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Living in a History Museum: Local Perspectives On Colonial Williamsburg

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies from The College of William and Mary

by

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INTRODUCTION

Recent efforts to designate Virginia’s Historical Triangle a World Heritage Site have made Colonial Williamsburg the subject of renewed public interest. Williamsburg tourism officials have emphasized the town's formative importance to the ideals of American democracy in an effort to promote it to the ranks of the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park (Antony and Parsons, 2010). While comparisons between the international significance of Colonial Williamsburg and the Acropolis seem to favor the latter, the town remains one of the most treasured historical landmarks in the United States. Since its reconstruction in the 1920s, Colonial Williamsburg has become the destination of over a million tourists annually. Within its three hundred one acres, the museum boasts eighty-eight restored buildings and over four hundred that have been reconstructed to recreate the eighteenth-century town (Greenspan, 2002). The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation also employs historical reenactors who transform the town into an interactive, living history museum. Shortly after its founding in 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt named Colonial Williamsburg's Duke of Gloucester street “the most historic avenue in all America,” and almost every president has toured the city since (Taylor, 2000). However, an attempt to evaluate the qualities of Colonial Williamsburg that may possess “outstanding universal value” has reinvigorated the debate over the historical interpretation at the museum (Antony and Parsons, 2010).

According to its mission statement, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation aims to “interpret the origins of the idea of America” (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2010) in a living history museum. However, given the modern political implications of
this topic, most academic literature is skeptical of the museum’s mix of entertainment and education. Although it has come a long way from its original aim to “develop in American citizens a deeper love for their native land” (Goodwin, 1930), critics suggest that the Foundation's emphasis on “the homes and buildings where men like Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Patrick Henry inspired the fight for independence” (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2010) tells a story of American history that privileges a few colonial elites. Even the Foundation's recent efforts to include African-Americans, women and members of the working class have not spared it from accusations of presenting “a Republican Disneyland” (Handler and Gable, 1997). Moreover, the use of costumed interpreters to teach history has been described as entertainment value at the expense of a critical understanding of history.

The interaction between historical interpretation in Colonial Williamsburg and the contemporary “idea of America” is literally played out in the modern town of Williamsburg. Considering the relationship between Colonial Williamsburg and Williamsburg locals begs two inseparable questions: How has the local community been affected by Colonial Williamsburg? How do the dynamics of the local community affect the portrayal of history in Colonial Williamsburg? On one hand the tourist industry created by Colonial Williamsburg is the greatest source of revenue in the town and has drastically affected its modern geography and social dynamic (Taylor, 2000). On the other hand, the evolving social dynamics of the town have also had an effect on the historiography of Colonial Williamsburg. For example, the construction of Colonial Williamsburg increased residential segregation in Greater Williamsburg. Additionally, the evolving relationship between blacks and whites in the town has been reflected in the
portrayal of slavery in Colonial Williamsburg. Just as historical interpretation in the museum has shaped the modern identity of Williamsburg residents, the modern identity of Williamsburg residents shapes their interpretation of history in the museum. Hence, the interconnectedness of Colonial Williamsburg with Greater Williamsburg makes an interesting case study for teasing out the relationship between the modern individual and his or position within a historical discourse. Furthermore, it provides an interesting examination of how the construction a living history museum devoted to the discourse of American heritage has created a unique local culture.

I have conducted in-depth interviews with ten locals that focus on perceptions of Colonial Williamsburg, specifically its controversial portrayal of slavery in the 18th century. Additionally, I have taken dialogue from these interviews to write a graphic novel that addresses some of these themes and how they interact with the local culture. I found in my research that although members of the Williamsburg community claim diverse social identities as southerners, blacks, whites, students, and retirees individuals with opposing political beliefs had very similar perspectives on history, race and Colonial Williamsburg. I believe that many of these people would not normally have a conversation with each other in which they could realize this. As a result, I have used fiction to create a kind of conversation about these issues and I have done my best to represent the different perspectives that I encountered.

A Note on History

Before reviewing the pertinent literature, I would like to briefly discuss some observations I have made about the study of history that have informed my study of
Williamsburg. The discipline of history is concerned with investigating physical objects and narratives in order to articulate an experience of the past. It seems almost trivial to note that we cannot use this evidence to create a complete and irrefutable image of what the past was actually like, since we cannot authentically experience the past in the present. However, it is useful for the modern historian to acknowledge the limitations of their sources as well as the extent to which modern prejudices may inform their interpretation of history. For example, the evolution of historical interpretation in Colonial Williamsburg demonstrates not only the discovery of new information, but also a relationship with the socio-political climate in which that interpretation was created.

Furthermore, our motivation for learning history reflects a belief that knowledge of the past has a certain useful quality to the understanding present. When conducting interviews, I came across the same two claims for why history was important from nearly everyone I interviewed. The first claim was that knowledge of the past is valuable because the subject’s personal identity is affected by the past:

1. “*History is worth knowing ‘cause you begin to understand why we feel certain ways about a lot of things, because, uh, we inherit that. You know, perspective is handed down from generation to generation.’*
2. “*The simple fact is a lot of children and adults need to know what happened back then. They need to know why some people act the way they do now because, you know, some of that transcends through families.*”
3. “*It’s part of who we are and we have to own it, no matter what the history is, good bad or ugly.*”
Secondly, the subjects claimed that knowledge of the past was critical for achieving a kind of progress in the future:

1. “You’re not moving forward unless you know where you came from, you know.”
2. “If we don’t know where we come from, we won’t know where we’re going.”
3. “That’s the reason you have history, you learn from the past blah blah blah.”
4. “History is the most exciting subject there is. What’s its all about? Us. It’s not about dull dates and dead people, it’s about who we are and where we came from and where we’re going.”

