street; the Empire State Building was once owned by Blacks.

Ranger Edwin – Black male in his 40s

5.4.3. Reasons for visiting slavery related sites

To reconnect to the past

The information presented thus far indicates that the ABG evokes a diverse and complex range of emotions and feelings, and participants regarded the site from multiple perspectives. I explore further their reasons for visiting sites of slavery, their stance or disposition towards such sites, and their motivation for visiting them. In the course of this study, I came to the realization that many of the participants had not visited slavery-

related sites specifically; however, many had visited sites related to Black history in general in the U.S. or abroad. How they regard such sites (stance or disposition toward them), what meanings the sites hold for them, and how they regard the ABG were issues I explored in an attempt to understand the larger picture (context) in which their relationship to, and experiences of, the ABG are set.

The idea of **connection to a past** is prevalent in the literature as well as in my emerging themes. Those who had not visited slavery-related sites outside of the U.S. explained that they were interested in doing so with the aim to reconnect with the motherland, their ancestors, and the past in general. One important ritual in connecting to the past and the ancestors, involves traveling to Africa in search of one's roots and cultural identity. Sites of slavery, like Elmina Castle in Ghana are regarded as sacred places by some and simply sites of curiosity and learning by others (see Bruner, 1996). I explored this aspect with my participants in an attempt to understand better how they regarded enslavement history, and sites of slavery and "dark" history like the ABG. One young female participant in this study, Donna, expressed that she did not feel a need to learn about her family history further than her grandparents. She felt content being who she is today and as of the time of our interview, she claimed that she did not have any sort of yearning for that part of her family history. By contrast, Fiona was clearly interested in identifying with her roots in the African continent. Her involvement with the ABG motivated her to read more about slavery and to research her own family history as she explained her purpose of going to Africa some day:

[...] it's like we have no connection, so if you don't know where you come from, to me, I feel empty. A part of me is empty without that knowledge [...] this is, as I said before, I wanted to go, I think the completion would be for me to go to Africa. Go to Senegal, Gorée Island, and then to Ghana to Elmina Castle.

Fiona – Black female in her 60s

Terence's experience in Guadeloupe shed some light on this yearning to assuage the feeling of emptiness. He was very outspoken about how "depressing" he felt his overseas trip was. Terrence, a black man in his 30s had wanted to connect to his African roots in this journey abroad, but the slavery museum he visited was named after a white person, and the message of slavery was whitewashed. I came to learn that the museum he went to (Schoelcher Museum) was named after a French abolitionist who was very instrumental in the abolition of slavery in the French West Indies. However, Terence believed that this "heroism" was not enough of a justification to name a slavery museum after a white person. He explained that the intention of his visit was to seek reconnection with his cultural past because he recognizes that his history does not start with slavery and that it's important to know more about his ancestors.

Education and learning

Several participants were well educated and aware of the importance of learning. For them, visiting slavery-related sites can help one learn not only about African American history, but about American history. Participants like Fred and Natasha have done considerable research about the presence of Africans in New York. Fred is a journalist and documentarian who, in 2000, released a 13-hour documentary on the legacy of the ABG and its meaning to the rest of the country. He has tremendous

knowledge about the ABG's history and also a great interest in learning more about the lives of the enslaved. Travel to Africa emerged during the conversation, in direct relation to the ABG. He explained to me that his intention to go to Africa was to do some research about the origins of the enslaved brought to the New World in order to better tell their story:

I did really want to shoot some of those areas where they came from as a part of telling who those Africans were. As it was, we had to just make references to where they came from and their cultural beliefs and heritage that they were trying to hold onto that they were passing laws in this country to try to stifle.

Fred – Black male in his 50s

Natasha is a historian and retired professor of black history who, too, possesses quite impressive knowledge about the ABG, as she is writing a book about it. Natasha also has a great interest in diaspora travel, more precisely in Brazil, where she has taken students.⁹⁰ “Addicted” to Brazil since her first visit there, Natasha told me that she goes to Brazil on a regular basis to explore questions of history and comparative slave history, abolition histories, and emancipation histories.

Natasha and several other participants of this study work in education and have visited the ABG with their students, from elementary school pupils to college students. When I asked Natasha why it was so important for her to take her students to the ABG, she replied:

That's such a deep question. It was important because students don't know any history. They know the history of people's romances, the history of cars, and branding but they have no idea of the contemporary history of New York, much less colonial history. So then when I would start to tell them about the African Burial Ground, which was adjacent to City Hall,

⁹⁰ Brandy, who was recommended by Natasha is a former student of hers and went to Brazil with her class.

they had no idea what City Hall was. I'm not talking about a City Hall from the 18th century; I'm talking about the one that exists today where people have protest rallies, daily. They had no idea what City Hall was. And so to place African history in the context, the geographical context, of adjacent to City Hall, it just, they just didn't believe it.

Natasha – Black female in her 60s

As a professor, Natasha has experienced first-hand the lack of knowledge youth have about the history of NYC, let alone the history of slavery. Thus for her, visiting the ABG is a powerful teaching experience she shared with her students and that she wished all youth could have. Similar to other participants, Natasha believes that this site is not only important for black children but for children of all ethnicities, so they will recognize the significant contributions of people of African descent in early NY:

A lot of the European students openly acknowledged they did not know African-American history, did not know New York City history, had an interesting context, in which, to put this African Burial Ground story.

Natasha – Black female in her 60s

However, Natasha insisted that teaching kids about the true story of slavery is tough because many of them think they already know enough. She has noticed that “it's easier for them to pretend they know already because they saw *Roots*.”

Kandace also believes in the necessity for white kids to learn more about the African experience in the New World and to move from the stereotypes, as she declared:

[...] kids who are of other national and ethnic groups all need to see African Americans in a different light. Because so few people know about the other African experience other than the slavery and being beaten down and being held and we have that whole other part of our culture that's like amazing that most people don't know about, African Americans or otherwise.

Kandace – Black female in her 50s

Finally, Pattie's stance towards the site is worth re-visiting. Though she does not approve of the way the site and story of the ABG are presented, as the director of a charter school,⁹¹ she felt it was important for her students to visit it as part of their history. Yet, because of her disagreement with the process of development of the ABG, Pattie promised her ancestors she would never step foot on the site, as she proudly expressed:

Pattie: I haven't been there to see it...I promised my ancestors I would never dignify it by going in that room [visitor center]. It is so unfortunate...when I hear people tell me how beautiful it is [and] I say, "My dear, if you only understood." It's like when the Mafia kisses you: they call the *kiss of death* and give you the biggest funeral. They'll even bring in mourners to make your send-off the most glorious. So I'm not willing to sell my ancestors for 30 pieces of silver. It's not beautiful to me. It's not beautiful to me. [...]

Linda: Why did you send your students there?

Pattie: I didn't send them, the teachers did. No, they need to see and understand. You understand what I'm saying?

Pattie – Black female in her late 60s

To pay homage and respect

For many participants in this study, a major intention for visiting slavery-related sites like the ABG (a burial ground in this instance) is to pay homage and respect to the ancestors. Elizabeth informed me that people come to the ABG to pay their respect and deposit flowers on the mounds at the memorial:

⁹¹ Pattie's school provides an afrocentric approach to teaching. Her staff and faculty share that same vision.

[The ancestors] can come home and be comforted and everyone can see them shine. Let the sun shine on them, always joyful. People come and pray. People can pray, people can bring flowers. [...] So we can [pay] homage to these people as we remember how they made their journey.

Elizabeth – Black female in her 60s

Elizabeth also volunteers at the ABG and claimed that she too, comes to the ABG “to pay homage to those people who left, because obviously they made a great contribution and most of that, their contribution enabled me to be here.” Similar to Elizabeth’s remark, Damon stated that he goes to the ABG as a volunteer because he likes being there and he pays his respects to the ancestors:

I had to go there and do something. That’s why I’m a volunteer. I like being down there. I like that feeling. I pay my respects to my ancestors.

Damon – Black male in his 60s

The National Park Service also acknowledged the importance for visitors to come to the ABG to pay their respect to the ancestors, as stated by Ranger Edwin to a group of visitors at the memorial:

As you can see people come here and they pay respect to the dead as people place flowers. Some come and pour libation, a traditional African ceremony where alcohol or water is poured out in honor of our God or our ancestors, those who have passed away.

Ranger Edwin – Black male in his 40s

Curiosity

Despite the fact that Leila did not know much about the site, let alone about those buried there, she confessed that she was motivated by curiosity to visit the ABG because

she was looking for something interesting and different to do in New York. Leila was not informed about the ABG, but she learned about it when searching for places to visit in the city:

Going to the burial ground it was also just curiosity. I didn't really know anything specific about the people who were unearthed there. Nobody does, you can only speculate about the people who were buried there and about how they ended up there, or what kind of life they led.

Leila – Black female in her early 30s

Wanda, for her part, explained that she went to the ABG with no expectations but out of curiosity. Also, she thought it was important to encourage children's curiosity. For her, living life without expectations is being free from worry and she would rather be open to discover things as they happen:

J'allais pas pour trouver quelque chose, j'allais comme visiter un musée ou je découvre des choses.

I wasn't going there [the ABG] to find anything, I was going to see something like I was going to visit a museum where I discover things.

Il faut être ouvert. Et je sais qu'en tant qu'enseignante que j'essaie de dire aux enfants "soyez curieux," ne vous attendez pas au tas des merveilles parce que bon c'est vrai que - en plus quand on est dans l'attente, soit on fait pas les choses, soit on est déçus, soit, enfin bon, c'est tout un micmac. Alors qu'avec la curiosité, tu vas vers quelque chose.

We have to be open. And I know that as a teacher I try to tell children "be curious," don't expect a whole lot of wonders because it's true that – in fact when we have expectations, either we don't do things, or we are disappointed, or, well, it's a whole mishmash. While with curiosity, you go towards something.

Curiosity was a strong motivational force leading those who had not been involved in the community protest to discover the site on their own. For instance, Leila,

Francis, and Kendra were led by curiosity to attend events taking place at the site.⁹²

Lance explained that he has a great interest in how sites talk about slavery and before his first visit, he was very curious about how the ABG would present the history of slavery, as illustrated in our exchange below:

Linda: And when you look at your recent visit to the visitor center and memorial, can you think of your motivations to go visit?

Lance: Curiosity, I guess. I was wondering about the design because it was a competition for the design of the memorial. So I was curious about that. I had read about it, but hadn't been there. So I was curious about that, and then when the visitor center opened, curiosity as well just to see how are they going to present this? How are they going to tell this story? Is it something that people will understand?

Katrina has visited a variety of slavery-related sites in Africa and in South America, and like Lance, she has always had an interest in the history of slavery. Actually, she shared how this interest or consciousness of Black history progressively grew in her life and affected her perception of places of black heritage. Katrina indicated how her visit to Fort Jesus in Kenya was mostly motivated by curiosity. At that time, she did not have a deep understanding of the significance of that site as a holding place on the slave route of the Indian Ocean:

⁹² These key public events in the development of the site were the reinterment of the remains in 2003, the opening of the memorial in 2007, and the opening of the new visitor center in 2010.

[...] because where I was mentally it was more growing out of a sense of “I want to see.” I mean “I want to see this.” Gorée Island definitely was more of a spiritual pilgrimage and particularly standing up in the gate of no return. But when I went to Fort Jesus, I was very young. I was like 22, 23. And I don’t think I had a deep understanding. It was more of, “Wow!” “I just want to see the forts” because I’d heard [about] these forts, but I didn’t have any conception of what a fort was. And when I saw them, it was just like, “Wow! They’re like warehouse.” But they didn’t have the deep impact.

Katrina – Black female in her 40s

Similar to her experience at Gorée Island, Katrina compared her visit to Fort Jesus to the one she had at Elmina Castle years later where she gained a better sense of the meaning of that site and felt more of an emotional connection to it.

While her intention to visit sites in Brazil was to make comparisons of slave history, abolition histories, and emancipation histories between Brazil and the U.S., Natasha stated that her motivation to go there was just for curiosity:

Linda: What were your motivations to go there, in Brazil?

Natasha: The first time it was just curious, and that first trip somebody addicted me to Brazil. Somebody stuck a needle in my arm and I haven’t been able to stop going since.

Interest in learning about history

A number of participants explained that interest in history motivated them to visit the ABG. From the conversations I had with the participants in this study, those who expressed an interest in black, African American, or diaspora history also said they were interested in history in general, i.e., American history. Leila, for instance, was motivated by curiosity to visit the ABG, as well as by her interest in African American history (on which she has done substantial research):

I haven't actually been to a lot of sites that specifically deal with African American history or black history in any of the places that I visited. So it was nice to be able to come to some place that, you know, to do that.

Leila – Black female in her early 30s

Tamara had heard about the ABG in the 90s when the bones were unearthed. She has visited a variety of black heritage sites including slavery-related ones, and explained to me how special it was for her to visit the ABG with her mother and sister as her parents have instilled the importance of history in their children:

I'm very, very, very interested in my history and in reality. I think a real depiction of what was really going on, how African slaves were treated, what the little things that were a part of our culture that were lost or lost in assimilation and in integration or just trying to fit in and not be ostracized. I just thought it would be a great opportunity to see what was really going on in New York.

Tamara – Black female in her 20s

Wanda heard about the ABG during a visit at the Schomburg Center while doing research on African art. And although she regularly goes to the Memorial to meditate, her first visit was largely triggered by her interest in history and the cultural connections between Africans and African Americans:

Je suis arrivée de France aux États-Unis, et j'ai été intéressée par tout ce qui était culture des noirs américains. C'est q dire que j'avais vraiment envie de connaître déjà moi en tant qu'africaine, connaître, voir ou en était ma relation, ou pourrait en être ma relation avec les noirs américains et savoir tout ce qui pouvait nous connecter entre les noirs américains et les africains

I arrived to the U.S. from France, and I was interested in everything about the culture of black Americans. This means that I really wanted to know, inside of me, as an African, know, see where my relation was, or could be with black Americans and know about all that could connect us, between black Americans and Africans.

