

History, Memory, and Slavery at the College of Charleston, 1785-1810

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While much in Charleston has been preserved, a great deal has also been lost. To get beyond “Historic Charleston” and to begin to approach the Charles Town of history, one must not only restore the silent and passive buildings of the old city but also recapture the voices and actions of the people who once lived in them.

Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects*

On February 7, 2008, students, faculty, and other members of the Charleston community gathered to unveil a monument commemorating the African American burial ground upon which the College of Charleston’s Addlestone Library is built. The library is one of the newest and most impressive structures on campus, a colossal building (by Charleston standards) approximately the size of three football fields stacked on top of each other. During the construction of the new library, workers found human remains that proved to belong to African Americans. The construction site had been the location of African American cemeteries belonging to the Brown Fellowship Society, the Humane Brotherhood, Plymouth Congregational Church, and other organizations from 1794 to the 1930s. The Brown Fellowship Society, established in 1790, was the most prestigious league of free blacks in the city (Powers).

Though the commemoration was long overdue (the library opened in January 2005), the College must have not expected the turnout for the event to exceed fifty people. This was a huge miscalculation. By

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3:30, about half an hour before the scheduled starting time, the event had already become standing room only. Because the commemoration was not expected to become the Thursday afternoon hotspot, there were no microphones for the speakers, and many of the latecomers could not hear the commemorative remarks. The sheer number of those who attended the event showed that members of the Charleston community across all demographics are interested in investigating and memorializing this portion of Charleston's history, which has been overshadowed by the history of the city's white affluent residents. The Addlestone Library is one of many literal representations of this process of overshadowing that continues to exist today, even within the college community.

One would expect that the research of this untold history would naturally begin at an academic institution such as the College of Charleston. There has been a recent trend of investigation of the most fundamental portion of African American history, the institution of slavery, in universities across the nation. Brown University's Commission on Slavery and Justice is a superb model of such an investigation. The goal of this project was not only to examine the institution's relationship to slavery in the past, but also to connect this relationship with more contemporary issues involving social injustice and reparations. In 2006, the commission produced a report, *Slavery and Justice*, that exceeds a hundred pages, but only about a third of the publication discusses Brown University itself. Two other chapters consider how "other institutions and societies around the world [have] dealt with historical injustice and its legacies" (32). By recognizing this broader context, the Brown report seeks to cultivate global understanding.

In addition to Brown University, colleges such as the University of North Carolina, Emory, and Dartmouth have explored the connections between slavery and their own institutions. While the College of Charleston has a number of professors who are dedicated to promoting African American history and its Avery Research Center is an excellent source on the subject, it has not yet undergone a similar project. It is time that the College of Charleston pursues a critical examination of its own history involving the institution of slavery.

The voice of slaves in Charleston has been effectively suppressed,

but it is still possible to reconstruct a memory that has not been written. Luckily, although direct information often does not exist, it is possible to piece together a history of slavery at the College of Charleston through references in letters and personal papers of the trustees. The difficulties with this type of project, however, are vast. First, it is important to understand what daily life was like for both white and black 18th century Charlestonians. For whites, slavery was an integral and unremarkable part of ante-bellum life. The white elites who established and governed the College of Charleston relied on slave labor so extensively that they rarely troubled themselves to mention the fact. When they did refer to slaves or free blacks in correspondence or financial documents, they used the common title “Negro” in addition to “hand,” “laborer,” “servant,” and “boy” or “girl.” Thus, the ambiguity of terms often makes it difficult for historians today to discern whether a referenced black Charlestonian is a slave, a hired-out slave, or a free black.

There are few first-hand accounts of slave life in Charleston. There were some early schools established for slaves, but these schools were limited to religious education. Charleston slaveholders were interested in educating their slaves only to “civilize” them (Rogers 91). But while whites and blacks of 18th century Charleston were segregated by economics, social class, and level of autonomy, their lives intersected more than most elite Charlestonians would have liked to admit. Though it was rarely acknowledged, slaves greatly influenced the cuisine, language, art, and culture of the lowcountry, and knowledge about growing the plantation crops that made the white elite so affluent was certainly obtained from Africans (Olwell 50-51). The institution of slavery even influenced the design of the city. Slaves lived in the yards of their masters; clusters of domestic buildings were attached to great houses, and these physical arrangements still exist today (Rogers 71).