Both set of claims demonstrate that individuals perceive themselves as constructing and constructed by the discourse of history. Furthermore, both suggest that an individual’s desire to study the past is actually a desire to understand something in their modern social, political or cultural reality. Similarly, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's motto, “so that the future may learn from the past” (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2010), suggests that the museum reconstructs the past to yield some instructive message about contemporary American society. As such, I believe that Colonial Williamsburg attracts tourists by using the details of the colonial period to tell stories about the visitors themselves.

I make these observations to highlight an especially important concept that has motivated my research on Colonial Williamsburg, namely that it is impossible to separate our interest in the past with the ideological content of our interpretations. As such, it is necessary to acknowledge that telling stories about the colonial period always either legitimizes or challenges the structure of America’s current social order. Of course, even though historians cannot objectively investigate the past, they can have interpretations
that are just untrue. Historical claims can obviously be evaluated and discarded, since it is possible for historians to use faulty evidence or come to poorly reasoned conclusions. It is beyond the capacities of this researcher, however, to assess the rigor of historical interpretation in the museum or assess the museum in terms of its quixotic attempts at historical authenticity. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in what Colonial Williamsburg can tell us about modern ideologies, rather than the soundness of its interpretive claims. My perspective of history is therefore as a discourse where different groups struggle to have their social, political or cultural perspectives validated by the dominant narrative. There are countless stories one can tell about the colonial period and as a leading institution in teaching early American history, Colonial Williamsburg’s decisions as to what stories should be told help construct the dominant narrative of American history. Furthermore, as a living history museum, Colonial Williamsburg has a particular ability to link the past and present since the use of historical re-enactors makes the discourse of American history a literal discourse.

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Williamsburg is rich with historical and historiographical narratives. Scholars have performed extensive research on the history of Williamsburg during the colonial period, the history of the construction of Colonial Williamsburg, the historiography of Colonial Williamsburg, and finally the history of the Greater Williamsburg area. The amount of literature available seems to suggest an interest in history that may be culturally particular to this area. Believing that an awareness of these different kinds of
local histories is necessary in order to understand local perceptions of Colonial Williamsburg, I have endeavored to summarize the major points.

1. Colonial Williamsburg

“Through this Restoration, a shrine will be created that will serve to stimulate patriotism, that will develop in American citizens a deeper love for their native land as they come to understand the things that happened here, without which the foundations of the federal republic could not have been securely laid.” - Rev William Archer

Rutherfoord Goodwin

The historiographical narrative of Colonial Williamsburg

Despite Williamsburg's claim to play an important role in American independence, when the capitol of Virginia moved to Richmond after the Revolutionary war, the town largely faded into obscurity. However, Colonial Williamsburg's original advocate, Rev. W. A. R. Goodwin, envisioned “a shrine that would bear witness to the faith and the devotion and the sacrifice of the nation builders” (Goodwin, 1930). Noting that Williamsburg was “the only city celebrated in connection with pre-Revolutionary events that was capable of restoration,” Goodwin was able to secure the financial support of John D. Rockefeller in 1926 (Goodwin, 1930). Two years later, twin corporations were created to be responsible for the project: the Williamsburg Holding Corporation earned money and acquired property for Colonial Williamsburg Inc, which was devoted to

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1 Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Virginia's former capitol was Eastern State psychiatric hospital. The psychiatric hospital provided most of the jobs in the area and it was apparently said that the “500 Crazies” of the hospital supported the “500 Lazies” of the College and surrounding town (Greenspan, 2002).
cultural and educational work (Greenspan, 2002). Over the next decade, Goodwin
convinced his fellow residents that the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg would
bring both renown and economic prosperity to the area. By the end of 1934, fifty-nine
structures had been restored, ninety-one were reconstructed, and four hundred fifty eight
structures had been removed (Taylor, 2000).

Since the museum opened to the public in 1934, the presentation of history at
Colonial Williamsburg has reflected changes in America's political climate. Handler and
Gable (1997) have identified four major paradigms that have guided the museum's
historical interpretation. First was the “Colonial Revival” paradigm of the 1930s, which
reflected efforts to discover an indigenous American “folk” culture that had been
preserved from the technological advances of mass society. Miller (2006) suggests that
during this period Colonial Williamsburg employed the kind of populist rhetoric and that
reflected the search for a definitively American way of life and the use of history to
discover a shared public culture.² By World War II, the paradigm became more generally
patriotic, which continued throughout the Cold War. During World War II, enlisted men
from Fort Eustis were brought to town in truck convoys for programs in the Williamsburg
Theater and Colonial Williamsburg Reception Center to bolster their patriotic fervor
(Molineux, 2000). Colonial Williamsburg's infamous dramatization of the American
Revolution, *Williamsburg- The Story of a Patriot*, was filmed in 1957 and continues to
play today as a reminder of the organization's former patriotic tone (Greenspan, 2002).

² Harold Shurtleff, who headed the Department of Research and Record in the early days of the
Williamsburg restoration “one of the few opportunities I know of in this country for trying mass
education in history.” Furthermore, in 1937 he rejected “promoting the fame of the leaders” at the
expense of nine-tenths of what an able historian to-day thinks is necessary to the proper conception of
history.” (Carson, 1998)
The 1960s brought about a turn to a new social history in reaction to how the rights revolution changed American attitudes towards the past (Carson, 1998). During this time period, Colonial Williamsburg emphasized its broad appeal instead of a patriotic duty to consecrate the ideals of democratic government. In response to dwindling finances and attendance as well as the appointment of a new president in 1977, Colonial Williamsburg began to focus on a more complete picture of colonial life in southeastern Virginia. By the 1980s, Colonial Williamsburg was making strident efforts to represent slavery and other less palatable aspects of eighteenth-century life (Greenspan, 2002).