Le Schomburg avait des documents parlant de l'African Burial Ground: comment les choses se passent, ou en étaient les recherches, comment les archéologues travaillaient. Donc du coup j'ai acheté ces documents, c'était pas cher. Et puis, bon voila, ca était le premier choc, ou enfin, point, c'est ce qui m'a un peu ouvert, ce qui m'a fait connaitre l'African Burial Ground. [...] et donc je suis allée voir les lieux.

The Schomburg had documents about the ABG: how things are going, what was the progress of research, how the archaeologists were working. So I bought these documents, they were not expensive. So then, there, it was the first shock, or at least, thing that opened my eyes a little... so then I went to see the site.

Wanda – Black female in her 40s

Brandy, who holds a master's in history, has always had an interest in history, and especially African American history. As a matter of fact, she has visited a good number of black heritage sites around the United States and traveled to Bahia with Natasha as one of her students. In her own words, she explained: "I studied history. My master's degree is in history and so I have an interest. So that's the reason, especially [an interest] in African American history." Barbara is another young participant who has a great interest in African American history and who claimed she had been to at least 70% of African American museums in the country because she recognizes the value of history and the need to connect to one's personal history.

The purpose of this chapter was primarily to explore the "consumption" of dark tourism at the ABG. I examined my participants' relationships to the site, their experiences and reasons for visiting the site, the various acts they conducted on site, and the meanings this site held for them. In addition, I attempted to look briefly at the larger picture of slavery heritage, with respect to other slavery sites they may have visited (or

intend to visit) and how this might relate to their stance toward the ABG and their experience of this site in particular.

It seems like those who were involved with the ABG since its re-discovery were more inclined to search for a personal connection with the site, as well as a connection to the past. These were generally older participants. Younger participants were typically first-time and one-time visitors. They were mostly interested in visiting because of the historical significance of the ABG. Through their visit, they learned more about slavery in NY as well as the site itself. This means that older participants were more interested in making personal meaning of the past through the ABG, while younger participants were more interested in information and facts about NY's past. A potential proposition can be framed around this insight, that older generations look at how the ABG fits in the overall context of segregation and racism toward African Americans, while younger generations --who typically do not perceive society to be discriminatory toward African Americans—look beyond the years of overt segregation they did not personally experience. Chapter VI discusses some of the emergent insights from this and the previous chapter, and offers analytical as well as propositional directions for future research and management.

CHAPTER VI

INTEGRATIVE DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the emerging themes reported in Chapter IV and Chapter V and to propose theoretical insights for future inquiries. The chapter commences by discussing past literature in relation to stakeholders' strategies for management of "atrocities" sites and in the politics of representation of slavery. The subsequent sections address the formation of collective memory, Black identity, and telling the "truth" about slavery in light of the emerging themes from Chapter IV and Chapter V.

6.1. Representation and "production" of slavery at slavery tourism sites

6.1.1. Strategies for development and management of atrocity sites

Key stakeholders

The literature on heritage tourism advances that representing dissonant heritage can be challenging for site managers. Scholars argue that heritage usually favors one group at the expense of another (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000; Graham & Howard, 2008; Howard, 2003). Ultimately, the difficult task remains to include the interests of all concerned stakeholders. This inclusion is notably harder when key stakeholders have conflicting interests in the history to be presented. Table 6.1 presents the major stakeholders involved in the development and management of slavery heritage sites, based on their level of intervention.

Table 6.1: Major stakeholders in the development and management of slavery heritage sites

	Level of operation	In the literature	At the ABG
1	Global	The UNESCO (The case of Elmina Castle) The USAID (The case of Elmina Castle)	
2	National	-The Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora (The case of Elmina Castle) - The Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (The case of Elmina Castle) -The National Park Service (The case of Magnolia Plantation) -The National Trust for Historic Preservation (The case of many plantations)	-The General Service Administration (GSA) -The National Park Service (NPS) -The Congress -The Senate
3	Regional		-The African Burial Ground Project team ⁹³
4	Local (including community)	-Local residents of Elmina -African American, European, and African (mostly Ghanaians) visitors (The case of Elmina Castle) -Visitors of European descent (The case of Magnolia plantation and most plantation sites) -Site managers/plantation owners (The case of plantation sites)	-The Federal Steering Committee -The African American community in New York City ⁹⁴ -The City of New York - Mayor David Dinkins' office -The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture - Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) -Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground -Friends of the African Burial Ground

⁹³ Most of the scientific analysis was conducted at Howard University in Washington DC, however members of this team included scholars and scientists from around the country.

⁹⁴ Also referred to as “African descendent community”

Victim and perpetrator strategies

Ashworth and Hartman (2005) touched on the challenge of developing and managing sites presenting a dissonant heritage, and although slavery does not fall under their own definition of “atrocious”, slavery is commonly interpreted as an atrocious labor system in the history of the US and the world. These authors advance that one interpretation strategy tourism managers can use for the development and management of atrocity sites is the **victim strategy**, which focuses on the needs of those who identify with the victims of the atrocity. Often times, those who identify with the victims qualify tourism as intrusive because their atrocity is now being treated as entertainment. This same issue was raised by one participant in this study. Sylvia, poet and writer, suggested that the ABG has become a tourist attraction with no proper contextualization. For Sylvia, the ABG is a sacred ground, a resting place to honor and pay respect to her ancestor, and as an African (American), she claims ownership to that site and, according to her, she relates to it in deeper ways than any tourist would. By *tourist*⁹⁵ she meant a person with no relationship to the site, who comes to visit the ABG as he or she would visit any other attraction in NY: for the purpose of visiting, not to connect and pay respect. Unlike Sylvia, most other participants explained that people from all ages, ethnicities, and nationalities should come to the ABG because the visit could trigger change in the way they perceive the history of slavery and African Americans in general. Also, being part of the National Park system, the ABG is dedicated to provide enjoyable

⁹⁵ “Casual tourist.” See Kim and Jamal (2007) for typology of tourists.

and meaningful experiences to visitors from all walks of life, whether they are black, white, African, foreigner, or anything else.

Another strategy proposed by Ashworth and Hartman (2005) that can be illustrated in the case of the ABG is the **perpetrator strategy**, which usually takes the form of denial and occurs when “tourists identify with victims while the host governments have a different agenda” (p. 11). Although the development of the ABG was initiated by a grassroots movement, the African descendent community in New York City did not legally own the land where the cemetery was uncovered, but the federal government did (hence a public property). It was thus a matter of negotiating the spiritual and political ownership of the land between the community and the government. Information gathered from participants in this research and those who were involved in the protests and the different community meetings indicated they perceived the General Service Administration as lacking respect for the community’s sense of ownership of the site.

Ashworth and Hartman’s (2005) **victim and perpetrator strategies** were two opposing approaches taken by the ABG administrators from the time of its discovery until today. The conflicting relationship between the GSA and members of the African American community in New York during the years the federal agency was in charge of administering the site (1991-2005) matches some characteristics of the perpetrator strategy. Many participants perceived the GSA to be part of a system of perpetrators that have continuously oppressed Black people since slavery. As a matter of fact, Pattie, Karen, Damon, Derek, and Isaac (all older participants who were part of the protests and

members of committees) explained how they felt the GSA had no interest in preserving a part of African American heritage based on the disrespectful attitude exhibited by its representatives during many of the community meetings. Even Congressman Gus Savage reprimanded the GSA head, Mr. William Diamond, for his obstinacy to proceed with the unearthing of graves and his lack of sensitivity towards a sacred site that scholars believed to be one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th century in the US. After that congressional hearing, GSA was ordered to stop the extractions of graves.

Denial of African American heritage

Some of the policies used when perpetrators have significant power include not only denial in their involvement in the atrocity, but “attempts to conceal or destroy any surviving relics or sites so that heritage cannot later be created” (p. 11). This means that for individuals like Pattie and Karen, two older participants who are highly suspicious of White people, there is absolutely no doubt in their mind that the GSA had no intention to allow the African American community to claim ownership of the remains and to memorialize the site with due respect. Instead, they believed the GSA intended to continue to exploit their ancestors even in death. Whether these were indeed the intentions of the GSA or not, there are two important points to make here, one on the racial level and related to the ownership of the human remains, and the other on the political level and related to the power of the community.

Inclusion of multiple stakeholders

In the case of the ABG, the site only includes the voices of people of African descent (from enslaved Africans to African Americans). The voices of the “perpetrator” or the slaveholder is nowhere in the site’s production. The colonists of European descent (Dutch and British preceding American takeover) are mainly mentioned when comparing their higher life expectancy rate with that of the Africans, or when addressing the slave codes and other restrictions placed on the lives of the enslaved. That they were colonists engaged in slavery, and how they treated or related to the slaves over a significant period of time in US history, is little emphasized.

Sharpley’s (2008) argument is that even if not equally significant, the histories of all stakeholders should be included in the narrative, whether these are good or bad. Given the challenge to fairly include the interests of all stakeholders at dark tourism sites, Sharpley (2008) proposed a governance framework within which the management and interpretation of sites of dark heritage sites may be located. This model of “dark heritage governance” is based on the “continual, sequential process of stakeholder identification, the *determination of the histories of each stakeholder*, and the negotiated or cooperative writing or re-writing of the heritage narrative for the site” (p. 163, my italics). His model is adapted from Seaton’s (2001) model of “heritage Force Field” and Poria’s (2007) concept of “stakeholder histories.” Poria (2007) identified four groups of histories based on stakeholders’ feelings towards an event (shame or pride) and their degree of involvement (active or passive). These four groups of histories are presented in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Stakeholders histories. Adapted from Poria (2007)

		Degree of involvement	
		Active	Passive
Feelings associated with the event	Pride	Good active history	Good passive history
	Shame	Bad active history	Bad passive history

Applied broadly to the ABG, “good active history” occurs when the actions taken by one’s social group are assigned positive feelings such as pride (e.g., significant inventions by African Americans); “good passive history” when the actions not performed by one’s social group draw benefits to oneself (e.g., African Americans benefiting from legislation that primarily affect Native Americans); “bad active history” when the actions taken by one’s social group are assigned feelings such as shame (e.g. German visitors to Auschwitz); and “bad passive history” when actions not taken by someone in one’s social group but, instead, perpetrated on one’s social group are assigned feelings such as sadness and revenge (e.g., African American visitors at Elmina Castle).

Governance and management

Issues of power and control are introduced above, and raise question about the management and governance of heritage sites. An especially important issue here is the role and involvement of those whose history and heritage are being commodified and represented to the public. Sharpley’s (2008) point above are partially applicable at the ABG as the site uncovers the dependence of colonial New York on the institution of

slavery and touches on the violent nature of Northern slavery. However, the participants in this study who have been the most vocal about the injustice perpetrated on people of African descent by people of European descent (Pattie, Sylvia, Karen, and Natasha), claim that the ABG is not exposing enough of the “bad active history” of people of European descent.

Ownership of African American heritage

Most of the GSA representatives that worked on the case of the ABG were White, while the community fighting against them was in majority Black. The racial tension between the African American community and the GSA was obvious through the testimonies of some of the participants in this research. The main problem was not the fact that the representatives of the GSA were White but that they displayed arrogance and disrespect towards the representatives of the African American community, while claiming to own the newly discovered human remains. This claim was unconceivable and even insulting for some members of the African American community, who saw themselves as the evident owners of the remains because they saw themselves as the descendents of those entered at the burial ground.

In the case of Elmina Castle in Ghana, Bruner (1996) explained that African American visitors felt they owned the site and did not want any other part of the history of the site to be represented. African American visitors claim to own the site because of the heritage it represents, while other stakeholders also claim part of the ownership (Bruner, 1996). Indeed, Elmina Castle has had multiple uses before and after it was utilized as a transit point for enslaved Africans taken to the New World (Bruner, 1996).

Ultimately, the economic power of African American tourists has influenced the Ghanaian authorities, through the Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations,⁹⁶ to lean more towards the interests of this group (Bruner, 1996).

In the case of the ABG, the use of the site (land) is not being contested but the inclusion of all the parties involved during slavery and the knowledge they brought to the development of the site's interpretive history and its facilities, etc., remained an issue (for more on the residents living around Elmina Castle, see the extensive work done by Arthur & Mensah, 2006; Bruner, 1996; MacGonagle, 2006; Yarak, 1989).

As the National Park Service took over the administrative duties of the ABG from the GSA in 2006, it can be argued from the stories that are told and the stories that are omitted or de-emphasized at this site that the management of the ABG favors a broad American ideology and mainstream history with "some" acknowledgement of African presence. Thus, when it becomes time to decide on future directions for the site, it will be interesting to see how members of the African American community who have been involved with the site since its re-discovery welcome suggestions from individuals who are supposedly not related to those buried at the burial ground.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Renamed "Ministry of Tourism" in 2009. Source: <http://www.touringghana.com/mot.asp>. Accessed September 14, 2011

⁹⁷ Karen exhibited a strong anti-White sentiment during our discussion as she explained the feelings she had during the reinterment ceremony when Gifford Miller, former (White) Speaker of the New York City Council, addressed the crowd: "He said, 'Our ancestors have come.' I said, 'I didn't know you were related to us. Are you related to us?' Why is he saying 'our ancestors have come back?' What do you mean 'our'? I'm not related to you. Although you came from me, I'm not related to you. I'm not claiming you."

Political power of the African American community

Despite various tensions and conflicts over site development, my study and observations indicate that, overall, the voice of concerned African American residents were heard and their demands respected.⁹⁸ The GSA stopped the excavations, scientific research was led by a Black professor at a Black university and the remains were reinterred after they had been analyzed; those interred at the burial ground were finally given proper recognition through the construction of a memorial and a visitor center. This is a hopeful testimony of American democracy. As noticed by Terence⁹⁹, who currently lives in Liverpool, the Black community in the UK, or even in France has less successfully pressured its government to memorialize Black heritage. The power that African Americans possess to openly claim their African roots, to confront a federal agency (the GSA – as a national stakeholder), and to pressure the authorities (the City of New York Mayor’s Office, the Congress, the Senate, and even the White House – as local, regional, and national stakeholders¹⁰⁰) to acknowledge their mistakes of the past and to comply with the demands of the people is to be saluted may even be envious of in certain parts of the world where the heritage of Black minorities is not publicly and officially celebrated.