The Charleston elite made certain that slaves were kept on constant watch and enjoyed an extremely limited amount of freedom. It was customary for slaves in a task labor-based plantation system to be given their own land that they were permitted to cultivate if they had any free time. The less these slaves relied on their masters for food and clothing, the more profitable they were to the white elite. But

these masters also knew that it was dangerous to give their slaves too much freedom. Slave uprisings such as that on Santo Domingo and the Stono Rebellion (on the Stono plantation, which John Rutledge later owned) taught white Charlestonians to keep a close eye on all blacks, whether free or enslaved. Runaway slaves suffered harsh consequences, as did slaves suspected of inciting uprisings (usually punishable by death). Although there were free blacks in the city, they were required to wear a badge at all times (Greene 23). Any slaves sent to the city on errands or other missions had to have permission notes (Greene 15).

The slave-hire system in Charleston was particularly important to understanding the evidence found during this investigation. A large portion of slaves were also skilled artisans—bricklayers, cabinetmakers, tailors, shoemakers, and any number of other occupations. Charleston was very much in need of this type of labor, thus masters could make incredible profits by hiring out their slaves under the condition that the money earned was promptly returned to their masters. By law, under no circumstances were slaves allowed to earn their own money; this privilege was limited to free blacks only (Greene 15-33). This illustration of late 18th century Charleston life should aid in understanding the evidence found during this project. What follows is an admittedly imperfect effort to investigate the College of Charleston's involvement with slavery before the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The College of Charleston boasts to have been founded in 1770. While it is true that the first charter was written in this year, Bishop Robert Smith did not teach the first classes at the College until 1790. The first charter held that the president of the College must be a member of the Anglican Church, but in 1785 it was rewritten to allow for complete religious freedom. During the years before Bishop Smith became the president of the College, the trustees encountered many obstacles while founding the institution. The American Revolution delayed the process before 1785 and created further financial problems years later. Smith, president of the trustees from 1786 to 1789, finally offered in 1789 to lay the foundations of the College and enroll sixty students from another school he was administering at the time. He offered to furnish the materials and labor that would renovate the east

wing, a section of old Revolutionary barracks on the college grounds. In the meantime, Smith taught the first classes in his own house, which is still the president's house today. On October 11, 1790, the trustees announced that the building was finally completed and ready for students.

Under Bishop Smith, the College continued to evolve. On October 17, 1794, the first commencement was held, and six students received degrees. After this point, however, few students could be recruited, and the College remained unstable until the 1820s. Disinterest in a local college education was the result of the yellow fever epidemic, the idea that it was more fashionable to receive an education abroad, and continual problems with estate settlements. Smith had been running the College almost single-handedly. Undoubtedly, Smith's duties of the church began to occupy the majority of his time, and he could no longer provide the College with the support it needed. His resignation took effect January 1, 1798, and he left the College owing him \$14,000. Although Bishop Smith did not press for settlement at the time of his resignation, the executors of his estate certainly did after his death in 1801. The amount was constantly gaining interest, and as the College's debt to its founding father increased, the trustees were forced to divide the college property into four quadrants, break the land down into lots, and sell the lots on leases. They were able to keep only the southwestern quadrant, which contained the college building.