Handler and Gable (1997) suggest that this paradigm shift towards a “dirtier” history is perhaps best symbolized by the presence of horse manure in the streets of Colonial Williamsburg. The Foundation's effort to represent a broader perspective of social, economic and political life in the eighteenth-century reflected changes in the demographics of its visitors (Carson, 1998; Greenspan, 2002; Handler and Gable, 1997). Furthermore, it signaled the Foundation’s attempt to revise the view of Colonial Williamsburg as a kind of eighteenth-century amusement park rather than an educational facility. During that time period the Foundation's literature, most notably the 1977 report _Teaching History at Colonial Williamsburg: a Plan of Education_, expresses a mission to teach history as the modern product of an ever-changing historical sensibility. This transition to a more constructivist paradigm in the organization's literature on historical interpretation reflects its response to critics of its traditionally objectivist emphasis on the “accuracy” of its representation (Handler and Gable, 1997).

One of the most obvious manifestations of this new social history paradigm was Colonial Williamsburg’s early attempt to portray slavery in the colonial era. Until the
Foundation’s African American interpretations and presentation department was created in 1979, Colonial Williamsburg contained little evidence of the African-Americans who made up over half of the town’s population in the eighteenth century (Horton, 2006). At first, the Foundation employed six black interpreters to represent slaves. Later Colonial Williamsburg included performances about runaways, parenting and interracial relations in an attempt to represent colonial slavery (Janofsky, 1994). In 1989, the museum bought Carter’s Grove, an expansive James River plantation, and built replicas of slave quarters in order to focus on the lives of enslaved Africans in the colonial era (Horton, 2006).

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Colonial Williamsburg’s attempt to portray slavery was the highly controversial slave auction that was performed in 1994. In this forty-five minute presentation, four slaves were brought in period dress and bid on by white colonists and one free black man (Janofsky, 1994; Horton, 2006).

However, despite advances in the eighties and early nineties, it wasn't until 1998 that the organization underwent a major overhaul in order to focus on making the social history of the Williamsburg community the museum's primary interpretive theme (Carson, 1998). In 2007, the Foundation sold Carter's Grove, and due to the recession has continued to consolidate its educational mission. Literature on the organization usually notes its continuing effort to include the lives of the working class, women's roles and slavery in its interpretation of the past despite its increasing emphasis on retail (Greenspan, 2002; Miller, 2006).

**Colonial Williamsburg, its Critics and its Champions**
The aspects of Colonial Williamsburg that have attracted academic attention have varied with the museum’s historiography. Its architects have always endeavored to make Colonial Williamsburg as historically rigorous as possible,\(^3\) and the museum's claim of authenticity has attracted a fair amount of critical attention. Critics of museums in general, and of Colonial Williamsburg in particular, have long suggested that these institutions allow wealthy individuals, like the Rockefellers who funded the museum, to dominate the discourse of American history. Colonial Williamsburg has been especially targeted for ignoring the history of African-Americans and the material culture of everyday life. Various newspaper articles have hinted at Colonial Williamsburg's artifice (Ashenburg, 2000; Kelly, 2004; Gardner, 2010), including a review in the New York Times that suggested that the town was “more postmodern than colonial” (Rothstein, 2007). The common thread to these perceptions of Colonial Williamsburg is that they all characterize the museum as an inaccurate representation of the eighteenth-century colonial period. In other words, these criticisms suggest that the problem with Colonial Williamsburg is its failure at mimetic realism.

The ramifications of Colonial Williamsburg's historical incongruities have been thoroughly analyzed. Perhaps one of the earliest writings on Colonial Williamsburg was published by National Geographic in 1937 and written by W.A.R. Goodwin himself. Goodwin's emphasis on the Cinderella story that transformed “a forgotten tidal backwater” into a “fully restored and colonial gem” is accompanied by a number of

\(^3\) “Mr. Rockefeller was extremely anxious that the work should be done in accordance with historic verity. To this end research work was organized and research workers were sent to England and to France to study the records in the British foreign record office, in the libraries in the universities of England, and in the military offices and historic libraries of France” (Goodwin, 1930).
drawings and blueprints that detail the preservation effort (Goodwin, 1937). Miller (2006) suggests that this vision of Colonial Williamsburg simultaneously looks nostalgically back at America's past, as its preservation effort glorifies American progress and industry. Furthermore, critics have suggested that Colonial Williamsburg's patriotic ideology makes ideas, like the opportunity for every American citizen to achieve success, seem part of the country's very origin and therefore essential to the American social order. The research of Bruner (1994) on the historical site of New Salem, Illinois demonstrates how this characteristic may be shared by other living history museums. He hypothesizes that the tourist experience in New Salem has three different components. First, it allows tourists to consume nostalgia for a simpler bygone era while also celebrating American progress by emphasizing on how difficult everyday life was in the 1830s. Additionally, tourists at the New Salem site are celebrating the “traditional American values” of small-town America and how Abraham Lincoln’s success story embodies the American dream. The research of Handler and Gable (1997) confirms this pattern in Colonial Williamsburg, suggesting that narratives of nostalgia, progress and the American dream continue to persist despite the Foundation's goals to present its research as non-ideological and non-paradigm driven.

Other critics of Colonial Williamsburg attack the historiographical traditions that motivate its historical interpretation. In The Unreal America (1997), architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable laments the demolition of old properties in Colonial Williamsburg and admonishes the museum for its anachronistic color palette. Her most explosive prose suggests that restoration efforts, “paved the way for the new world order of Walt Disney Enterprises.” However, more importantly she discusses the act of historical preservation
itself, suggesting that “at best, preservation is a necessary but ambiguous effort; there is nothing tidy about it.” Her portrayal of history as “both charged and changed by the prism of passing time” such that “the past lives only as part of the present” reflects how the social critics of the 1970s regarded the museum. Her appeal to historicity suggests not only that the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg has certain historical inaccuracies, but also that it misrepresents the process of history making itself.

