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## **Local Identity, National Memory, and Heritage Tourism: Creating a Sense of Place with Archaeology**

**By Paul A. Shackel  
University of Maryland**

**With the emerging field of heritage tourism, there is a continued need for research devoted to understanding the cultural characteristics of heritage, its importance in contemporary society, and its uses. Many communities struggle with their sense of place in an increasingly globalized world. Recovery, interpretation, and the celebration of the past are important for sustaining local identity and a sense of place. Local history can be compromised by the drive to create alternative pasts in order to cater to heritage tourism. Local communities' involvement is necessary with the development of heritage tourism activities, including having a say in the way their past is presented to the outside world. This form of inclusiveness needs a continuous dialogue between the various stakeholders as different ideas about the past can make the process contentious (Derry and Malloy 2003; Dongoske et al. 2000; Little 2002; Shackel and Chambers 2004; Swidler et al. 1997; Watkins 2001).**

**The heritage of peripheral groups is not always part of the story told of our national heritage. When looking at archaeological heritage, we not only need to interpret the dominant culture, but we also need to understand that racism, ethnocentrism, religious-ism, linguistic-ism, age-ism, able-ism, class-ism, sex-ism, and heterosexual-ism are all part of our past. I propose several elements that will help make archaeological heritage tourism a more inclusive endeavor at multi-ethnic sites. These are:**

- Critically analyze and expose racism in the past, and present and dismantle the structures of oppression where we can. We need to recognize race and provide a historical perspective of racism when telling the story.**
- Explore diversity in the past, and promote it in the present. We cannot dismantle racism if only like-minded people are participating in the project.**
- Build a multicultural organization. We need to explore and identify the dividing walls in the past and in the present. For us, the organization is the field of American Archaeology, and we hope that our efforts will help build diversity. The story is not complete without a variety of perspectives.**
- Create a color-conscious past rather than a color-blind past. By recognizing cultural and ethnic differences, we can provide a richer perspective of the past and the future.**

**By opening up a project to traditionally muted viewpoints, the relationship of archaeology to heritage tourism has made the discipline much more complicated. Archaeologists must navigate between their interests as scholars and professionals and the interests of many other stakeholders. It becomes even more difficult when archaeologists find that they must deal with several descent groups, each of which may have their own memories about the**

place. My recent work with a project in New Philadelphia, Illinois provides an example of some of the benefits and pitfalls while working with many stakeholders that support different views of the past. While all agree on the importance of the site, discussions about uses of the site for heritage tourism have sometimes become tense.

### *The Struggle in Heritage Tourism*

New Philadelphia is the earliest-known town that was founded and platted by an African American. The site is located about 25 miles west of the Mississippi River and developed as a small multiracial rural community beginning in 1836. In 1869, the railroad avoided the town by about a mile and the town soon began its decline. In 1885, some of the town was vacated and reverted to agricultural lands. A small multiracial community existed in the town until the 1920s (Figure 1). Today, nothing exists of the town except for a few foundations in a planted field and abundant memories. In 2002, Vibert White, then chair of African American Studies at the University of Illinois-Springfield (UI-S), invited Terry Martin of the Illinois State Museum (ISM) and me to help study the history of the place. This work moved forward with an archaeological survey (Gwaltney 2004) with financial support from UI-S and the New Philadelphia Association (NPA), a local nonprofit group established to celebrate the founding of the town. After two years of archaeological, historical, and oral history research, we applied for and were awarded a three-year NSF-REU grant. One of our goals was to recruit a diverse student body to work on the project so we could train them in scientific archaeological techniques. This teaching and learning experience was a tremendous success because of the support from the above-mentioned groups and the addition of Christopher Fennell of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC).



**Figure 1: A 1920s class in front of the one-room schoolhouse at New Philadelphia. The photograph is courtesy of the Pike County Historical Society.**

While we have not yet convinced the Archaeological Conservancy that the place is important and in need of their efforts for preservation, we hope that by raising the town's profile in the public consciousness, we can convince other organizations that it is worthy of protection. After one field season, we can now begin to make the archaeology part of the New Philadelphia story (<http://www.heritage.umd.edu/>; follow the links to New Philadelphia), contributing to the town's social and landscape histories. With our assistance, the community has taken the lead in nominating the site to the National Register of Historic Places because it is archaeologically significant. The former town has the potential to be an archaeological preserve with innovative forms of site interpretation.