⁹⁸ Although a few participants who were involved in the protests felt otherwise.

⁹⁹ In his 30s, Terence is of Caribbean origins and residences both in the US and the UK.

¹⁰⁰ Although I am not listing the White House as a major stakeholder, it played a significant role as President George H. Bush signed a law prohibiting the construction of the proposed pavilion site and approved a \$3 million fund for a memorial site on the burial ground. See The New York Preservation Archive Project (2010).

Race, power and heritage

Chapters IV and V, and issues of race and power in my research support a relational perspective on visitor experience and stakeholder participation (see the analytical framework RAISA¹⁰¹ discussed further below). Findings from previous research also show that the experiences of visitors at (dark) tourism sites are influenced by their relationship with, and intentions toward, these sites. In the case of the ABG, it is evident that some members of the African American community felt a strong personal connection to the site because they saw themselves as descendents of those free and enslaved Africans. Upon the re-discovery of the site, they had the firm intention to preserve the site and commemorate the life and contributions of their ancestors. In that way, their acts of resiliently protesting and fighting for the government to intervene were influenced by this cultural identification (who they saw themselves as in relation to the site).

It would appear that the ABG has made a reasonable effort to present a message of resilience, strength and resistance of enslaved Africans in New York. Despite some voices to the contrary, many study participants appear satisfied about the way African history has been presented. However, it could be argued that MUCH greater effort could be made to show this long and important history of African presence in the American past. American history is only just being revised in this case; as participants voices like that of Fred and Sam in Chapter V suggest, even African Americans themselves may only be familiar (through mainstream American history taught in school) with the dark,

¹⁰¹ Originally proposed by Dr. Michael Hand, Dr. Tazim Jamal and Dr. Christopher Menzel (Glasscock Working Group, TAMU; Jamal, 2007) and standing for Relationship-Agent-Intention-Site-Act.

depressing images of 19th century cotton plantation slavery history. While a good topic for future research, the ABG could greatly benefit African Americans and other visitors by better representation of the important period of Dutch colonial history and their (arguably) better treatment of African slaves relative to the British and American period (Moore, 2005).

From a management perspective, given the protests and power relations discussed earlier in the chapter, I would add that conflict management, and constructive dialogue and reconciliation can be helped in part by improved citizen and visitor awareness and learning of the very long period of African presence in the US. Additionally, greater effort must be made to address the psychological dimensions of trauma, post-traumatic slave syndrome, for instance (DeGruy-Leary, 2005), and also dealing with the sense of shame that is compounded by poor representation of the rich culture, music, foods, traditions that were brought by incoming slaves and also length of time that Africans have been residing in the US. While illustrated only briefly in Chapter V by comments such as that of Sam, past research indicates many people of African descent live with the shame of slavery (DeGruy-Leary, 2005; Latif & Latif, 1994; Shipler, 1997; Thompson-Miller & Feagin, 2007; see section 6.3 on Black identity below). Visiting the ABG may be able to help remove some of that shame and develop a better sense of self, perhaps (further research is needed on this aspect). The ABG site is unique in that it offers an opportunity for collective memory (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000; Lowenthal, 1985).

There remains a strong need for developing slavery related heritage sites that pursue greater interpretation of the rich cultural heritage brought to the US by African slaves, and provide avenues for reconciliation through improved understandings and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange (e.g., at the heritage site, or through social media related to these sites) between the colonized and the descendants of the various colonizers involved (including the British and Dutch). I hope that further historical and heritage related sites (e.g., museums) may emerge in the U.S. in the future to address aspects not covered by the ABG (e.g., the soon to be open Washington DC Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, which could better serve as a site of collective memory than a slavery site).

6.1.2. Representation of slavery on site

Past studies in comparison to the ABG

Previous research on slavery tourism has revealed that southern plantation sites tend to under-represent or misrepresent the history of slavery and the lives of the enslaved (e.g. Butler, 2001; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Dann & Seaton, 2001; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Modlin, 2008; Modlin, Alderman, & Gentry, 2011). In terms of their representation of slavery, these studies have provided major insights that are important to report here in comparison to those issued from the study of the ABG.

(i) Mis- or under-representation of slavery

The life experiences of enslaved African living and working on the plantations are not acknowledged as much as the life experiences of their white owners (Butler, 2001; Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Dann & Seaton, 2001; Eichstedt & Small, 2002; Modlin, 2008). In fact, the topics most covered by brochures in southern plantation museums include: “architecture”, “original owners”, “current owners”, “crops”, “slaves”, “furnishing”, “gardens/grounds/landscape”, “civil war”, and “heritage/politics/public office” (Butler, 2001). It was also found that the least cited topics included “slavery”, “slave”, “slave cabins” and the like (Butler, 2001).

In Chapter IV, in addition to the evolution, conflict and development of the site, I explored how slavery was represented at the ABG through the brochures, the film, the rangers’ narratives, and the exhibits. Contrary to other sites referred to in past studies, slavery is at the center of the discussion at the ABG. The ABG exposes the existence and the nature of slavery in New York. Table 6.3 reminds the reader of the top five themes/topics mentioned at the ABG in comparison to Butler’s (2001) plantation sites.

Table 6.3: Comparison between top themes at southern plantation sites and the ABG

Topics	Southern plantation sites	ABG			
		Brochures	Film	Tour narratives	Exhibit ¹⁰²
	Original owners	The process of development of the site	Slavery was about work	The brutality of slavery	Contributions of the enslaved
	Architecture	Understanding the history of New York and slavery	Africans found ways to resist	References being made to scientific research and history	Resistance and rebellion
	Current owners	The contributions of African Americans to New York	Africans contributed to the development of New York and the Americas	Community's involvement	Richness in the diversity of the community
	Landscapes and gardens	The community's involvement	Africans never ceased to claim their humanity	Contributions of Africans	Resistance and rebellion of the enslaved
	US Civil War	The significance of the site today	Community's involvement	Sankofa	

(ii) Exclusion of the legacy of enslaved Africans

Several scholars argue that the contributions of enslaved Africans in the building of the US are often excluded from tourism site narratives (Lawton & Weaver, 2008; Lockhart, 2006). Lockart (2006) referred to the legacy cattle mounts at Congaree National Park in South Carolina to suggest that it is relevant not only to African American history but American history. Yet, the presence of the enslaved is not acknowledged. This lack of acknowledgement is clearly problematic knowing that without enslaved labor, the plantations could not sustain themselves (Modlin, 2008).

¹⁰² These represent the top themes at each section of the exhibit area

Table 6.3 indicates that the legacy and contributions of enslaved Africans is a major theme at the ABG. All four avenues of representation (brochures, film, tour narratives, and exhibits) emphasize the contributions of Africans in New York. The preeminence of this themes shows that the ABG challenges the traditional representation of slavery at other sites, and presents itself as a carrier of change. Because slavery tourism sites have an educative role towards society, it is important that the message they present be fair (Butler, 2001). Change in public learning about slavery cannot occur until sites present a message that is fair to the legacy of enslaved Africans. As the first site entirely dedicated to the history of slavery, the ABG has the potential to contribute to changing of perception on slavery, notably slavery in New York.

(iii) Use of meta and production myths

A number of scholars argued that docents at plantation museums use two types of myths to portray slavery. The first ones are meta-myths, which are generalizations and broader statements about the history of slavery. The second ones are production myths, which are more specific and are often a mixture of several meta-myths. Production myth statements tend not to encourage further discussions about slavery (Buzinde, 2007; Buzinde & Santos, 2009; Modlin, 2008). Using these myths not only deter visitors from engaging in open discussions related to slavery, but tour guides do not challenge the audience to put themselves in the shoes of enslaved. Instead, visitors are encouraged to picture themselves as owners of the plantation house.

During their tour of the ABG, visitors can interact with the exhibits through touch screens. These include details about the scientific work and answers to commonly

asked questions, such as “How do we know they were Africans?” “How do we know they were children?” “Do we know how they died?” “Do we know what they ate?” These screens, in coordination with the rest of the exhibit encourage visitors to look for answers to their questions, whatever they are. In case the content of the exhibit does not provide enough information, visitors are also encouraged to approach rangers walking around the exhibit area and the memorial to ask for clarification or additional questions.

References to slavery and to its brutality are found all around the ABG, from the shape of the Libation Chamber (at the memorial) as a slave ship, to the mural listing the slave laws, the replicas of chains used on Africans, and the map of the “triangular” slave trade. With that, the ABG acknowledges the existence of slavery in New York and does not shy away from presenting it as it really was: violent, cruel, and inhuman, just as it was in the South.

(iv) Focus on the comfort of white visitors

Studies on slavery tourism sites in the US have noted that most visitors were Caucasian. After administering 1362 surveys to visitors at a plantation outside of New Orleans, Louisiana, Butler (2003) created a “typical visitor profile.” Accordingly, the typical visitor was an educated white female with a household income near or above \$100,000 annually and is 50 years old. She is pleased with the tour and is mostly interested in local history/culture, original owners, architecture and slavery at plantations but if there was one thing she could be changed, it would be to hear more about slavery during the tour. In fact, Butler (2003) identified the top five topics demanded by visitors

and compared them to the top five offered by the sites (as identified in Butler (2001).

These top supply and demand themes are illustrated in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Top five topics demanded and offered at southern plantations. Source: Butler (2001, 2003)

Topics	Supply	Demand
	Original owners	Local culture
	Architecture	Original owners
	Current owners	Architecture
	Landscapes and gardens	Slaves
	US Civil War	Other

It has been argued that because visitors are predominantly white, site managers do not want to offend them when mentioning slavery and the exploitation of Africans (Dann & Seaton, 2001). However Butler's (2003) point shows that what site managers present can be in discord with what white visitors want to see and hear on site. He adds that based on the level of education of white clients, site managers should present a more critical narrative that includes slavery and the lives of the enslaved. Butler's (2003) study shows the importance of looking at both production and consumption sides when analyzing the representation of slavery at dark tourism sites.

Based on my observations at the memorial and the visitor center, the ABG receives a large number of black visitors. This is especially evident with respect to school groups, which are primarily comprised of African American youth from the five

boroughs of New York City. Their teachers were generally African American; ten of my participants were educators (teachers or professors) mostly for Harlem. The majority of the white visitors that come to experience the site are tourists. The ABG is included in their itinerary as one of the existing National Park sites in Lower New York, along with The Statue of Liberty and Castle Clinton. Thus the ABG receives visitors from all around the world, both of younger and older generations¹⁰³. All visitors have the opportunity to hear about slavery in a way that is different from the traditional sites. Here, the objective of the ABG is not to satisfy the needs of one ethnic group, but of all visitors. In other words, as part of the National Park Service, the ABG does not present itself as an African American site, but as an American site. In that way, all (black, white, foreigner, etc.) can have a better understanding of slavery and its legacy.

(v) Few African Americans visit slavery sites

In accordance to the previous point, studies have shown that not only black tourists visited in small numbers, but that for those who visited, many feel cheated because they came to look for their own family history, which was not incorporated in the site narratives (Thompson, 2000). This learning demonstrates that black tourists are interested in visiting plantations. However, in comparison of their white counterparts, these black visitors hope to get something different out of their experience. Shipler (1997) advanced that while white visitors come to see the opulence of the plantation

¹⁰³ Although visitors are ethnically diverse and include locals as well as visitors from out of town, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, and based on my observations, I felt like most visitors were Black (regardless of their nationality)

house, black visitors come to make sense of their heritage. And for that, black visitors do not want to visit slavery sites that portray shame and atrocity (Shipler, 1997).

(vi) Slavery is increasingly being incorporated

As part of a follow-up research studies, several scholars revisited previously surveyed southern plantation museums and came to the conclusion that many of them have started incorporating slavery and the lives of the enslaved in their tour narratives (Butler et al., 2008; Modlin, Alderman, & Gentry, 2011). In addition, many of these sites now offer separate tours that solely focus on the lives of the enslaved. In these, visitors tour the slave cabins (re-created) and learn about the daily lives activities. Magnolia plantation somewhat falls under this group of slavery tourism sites as in one part of the site, owned by the NPS, park rangers tour the slave cabins and offer more slave-centered narratives (Montes & Butler, 2008). Nevertheless, the other site of the plantation is privately owned and follows the traditional strategy by focusing on the owners of the house, the architecture, and the crops. The case of Magnolia shows how slavery can be incorporated in tour narratives (NPS side).

In light of Poria's (2007) typography, slavery tourism sites that have traditionally excluded slavery and the lives of the enslaved from their narratives (including brochures and tour guide discourse) can turn the shame associated with slavery into pride. The case of the ABG shows how this new paradigm can be applied. In that way, the new paradigm will move away from the image of the African as a passive victim to an agent with strong cultural roots, dignity, resiliency, and resistance. In other words, in the new paradigm, the conversation focuses on the lives of the enslaved and their significant

contributions to New York and the world in general. Table 6.3 illustrates how the ABG makes that shift as the top¹⁰⁴ themes presented on site relate to a) the contributions of the enslaved Africans; b) the resistance and rebellion of enslaved Africans; c) the community's involvement in the development of the site; and d) the brutality of slavery. The table and information presented in previous chapters indicate that the ABG management is endeavoring to present slavery from the perspective of the enslaved. The exhibits, stories, film and tours are geared to offer visitors an opportunity to understand how Africans lived, worked, resisted, and died.

(vii) Community involvement

An important theme at the ABG is the involvement of New York City's African American community in the development of the site. Basically, the site recognizes that without the resilience of the community, there would be no ABG today. The subliminal message here is that having a slavery related site is not a given because people had to fight for years to finally get it. It is still a fight today to recognize the presence and contributions of Africans in New York and the Americas. This is why one of the participants in this study (Pattie) refuses to be called "African American," but "African living in America" because, according to her, if she was a citizen of this country she should not have to fight for recognition.