While this history does not say anything specific about the College's relationship to slavery, it does provide hints that suggest that the College likely would have benefited from unpaid labor. The first implication is the renovation of the east wing of the Revolutionary barracks, which became the first college building. It is necessary to investigate *who* actually built this structure, since there are no clear indications in either the trustee minutes or Easterby's history (1935). Furthermore, the boarding that was offered to students must have had some type of servants, whether unpaid or not, cleaning rooms and cooking meals. While the students were boarded at the parsonage, which really had no connection to the College other than Smith's involvement with the church, the trustee minutes and Easterby's history both mention that there were apartments in the college building that

faculty members frequently used. In this case, it is also likely that there would have been some sort of cleaning service or that the faculty members would have had their own servants, but there is no hard evidence of this in any college record. There is evidence, however, that slave labor was used for the renovation of the barracks.

Bishop Smith's personal ledger says more about the College's financial practice than any other source. According to the ledger, he paid for students' preparations for school, such as books, supplies, and always a fresh haircut and powder. Parents reimbursed these types of items strictly related to individual student expenses directly to Dr. Smith. Apparently, he also collected rent for the faculty members housed in the college apartments, when rent was due. For the most part, faculty members lived rent-free as long as they themselves kept the apartments in good repair. Furthermore, Smith paid the faculty members seemingly out of his pocket, sometimes months later than they were promised to be paid. It is difficult to say for sure whether he was receiving funds from the trustees for these expenses, but there are no indications in the trustee minutes of funds being transferred to the president. Unfortunately, Smith's ledger contains only expenses, not profits, and a college financial record from the time does not exist, so it is impossible to see to what extent the trustees actually reimbursed faculty salaries and other expenses. Easterby suggests that the majority of the \$14,000 that the trustees owed to Smith at the time of his resignation was the cost of the renovations of the barracks. This assumption is based on the fact that at the last minute, Daniel Cannon, the contractor, informed the trustees that Smith had suggested that they raise the roof four feet and add tile to the building. The trustees agreed, and later complained when the executors of Smith's estate attempted to retrieve their debt, stating that they had not intended to spend so much on the building. However, it is likely that while a large portion of the \$14,000 was building costs, it may have also included faculty salaries that the trustees had not reimbursed. Easterby ignores this detail in his history.

It is important to recognize Easterby's fallibility, and the above example has served to set the foundation for this idea. In his description of the building of the College, Easterby states, "Doctor Smith, on his part, was to furnish materials and pay the wages of bricklayers and

laborers, for the whole of which he was to receive a bond” (29). When one compares this statement with the trustee minutes, it is clear that Easterby has made an important assumption, that Smith was receiving a bond for the *wages* of laborers and for building materials. The trustee minutes record a slightly different account of what Dr. Smith was to provide: “the Revd Robert Smith had requested him to mention, that the bricks lime and workmen should be furnished by himself” (16). Easterby’s assumption here is also quite understandable, but it is valuable to examine the wording a little further. In the trustees’ account, bricklayers, lime, and laborers, are all listed as materials. There is no distinction between person and commodity here, suggesting that all are commodities. There is no mention of paying for wages in the trustee minutes, which suggests that the cost would be for labor only. There is a difference here; if there is a wage or salary involved, this indicates directly paying a person, but if labor were the cost, as far as 18th-century Charleston practice was concerned, this would be paid to the owner of the laborer. Indeed, in Smith’s ledger there is a clear account of expenses for this building that directly coincides with the dates in Easterby’s history and the trustee minutes. According to the ledger, Smith was hiring out his own slaves for the renovation of the building. He records, with variation from month to month, one “negro bricklayer” for 4 shillings per day, another for 3 shillings per day, and an additional two or three “laborers” for 2 shillings per day. It is highly unlikely, since he also records that these “negroes” had been transferred from his plantation account, that the workers were actually being paid a salary. Because the “negroes” are listed under his plantation account, they were clearly his slaves, and eighteenth century slave-hire laws forbade slaves to work for their own salary. Masters were allowed to hire their slaves out, but only under the condition that the master would receive the pay for the labor. Even though Smith never attaches the label “negro” to the laborers, they are probably unskilled slaves, because they are worth less than the skilled “negro bricklayers.” This is the only conclusive evidence I have found so far of the use of slaves on the College of Charleston campus.