While we are involved in the early stages to preserve New Philadelphia and make it part of our national memory, the various stakeholders have different ideas on how to interpret the place to outsiders. The NPA mostly consists of local community members, although descendant members are represented, and refers to the place as a multiracial community where everyone lived together peacefully. While we do not have evidence of overt violence during the town's period of significance (1836-1885), it is difficult to ignore the larger context of the condition of African Americans in the post-Civil War era. There are newspaper and oral accounts of KKK disturbances in the 1920s that chased black workers from a nearby road construction project. One informant told us that a nearby town was a "sundowner town," a place where African Americans were not welcome after sunset. Other members of the community prefer to only tell the story and honor the African American individual who founded the town. At the same time, a descendant and member of the NPA is quite clear about the stories of prejudice that his family endured while living in the town (<http://www.heritage.umd.edu/>; follow the links to New Philadelphia and oral histories).

The NPA is divided about reconstructing all or part of the town, while others do not believe it would be appropriate to "reconstruct" a village. While many of the descendants are anxious to preserve and protect this land for various reasons, one voice in the descendant community is objecting to the goals of the NPA because of fears that the place will become a tourist attraction. The descendant fears that any reconstruction by the NPA at or near the site would be a money-making venture that would be exploiting the founder's memory. The desires of the local and descendant communities for developing a heritage tourism site are truly varied.

Can a multivocal past be part of the heritage of New Philadelphia? Many times, a dominant group will allow alternative voices -- as long as they are not too radical. New Philadelphia is about the struggle over who controls the meaning of the place, and the goal of the archaeology team is to try to create a redistribution of power to allow for a real world multivocality. Access and inclusion are the archaeology team's and NPA's social responsibility in this process, and it is important that all communities be invited to participate in the discussion. Multivocality should not be seen as a free-for-all. Once the site is preserved, choices will be made as to which histories are represented. We are determined that the archaeologists' view of inclusiveness and time depth is part of the story.

**Discussions of race, diversity, and creating a color-conscious past are all important to the heritage of the place. It is important to be careful not to create a past that excludes the "other."**

### *Some Goals for Archaeology and Heritage Tourism*

**Preserving heritage is more than just freezing a moment in time. Heritage is an expression of what people think is important. Places on the landscape that are celebrated by heritage tourism mark who we are as a community and a nation. Places that are commemorated and become part of the heritage tourism industry may become part of a naturalized landscape. That is, they become reified and part of the national public memory. Therefore, our position as anthropologists is to take all voices into consideration, consult with the various stakeholders to be as inclusive as possible, and suggest avoiding reconstruction since we cannot accurately recreate the past built landscape. Rather, we want to suggest to the community that the archaeological information will contribute to a social history of the place. Negotiation with all of the communities involved needs to be continuous to ensure that all concerns are taken into consideration.**

**Academic institutions need to become more aware of the need for broader training to better manage archaeological resources in a heritage tourism context. Heritage tourism can have a tremendous impact on a community's history and economy. Discussion of heritage must deal with issues of sustainability in order to determine how best to utilize the resource for the enjoyment of future generations. Tourism can also change the local meaning of the place, as some histories are seen as having a broader appeal while other histories may be subverted. Community support and involvement in how the past is presented, as well as understanding the economic impact of the tourism industry, is necessary for any heritage tourism project. It is critical that this work be done in a sustainable manner that benefits the community while at the same time enhancing cross-cultural understanding.**

**Archaeologists involved in heritage tourism have found a need to rely on a variety of other anthropological skills while becoming immersed in the fastest-growing sector of the tourism industry. Archaeologists must work as collaborators and participants while working with communities and their heritage and tourism resources. Universities need to understand that training in an interdisciplinary approach is necessary to help create and develop sustainable heritage tourism. We now need training in skills like the determination of tourism carrying capacity, museum studies, environmental mediation, hospitality administration planning and project development, and the marketing of heritage resources (Chambers 2004; Smith et al. 2004).**

**When I looked at a recent AAA Guide and reviewed some of the new dissertation titles, I noticed that many of the top-ranked schools in the U.S. had a large proportion of students writing dissertations on topics common 20 years ago. Many dissertations are about the distribution of artifacts, subsistence and economy, exchange and distribution, production and exchange, settlement patterns, and the rise of complex societies. It is obvious that we are not training our students in applied topics, and issues like heritage tourism will be learned on the job. Many of the dissertations seem to lack any examination of**

**disenfranchised groups and agents of change. Acknowledging a multivocal past is necessary if newly trained Ph.D.s are to work successfully in heritage areas with the many stakeholders involved in creating interpretations of the past. It is a multicultural awareness of the present and the past that can make archaeology part of a socially relevant dialogue important to the development of heritage tourism.**

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