In their often-cited ethnographic study, Handler and Gable (1997) research the roles of professional historians, front-line interpreters, corporate officials, and service workers to explore the process of historical interpretation at Colonial Williamsburg. The authors' research is structured around the Foundation's recent attempts to incorporate the “new social history” of the 1970s into its interpretive program. Like Huxtable, Handler and Gable are interested in historical authenticity; but unlike other researchers, they note that Colonial Williamsburg's patrons are openly skeptical of both the museum's administration as well as the idea of historical authenticity itself.

An interesting aspect of this relationship is how the museum has adopted constructivist paradigms in a “post-authentic” age. Since the 1980s, the museum’s literature has emphasized the social construction of history, and Colonial Williamsburg’s attempt to make the visitor aware of the importance of historical perspective. However, according to their research, Handler and Gable find a serious gap between literature created by the organization's historians and the historical reenactors on the “front line” of the museum's interpretive work. Interpreters on the front line respond to visitor skepticism by emphasizing the attention to detail and “just the facts” employed by
researchers at the site. The museum's actual response to skepticism is thus to reassert authority based on its reconstruction of historical reality. Hence, the revisionist ambitions that were institutionalized in the 1980s do not prevent the museum from claiming authenticity based on the reconstruction of eighty-eight “original” buildings and rigorous attention to “the facts” (Handler and Gable, 1997). Furthermore, the museum's protection of its “authenticity” suggests that it uses this sense of authenticity to promote the quality of its tourist experience. However, the museum's emphasis on reality and accuracy misses Huxley's original point about the work of preservation itself.

A particularly misleading aspect of this objectivist position is evidence that reconstruction efforts in Colonial Williamsburg have been mostly motivated by an explicit pedagogical purpose rather than the material details of past physical environments (Carson, 1998; Chappell and Brown, 2004). Handler and Gable further suggest that Colonial Williamsburg's mimetic realism hides the interpretative work behind the making of history, and hence the political or cultural values that inform those interpretations. Moreover, the authors assert that the discrepancy between the literature produced by Colonial Williamsburg management and the work of historical reenactors demonstrates the problems of class divisions emphasized by the very social history the museum attempts to employ. It is interesting to note that in his study of New Salem, Bruner (1996) uses constructivist theories of culture to justify mimetic realism in living history museums. He suggests that since culture everywhere is an invention, the invented past of living history museums allows tourists to revivify certain enduring ideals relevant to their present and future. Hence, Colonial Williamsburg is a benign sign of a universal human tendency to construct culture. Handler and Gable (1996) respond to Bruner's idea
very critically, suggesting that Bruner employs constructivist insights to remain uncritical of how a representation of history reinforces dominant social paradigms.

Finally, some critics attack Colonial Williamsburg's process of representation itself, in particular the use of historical interpreters to convey a critical social history. In response to Handler and Gable, Carson (1998) argues that as far back as the 1940s, relevance and relativism were two guiding principles of interpretive planning in Colonial Williamsburg. However, the Foundation's early New York advisers argued that the museum should also make a calculated appeal to the feelings of its visitors (Carson, 1998). The criteria that the museum must make visitors “feel as well as comprehend” (Carson, 1998) history gets at the heart of the debate over historical interpretation in Colonial Williamsburg. The Foundation's emotional appeal causes critics to dismiss the museum as patriotic propaganda, and invokes a sentimentality that prompts the inevitable comparison with Disneyland. It is this appeal that causes visitors and critics to mistake the Foundation's attempt at education for entertainment. Even the reenactment of a slave auction of 1994, the organization's attempt at revisionist history, informs the public about slavery in an emotionally charged way. Criticism of Colonial Williamsburg’s effort to include African-American history remained similar to the original criticisms that the program attempted to overcome, namely visitors could misinterpret the museum’s dramatization of colonial life as entertainment (Horton, 2006).

Perhaps the most obvious and pervasive manifestation the Foundation's emotional appeal is its historical reenactors. Handler and Gable interpret the appeal of historical

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4 Salim Khafani, NAACP field coordinator, asserted that, “whenever entertainment is used to teach history there is the possibility for error of insensitivity and historical inaccuracy” (Horton, 2006).
reenactment in Colonial Williamsburg as the reflection of a good marketing strategy that responds to consumer preference. The author’s critique of historical reenactment is very similar to the theoretical basis of Bertolt Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, in that the authors suggest that it does not provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the stage. The use of reenactors to create an illusion of mimetic realism prevents the audience from achieving a critical distance, which further obscures the assumptions that construct Colonial Williamsburg's historical interpretation.

The failure of Colonial Williamsburg to teach a critical history is often attributed to the mechanics of the organization itself, namely its goal of providing both an educational and recreational tourist experience. In *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place and the Traveler* (2010), Wearing, Stephenson, and Young note that most tourist studies locate the purpose of tourism as either escapist and recreational, or as a means for self-development and education. Colonial Williamsburg is therefore a particularly interesting tourist destination because of its emphasis on both education and entertainment. Although the hospitality and research oriented sides of the company are separate, the Foundation's desire to make visitors “feel as well as comprehend” history indicates how entwined education and entertainment are in Colonial Williamsburg. Hence, the mission of the museum cannot be described as merely educational, but education through entertainment. Also, research at Colonial Williamsburg is mostly funded by the revenue generated from its recreational facilities (Miller, 2006). The organization's need to generate revenue from the popularity of its educational component provides a very real economic incentive for telling a particular, sanitized version of history that appeals to consumer preference. Notably, Handler and Gable (1997) found that even when employees admitted that
historical reenactment might affect Colonial Williamsburg’s educational mission, they saw this as a necessary concession.