The goal of this project is not only to illustrate a part of the College’s history that has previously gone unnoticed, but also to emphasize that Charleston’s economy was so dependent upon slavery

that without it there would not have been adequate financial support to establish the institution. Slavery is inextricably tied to the founding of the College of Charleston in ways that are even less noticeable than a recently unearthed ledger that explicitly states the use of slaves on the campus. While there are very scarce college records, the school was lucky enough to have an illustrious group of trustees that adequately demonstrate this point. Fortunately, these men were important enough to the history of Charleston (and of the United States) that records of their lives have been preserved and a wealth of information has been written about them. It is clear that in most cases, without the aid of slavery, these men would not have attained their status or wealth in society, and would not have been able to support the College in its earliest, founding days. Without a stable financial background rooted entirely in his plantation profits, Robert Smith himself would not have been able to spot the funds for the college building or pay the salaries of the faculty members. It is important to understand that the connection between the College of Charleston and slavery necessarily involves the personal lives and finances of early trustees, presidents, and faculty members.

By the time Robert Smith became president of the College of Charleston in 1789, he had already made a number of achievements that established him as a prominent figure in Charleston society. He was educated at Gonville and Caius College in Cambridge (Easterby 28). Upon relocating to South Carolina, he married Francis Pagett, who had considerable wealth (Smith Biography File), and when she died in 1771, he inherited all of it. In 1756, he was ordained a priest of the Anglican Church and in 1759 became a rector of St. Philip's Church. Smith's virtues were valued beyond his involvement in the Church—for example, during the siege of Charleston, he went to the lines as a common soldier. In 1789, he received his Doctor of Divinity from University of Pennsylvania, and in 1795 he became the first bishop of South Carolina (Easterby 28-29). He had an important role in founding the Society for the Relief of the Widows and Children of the Clergy of the Church of England and in the Province of South Carolina, of which there is evidence of frequent monetary contributions in his ledger (Smith Biography File). By any historical accounts I have read, Bishop Smith does not have a flaw on his record.

Faculty, students, trustees, and members of the Charleston community seemed to concur that he was a wholly benevolent, charitable, and righteous human being.

Indeed, Smith was an exhaustingly busy man, contributing immensely to the Charleston community and more specifically to the College of Charleston. But while his ledger does tell us the extent of his charitable donations and involvement with the Church, it also contains plantation records, and at least one instance of purchasing advertising space in the *Gazette and Advertiser* for the retrieval of runaway slaves. There are numerous instances of slave purchases, especially towards the beginning of the record (the ledger runs from July 1788 to October 1801). The estate record produced by his executors contains an itemized list of his property and its value. Cited are two plantations, Brabant and Point Hope. For each, alongside property such as material goods and livestock, there is a list of each slave owned (by name) and his or her monetary value. At Brabant, for example, he has five mules worth £100, but in comparison, Ishmael and Nanny are worth £40 combined. Other slaves were clearly in better physical condition, however—Lucy and Rya at Point Hope were worth more than ten mules, £230 combined. The executors of Smith's estate reported approximately 103 slaves valued at £7,550 at Point Hope, and 79 at Brabant valued at £4,650, for a total of 182 slaves worth £12,200.

Smith also mentions particular slaves in his will when he states, “[I] hereby emancipate my two servants Tenah and Dorset, to each of whom I give ten pounds per an: payable quarterly with liberty to live on either of my plantations, and to receive provisions and clothes with my negroes.” One could argue that this is evidence of Smith's emotional investment in his slaves, and that he appears to have been a relatively benevolent slaveowner. While we may assume from his numerous donations to charity and other virtuous acts throughout his life that he was probably a comparatively humane slaveowner, this cannot serve to dismiss his involvement in the institution of slavery. On the contrary, it should be a clear example of the hypocrisy of slaveowning. It is difficult to understand how Bishop Smith would realize the basic human value of an African American and still enslave him. Of course, the aim of this evidence is not to make a moral

judgment, but to simply illustrate to what extent Smith must have relied on slave labor to be able to fund the construction of the College building and frequent out-of-pocket payment of teachers' salaries and miscellaneous expenses.