African Americans' experiences at slavery tourism sites

The available literature on African Americans domestic (U.S.) tourism experience is scarce (Butler, Carter, & Brunn, 2002; Philipp, 1994; Pinho, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ When combining brochures, film, tour narratives, and exhibits.

Moreover, none of the studies on slavery tourism have looked at the particular segment of African American visitors. To my knowledge, this study is the first to look specifically at African American visitors' experiences at slavery tourism sites, including their motivations to visit. Nonetheless, some part of the literature has looked at the experiences of African Americans at slavery tourism sites in a few African countries and in Brazil. I shall compare the contributions of this study with those looking at what is commonly referred to as *Diaspora* or *Roots* tourism.¹⁰⁵ As discussed below, the experiences of African American visitors at ABG seems to show a range of similarities to the experiences of roots-seeking visitors to enslavement sites such as Elmina Castle in Ghana.

The discussion and insights presented in Chapters IV and V corroborate an analytical framework called RAISA¹⁰⁶ that was proposed in Jamal and Lelo (2010), summarized briefly below). RAISA attempts to identify some major analytical categories that appear to be useful for examining heritage sites, including "dark" sites and atrocity heritage. The acronym RAISA stands for Relationship, Act, Intention, Site, and Agent. This framework can assist in the understanding of visitors' experiences at dark tourism sites. And although the emotional aspect of visitors' experiences is somewhat missing from this framework, it is still useful to use it to attempt to better understand the experiences of African Americans at slavery tourism sites from the slave castles in the coasts of West Africa to the ABG in New York City. Table 6.5 presents the

¹⁰⁵ The reader is reminded that in this dissertation, the terms "diaspora tourism" or "roots tourism" refer to slavery tourism outside of the US. The main locations include sites in Africa.

major themes covered by five seminal articles on roots tourism.¹⁰⁷ The locations covered by these articles include Ghana (Elmina Castle and Cape Coast Castles), Senegal, the Gambia, and Brazil. For clarity purposes, each component of RAISA pertaining to the motivation and experiences of visitors – Relationship, Act, Intention, and Agent – is highlighted separately.

Relationship

The literature on roots tourism shows that African Americans who visit slavery sites in Africa view the continent as their home, no matter how geographically distant it may be. In fact, many of them have made Africa their primary residence (Bruner, 1996). This notion of homecoming is central to roots tourism as African Americans visit the place where everything began for people of African descent. Home is a place of reference, a place of comfort, and a place one can always go back to when lost or when tired. Many participants in my study commented that they do not have a precise place to call home because they do not know where exactly their ancestors came from. Thus, for participants like Fiona, who volunteers at the site, the ABG is the closest place she can get to Africa and her ancestors. For her, even if the ABG is not the first home of her forefathers, going there makes her feel at home.

¹⁰⁷ A longer list of articles can be found in the appendix section

Table 6.5: Major themes related to African Americans' experiences at roots tourism sites

Source	Relationship	Act	Intention	Agent
Bruner, 1996	- Castles as theirs - Castles as sacred ground	- Trance - Fasting - Crying	- Search for roots and reconnection with the past	- Sadness - Sense of pride and strength
Richards, 2005	- Africa as "motherland" - Elmina Castle as sacred ground	- Reenactment - Weeping - Trance - Praying - Singing	- Desire to connect to an identity other than the denigrated one ascribed to them by American racism	- Search of family lineage. - Unprepared for the intensity of emotions - Satisfaction and pain
Timothy & Teye, 2004	- Travel "home"	- Tours - Performances - Signing guestbook. - Crying	- Pilgrimage to reassert, reaffirm, or perpetuate one's heritage.	- Visitors as pilgrims - Grief and pain - Good vs. evil (black vs. white) - Revenge - Forgiveness and healing - Coming home - In memory of ancestors - Closure
Finley, 2004	- Ghana as homeland - Ghana as space of freedom	- Guided tours - Anti-white comments and attitudes - Reenactments - Comments in guestbook	- Visitors as pilgrims - Making sense of the past	- Visitors want the history of the slave trade to be the focal point.
Reed, 2004	- Africa as the homeland they can reconnect to	- Guided tours - Readings - Reverence - Monetary offering - Reenactments - Comments in guestbook	- Search to experience "Sankofa" - Search for a sense of closure - Identification with Africa	- Visits to Ghana are influenced by the media.

Act

Most of the acts enacted by African Americans visiting Ghana are also enacted at the ABG. I have observed several visitors depositing offerings at the memorial, in forms

of flowers, money, or water libations. Conversations with rangers are consistent with my observations. Instead of reenactments, the film played in the theatre illustrates the daily activities of enslaved New Yorkers, including caring for children, running errands, building constructions, and burying their loved ones. In addition to the film, the life-sized figures present a funeral scene that can be quite powerful for visitors. Indeed, as visitors approach the scene, they can feel like they are part of the funeral ceremony along the figures, as they hear the sound effects in the background. In that way, visitors are invited to be part of the exhibit in a personal and emotional way.

As in Ghana, visitors at the ABG are encouraged to leave comments in the guestbook provided by the NPS, located at the front desk. While I perused the entries, I decided not to conduct a systematic examination of the guestbook entries in this study as, based on my own observations, it seemed that very few visitors write on it and those who do, tend to provide demographic information only (gender, city, state and country of origin, and email address).¹⁰⁸ A look at the types of comments entered, offers an interesting insight into visitors' opinions and perceptions. Hence, I entered a number of these entries (198) on an Excel document, and provide a few below to illustrate what visitors felt or said:

- A remarkable tribute to "our" history
- Amazing experience!
- a must visit for everyone
- Excellent! Long overdue
- Extraordinary experience. Tearful. Overwhelming
- Good! It's nice to know true history
- In honor of our ancestors!
- May the truth of our history continue to rise

¹⁰⁸ Of the 530 demographic entries I counted, 198 had comments.

- Thank you - needs to be mandatory for everyone
- This was an "awakening"
- Very emotional and educating

Chapter V describes and examines a range of acts that visitors were actively engaged in during their visit. These comprise singing, clapping, and shouting. I have noticed a particular difference between the acts performed during their touring of the visitor center versus their performance at the memorial. In the first setting, the visit starts with a security check, which for participants Kandace and Wanda, ruin the visit from the start. As organizers of workshops at the ABG, Kandace and Wanda have had to come into the site on several occasions and both commented on the rudeness of the security staff, obliging them to remove all their jewelry. During the visit of the visitor center, one cannot help but hear the constant beep of the security screening as visitors come in. None of the participants in this study said to have been annoyed by that noise. Another point that makes the experience to the visitor center different than the memorial is that it has the feel of a museum, a place where people constantly walk around, sit, touch, talk, laugh, discuss, and read. On the other hand, the attitude and behavior at the memorial is more subtle. There is no restraining entrance as visitors can come in and out of the site without any type of screening. Also, the visible presence of the seven mounds reminds visitors that this is the precise place the remains were interred back in 2003. The architecture of the memorial guides visitors through the Ancestral Chamber, down to the Circle of the Diaspora, and back up along the wall of spiritual symbols. Elements like the grey granite, the mounds, the open air, the water, and the symbols create an atmosphere of solemnity that is unique to the memorial.

It is also at the memorial that visitors can sit to meditate, or even pray. As I interviewed participants for this study, meditation at the memorial did not make sense to me. I did not understand how one could find peace by coming to the memorial, until my last week in the field. Three days before I left New York, I lost a person dear to me. I hear the news while at the ABG and somehow I felt I needed to go to the memorial. I stood in front of the mounds to cry, to pray, and to communicate with that person for one last time. In that moment, I understood what some of the participants meant and felt when describing their spiritual experiences at the ABG. Sites of slavery heritage like Elmina Castle in Ghana or the ABG in New York can be powerful places where visitors can find solace, peace, and be able to “ground” themselves in their past and their ancestors, creating a sense of identification through *spiritual acts* as well as *acts of homage* (see Chapter V for more on this). These two types of acts especially illustrate the embodied, emotional, performative “authenticity” of experience that can occur at burial sites like the ABG.

Intention

Travel to West Africa requires time and money, and an exploration of the reasons for the visit, the intentions and motivations that drive roots-seeking journeys offers some insights towards understanding visitation to slavery-related sites that may be located within the current diasporic space (residence) of the African American resident. The literature reports that African Americans taking the journey to Ghana tend to have a high household income as well as a high level of education. The trips to the slave castles are rarely seen as tourist expeditions but more as pilgrimages to the sacred motherland. And

with that, the key reason to engage in that journey to West Africa is to (re)connect to their roots. Reed (2004) mentioned that *Sankofa* was a major influence for the journey. This means that for these African American visitors, they are practicing exactly what Sankofa calls for: return to the past and claim it. Heritage has been defined as the appropriation of the past into the present, or the “contemporary use of the past” (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000, p. 2), and in that way, African Americans visit Ghana to appropriate a past that has been denied to them through slavery, and to make sense of it in their reality.

In contrast to cross-Atlantic journeys to the diasporic homeland (e.g., Ghana above), visits to the ABG by area-based African-American residents entails the cost of a subway or bus ride. There is no entrance fee. This study shows that the major intentions for visiting the ABG involve: connecting to the past, spiritual engagement, paying homage and respect to ancestors, learning, and teaching. Similarly to past research, this study reveals that African American visitors feel a need to connect to their past—acts of spirituality and acts of homage are related to this connection to the past, invoking ancestral relationships through performative acts in various indoor and outdoor spaces at the ABG. Additionally, many study participants felt that the ABG is a tremendous medium to learn and teach about the past. Participants who work in the education system found this last aspect quite attractive at the ABG because they can incorporate insights from the site into a larger learning environment such as high school and college. Intentions and motivations here related to curiosity, interest in learning about the relatively new site, or using it for teaching purposes.

Agent

A close look at the feelings and emotions that African American visitors experience at slavery sites in Ghana show there are mixed feelings of pain and sadness and feelings of strength and pride (Bruner, 1996, Richards, 2005). On the one hand, visitors are saddened by the crude nature of slavery and its ravages not only for African Americans but also for Africans; on the other hand, they are filled with pride knowing that their ancestors survived and overcame despite of the adversity they faced. As standing reminders of the reality of slavery, slave castles in West Africa are tangible tools that can make visitors' experiences even more emotional and impactful. The fact that visitors can walk through the same doors, dungeons, and other areas in the castle that their ancestors once walked through centuries ago makes the experience quite powerful for African Americans. Many have commented being stunned by the heat, smells, and sights at the castle, which make the experience more real and touching.

In comparison to the above, similarities are evident. Participants in the ABG study also experienced mixed feeling of pain accompanied with pride. Danielle, who volunteers at the ABG, expressed to me her sadness about what has been done to her ancestors, and her pride in what they have done for the US; contributing significantly to the foundation of the nation. Many study participants said it was their hope that visitors to the ABG can come out filled with strength and pride for who they are and where their ancestors came from.

6.2. Collective memory

6.2.1. The African Burial Ground and collective memory

Quoting Schuman and Scott (1989), Eyerman (2001, p. 6-7) defines collective memory as recollections of a shared past retained by the members of a group that experience it and “passed on either in an ongoing process of what might be called public commemoration, in which officially sanctioned rituals are engaged to establish a shared past, or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective.” One of many questions this study raises relates to the role, function and significance of enslavement sites like this NPS managed burial ground: “Is the ABG a site of collective memory?” Former New York City Mayor David Dinkins paralleled the significance of the ABG for African Americans to that of Ellis Island (1892 - 1954) for the peoples who voluntarily migrated to the United States.

Millions of Americans celebrate Ellis Island as the symbol of their communal identity in this land. Others celebrate Plymouth Rock. Until a few years ago, African-American New Yorkers had no site to call our own. There was no place which said, we were here, we contributed, we played a significant role in New York's history right from the beginning... Now we – their descendants – have the symbol of our heritage embodied in the lower Manhattan's African Burial Ground. The African Burial Ground is the irrefutable testimony to the contributions and suffering of our ancestors. And this landmark site has become the inestimably important touchstone for our history as a community. Again and again I have witnessed the power this site has to move people's hearts, and to educate their minds.¹⁰⁹

For Mayor Dinkins, the ABG is a place for the memorialization of enslaved Africans, a place African Americans can call “home”. However, the definition of

¹⁰⁹ Excerpt from Mayor David N. Dinkins' preface of *Reclaiming Our Past, Honoring Our Ancestors: New York's 18th-Century African Burial Ground and the Memorial Competition* published in 1994 by the African Burial Ground Competition Coalition for the Memorial Competition.

collective memory implies a consensus among a social or ethnic group. Such consensus and unity is hardly found among African Americans and Blacks in general on the subject of slavery. As some want to forget all about it, others want to remember the resilience and contributions of Africans, while those calling for reparations insist on remembering the evil perpetrated on their ancestors. While slavery is worth remembering for some, it is worth forgetting for others. While it evokes suffering and shame for some, it evokes strength and pride for others. Indeed, Berlin (2004, p. 1264) advanced that:

[t]he story of slavery has two large themes. The first is the physical and psychological imposition that slaves suffered. [...] But there is a second theme, for the story of slavery is not only one of victimization, brutalization, and exclusion. [...] Slaves did not surrender to the imposition, physical and psychological. They refused to be dehumanized by dehumanizing treatment.

Likewise, Wertsch and Roediger (2008) argued that “what makes collective memory collective is the fact that members of a group share a similar set of cultural tools, especially narrative forms, when understanding the past. Unified groups use an array of cultural tools to remember the past (Alexander et al., 2004; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). These can include the arts (music, dance, painting, sculpture, etc.), discussions (debates, documentaries, etc.), or rituals and acts like visiting a memorial site.

This study shows that it is hard to define the ABG as a site of collective memory for African Americans since visitors come for different reasons and ascribe different meanings to it and, to a larger extent, to the history of slavery—however, as discussed further below, it demonstrates the potential to be a site of collective gathering and collective memorializing of a long period of African presence in the US. For many

African Americans, the history of slavery is a partial, fragmented learning on of cotton plantations, cruelty, and segregation history that is still recent (especially for the older generations), still painful to mention and thus better to forget. But, a number of participants also recognized that history needs to be remembered through the significant contributions of Africans to this nation as well as their resistance and resilience. There are active groups of African Americans today insist in fairly exposing slavery, and argue that many White Americans still benefit from systemic racism, segregation, and oppression against African Americans (Feagin, 2006).