Most critical analysis of Colonial Williamsburg involves its identity as a simulacrum, or an imitation of its creator’s idea of an eighteenth century town. Furthermore, different understandings of the museum can be organized according to cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard’s categorization of simulacra. Baudrillard (1988) proposes the successive phases of the simulacrum: firstly, the image is the reflection of a profound reality; secondly, it masks and denatures a profound reality; thirdly, it masks the absence of a profound reality; and finally, it has no relation to reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum. In the case of Colonial Williamsburg, the Foundation has presented the museum as merely a reflection of an eighteenth-century town and therefore a first-order simulacrum. However, historians or other researchers may view it as an inaccurate reflection that lacks historical rigor and is subject to the middle class sensibilities of its tourists, or a second-order simulacrum (Brown and Chappell, 2006; Greenspan, 2009; Huxtable, 1997). Theoreticians treat Colonial Williamsburg as a third-order simulacrum like Baudrillard's Disneyland: its performance of certain ideologies masks the fact that these ideologies –the American dream, historical progress or a homogenous American heritage –don't reflect reality (Huxtable, 1997; Handler and Gable, 1997).

On the other hand, supporters of Colonial Williamsburg argue that the Foundation does good work inspiring an interest in history. Carson (1998) makes the most compelling case, and he is supported by a number of newspaper articles (Ashenburg,
defending historical reenactment in the service of public history. His argument depends on the fact that Colonial Williamsburg as an organization is tasked with presenting historical knowledge to a general public audience. The museum is not oriented towards an audience that has spent the past four years mulling over how certain historiographical narratives have privileged a ruling class. In order for tourists to critically analyze the ideological motivations of a certain narrative, they must first encounter that narrative. Carson argues that Colonial Williamsburg's mission is primarily to inspire an interest in American history.

This perspective suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of why tourists visit the museum. Wearing, Stephenson, and Young (2010) suggest that tourist spaces are formed at the intersection of context and imagination, and that travelers make sense of their experiences at this intersection in the traveled space. Thus the spaces of tourism act as a 'thirdspace'; not being either real or imagined, but as simultaneously real and imagined. These perspectives suggest that despite the rhetoric of Colonial Williamsburg's employees, the modern tourist does not expect the reconstructed town to be “authentic.” Handler and Gable (1997) found that patrons of Colonial Williamsburg did not expect the museum to be educational as much as entertaining, due to its proximity to Bush Gardens and other commercial establishments. However, while there is extensive research on meaning-making in Colonial Williamsburg, there is less research on how tourists respond to this meaning. The most information available is a survey of the tourist experiences of journalists and academics, who are often predisposed to a critical perspective.
2. History of race relations within the Williamsburg Community

Williamsburg has a diverse number of social groups that make it alternately a tourist destination, college town and small southern city. According to the recent Census, 79.8% of Williamsburg's residents are white, 13.1% are black and 4.9% are Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Also, according to the Virginia Employment Commission (2010), 48% of Williamsburg residents are age 15 to 24, presumably students at the College of William and Mary. However, in the original 1790 census, the town was recorded as 49% white and 51% black (Williamsburg Documentary Project, 2010). According to the literature available on local history, this change in the town’s social dynamic is largely attributable to the construction of Colonial Williamsburg.

Before the Reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg

Although the use of chattel slavery hadn't been practiced or legislated in Britain or its colonies when Africans first arrived in Virginia in 1619, by the end of the seventeenth century, enslaved Africans had quickly replaced indentured servants as the preferred work force. By the mid-eighteenth century, Africans and their descendants made up 40% of Virginia's population and the majority living in the Chesapeake region (Morgan, 1998). Although slaves had little control over where they lived or with whom, they often left their owners' property without permission to visit with friends and loved ones. Also, by 1790, forty-six free blacks lived in Williamsburg and 521 lived in the surrounding area (Matthews, 2000).
Matthews (2000) emphasizes how the American Revolution was a period of great paradox: while white Americans proclaimed their independence and asserted their “inalienable rights,” more than twenty percent of the total colonial population and over half the Williamsburg population was enslaved. Furthermore, the Dunmore proclamation offered freedom to the slaves of patriot sympathizers and Washington initially refused to allow blacks to serve in the Continental Army. During the course of the war it is estimated that one out of six African Americans tried to escape slavery with perhaps 15,000 joining British forces compared to the 5,000 who fought with the colonists (Mathews, 2000).

African-American individuals did not play a prominent role in Virginian politics until after the Reconstruction. In 1860, blacks continued to outnumber whites 864 to 742 in Williamsburg; 121 of which were free blacks. During Reconstruction, more than sixty percent of registered voters in Williamsburg and James City and York counties were African-American and Republicans kept a grip on Virginia politics for nearly two decades with the help of black voters. One black person from Williamsburg, Daniel M. Norton, was a delegate to the Virginia constitutional convention of 1868. This constitution enfranchised black men in the state and called for a “uniform system of public free schools and for its gradual equal and full introduction into all the counties of the state by year 1876” (Nicolls, 1990). Norton served several years as a state delegate and senator and similarly Reverend John M. Dawson, pastor of First Baptist church, was elected to the state senate to represent the district comprised of Charles City, James City, and...
York, Warwick and Elizabeth City (Rowe, 2000). Samuel Harris, a black entrepreneur and real-estate investor began a six-year term on the Williamsburg School Board in 1883 and also supplied anthracite coal and wood to the schools.