While Robert Smith did make the most significant impression on the College during its early years, the trustees cannot be completely ignored. Most of the early trustees were very active members of the Charleston community, and their importance in United States history largely overshadows the fact that many of them attended meetings rather infrequently. The College of Charleston's history portion of its web site mentions that, "Three were signers of the Declaration of Independence and another three were signers of the U.S. Constitution." (The signers of the Declaration were Edward Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, and Thomas Heyward, Jr. The signers of the Constitution were John Rutledge, Charles Pinckney, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney.) The Rutledge family was one of numerous influential families that had multiple members who served on the Board of Trustees. Brothers John, Edward, and Hugh were all at some point involved in the College, and while it seems that Hugh was probably the most important of the three to the College's history, I will focus here on John, since he was better known across the country. All three brothers were quite important, however, and were similar in their political involvement and landowning practices. The parents of these men were John Rutledge and Sarah Hext (Haw 3). According to historian James Haw, John followed his brother Andrew to South Carolina in the 1730s. Sarah was Andrew's 14-year-old stepdaughter, and she brought to the marriage two Charleston houses and two plantations. The union immediately established the Rutledges as a wealthy Charleston family.

John Rutledge, the eldest child in the family, became a prominent lawyer. A description of his personal achievements would itself span a few pages, so it will suffice to say that in addition to signing the Constitution, he was also the first president of South Carolina and for a few months served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. In South Carolina, because of the greatly disproportionate population, the constant fear of slave uprisings prevailed. As a prominent member of the General Assembly, Rutledge proposed banning the slave trade for

three years after January 1, 1766 to attempt to increase the proportion of white inhabitants to slaves and also to allow planters to pay back old debts before incurring new ones. Rutledge was quite wealthy, but throughout his lifetime exhausted his credit, and there are many accounts in correspondence and other such records of debts he owed. In 1771, for example, Henry Laurens noted that he had not paid £515 that he owed for two slaves. He was also a staunch Patriot, and on May 16, 1779, while Rutledge was in exile in Salisbury, NC, Prevost's army carried off a large number of slaves from his Stono Plantation, but Lincoln's army retrieved many of them. This plantation, along with over 180 slaves, was given to loyalist Malcom Brown in 1780. In 1781, the southern army was finally able to bring to him in Salisbury many of his slaves from Stono Plantation, "to some place where I may, perhaps, make a little by them" (145-6). During this time, he frequently used a slave named Antigua to deliver letters to Charleston, which was under British control. Rutledge had noted that Antigua had provided him with "very considerable information in the past," (156) and he promised the slave freedom for his work. Antigua was eventually captured, and his letters were published in the *Royal Gazette*; his actual fate is unknown. After the Revolution, of course, slaves were a very important part of the issue of property restoration, Rutledge's case included. Around 5,000 slaves had been captured in Charleston, and this is one of the reasons that the College had so much trouble finding funds after the war; the gentlemen of high society in Charleston had significant financial trouble after such a blow to their labor force.

With regard to Rutledge's legal affairs, there are a few anecdotes involving slaves in Haw's biography of John and Edward Rutledge, though there are likely more examples that have been ignored. In 1791, John Rutledge upheld a plaintiff's claim that falsely calling him a mulatto was considered slander, on the grounds that if the claim had been true, the man would have lost all civil rights and been subject to the laws pertaining to blacks. In another case, however, a slave woman had been hiring herself out by permission from her master, with the understanding that she would pay him a certain salary for her relative freedom. She earned enough money that she was able to save the excess and buy the freedom of a slave friend, named Sally. The master

argued that all of a slave's property belongs to the master who owns the slave, and in this case, the master would own not only the woman, but also the newly bought Sally. In this instance, Rutledge ruled in favor of the slave woman, noting that she had worked honestly and hard to free her friend.