Following from the above, the ABG offers a significant opportunity to facilitate learning and a more informed citizenry. Many Black New Yorkers do not know about the ABG. The site is not as popular as it should be within the African American community in the city New York and the nation as a whole. For being the first National Monument dedicated to the significant history of slavery, the ABG is very far from being recognized at the same level as the Statue of Liberty, which stands only three miles away. The ABG neither has recognition at the national level from all Americans, nor at the community level from all African Americans. It appears to be lacking recognition, or cultural awareness and knowledge of local New York residents of this aspect of the city's heritage.

Relationship and identification by African American residents and visitors is also worthy of further investigation. A few participants in this study (Francis, a 20 years old student, Katrina, a 43 years old professor, Helen, a 68 years old educator, and Natasha, a 65 years old retired professor) ascribed significance to the ABG at the same level as the

Statue of Liberty and other significant landmarks in the nation. However, its significance merits much further research. The ABG did not emerge as a significant site of collective memory in this research. Site representations through the exhibits, film and documents did not present it as a site of collective memory and it not seem to be experienced as such by the majority of this study's participants.

6.2.2. A site of collective memory in the future?

If the ABG does not constitute a site of collective memory, could it become one with time? If so, what would it take to make it a site of collective memory?

Collective memory can be formed when people seek the support of others to “validate their interpretations of their own experiences, to provide independent confirmation (or refutation) of the content of their memories and thus confidence in their accuracy” (Schackel, 2001, p. 655 quoting Malbwachs, 1925). In other words, when individuals remember events, they need the testimony of other people to collectively agree on what and how to remember. Schackel (2001) commented that when the group has enough power and resources to promote that collectively remembered past, the memory can become public. Like heritage, collective memory can be shaped and adapted to the interests of the concerned group. And like heritage, collective memory is often about politics and power. So, African Americans would need the necessary power and resources to bring the small, relatively unknown ABG site from being a small unique representation of an important, long, early period of African presence in the US to becoming a site of collective memory of early presence and ancestral linkages, and promoting it to national significance, or at least of collective significance to African

Americans. Future research should look at other sites with greater national exposure like the newly inaugurated Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial in Washington DC, where there could be a deeper sense of collective memory among African American visitors because the site is not about the contested topic of slavery but about honoring the life of a Civil Rights leader. One difference in this case is that the figure and message of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. resonates with all Americans, since today all are familiar with his famous line “I have a dream.” Although the context of the work of Reverend King is that of segregation, racism, and hate towards Blacks in a dark time of American history, it is apparent that Americans as a whole have embraced him as a national hero.¹¹⁰

An additional challenge would to address the diversity of perspectives and views that seem to be present in Black visitation to slavery related sites. As discussed below, Black identity and relations to slavery vary significantly and much further research is required to avoid the mistake of generalizing Black experiences of sites related to their past, especially sites of enslavement and atrocity.

6.2.3. Mobilizing action and promotion of the ABG’s special significance

The ABG is the first site in New York City entirely dedicated to enslaved Africans and slavery. In order to see many more sites entirely dedicated to slavery, instead of parts of museum exhibits, African Americans must come to terms with the history of slavery and the way they individually and collectively remember it. Unity and cohesion could progressively come through cultural tools like the arts and discussion, as

¹¹⁰ The fact that Dr. King was a Christian, an advocate of non-violence, and a recipient of the Peace Nobel Prize certainly made him a more accepted figure by all Americans than Malcolm X.

well as through the media. My research indicates that African Americans would be receptive to the development of a film, program, series or online media related to the ABG that depicts the other side of slavery; that presents enslaved Africans as human beings with rich cultural roots, strength, resilience, and an incontestable sense of resistance and spirit as supported by (revisionist) historical evidence? Similarly, it would seem that there is a need for developing and promoting physical sites of collective heritage remembrance for an ethnic group that has been marginalized historically in the US, despite the fact that Africans have had a long presence in the U.S., and have been instrumental in building places like New Amsterdam, which is the site of present day New York! Consider, for instance, the way Jews are collectively remembering the Holocaust through memorials and museums in Europe, Israel, and the United States; one wonders why the same remembrance is not displayed around the United States for African Americans and slavery. African Americans do figure in the political sphere (like the always outspoken Reverend Al Sharpton), and it would seem that popular figures in the media like director, actor, and producer Tyler Perry, and his close friend, the very influential Oprah Winfrey can be agents of change in this regard. During our interview, Natasha, a retired history professor in her 60s, suggested that President Barack Obama and New York celebrities like basketball player Amar'e Stoudemire, rapper Jay-z, and baseball player Alex Rodriguez should visit the ABG to inspire the youth to do the same. Education – through curriculum changes – is a valuable source of change in the perception of slavery and the dissemination of early long African residence in the US should be incorporated along with more information and learning about their cultural

heritage. However, well regarded Black personalities can also only incite African Americans to visit sites like the ABG, celebrate their origins in the US jointly, and inspire them to learn about other than the “dark” sides of slavery.

6.3. Relation to Black identity

6.3.1. Black identity typologies

Psychologist, Erik H. Erikson (1959, p. 102) defined identity as “an individual’s link with the unique values, fostered by a unique history, of his people,” and added that it involved a relation with oneself and with others. In other words, the development of identity is a process of observation of oneself in relation to others compared to other’s impression of the self’s relation to themselves (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). One of Erikson’s (1959) arguments was that the identity is constantly shaped through life, but that it is mostly stabilized during the stages of late adolescence and young childhood. In the context of African Americans, Erikson (1968, p. 310) indicated that identity “links the actuality of a living past with that of a promising future,” and thus the importance of the past in shaping identities. In their review of the literature, Burt and Halpin (1998, p. 5) suggested that before the 1970s, research on African American experiences were misinterpreted because they were conducted through the lens of the dominant White culture. For that, Erikson (1968, p. 314) called for a more inclusive study of African American’s identity as he asked “what historical actuality can the Negro American count on and what wider identity will permit him to be self-certain as a Negro (or a descendant of Negroes) and integrated as an American?...What are the historical actualities that a developing identity can count on?” Unquestionably, it is

necessary to understand the history of African Americans in order to assess their identity development (Burt & Halpin, 1998, p. 1).

Landrine and Klonoff (1996) insisted that we should not study African Americans as a homogenous group, as it was (and still is) very often done, but as an ethnically diverse population. They recommend looking at ethnicity rather than race, as the latter leads us to determine how physical differences (such as skin color) explain behaviors, whereas the former helps determine how cultural differences (such as language, religion, and values) explain behavior, which is a much more realistic approach to identity. Several theories and models have been used to examine African Americans' racial identity, two of which are presented below in order to better comprehend the experiences of the participants of this study.

The Nigrescence Model by William Cross

The first theory to be discussed is that of psychologist William Cross (1991), who developed the *Nigrescence* ("the process of becoming Black", p.x) model consisting in five stages Blacks go through in order to acquire Black identity, by moving from "Negro" to "Black." These five stages include pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization/commitment. In the **pre-encounter** stage, Black people tend to orient themselves toward White culture and away from their own. Individuals in this stage believe that Black people are responsible for their own fate independent of the history of slavery. These individuals tend to conform and comply with societal norms and look for acceptance from Whites. The general

emotions associated to this stage include avoidance, defensiveness, and anxiety (Belgrave & Allison, 2006).

In the **encounter** stage, black individuals' perception of themselves and Black people shifts due to a specific or a series of life-changing experiences such as witnessing an act of police brutality on a young Black male. Individuals in this stage start researching more about their culture as their level of curiosity increases and develop emotions that include vigilance and anxiety as they question their beliefs about Whites and Blacks.

The **immersion/emersion** stage occurs when an individual manifests a new sense of identity as a black person. Here, black individuals get involved in activities and organizations where they can be affiliated with other black people. Also, they now tend to define whiteness as evil and blackness as good.

The fourth phase of **internalization** characterizes individuals who have internalized their new identity, which allows them to have a better sense of who they are. At this stage, black individuals are confident in their identity and do not have to deal with the anxieties of the preceding phases. They also have a better ability to participate in both White and Black events and be at ease during their interactions with White people.

Finally, during the stage of **internalization/commitment**, black individuals have not only internalized a confidence about being black, but they are not committed to work toward the liberation of other oppressed people, whether black or not. Thus at this stage, the interests of the person shift from the individual to the collective level.

One of the limitations of this model is that individuals cannot be placed under fixed categories, as human behavior changes based on the context. For instance, one can exhibit attitudes reflective of the phase of internalization while at school, and demonstrate attitudes of immersion/emersion while at home. Moreover, the model does not inform us of the social factors that may influence shift of attitudes (Pinckney, 2009).

The Ethnic Identity Acculturation Model by Phinney

When investigating the ethnic identity of adolescents, Phinney's (1989) proposed an *acculturation* model that examines the interactions ethnic groups have within their group and with society as a whole. Table 6.6 illustrates these interactions based on the idea that members of minority groups can feel strong or weak ties with their own group and with the majority group. The model suggests the possibility of four scenarios within which ethnic minorities can find themselves. Each one is described below.

Table 6.6: Ethnic identity acculturated model. Adapted from Pinckney (2009)

		Identification with ethnic group	
		Strong	Weak
Identification with majority group	Strong	Acculturated	Assimilated
	Weak	Separated	Marginalized

- Scenario 1: Acculturated – Individuals who feel strong ties both to their ethnic group and to the majority group fall into this category. They easily negotiate their identity in both interactions.
- Scenario 2: Assimilated – Individuals with strong ties to the majority group and weak ties to their ethnic group characterize this category. In this case, they have completely embraced the culture of the majority group.
- Scenario 3: Separated – Individuals who have weak ties to the majority group but strong ones to their own fall into this category as they reject the dominant culture and are totally accepting of their own.
- Scenario 4: Marginalized – Individuals who do not feel any specific attachment to their own or the majority group characterize this category. They are marginal participants in these groups, but could have an attachment to another minority group's culture.

These typologies will provide additional insights from the case of the ABG when discussing the racial identity of the participants of this study.

6.3.2. Racial identity of visitors to the African Burial Ground

As Chapters IV and V show, African American (and Black as a whole) visitors to the ABG do not necessarily share the same perceptions and experiences. For instance, while the outdoor memorial symbolizes liberty and strength for some, it is a complete desecration and monstrosity for others. While the life-sized wax figures help some to better understand the context of slavery and the site, they remain too dull and simplistic

for others. While some visitors enjoyed the video, others found it to be too dramatic and in favor of the entertainment over the educational.

In this section I shall attempt to recognize the participants' corresponding racial identity through the examination of their perceptions and experiences at the ABG. Again, it would be deceptive to categorize the participants of this study under one unique identity, but the reader should be aware that, for the purpose of this research, participants are classified solely based on insights from our discussions, not based on their personality, personal experiences, or family history, of which I am less informed.

Table 6.7 and the discussion below explore the racial identity attributed to each participant of this study drawing from Cross' model of Nigrescence and Phinney's Ethnic Identity Acculturation Model. Albeit, the purpose here is not to fit the participants of this study into fixed boxes as they all can shift identities depending on the context, but to use the literature to generate insights on the identity of the participants. I attributed identities based on their coherence with the participants' profile. For that, at time, Cross' (1991) typology was more appropriate, while at others, Phinney (1989) fit somewhat better. Also, for some participants, two identity types were attributed because they both could fit with their profile. When no racial identity "fit" with a participant, the cell was left blank.

Table 6.7: Participants' racial identity based on Cross and Phinney's models¹¹¹

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG	Racial identity	
						Cross' Nigrescence Model	Phinney's Ethnic Identity Acculturation Model
Fiona	62	Female	Administrator	Volunteers and protested	Going to the ABG is like going "home" to Africa	The encounter or Internalization	
Sam	69	Male	Writer	Volunteers and protested	Joined the Civil Rights Movement		Separated
Barbara	27	Female	Financial manager	Visited once. Friend of a ranger	Member of the NAACP, the Urban League, and the Studio Museum in Harlem		Acculturated
Karen	59	Female	Retired	Refuses to visit	Member of the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground	Immersion/emersion but still with association of whiteness as evil	Separated
Wanda	48	Female	Artist	Comes often to the memorial	Originally from Cameroon (and France)	Internalization	
Leila	29	Female	Student	Visited twice	Parents are originally from the Caribbean		Acculturated/assimilated
Danielle	66	Female	Retired accountant	Volunteers	Parents are originally from the Caribbean	Encounter	
Elisabeth	67	Female	Retired/business owner	Volunteers and protested	Has done social work in South Africa	Internalization/commitment	

¹¹¹ When identifiable, racial identification from both models was appointed.