Another benefit of the Reconstruction was that it established a public school system supported by state and local taxes. In 1871, the Williamsburg school board appointed James W. Edloe as its first teacher for African-Americans and in 1874 the school board hired Miss M. W. Bright as his assistant teacher. At first, the salaries were distributed equally among Edloe and the two teachers appointed for the white school; but within a year, white teachers received double the salary of their black counterparts (Morgan, 1985). When public education first came to Williamsburg in 1871, the school board rented spaces in private homes or other buildings for either black or white students. In 1873 the school board leased the colonial Governor's Palace for the white school and after twelve years, the building designated School No. 2 was constructed for black students. Although in the 1870s there had been relatively few educated African Americans in Virginia to fill teaching positions in local schools, by 1890 there were nearly as many black teachers as white in Williamsburg and James City County (Rowe, 2000).

Before the turn of the century, the black community had formed the Williamsburg School Improvement League (WSI) which provided funds for school books and other equipment, busing and rental fees when additional space was needed. With significant funding from the WSI, Williamsburg's first African American High School, the James City County Training School, finally opened in 1924 (Rowe, 2000). The ability of the
African-American community to financially support itself suggests a strong community identity that accompanied the Reconstruction era. When Carter G. Woodson pioneered "Negro History Week" in 1926, Williamsburg residents immediately celebrated it. The James City County Training School was a venue for orations, musical concerts, and plays in which black students portrayed scenes and personalities from African-American life and history. Although the Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal facilities for whites and blacks were constitutional in 1896, by 1931 the operating expenses for the James City County Training School and the new, white Matthew Whaley School stood at about $1,500 and $5,470 respectively (Rowe, 2000). However, even without state funding the African-American community continued to be able to raise enough money to support its public schools (Morgan, 1985).

Black owned businesses also played an important role in nineteenth-century Williamsburg and several were patronized by both races. Of particular importance was Samuel Harris's “Cheap Store” on Duke of Glouster Street, which served both white and black citizens due to its vast assortment of goods (Oxrieder, 1998). As one 1897 observer reported “Samuel Harris, the well-known merchant of Williamsburg, Virginia, does probably the largest business of its kind of any colored man in the United States” (Rowe, 2000). In 1902, when a business license was based on total sales, Harris had the most expensive license, $203, compared to most of the licenses in Williamsburg, which cost $5 or less (Oxrieder, 1998; Rowe, 2000). Otherwise, he invested heavily in real estate and had properties on Duke of Glouster, Francis Nicholson, England, Nassau, Waller and York Street. In Lorent Schweninger's *black Property Owners in the South*, Samuel Harris
is listed as one of four black Virginians with an estimated real estate of more than $100,000 (Oxrieder, 1998).

Local historians often evoke Samuel Harris's financial success to demonstrate race relations in Williamsburg during the late nineteenth-century (Morgan, 1985; Oxrieder, 1998, Ellis, 2000; Rowe, 2000). Although more commonly, black men worked in white private homes, at the College of William and Mary or Eastern State hospital, Samuel Harris is an astonishing example of a black entrepreneur that quickly attained financial success after the Reconstruction (Rowe, 2000) and was respected by members of both the black and white communities. In fact, in 1889 Benjamin S. Ewell, president of the College of William and Mary borrowed money from Samuel Harris in order to restart the College of William and Mary (Oxrieder, 1998). A few years later, Virginia Gazette writer W.C. Johnston noted Harris was a “great benefactor to the community. His example of thrift and enterprise might well be imitated by others who have the means” (Oxrieder, 1998). However, when Colonial Williamsburg was built, all traces of Harris’s store were removed. The story of Samuel Harris is an example of history important to the local African-American community's identity that has been affected by the reconstruction of Colonial Williamsburg.

The Construction of Colonial Williamsburg

Before the construction of Colonial Williamsburg, a number of African-American and white households lived in close proximity along Duke of Glouster, York, Prince George, Henry, Francis, and Nassau streets. However, African-Americans were not included at the Williamsburg town meeting in 1928, where white citizens voted in favor
of Goodwin's project (Ellis, 2000). Relocating displaced residents, black and white, established racially segregated residential areas along lines unknown before the construction. Blacks were funneled into specific areas northeast of town on Scotland Street, south of Francis Street, or in the vicinity of Nicholson and Botetourt streets.

According to Rowe (2000), a group of white-painted houses, built in that part of town for some blacks who sold their properties to Colonial Williamsburg, came to be known as the “white city”. Black churches such as Mt. Ararat, Union Baptist and First Baptist Church also moved out of Colonial Williamsburg and were demolished. By the late 1930s, only 23% of Williamsburg's population was African-American (Foster, 1993).

According to Ellis (2000), many who lived in the historic area still have bitter memories about the circumstances surrounding their displacement. While many white families were allowed to stay, or given top dollar for their properties, the majority of black families received less for their property and in some cases were forced to move. Reverend L. L. Wales was asked to relocate Mt Ararat Baptist Church and after taking legal action successfully lobbied for a new church to be built and paid for by the Foundation (Ellis, 2000). Further displacement of African American communities, by eminent domain occurred during the World Wars. The community of Magruder, east of town, was displaced to make room for Camp Perry, and Cheatham Annex displaced black families along the York River and the Naval Weapons Station displaced black families (Ellis, 2000).

Ironically, the process of removing inappropriate buildings and the excavation of historical sites, many of them once black-owned, provided jobs for local blacks. Between
1927 and 1931, Lydia Fraiser Gardner was a guide at the George Wythe house, although she lost her job to a white woman and became a maid for the Foundation (Rowe, 2000). From 1939 to 1941, Hames Payne and his family lived in the upper floor of the kitchen building of the Wythe house; and at the behest of Colonial Williamsburg, the family wore colonial costumes when at home and tended a cow, a few chickens, and a garden on the grounds to give the house a more colonial look (Foster, 1993).