In 1791, John Rutledge's son, John Rutledge, Jr., married Sarah Smith, the only daughter of Bishop Smith, and as a marriage gift, he gave his son Poplar Grove, a 665-acre plantation with 50 slaves. In 1792, both his mother and his wife died, his mental health declined, and he ceased attending Trustee meetings after 1793. Rutledge's financial affairs continued to worsen, and he was faced with impending bankruptcy, but an estimation of his property on October 1, 1791 included his own home with 15 slaves, two other houses, 29 town lots, 107,835 acres of land in South Carolina, 300 plantation slaves, and unpatented land warrants in Tennessee. He was able to help pass a law from 1787-1793 that would ban slave imports in hopes that landowners such as himself could alleviate debt. In 1792, he most certainly voted for an extended ban on the foreign slave trade and a permanent ban on importation from other states for fear that slaves from these places may be corrupt or rebellious. It is also worth noting that he fought hard at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 for state representation to be based upon wealth, and for slaves to count for much in this calculation of wealth, in order to preserve the power of lowcountry gentlemen. At the time, it was true that South Carolina's slave to white ratio was still dramatically disproportionate, and he feared that since slaves were only counted as a fraction of a person, this would hurt representation in the new government. The death of his wife, however, was truly traumatic for him, and from 1792 on many people doubted his sanity. In 1795, Rutledge attempted suicide by jumping into the Ashley River. He was saved by "a negro child" who alerted "some negroes on the Deck of a Vessel" (258). Although he violently opposed his rescue, it is quite ironic that a slave child saved him from death.

Dr. David Ramsay, College of Charleston Trustee from 1787 to his death in 1815, is an extremely important trustee to examine because he was the most well known historian of South Carolina during his time. Son-in-law of the famous slave trader Henry Laurens, Ramsay

published extensive historical accounts (many are multivolume works), including *History of South Carolina* spanning the years 1670-1808, *Universal History Americanised*, a book of world history from a newly-created American perspective, *History of the United States* from 1607-1808, *The Life of George Washington*, and *The History of the American Revolution*, among others. In addition, he has many unpublished manuscripts that have been preserved. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the *History of South Carolina* discusses slaves within the economy, statistical references to buying and selling slaves or ratios of the slave-to-white population in South Carolina, but there is nothing that could provide us with an account of their lives.

One of Ramsay's unpublished manuscripts might provide some personal insight into this conscious exclusion of slaves from his histories. Entitled "A Dissertation on the Manner of Acquiring Character and Privileges of a Citizen of the United States," (1802) Ramsay was inspired to write the essay after a dispute with a friend about what constitutes an American citizen. For the most part, this dispute centered on people who had left the country during the Revolution. Ramsay argued that upon return, these people could not possibly expect to become American citizens because they had not been present for the signing of the Declaration of Independence. He explains in detail why he asserts that this is true. While the essay is not specifically on the subject of slaves, there is one detail that says much about how he views blacks in America; he states quite bluntly during his description of citizenship, "There is also a great difference between citizens and inhabitants or residents. Any person living within a country or state is an inhabitant of it, or resident in it. Negroes are inhabitants but not citizens" (Ramsay 21). Later he reveals similar beliefs about Native Americans, but unfortunately, the manuscript does not offer any further explanation for why slaves or Native Americans should not be considered citizens of the United States. Although we know that this was the prevalent thought of the time, it would have been helpful to be able to cite the South Carolinian historian's more extensive personal point of view on this subject.