Table 6.7, Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG	Racial identity	
						Cross' Nigrescence Model	Phinney' s Ethnic Identity Acculturation Model
Katrina	43	Female	Professor	Has visited several times with students	Has traveled in East and West Africa	Internalization	
Stanley	47	Male	Clergyman	Has visited several times	Travelled to Africa more than 17 times. Teaches MLS's philosophy of non-violence		Separated
Lance	41	Male	Professor	Has visited several times	Family lived in a farm in Alabama since the end of slavery	Internalization	
Isaac	80	Male	Clergyman	Was part of the protests	Pan-African activist	Internalization/commitment	
Sylvia	72	Female	Retired professor	Has visited several times	Originally from West Africa	Immersion/emersion	
Natasha	65	Female	Retired professor	Uses the ABG library regularly	Goes regularly to Bahia (Brazil) to do research on enslaved Africans	Internalization	
Helen	68	Female	Educator	Has visited several times with students	Went to Africa with the Peace Corps	Internalization/commitment	

Table 6.7, Continued

Pseudo nym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG	Racial identity	
						Cross' Nigrescence Model	Phinney' s Ethnic Identity Acculturation Model
Brandy	29	Female	Program manager	Visited once. Friend of a ranger	Engages in church activities related to history. Visited historical sites in Bahia, Brazil	Internalization	
Francis	20	Male	Student	Student worker	Parents are originally from Guyana		Acculturated
Tamara	28	Female	Manager	Visited twice. Friend of a ranger	Mentors inner-city kids ("Big Brother-Big Sister" type program)		Acculturated
Kandace	58	Female	Artist	Has visited several times	Performs Afro-Cuban dancing		Acculturated
Pattie	68	Female	Educator	Refuses to visit	Member of the Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground	Immersion/emersion but still with association of whiteness as evil	
Kendra	20	Female	Student	Student worker	Mentors youth on HIV AIDS prevention	Encounter	
Erika	36	Female	Youth programs manager	Has visited several times with students	The ABG is as close to her as her family cemetery	Internalization	

Table 6.7, Continued

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Occupation	Current interaction with the site	Heritage relation to the ABG	Racial identity	
						Cross' Nigrescence Model	Phinney' s Ethnic Identity Acculturation Model
Fred	59	Male	Documentarian	Has visited several times. Made his own documentary on the ABG	Originally from Panama. Has produced a documentary on the ABG	Internalization	
Donna	29	Female	Manager	Visited once. Friend of a ranger	Family is originally from Georgia		Assimilated
Damon	66	Male	Educator	Volunteers and protested	Member of the Black Panthers Party	Immersion/emersion	
Terence	34	Male	Instructor	Volunteered	Originally from Trinidad	Internalization /	
Derek	46	Male	Historian	Has visited several times. Has done considerable research on the ABG	Can trace his family history to Lenape, Dutch, and Africans of colonial New York	Internalization	

The previous section of this chapter on collective memory addressed a major difference between history and memory, as the former claims to be based on objective facts, while the latter is influenced strongly by personal interpretations and perceptions.

Wertsch and Roediger (2008) suggested that:

In a nutshell, one could say that history is willing to change a narrative in order to be loyal to facts, whereas collective remembering is willing to change information (even facts) in order to be loyal to a narrative. (p. 324)

This exact statement was exemplified in my conversation with Sylvia, a writer and poet in her 70s who was convinced that the burial ground was a dumping ground for Africans. In a way, the idea of dumping enslaved Africans in common graves without individual coffins or any reverence or respect is consistent with the general narrative of the brutality and inhumanity of Whites in their treatment of Blacks. Any attempt to approach Sylvia with the historical, objective facts stating that the burial ground was a dumping ground for pottery reuses (as the literature claims) and not for Africans, as these were interred in individual coffins and with proper burial reverence from their peers. Sylvia's view is conveniently consistent with the general narrative of White evil and Black innocence, which is consistent with **immersion/emersion**, Cross's second stage of Nigrescence. Acknowledging that the burial ground was not a dumping ground would create a discrepancy in her belief system that whites were and are still evil against blacks. Many black individuals like Sylvia, are not ready for such a shift and consistently adapt the information they receive (objective facts) to their own personal narrative.

6.4. "Telling the truth" about slavery

6.4.1. Differences between 17th and 19th century slavery

Davis (2006, p. 125) argued that it is inaccurate to think that all of slavery in America resembled the cotton plantation system of the 1850s in Mississippi. He reminded his readers that two thirds of the history of northern slavery took place before

the American Revolution (1775-1783). Berlin (2003) used a generational research model to show how diachronic the institution of slavery was, as he suggested five generations (*Charter, Plantation, Revolution, Migration, and Freedom*) during which social, economic, and political changes entailed.

While 17th and 18th century slavery in New York has the characteristics of the Charter Generation, 19th century slavery in the South has characteristics of the Plantation Generation (see Chapter II for more details). Northern “societies with slaves” differed from southern “slave societies” in the scale of their agricultural system, with southern economies being more dependent on the production and export of staple crops such as rice, cotton, and tobacco. Also, according to Davis (2006), it was not uncommon for northern states to have Blacks and Whites working alongside, which was less likely in the South. Nonetheless, slavery in the North was harsh and violent on Africans, as revealed by the scientific work conducted on the human remains excavated from the burial ground. Among the causes of death, scientists identified indicators of overwork (musculoskeletal stress, arthritic and traumatic effects) bruising of bones (due to overwork), malnutrition, disease (Blakey & Rankin-Hill, 2004).

In the end, whether it occurred in the North or the South, slavery was brutal and traumatic although it manifested in different ways. However, when most people think about slavery, they have the characteristics of southern slavery in mind. Two areas where this gap subsists between scholarly and popular knowledge of slavery are the media and tourism sites. Knowing where the gap exists may help change popular beliefs.

Slavery in the media

Movies like Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*, can be based on historical events that have been documented, such as the slaves revolt on board of the ship *La Amistad* in 1839 (Jones, 2000). But, like many movies in Hollywood, they tend to oversimplify or overdramatize some aspects of the historical events. Moreover, if such adaptations or dramatization are made evident to the viewer in some way, audiences may take movies like *Amistad* as historical references for the events (e.g., portrayal of slavery).

The traditional view of 19th century southern slavery in America was also greatly reinforced in popular culture through the television series *Roots*. The power of representation through images has without any doubt effects on the general public and the way people understand and remember slavery. Indeed, the image of Blacks laboring the cotton fields, the Black or White overseers on his horse, and the White planter sipping cool lemonade on his porch are too familiar, and as a result are part of Americans' psyche.

Slavery at tourism sites

Another reason why there exists a divide between popular and scholarly knowledge of slavery is in the way the tourism industry has been exploiting the history of slavery. This disconnect is noted at two different levels. In the first case, and as previously mentioned, many former plantations open for tourism in the United States offer a "whitewashed" version of slavery (Butler, 2001). This means that the tour narratives emphasize on the planters' mansion and its architecture, their way of life, and the crops they raised, but fail to mention that they owned slaves who actually did all the

manual work to make those planters' lifestyle possible, and who lived in quite different conditions (Butler, 2001). Other scholars have come to the same conclusions as Butler (e.g. Butler, Carter, & Dwyer, 2008; Buzinde, 2007, 2009; Modlin, 2008) which are testimonies of the oversimplification of slavery.

In the second case, tourism also tends to overdramatize slavery, as in the case of Elmina Castle in Ghana. By travelling to West Africa, African Americans hope to find themselves and their identity by reconnecting with their roots (Bruner, 1996).

Interestingly, slavery and the slave trade only represent one part of the long history of Elmina Castle as Bruner (1996) reminds his readers that the castle has had multiple uses (school, prison, food storage) after slavery and before it was solely used for tourism.

Here again, not only there is no mention of the non-slavery related uses of the castle, but there is an emphasis on slavery – on the personal connection African American tourists have to the site – and even a distortion of history through the invention of the *Door of no return* at Elmina Castle.

6.4.2. Fairly representing slavery through education

Past research indicates there are several reasons why historical events of the African American past are minimized, misrepresented or excluded from the content of school curriculum (Stone & Mackenzie, 1989). The lack of space, the ignorance of teachers, the lack of suitable material, the lack of recognition of its relevance in today's society, the pain and embarrassment associated with the past or even politics are some of these reasons (Stone & Mackenzie, 1989). Additionally, Stone and Mackenzie (1989) explained that because of the dilemma between what to teach and not, the history of

minorities is excluded and this allows the promulgation of the accepted values of the dominant group in society. Educators have a responsibility, if not an obligation, to expose children to dependable history and not to perpetuate the myths of popular culture. Not only will kids have a better sense of what slavery was and how it manifested in mainland North America but they will develop a better understanding of the world's dynamics.

In the context of a study about students' understanding of their learning about slavery, Singer (2008, p. 114) surveyed 450 students from seven racially segregated schools in New York City. He reported that those who identified as African American or Black felt that their social studies curriculum should focus on:

- the resistance by people of African ancestry to slavery,
- the continuation of racial oppression in the United States after the Civil War,
- racism in the United States in the present, and
- the continuing problem of slavery in the world today.

Singer's (2008) study shows that the Black youth he surveyed are not interested in the suffering instigated on Africans, but are more inclined toward understanding ways of resistance, the significant contributions made by Africans to the nation, and the legacy of slavery in contemporary America.

Exposing the “truth” at the African Burial Ground

Butler (2001) wondered if it really matters that slavery sites appropriately represent slavery and stated that while people on vacation want to relax and enjoy themselves, as museums, plantation sites have an educational, civic, and ethical duty to

present the public with authentic information and artifacts. He adds that tourists tend to trust the content of plantation museums and that “if plantations falsify or remove slavery from prominence in their museums, the result is a lost opportunity for a nation to learn from its past mistakes” (p. 173). In this study, Tamara, a young professional New Yorker, explained that she trusted the information she received at the ABG because it felt “truthful” in the content and logic in the presentation. With that said, the ABG has a pedagogical obligation to present history in an authentic fashion that should avoid misleading the visitors.

Stone (2008) emphasized the educative role of heritage and dark tourism sites, a role that is also recognized at the ABG. Indeed, one of the missions of the ABG is to provide relevant research that “contributes to the reframing of the public’s knowledge of slavery and the African experience in the United States, and of the history of New York” (National Park Service, 2005, p. 36). One of the components of the interpretive program is the development and use of education programs as the *Draft*¹¹² recommended that “educators will be encouraged to use the burial ground as a tool for learning and teaching through a carefully planned educational program for many grade levels and for traditional and nontraditional learners” (National Park Service, 2005, p. 57). In fact, the *Draft* states that the site is to “re-educate society as knowledge is provided” (p. 24). And although the information produced by the ABG (brochures, film, tour narratives) does not explicitly express the need to change the perspective from southern 19th century slavery to northern 17th and 18th century slavery, it calls for education about slavery in

¹¹² The Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground published in 2005.

New York. The teaching about slavery in New York should educate people not only on the existence and prevalence of the institution in New York from 1626 to 1827¹¹³ but also on the diverse forms of resistance and resilience implemented by enslaved Africans, their significant contributions to the development of New York, and today's legacy of slavery (National Park Service, 2005). Wide understanding of the relevance of enslaved Africans and the ABG to the history of New York City and the United States is currently missing and should be facilitated actively.

McKercher and du Cros (2002, p. 160) argued that the ability of cultural tourism site personal to deliver a specific message depends on the amount of information or misinformation visitors bring with them. These authors found that park rangers at Alcatraz Island have to deal with visitors coming in with several myths. In fact, upon visitors' arrival to Alcatraz, rangers share the reasons the site is part of the National Park System and proceed with strategies to tear down these myths. By doing so, "the rangers strive to dispel some of the Hollywood myths about the place with the hope that visitors can appreciate it for what it is and not what its image is" (McKercher & du Cros, 2002, p. 162). Following the example of Alcatraz Island, the ABG needs to seize the opportunity to shift visitors' preconceived idea of slavery in America as characterized by a static time period of history.

¹¹³ The state of New York officially abolished slavery in 1827. It was one of the last northern states to do so (Berlin & Harris, 2005).

6.4.3. General propositions

While the purpose of this present study is not generalization, its learning outcomes can inform other similar heritage sites through transferability. For that, I am suggesting four propositions related to the four theoretical avenues discussed earlier, namely, the representation of slavery at heritage sites, collective memory, Black identity, and fair presentation of slavery history. These propositions should assist site managers when faced with the same situation and challenges the ABG was and still is faced with.

Proposition 1 – In relation to the representation of slavery at heritage sites

The development and management of slavery heritage sites require the recognition and inclusion of all key stakeholders related to the conservation, development and management of the site and/or objects from the site. Inclusion of all key stakeholders from the start of the planning process should favor collaboration and reduce conflict. Constructive discussions on the representation of slavery should be undertaken in order for the outcome to be fair to all key stakeholders. Adequate balance between negative (victimization) and positive (contribution) aspects of history should be provided.

Proposition 2 – In relation to collective memory

Sites of slavery heritage should be aware of their significant role as cultural and political tools for African Americans. Indeed, as time progresses, these sites can be appropriated and used as ways to remember and make sense of slavery (individually or jointly). Site managers should understand the role they have as social connectors to the past and should accommodate for physical and spiritual acts that enable these connections and the possibility of forging a collective memory: prayers, libations, rituals, etc.

Proposition 3 – In relation to Black identity

Sites of slavery heritage should be aware of the heterogeneity of African Americans, who may visit these sites for diverse purposes and reasons. These may include: to reconnect to the past, education and learning, to pay homage and respect, curiosity, and interest in learning about history. Sites of slavery heritage should also note that younger African Americans are more likely to be assimilated or acculturated, contrary to older generations, among whom being separated is more common. Site managers should also be aware of those with immersion/emersion racial identity, as they tend to have a highly critical view of White people. Racial identity is likely to influence the expectations, the perception of the site, the behavior, the experience on site, and the reflection on the representation of slavery on site.

Proposition 4 – In relation to telling the “truth” about slavery

Better mechanisms and participatory processes need to be sought to incorporate scientific data and historical facts into interpretive sites like the ABG that are deeply personal, and may be highly political and conflict laden. Site managers should have a good understanding of the scale and scope of slavery: its local as well as its regional, national, and global manifestations. Sites of slavery heritage should have the ability to re-educate the public on the subject of slavery, by presenting new material in relation to already familiar ones. However, the telling of the story should be recognized as politically and culturally embedded, and should therefore involve not only historians, conservationists and site managers, but also those diverse communities, groups and individuals whose history is being appropriated and packaged for consumption by a visiting public.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Concluding thoughts

Although slavery in the United States was abolished in 1865 with the end of the Civil War, its legacy has present-day repercussions on African Americans (Williams, 2007). The idea is that slavery, not as an institution but more precisely as a memory, has impacted the formation of African Americans' identity (Eyerman, 2001). The memory of slavery and associated identity politics also influences African Americans' visitations to slavery heritage sites like former southern plantations. When the topic of slavery arises, the dominant image or assumption is that of Blacks working on large cotton plantations. However, neither Black nor non-Black populations in the USA recognized that slavery was different in the north than the south. For slavery heritage sites in the northern parts of the country, like New York, it is imperative that such sites take the opportunity to reinscribe history and increase visitor awareness and understanding of the different characteristics and temporality of northern slavery.