The relationship between the Rockefellers and Williamsburg's African-American community is complex and merits more research. Although John D. Rockefeller insisted from the outset of his financing the town's restoration that facilities operated by Colonial Williamsburg be integrated (Ellis, 2000), blacks were barred from Jamestown Island (Rowe, 2000). Furthermore, because Virginia Code required that the races by lodged separately, black tourists who could not find lodging in Colonial Williamsburg had very few options. According to Rockefeller's black chauffeur, James Hudson, the African-American community's apparent resentment against the Restoration was threefold. Firstly, it had caused many blacks to lose choice property locations without much opportunity to obtain desirable new locations. Secondly, as Williamsburg's largest employer, the Restoration had marginalized the black community by not taking more interest in more equal opportunities for all. Finally, by virtue of the Foundation's holding and position in the community, it should be held accountable by the City Council.

Regardless of his efforts in Colonial Williamsburg, Rockefeller publicly supported the qualitative improvement of black education and had proven his resolve by providing funding for Bruton Heights High School (Ellis, 2000). According to a local
paper, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller personally contributed $50,000 toward the proposed black school. Although white residents initially objected, local officials broke ground for the school in 1938 and about three hundred people, black and white, attended the dedication ceremony. Eventually, the building was open one night a week for group meetings, offered night classes for adults, and movie screenings in conjunction with the segregated Williamsburg Theater (Rowe, 2000).

Despite Rockefeller's mandate for racially integrated facilities in Colonial Williamsburg, the dislocation of Williamsburg residents caused by the museum's construction is responsible for the racial segregation that persists in Williamsburg's modern neighborhoods (Ellis, 2000). The black neighborhoods of Williamsburg during the last fifty years have been Highland Park, Braxton Court, and those along Ironbound, Strawberry Plains, and Longhill roads. Additionally, Ellis claims that much of Williamsburg is seen as elite with most of the communities of color lying on the outskirts of the town in the same areas they occupied in the fifties and sixties.

The town was relatively unmoved by the more radical aspects of the Civil Rights Era, although Martin Luther King Jr. visited Williamsburg's First Baptist Church in the early 1960s (Ellis, 2000). Racism in the community persisted, however: even in the seventies, Eugene Vorhies, an African-American businessman from Washington D.C., wrote a letter to Colonial Williamsburg complaining about the treatment he had received at a private Williamsburg guest house. Ellis claims that even though there has been a positive change in the interactions between blacks and whites in Williamsburg, neither of the two communities seems concerned by racial divisions that persist in the town. He
notes that some members lament the time when black children were taught by black teachers who had a vested interest in their success, and feel that the education offered by schools such as Burton Heights and James Weldon Johnson during segregation was superior.

Based on the available literature, it is difficult to determine whether Colonial Williamsburg has had a positive or negative effect on race relations in the town. I hope that a comparison of different perspectives may shed light on differences between how the black community viewed Colonial Williamsburg as an organization at its inception and how the black community views it now. A comparison between the perspectives of individuals who experienced segregation with those that have not may also help shed light why the portrayal of African American history in Colonial Williamsburg is such a controversial issue. Furthermore, given the impact of Colonial Williamsburg on the growth of the community, research on different local perspectives is helpful to understand the nuances of race relations in the town generally.

**METHODOLOGY**

I conducted ten interviews with members of different social groups that the greater Williamsburg community is known for: retirees, African-Americans and historical interpreters. Since the goal of this study is not to conduct a survey, I have not interviewed enough people to be able to draw any meaningful conclusions about certain demographics. Instead, I am using interviews to locate and evaluate different opinions about Colonial Williamsburg: its historical interpretation, its relationship to modern
politics, and its relationship with the local community. From these opinions I have constructed several narratives about Williamsburg that I have incorporated in the graphic novel. The text for my graphic novel is adapted as directly from the interviews as possible in order to capture the subjects’ distinctive speech patterns and remain truthful to their perspectives.

1. Subjects interviewed

Subject 1: 64-year-old white retired technical writer who moved to Williamsburg from Northern Virginia in 2000. He has been the editor of the Chesapeake Bay Writers newsletter for 15 years and is part of a group of local authors who hang out at Joe Muggs. He claims to be a Progressive and thinks there are too many Republicans in Williamsburg. I approached him for an interview as he was drinking coffee with his friends at Joe Muggs.

Subject 2: 29-year-old black employee of Books A Million. She was an English major at VCU and her mother just recently went back to school to receive a bachelor’s degree. She has lived in the area her whole life and went to Mathew Whaley, Williamsburg’s historically white elementary school. I approached her for an interview after I paid her for coffee.

Subject 3: 60-year-old black man who works at a laundromat and has lived in this area his whole life. He is in a relationship with a white woman and has 5 biracial grandkids. He is on disability and thinks Social Services is more receptive to “Mexicans.” He blames the recession on the election of too many Republicans. His father got emphysema
working in a coal factory near the current police station. I approached him for an 
interview when I was doing my laundry.

Subject 4: older white author who came to Williamsburg in 1957, worked as an 
interpreter in Colonial Williamsburg for about 4 years during the ‘60s and later worked in 
Jamestown. He is the son of an army colonel and has lived in the Caribbean, and South 
and Central America. Subject 1 recommended him as a good person to interview and 
gave me his contact information.

Subject 5: older white woman who worked for the House budget committee when Ronald 
Reagan became president and was one of the four people who wrote the budget for the 
United States Government. She was also one of the 20 people to rewrite the tax code in 
the ‘80s and the only member to move from the House to the Senate. She published her 
recollections on that process in her memoirs and has used them to give speeches. She 
came to Williamsburg in 2001 and is now a docent at Jamestown settlement museum. 
She is working on a novel about history focusing on a period between the 1688 into the 
1700s because she feels like people don’t know anything about history between 
Pocahontas and George Washington. She doesn’t think she’ll publish it but enjoys 
reading it to the Chesapeake Writers Group. I also got her contact information from 
Subject 1.