Ralph Izard was another trustee worth mentioning here. He became a trustee in 1785, was elected secretary of the trustees in 1786, and served as vice president of the trustees from 1796-1800. In 1797, he

was nominated Minister to Portugal, and thus spent an extensive period of time out of the country. According to the 1790 census, Izard was the second largest planter in South Carolina, owning 594 slaves distributed on eight plantations in three parishes, and 10 other slaves in Charleston (Sellers 26). The introduction to his published memoirs notes that later in his life he was seized with a “dreadful malady” (Deas xiii) that left one side of his body paralyzed. He lived for seven years after, during which a slave took exhaustive care of him. The slave (called a “servant” in the text) “received his freedom—as the reward of his faithful services” (Deas ix). During one of Izard’s long absences from the country before the Revolution, he left his plantations in the hands of Henry Laurens and Edward Rutledge, whom he corresponded with frequently. The bulk of his memoirs are correspondences among these three men, and throughout Izard frequently expresses concern for “clothing for our negroes, if our disputes with England continue” (Oct. 18, 1774). It seems that he did show actual concern for his slaves, as he would have no reason to obscure his true feelings in a personal letter. In the same letter, he states, “I beg that, before the non-importation takes place, you will be so good as to provide such a stock of negro cloth and blankets, that these poor people may not suffer.” Interestingly, Izard does refer to a slave as a person, and throughout his memoirs he repeatedly cites this problem and constantly asks if it has been resolved. He even suggests planting cotton to provide clothing for his slaves in a letter to Edward Rutledge dated November 15, 1774. Whether his slaves lacked so severely in adequate clothing that he was concerned for their ability to stay alive, or he was genuinely concerned with their comfort cannot be determined.

There are other people involved with the College that I have not been able to extensively research, but have found interesting pieces of evidence for their involvement in slaveowning. For example, it is important to mention that Miles Brewton, who offered £2,000 sterling in his will for the establishment of the College, was an important slave trader. On May 31, 1773, Brewton advertised the sale of 65 slaves in the *South Carolina Gazette and Advertiser*. In the same paper on September 27, 1773, he reports that he received 160 slaves Saturday from a ship called *The King George* (Sellers 131). These examples serve to further

exemplify how the slave trade was important to funding the College. It is difficult, however, to discern whether the Trustees were able to realize Brewton's donation, as they had considerable trouble obtaining estate funds.

This investigation has proven that there is a wealth of information that can be extrapolated about the involvement of slaves with the founding of institutions such as the College of Charleston, but it is important to question why such research has not already been done. There are many obstacles to reclaiming a true history of slavery in Charleston. Charleston's deep-seated connection with slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade should be visible to anyone with a basic knowledge of American history. Often, however, this connection is cleverly swept under the rug, especially by the tourism industry, which has for many years been the mainstay of the local economy. For the most part, the tourist-friendly view of Charleston includes love affairs, politics, and gossip of rich antebellum white Charlestonians. It is not as if the presence of slavery is completely ignored, but rather it is noted briefly in passing, without critical explication. These superficial investigations, meant more to entertain than to inform, overshadow the voices of African Americans of antebellum Charleston. An excellent example of this is the manual that tour guides must learn in order to receive a permit in Charleston. The dense, 600+ page study guide, *Information for Guides of Historic Charleston* (1985), contains extensive information on architecture and history, with vivid descriptions of Charleston's elite, their beautiful homes, and interesting historical details from their lives. A few of these anecdotes mention African Americans (such as the butler who invented she-crab soup), but such information is scarce. Instead, the study guide includes a separate section spanning about thirty pages that discusses African American history from 1670-1985. Thus, not only is the information on African American Charlestonians scarce; it is segregated from the "white" history.

One must understand that the influence of the tourism industry pervades popular images of Charleston's history. For example, even the historical pamphlet that the College of Charleston circulates is misleading. The College often boasts about its prestigious founders, signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

While this is certainly something to boast about, the pamphlet conveniently ignores the fact that the early trustees, regardless of whether they were founding fathers of our nation or were simply famous for being rich within the Charleston community, fully participated in and profited from the institution of slavery in order to gain their wealth. On another page of the pamphlet, however, the College prides itself with producing the graduate John Charles Fremont, who was “an outspoken opponent of slavery.” Additionally, the pamphlet lists important dates in the College’s history, such as the year that it was founded, the year that it became the first municipal college in the United States, and the year that women were first admitted. It fails to mention the year that the College began accepting African American students: 1967, three years after the Civil Rights Act was passed. Interestingly, it also mentions that the College became private in the 1950s, but fails to explain that this was to avoid forced integration of African American and white students. It is clear that at the College of Charleston, just as in the tourism industry, these unattractive historical details are cleverly ignored.