The ABG reminds visitors of a difficult part of U.S. history that many wish to forget for a variety of reasons. As a heritage tourism site, it offers visitors both an entertaining and educative experience. The first one is characterized by the dramatization of history through the film and the exhibit (particularly the burial scene recreated by life-size wax figures). The second one involves the exposure of the nature of slavery in colonial New York.

In reference to Stone's (2006) dark tourism spectrum (supply-side), it seems like the ABG falls under the darkest side as it fits into the six following characteristics:

- There is a higher political influence and ideology: as explained earlier, the ideas of race, power, and nationalism are clearly embedded in the development of the ABG.
- It is a "site of death and suffering" where free and enslaved Africans entered their loved ones with care and dignity in the mist of the violent and inhuman conditions they lived under.
- One of the primary aims of the site is to educate the public about slavery in New York.
- As a historic site, the ABG commemorates the lives of free and enslaved Africans who lived, worked, and died in New York.
- There is indeed a perceived authenticity in product interpretation as the site presents a full exhibit section on the scientific analysis of the human remains and the findings learning related to way New York Africans lived and died.
- The site of the ABG stands on the grounds of the location of the original cemetery

Other characteristics described by Stone (2006) do not entirely fit with the ABG as

- The time scale to the event (slavery, or the use of the cemetery) is long
- The ABG is a high tourism infrastructure, purposely developed for visitors to come experience the site.

The idea here is that the ABG is a complex site as it constitutes a burial ground (a “dumping ground” for pottery refuse) mixing the sacred and the profane (Graburn, 1989). This study shows how for some visitors, going to the ABG is close to going to a sacred journey, similar to a pilgrimage. For someone like Fiona, who lamented the gap she feels with her past because she does not know where her ancestors come from exactly, and who said she felt that gap closing down when she comes to the ABG, experiencing the site is more than a tourist experience, it is a personal journey that reconnects oneself to one’s past.

The ABG is more than a cemetery for free and enslaved Africans, it is a reminder of the history of New York under two different colonial rulers preceding American rule. This study opens doors for further research guided by post-colonial theory and examination of how the legacy of slavery and White imperialism has impacted the life conditions of African Americans and Blacks in general.

The ABG is a site of great significance for African Americans and Blacks because it represents a place for possible reconnection to a lost past. But it is also a place where all Americans can find significance, as being a National Park, this site presents an opportunity for all citizens and other publics to learn about the “dark” past of the city, including its role and involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its reliance on both enslaved and free Africans to build “New Amsterdam” that evolved and grew into present day New York City. The ABG can be fairly described as a “dark” site because it’s history covers atrocity related to slavery but is not merely such--it is also a site of joy and pride where some visitors get a personal connection with the past, while others get a

general understanding of this past. This complex and sacred site of mourning and commemoration has the potential to elicit a diverse range of feelings, experiences and relationships.

Lastly, it is important to underline the spiritual dimensions of the “Acts” described in Chapter V, which included: connecting to the past; communication with the ancestors; and homage. The framework RAISA (Relationship – Agent – Intention – Site - Acts) is helpful in conceptualizing the experiences of visitors at dark tourism sites like the ABG, where “acts” and “relationships” are central to the experience of visitors. As a cemetery, and thus a perceived holy ground, the ABG facilitates spiritual acts by visitors who display an attitude of reverence for the dead (to whom they relate closely). The structure of the site (the memorial section) provides for spiritual acts as there is space to pour libations, to leave prayer notes and offerings, and there is a lingering atmosphere of peace and holiness supported by the running water, the African symbols, and the gray granite walls. The five elements of RAISA are interconnected since if it were not for the Site’s historic connections, visitors, as embodied Agents, would not intentionally perform these spiritual and physical Acts that reinforce the Relationship they have with the ABG and their Intentions towards its.

7.2. Implications for future research

Examining the experiences of African American visitors to slavery tourism sites through RAISA may help to better examine and understand that these are embodied Agents with feelings, emotions, and sense experiences, in Relation to a Site (the ABG in this case), manifested through specific Acts and Intentions towards to the site. This study

supports the scant previous literature to enslavement sites, in showing that African Americans that visit sites of slavery and burial grounds (such as the ABG in this instance) want to see a “true” display that presents accurate facts of their history (as best as is known within the hegemonic domination that is currently being revised), and does not only present the negative, “dark” sides but also shows the humanity, the culture and the everyday lives of the site’s inhabitants. Theoretical perspectives that may be drawn upon to inform future research could include postcolonial theory, critical race and ethnic studies, gender and feminist theory, anthropology, culture studies, and a rich growing literature on public culture, collective memory, and cultural heritage.

Future inquiries on slavery tourism should examine power relations and identity politics, as well as issues of control and ownership of both the site and the representation and interpretations of their pasts, i.e., the representation of their own interests. It is also imperative for future studies to better examine how received history is being interpreted at the site, and examine the potential for sites like the ABG to contribute to revisionist history. The “missing” stories of African presence in the US, as well as possible distortions of whatever is considered by site managers to be legitimate history, in order to whitewash deliberately, or accidentally omit a rich rendition of the cultural richness of the enslaved and freed Africans, are concerns raised by previous research and echoed in my study (see Jamal & Lelo, 2010).

7.2.1. Research limitations

Some of the limitations of this study are important as they help to reveal gaps and opportunities for knowledge building through further research. This study of the ABG

was based on the diversity of participants or rather, the lack thereof: only New York residents were interviewed, no tourists, and many of the participants shared the same experiences (participating in the protests and volunteering at the site). This was mostly due to the challenges of recruitment which limited my ability to spontaneously approach potential participants on site. In order to overcome this administrative obstacle, future researchers should consider spending a longer period of time in the field to secure a larger pool of participants. In addition, I would recommend future studies to look at a broader audience that include White Americans and/or foreigners. Other studies could also contribute to the field of youth development by understanding the experiences of children youth and students at the ABG or similar sites.

7.3. Implications for the National Park Service (managerial implications)

In order for visitors to truly grasp the characteristics of northern slavery, they should be compared to those of southern slavery that are more familiar to Americans. In doing so, sites like the ABG provide a context from visitors' reference system that can help them better understand what was special about slavery in New York. Future studies should examine how sites of slavery heritage, which focus on a specific era or region, ought to provide a larger historical context of slavery that visitors are familiar with. Sites should convey to visitors that slavery was an event that needs to be understood through its long time span.

One potential interpretive direction is for the ABG to present 17th century slavery in New York in comparison to 19th century southern slavery. For the public to learn more about slavery in New York, discovery and understanding has to be facilitated

through a range of interpretive strategies as well as the involvement of key stakeholders including historians, park managers, non-profit and ethnic communities plus other key individuals and groups. Gathering and reconciling historical and scientific “facts” with contested ideological interests and politics of ethnicity and identity, require much greater attention to issues of process and control over not only the site and its tangible heritage, but also its intangible heritage—the social, cultural, spiritual and psychological dimensions, and these are enacted through acts, influenced by relationships with, and intentions towards, the site.

The lack of reconciliation between the perceptions of 17th and 19th century slavery makes the history of New York hard to conceptualize and comprehend. Lessons from this research suggest that it is imperative for the ABG to improve its staff training system, both with respect to ensuring accuracy and consistency in communication of historical facts and the importance of this site to American history, and to facilitate multi-sensory experience of a challenging (“dark”) but also culturally informed past. The lack of a standardized training system that rangers have to go through at the ABG is highly problematic.¹¹⁴ The lack of precise script or outline risks the delivery of a consistent and pertinent message to visitors. Although letting rangers highlight information that is more related to their own personal research interest (whether it is the abolitionist movement for some rangers or the rediscovery of the past for others) may help rangers to convey parts of the story they feel more comfortable with, this practice is carried out at the expense of the ultimate goal of demystifying slavery and fairly present

¹¹⁴ Personal communication

how it compared in the North from the South. It is also important that the ABG staff to understand the different missions and meanings enabled at the site (recognizing especially its pedagogic potential) and ensure training for rangers to communicate with visitors with some measurable guidelines of consistency, fairness, accuracy of interpretation and public involvement in the overall process.

7.4. My voice as a researcher

When I started this study, I thought that the fact that I am not African American would make the site impersonal to me. However, as I spent time in the field examining the exhibits, reading books from the ABG library, and interacting with both the participants of this study and the ABG staff, I came to realize how dear and meaningful the site was to me, a Congolese woman born and raised in Morocco.

The initial framing of this study was influenced by my aspiration to give a voice to African American s/Blacks in the field of tourism. My intention was not to conduct a comparison between African Americans and other ethnic groups, as it has usually been done in leisure studies, but to focus solely on the former, as a unique and independent segment. For similar reasons, I did not want to compare the ABG with other sites, but I wanted the readers to completely understand this site and if possible entice them to eventually visit and tell others about it. As I explained in Chapter III, it was important for me not to overshadow the ABG with another site as this is the first study, known to me, that takes a qualitative look at the experiences of visitors at this site. I wanted to give justice and voice to the ABG, as the first site dedicated to slavery in New York, which only a few had heard about.

Because this dissertation is giving me a voice, an opportunity to openly and publically promote the ABG, I feel a tremendous responsibility towards the site and what it represents. This includes the responsibility I feel towards my ancestors, to whom I hope this research can pay homage and respect. But most importantly, I feel quite a responsibility towards the participants of my study as I hope that I interpreted and reported their opinions accurately and in a way that will bring pride to them.

Through the time I spent in New York City interacting with the site, the participants, and the city as a whole, I came to realize that this study was changing me: I became more aware of my identity and what it meant to my everyday life. I realized that the sacrifices of those that came before me made me who I am today and that the strong heritage that stands in my shoulder is there to guide me as I learn more about the past and utilize it in my present and future. The fieldwork showed me that I have a responsibility towards my ancestors (known and unknown) and my offspring to do better for myself and to teach others about the important things that are often put aside and forgotten. The stories of Africans who were forcibly brought to the New World should not be forgotten nor underestimated and pushed to the side, but placed at the center of the dialogues on race in America, may it be at schools, in political debates, or private conversations. There is considerable work to be done before we can reach that stage of open dialogue; however, I truly believe that we will get there, sooner than later.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Background information

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself
2. How do you identify yourself on the Census?
3. What does it mean to be African American?
4. Where were you born?
5. What year were you born?
6. How long have you been living in New York?
7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
8. What is your primary occupation?

Site

9. When did you first hear of the ABG?
10. How did you hear about the ABG?
11. How important to you are slavery-related sites? Why?
12. How important to you is the ABG? Why?
13. Who do you think should visit the ABG? Why?
14. What do you think is the role of slavery-related sites? The ABG? Why?

Relationship

15. What Black heritage sites (non-enslavement) have you visited?
16. What were your main reasons to visit?
17. What experiences have you had at these Black heritage sites (non-enslavement)?
18. How do you relate to these sites?
19. What do these sites mean to you?
20. What other slavery-related sites have you visited? When? How often?
21. What were your main reasons to visit a slavery-related site? The ABG?
22. When did you last visit the ABG? How many times have you visited the ABG?
23. How do you relate to the slavery-related site? The ABG?
24. What does the ABG mean to you?

Experience

25. What kinds of experiences are enabled on site?
26. How are these experiences enabled?
27. What types of memories were brought to your mind when you visited the ABG?
28. How did the visit affect the way you interpret these memories?
29. Did you ever feel uncomfortable during your visit? Why? (assess the degree of darkness)

30. What are some of the feelings you can associate with your visit to slavery-related sites? To the ABG?
31. How different was your visit to the ABG in comparison to other slavery-related sites?
32. What did you like the most about visiting other slavery-related sites? The ABG?
33. What did you like the least about visiting other slavery-related sites? The ABG?
34. What elements would you like to be changed (added or removed) at the ABG in order to enhance your experience? Why?

Outcomes

35. Why have you (or not) visited slavery-related sites? The ABG?
36. How have previous visits to other sites influenced your visit to the ABG?
37. How has your visit to the ABG influenced your visits (or future visits) to other slavery-related sites?
38. What do visits to slavery-related sites do to you personally? And the ABG?
39. How do you think a visit to a slavery-related site can particularly impact African Americans?
40. Do you participate in discussions about slavery? At home, school, seminars? Why? Why not?
41. How important is it for you to engage in these activities?
42. How relevant is the history of slavery to your everyday lives?
43. Has any visit to slavery-related sites (including the ABG) influenced this importance?

Questions added later on during fieldwork:

44. Why is it important for you to volunteer?
45. Have you volunteered at other sites?
46. What does it mean for you to be African American?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Experiences of African American visitors to the African Burial Ground National Monument

You have been asked to participate in a research study examining the experiences of African American visitors to the African Burial Ground National Monument (AFBG). You were selected to be a possible participant because you fit the study criteria. A minimum number of 25 people will be asked to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of African American visitors to Black heritage sites like the AFBG and the impacts of these visits on their lives. The study is part of a dissertation work for Linda Lelo (see contact information below). If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to participate in an interview about your experiences at the AFBG. If you do not want to be audio recorded you are still welcome to participate. The interview will last from one to two hours. There are minimal risks associated with this study, but you could possibly feel uncomfortable answering some questions related to slavery, racism, and discrimination. The only benefit may be that you enjoy sharing your experiences and talking about this topic.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Your name will only be used if you provide permission by signing below. If you do not wish to be identified, any information used in publications or displays will not identify you. Audio recordings and interview notes will be stored securely and only Linda Lelo and Dr. Tazim Jamal will have access to the records. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future of current relations with Texas A&M University or the African Burial Ground National Monument. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without your relations with the University being affected. You can contact Linda Lelo at 806-252-1770 or lelolinda@tamu.edu, or Dr. Tazim Jamal at 979-845-6454 or tjamal@tamu.edu with any questions about this study. This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board - Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, you can contact the Institutional Review Board at (979)458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for you records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in the study.

