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The Archaeology of the Recent African American Past

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**The Archaeology of the Recent African American Past
February 27-28, 2009, Columbia, South Carolina**



The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology and the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Carolina will hold their first annual Post-Doctoral Archaeology Conference on February 27-28, 2009. The conference will focus on the archaeology of African American lives in the recent past. For this conference, the recent past signifies an emphasis on post-emancipation life -- or how African peoples experienced freedom -- in the United States.

Archaeological research on the African Diaspora has focused on the material identification of African identity, the archaeology of freedom at Maroon sites, and the archaeology of race and racism (e.g., Fennell 2007; Orser 1998; Orser and Skibo 2001). Studies of the Diaspora have become more global in scope (Ogundiran and Falola 2007; Havisser et al. 2006). Most of these studies have focused on enslavement (e.g., Ferguson 1992; Singleton 1995, 1999) whereas post-enslavement studies have tended to focus on tenancy (e.g., Brown 1994; Orser 1988; Wilkie 2000). Although the African Diaspora is a historic process that traces Africans through the slave trade to homes outside of Africa, many archaeologists have neglected the idea of the Diaspora as a modern identity with a historical and material context.

Archaeologists, with their focus on time and materiality, contribute to the study of places, sites and objects, whose creation we remember and commemorate, and whose form and character we continue to influence in our everyday lives. Because of these concerns archaeologists are increasingly interested in the recent or contemporary past (e.g., Bradley et al. 2004; Buchli and Lucas 2001; Schofield et al. 2002). The archaeology of the contemporary past found a place in the New Archaeology as a parallel effort to historical archaeology (e.g., Gould and Schiffer 1981). Building on this work, Buchli and Lucas (2001) argue that the archaeology of the contemporary past connects temporal proximity and materiality. Contemporary archaeology bridges the gap between past and present and between archaeologists and the societies we study. It also recasts the familiar as unfamiliar and helps individuals and communities cope with painful contradictions that otherwise would remain unarticulated. For these reasons, archaeologies of the recent past in the United States are a way to address the painful histories of Reconstruction and Jim Crow and the more

hopeful histories of the Civil Rights Movement and the building of Black neighborhoods and universities.

This conference, with its focus on the recent past, encourages collaboration and dialogue between archaeologists, historians, folklorists, and other scholars who are interested in the materiality of the post-enslavement African diaspora. We invite papers that consider, but are not limited to, what archaeology can tell us about the Civil Rights movement, Black intellectualism, African American towns, Jim Crow, and more recently, gentrification. How are the experiences of emancipation seen materially? What role do memory and oral history play in the archaeology of the recent past? How does the archaeology of the recent past combine archaeological research and public responsibility? What does the materiality of the recent past tell us about contemporary concerns?

The University of South Carolina Press will publish the conference proceedings as an edited volume. For more information, contact Jodi Barnes. The deadline for abstracts is October 15, 2008. Please email a 250 word abstract to JBarnes@mailbox.sc.edu.