The question that remains is how, in the face of popular myths promoted by the tourism industry, can we successfully reclaim a history of slaves in Charleston? Effective models of historical reclamation such as South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which provided a place where previously oppressed South Africans could tell their stories and reclaim a history that would have never been written otherwise, are unfortunately useless to approaching the void of knowledge about slavery and the College of Charleston. Truth Commissions must be arranged while the victims still exist to tell their stories. Still, it is helpful to compare how Charleston has reconstructed its infamous slaveholding past with other instances of memory reconstruction, and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a useful comparison. Charleston has moved from slavery to emancipation to tourism, but has never fully attempted to reconcile itself to its history of injustice. South Africa’s black population has been able to effectively reconstruct its past through the TRC, while the tourist industry has minimized and segregated the history of African Americans in Charleston. We are left with a sanitized version of plantation history.

One concern with the TRC that can be applied to Charleston's (and the College's) situation is the difference between being overly sympathetic towards a group of oppressed people in place of truly reconciling the situation. Njabulo Ndebele, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Cape Town, sees the TRC as a "living example of people reinventing themselves through narrative" (27), but while this seems like a positive healing process, he also shows concern that with the TRC, the black population of South Africa will continue to be seen as the "suffering minority." Paying an increased amount of attention to the history of slavery in an extremely sympathetic way could bring about pity rather than true reconciliation. André Brink interprets the TRC as a "patchwork" to convey the fragmentary nature of memory. He validates the importance of the writer in reconstructing history, making the essential observation that "the past cannot be corrected by bringing to it the procedures and mechanics and mind-sets that originally produced our very perception of that past" (33). This importance of the writer in the reconstruction of history relates perfectly to this project. There has been nothing written thus far on the history of the College and its ties to slavery, but, in reality, there should be several extensive publications that allow multiple representations of the rewritten history. It is only through re-writing the history from a non-tourist perspective that we will be able to recreate a more realistic story of slavery in Charleston.

Another concern with re-writing history is that no matter how well we are able to reconcile slavery, our society contains irreparable racial internalizations. Ingrid de Kok believes that a suitable metaphor for the process of memory in South Africa is a "cracked heirloom," and that the task of memory is not to make whole but to reconstitute turbulence (58). Annie Coombes explains a similar idea when she discusses contradictions within re-writing history as proposed above, free of the past's discriminations. She notes that while viewing South Africa's history in terms of the racial constructions invented during apartheid shrouds the complexity of its history, it would be naïve to think that these discriminations have not been to some extent internalized. She also recognizes that these contradictions, the inability to view the past from a completely different perspective because of the complexity of today's remaining racial internalizations, are rather

healthy: “But it seems to me that if nothing else, the South African debates on history and heritage, on ‘truth’ and lies, and on memory and make-believe . . . demonstrate the health and vitality of a political culture of critique and contercritique” (5). This idea of the unavoidable internalization of racism most certainly applies to Charleston’s omission of African American heritage from popular histories, and while it would be counterproductive to use these racial constructions to re-write the past, they must at least be constantly taken into consideration.

Perhaps the observation that Coombes makes about the TRC that most directly applies to Charleston today is that these contested histories are not the interest of just an intellectual elite, but the larger public. The history of African Americans in Charleston, and especially its fascinating slave past, is a subject of broad interest in the Charleston community. This was proven at the memorial of the Brown Fellowship Society’s cemetery; students, history buffs, members of the African American community, members of today’s Charleston elite, and the average interested Charleston citizen were all present for the event. As Charleston’s public becomes increasingly more comfortable with its slaveholding past, finally attempting to reclaim its unwritten histories, the College of Charleston will continue to play an important role, and hopefully become a leader, in the ongoing investigation.

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