_____ Yes I would like to be identified in written and audio publications of the information collected.

(initials)

I would like to be identified as _____

_____ No, I do not want to be identified in publications. I wish to remain anonymous.

(initials)

_____ I give the researchers permission to make an audio recording of the interview.

(initials)

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

TABLE OF PAST STUDIES

Slavery tourism articles (slavery-related sites in the USA)

Title/Author/Year	Major themes	Findings	Gaps and further needs	Methodology
Whitewashing plantations: the commodification of a slave-free antebellum south/ Butler/ 2001	Removal and marginalization of slavery in plantation museums 5 styles of plantation ownership	Black and white visitors come for different reasons (personal heritage, chill of the remembrance vs. opulence, beauty) For some people, “plantation” is synonymous to “slavery” so embedded in the tour even if not mentioned. But for other people it can have other meanings and connotations not associated with slavery (opulence, wealth...)	Need to look at the tourists	Textual analysis of brochures of over 100 plantations – frequency count of key words related to slavery
Slavery, contested heritage and thanatourism/ Dann and Seaton/ 2001	Omission of lives of the enslaved and the role they played. Only included in special on demand tours	“servant” for “slaves”: euphemism, incompleteness, and “distory” (Fjellman, 1992)	Need to look at the demand side: visitor’s interpretation of these narratives	
Black history becoming a star tourism attraction/ Somashekhar (Washington Post)/2005	Increase in demand for African American heritage sites. AA visitors want authentic portrayals of slavery as well as uplifting aspects of their history	black visitors want to learn the truth about black history, not just from a white perspective		

Holiday tour focuses on slaves/ Gebhardt (Washington Post)/2003	Holiday tours that focus on the lives of the enslaved at Clinton Plantation	“you can’t interpret the house without talking about the African Americans on the plantation”		
Louisiana town mixes tourism, slave history/McArdle (Globe correspondent)/2003	Adding a black perspective to the plantation’s annual event	Tourism helps maintain the plantation houses Louisiana attracts more black tourists than any other state The objective of new, inclusive, programs is to unite whites and blacks for a common goal and create dialogues		
Pulling the cotton over our eyes/Widdup (The Charleston City paper)/2000	“Built on the back of slaves, local plantations must address their dark history and present more than the romance of the Old South. Plantations miss to include the presence of the enslaved The plantations are a microcosm of what is happening in larger society	Plantations fail to acknowledge the contributions of the enslaved A separate new program gives a more inclusive version of the history of the area and the lives of the enslaved Many visitors feel cheated, like their experience lacked something Plantations are catering to where the income is coming from, not necessarily that they don’t want to talk about black history	Need to know about the tourists as customers and compare their needs and interests against what the plantation wants to educate them with	
Gloria and Anthony visit a plantation: History into heritage at “Laura: A Creole Plantation”/Roush anzamir and Kreshel/2001	Examination of the marketing efforts of Laura Plantation: how, as a site related to the history of slavery is transformed into a heritage tourism site	4 ways in which history becomes heritage: emphasizing genealogical continuity, connecting a little-known site with major event in US history, promoting Creole culture as particularly enigmatic, and highlighting women as owner/managers. Lived experiences are transformed into saleable commodity.		Textual analysis of written content

Supply and demand at tourist sites: A case study of plantations/ Butler/ 2003	Marketing research to determine if the demand at the site matched the supply found in Butler (2001).	Profile of the typical visitor to the site. If one thing could be changed, the typical visitor would like to hear more about slavery during the tour. Partial disconnect between what is generally supplied at tourism plantations and what the tourists are demanding	No reference to the emotional aspect of the visit. No reference to Black visitors	Self-administered survey in English and French based on pre-set topics Builds on Butler's (2001) work which looked at the supply side of tourism plantations
Factors associated with non-visitation by area to Congaree National Park, South Carolina/ Lawton and Weaver/ 2008	Examine the constraints for local residents to visit Congaree National Park	Non-visitors were more likely to be African Americans. 3 types of non-visitors: procrastinators, unawares, and multi-constrained. African Americans account for almost 1/2 of those who had never visited and only 13.2% of those who had visited	Does not explain the constraints that are specific to African Americans	Mail-out surveys

<p>Tales told on the tour: Mythic representations of slavery by docents at North Carolina plantation museums/ Modlin/ 2008</p>	<p>Slavery is often misrepresented on tours at plantation museum sites in North Carolina</p>	<p>Frustration on the part of some visitors who come with the expectation of hearing more about the plantations (and slavery) “slavery” is mentioned more during the tours than on the brochures Socially constructed myths used to discuss the enslaved guide visitors on how to look and understand the past, encouraging certain associations and meanings while discouraging others: meta-myths (broad blanket statements that deflect public attention away from the discussion of slavery) and production myths (specific and simple statements thrown into the discourse on slavery in a way that does not encourage the visitor to ask for further detail or clarification) Change could come through the greater inclusion of African Americans in the operation and administration of plantation sites 3 reasons why the inclusion might not be easy: African Americans are not a monolithic group and do have different voices; sites stakeholders may fear of dark narratives about slavery; and many African Americans want to forget the trauma of slavery</p>	<p>Only looked at the supply side</p>	<p>Content analysis and discourse analysis</p>
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<p>Imagining plantations: slavery, dominant narratives, and the foreign born/ Butler, Carter and Dwyer/ 2008</p>	<p>Evaluation of visitors' interest in slavery at Laura Plantation compared to other more dominant narratives commonly associated with promoting plantation history throughout the U.S. South</p>	<p>Identification of the typical tourist to Laura Plantation and his/her desire to learn about aspects of slavery 3.5% of the respondents were Black/African American. The average visitor to Laura is much more educated than the typical American Foreign born may be more open to learn about slavery because they do not feel guilt or shame like Americans may feel. The article argues that tourism plantations do not reflect a positive contribution and success of African Americans. Most African American visitors would visit sites with positive image, such as civil rights museums.</p>	<p>The study does not explain the specific aspects (positive? Negative?) of slavery that are sought after, not of interest, or missing.</p>	<p>Survey at the end of the visit that listed key themes developed by Butler (2001) Respondents are separated by race and country of origin</p>
<p>Debating race through the tourist plantation: analyzing a NYTimes conversation/ Montes and Butler/ 2008</p>	<p>This study illustrates how the very mention of tourist plantations and the wide range of feelings they evoke serve as an important springboard for a much broader discussion of race and race relations in America</p>	<p>Black and Whites in America view tourist plantations, and their representations, in a significantly different light (Shipler, 1997: the double, contradictory image between black and white views of tourist plantations). Racial groups should be viewed heterogeneously and studied that way to better understand their experiences at slavery sites</p>	<p>The study is not conducted on site, but is an analysis of online comments</p>	<p>Content analysis</p>

<p>Symbolic excavation and the artifact politics of remembering slavery in the American South: observations from Walterboro, South Carolina/ Alderman and Campbell/ 2008</p>	<p>Understanding how the Slave Relic Museum in Walterboro, through its owner curator and with the artifacts it uses, reconstructs and represents the history of slavery</p>	<p>Symbolic excavation of slavery requires that individuals and groups engage in the memory work of not only shaping what is said about the enslaved but ensuring that representations of a slave past can be seen, heard, and felt through the landscape. “Narrative possibilities” of the artifacts, using them to tell a larger story of the lives of the enslaved and encouraging visitors “to think more broadly about things and their meanings”. The museum evokes strong emotions, in part, because the curator allows visitors to touch and hold several of the relics. The site provides a more uplifting version of slavery, by a better understanding of the everyday lives of slaves and how they still managed to carve out an identity, even under the burdens of slavery</p>	<p>Need to record emotions and feelings experienced by visitors as they touch and hold the various artifacts</p>	<p>Interview, observations -</p>
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Slavery tourism articles (slavery-related sites outside the USA)

Title/Author/Year	Major themes	Findings	Gaps and further needs	Methodology
Performing family: cultural travel to Ghana's slave castles/ Richards/ 2005	The various and complex experiences of African American visitors to Ghana's slave castles	<p>African Americans engage in more heritage tourism in the US than other racial/ethnic group (Hayes, 1997 quoting TIA)</p> <p>Conflict between locals and visitors</p> <p>The trip is satisfying but also painful (emotional) and complex (relationship with locals)</p> <p>African American visitors reenact some aspects of the captives' experience</p> <p>Difference between "slave" and "captive"</p> <p>African American visitors as pilgrims who are not prepared for the intensity of emotions</p> <p>Pain also because of the absence of material that can only be imagined (invisibility → flow of imagination)</p> <p>AA visitors feel a thrill about finding family lineage</p> <p>Many search for connections to a culture where Blacks are not denigrated</p> <p>Multiple behaviors from AA visitors (pictures taking, smiling for the camera, stunned by the environment, weeping, trance)</p>		Observations, analysis of various groups' videos

<p>The varied colors of slave heritage in West Africa/ Teye and Timothy/ 2004</p>	<p>White American visitors to Elmina noted distinct sets of experiences that reflect deep emotional reactions to the past, present, and future. Three primary themes were identified in the entries of White visitors: shame and regret, sadness and disgust, and learn from the past (never again!)</p>	<p>African Americans in particular have become the primary market for Africa's expanding heritage tourism sector. White and other non-African races also have an interest in visiting West Africa for a variety of reasons, and most of their itineraries and attractions are the same as those for tourists of African descent. The roles of Whites cannot be ignored and may be equally critical to the success of slave heritage tourism development. Many African American visitors are given special tours and performances, such as the "Through the Door of No Return – The Return". Deliberate forgetting, or ignoring, of certain aspects of history because they are embarrassing, uncomfortable, or because broader society and its leadership desire to achieve some ideological objective, typically with a racist slant. Since the abolition of slavery in the 1800s, the subject has been an embarrassment, and the more politically powerful White majority has succeeded in keeping the Black past fairly well covered up.</p>		<p>Content analysis of visitors' guest book</p>
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<p>American children of the African diaspora: Journeys to the motherland/ Timothy and Teye/ 2004</p>	<p>Experiences of African American tourists at Elmina Castle</p>	<p>Roots tourism has the spiritual aspect of pilgrimage (“connection to one’s spiritual self”). Going to Africa is not simply a vacation but an emotional and spiritual journey of personal discovery unique to the black race. A type of pilgrimage aimed at reasserting, reaffirming, or perpetuating their heritage.</p> <p>Reasons people visit the land of the ancestors: nostalgia, identity, and relatives.</p> <p>Slavery sites appeal to African American travelers and educate white Americans about the role of slavery and African Americans in the nation’s history</p>		<p>Content analysis of guest book entries</p>
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Atrocity tourism/Holocaust

"Transcendence", "trauma", "healing", "mourning", "public memory", "collective memory", "forgiveness", "reconciliation"

Title/Author/Year	Major themes	Findings	Gaps and further needs	Methodology
<p>Horror and human tragedy revisited: the management of sites of atrocities for tourism/ Chapter 1. Introduction: Managing Atrocity for Tourism/ Ashworth & Hartmann/2005</p>	<p>The overlap between tourism and atrocity through the management of atrocity sites, relics, and memorials for tourism</p>	<p>To define an event as an atrocity it has to follow four fundamentals: existence of both human perpetrator and victim, deliberate actions, unusual seriousness, and memorability (sustaining collective memory by those with interest to do so) Increase in people's interest in history results in an increase in heritage consumption All heritage tourism is essentially "roots" tourism because tourists buy their own heritage wherever it is located Possible motivations for heritage tourism include self-understanding, identity, and thus raise the question "who am I?" The atrocity must itself be a major element in the tourism product consumed 3 motives and strategies: victims, perpetrators, & bystanders</p>		
<p>I still remember America: Senior African Americans talk about segregation/ Liberato, Fennell, & Jeffries/ 2008</p>		<p>During segregation, Black Southerners created entities as sources for collective empowerment to promote a sense of competence, self-respect, and solidarity in the face of beliefs in African American inferiority</p>		<p>Interviews Storytelling</p>

Black heritage

Title/Author/Year	Major themes	Findings	Gaps and further needs	Methodology
(Re) creating culture through tourism: Black heritage sites in New Jersey/ Harvey/ 2007	The regeneration of minority culture through tourism and the re-imaginering of place	The production and the transformation of meaning of culture Most significant sites for Blacks in the community have already been commemorated by the dominant group The “dark” past of the location have been removed from the current promotional brochures, thus many sites fail at regenerating culture		

<p>African Americans, history and museums: preserving African American history in the public arena/ Crew/ 1996</p>	<p>African American museums could generate greater self-confidence and pride among AAs and illustrate the appropriateness of black demand for equality Other general museums usually don't present an uplifting and positive picture African American museums should seek to involve the community even in the choice of exhibits and programs AA museums should also make an effort to hire AAs for the development of their interpretive programs</p>			
<p>(Re)covering the past , remembering trauma: the politics of commemoration at sites of atrocity/ Moore/ 2009</p>	<p>African American museums that grow out from within the community inherit the responsibility of the griot tradition as modern-day keepers of the culture</p>			

<p>Surrogation and the politics of remembering slavery in Savannah, Georgia (USA)/ Alderman/ 2009</p>	<p>The politics of remembering/forgetting through commemoration is controlled by those in power, but marginalized groups can challenge dominant narrations with sites of counter-memory</p>	<p>Emancipation Day ceremonies provide crucial forums for AAs to reflect, debate, and enact their own versions of history and plans for the future</p> <p>A growing number of historic sites are pursuing a more frank discussion of slavery, if not out of a sense of responsibility then certainly in response to the growing demand of tourists (including whites) for more authentic, less sanitized, and even tragic historical narratives</p> <p>AAs know all too well that the racism that grew out of the slave system continues to deny them their full measure of the American promise, particularly in the economic sphere</p> <p>Public remembrance of the enslaved is a struggle over language: how much/little to say? What to say? How to say?</p> <p>Slavery has 2 major narrative themes: physical and psychological imposition suffered by the enslaved and the slave resistance, creativity, and survival in the face of brutality</p> <p>AAs differ with each other over the most appropriate way to narrate slave heritage</p> <p>AAs place great emphasis on how slavery is depicted because of its close connection with discussions of race in America</p>		
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