Subject 6: middle-aged white masseuse with 6 years of higher education. Her office is in 
the Lawson apartments building which used to be a funeral parlor. She worked as a psych 
nurse and then moved to Newport News from Philly in 1979. She is an enthusiastic
member of the Tea Party and listens to Conservative talk radio. I approached her for an interview when she was eating lunch outside my landlord’s office.

Subject 7: older white man who came to Williamsburg in 1958 to live with his father and with the exception of one year he’s been here ever since. He attended William and Mary shortly after moving here where he studied Classics. He gives tours at Jamestown and Yorktown and gave his 2,000th tour on the day of our conversation. He worked three and a half years for the Virginia Gazette and three and a half years for the Daily Press. He strongly identifies as Southern and wrote a book about Nat Turner. He defines himself as a radical centrist. I was given his contact information by Professor Pease.

Subject 8: black owner of property in Braxton Court in his 70s. He was born in Hampton because they didn’t have a hospital for black people in Williamsburg. His great grandfather owned a restaurant with Samuel Harris. Both his parents went to Hampton Institute and he left Williamsburg after he graduated from high school to attend Hampton Institute in 1956. He came back to Williamsburg 40 years later and was elected to city council. He has a motorcycle, which he bought when he was 69. I met him at the annual meeting of Williamsburg Historical Society, and looked up his contact information in the phone book.

Subject 9: 37-year-old white historical interpreter for Colonial Williamsburg. In his spare time he is the evil referee for pro-wrestling tournaments and does some acting. He has lived in Williamsburg for most of his life. I was given his contact information by a local professional wrestler that I met at Paul’s.
Subject 10: middle-aged black woman who moved to Williamsburg in 1987 from Jamaica. The shops and wall postings in Colonial Williamsburg remind her of Jamaica and sometimes she would work Christmases because it reminded her of home. She has been part of the reenactment of slave quarters in Carter’s Grove since its inception in 1989. After talking to several other African-American interpreters in Colonial Williamsburg, I approached her for an interview because she had worked in the organization for the longest period of time.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Overall, the subjects I interviewed were very forthcoming about their positive and negative experiences in Colonial Williamsburg and the greater Williamsburg area. Obviously my position as an interviewer affected the content of my interviews, but I believe it was mostly to my advantage. In some way, all of the people that I interviewed expressed a desire to communicate a kind of counter-narrative to what they thought were my pre-conceptions about a certain entity, event or idea. I think that my position as a non-threatening outsider made the subjects more inclined to tell me the kind of stories they wanted the outside world to know, which were generally stories they perceived to offer a different perspective to some dominant socio-historical narrative. As a result, I had people sharing opinions about race and politics that I did not share or that were very different from the perspectives of the other people interviewed. This gave me a wide variety of opinions to compare and I have outlined some of the major trends in the following sections.
1. The Oral History of Race Relations in Williamsburg

**During Segregation**

As people who have lived in Williamsburg since the time of segregation, subject 3, subject 7 and subject 8 provided the most information about the evolution of race relations in the town. Both subject 3 and subject 8 are older black men and subject 7 is an older white man. As I reviewed in the literature, Williamsburg blacks had a strong community identity during segregation. Both subject 3 and subject 8 remarked on this:

**Subject 3:** “And we had our own, had our own little club that we used to go out, you know go messing around, we had a barber shop. Back in the 40s, Williamsburg was all black: South Henry Street, Armistead Avenue, Braxton Court, Highland Park, it was all black.”

**Subject 8:** “We had a ball in this town. We had an absolute ball, so it was not a matter of feeling sorry for black people, oh no. We- there were a number of things that you could do and you really could enjoy yourself. Speaking of, where the center of activities from what I remember, were around three places, let’s just say for now. That was First Baptist church, Bruton Heights School and Log Cabin Beach.”

In terms of relations between blacks and whites, the recollections of subject 3, subject 7 and subject 8 all supported the idea that there were two predominant realities. On the one hand, both white and black children would often play together. Subject 7 drew a diagram illustrating how while their parents watched movies in the segregated local movie theatre, white and black kids would play together behind the theatre. Subject 3 had a memory to the same effect:
Subject 3: “when I was a kid, till I got 15, my mother worked for a judge in the county called Tom Tom and his grandson and me and granddaughter, we’d all play. If I didn’t go to their house they’d come to our house.”

Additionally, subject 7 recalled that both races patronized several local businesses. He noted that interaction between the two communities was apparent during the opening of an ice cream store:

Subject 8: “when they opened up, they had a carry out and when it first opened, the day it opened they had a line wrapped around, black and white and everybody knew each other, ok?”

Also, blacks were welcome in restaurants owned by Greek and Jewish immigrants:

Subject 8: “But some of the Greek and Jewish places we could go to, believe it or not. The Greeks, they had a little different perspective on things you know, their background.”

He also told me about how Samuel Harris, the wealthy local black entrepreneur that I had previously come across in my research owned a restaurant with his great grandfather:

Subject 8: “It’s sad that him and some others, my great grandfather included, what they did is they had a restaurant which the students loved. It was owned by blacks and run by whites... Yeah, that’s not in the history books. Now how could that have gone along, how could that happen? It happened, it just was under a time of segregation.

An especially interesting part of his testimony was how he maintained that segregation was not as important to businesses as the desire to make money:
Subject 8: “Now, the thing that was interesting is when my mother liked to shop, she liked to go (a store in) to Richmond...because it had, they had more and they treated black people like equals in the store of course, and the driving force was the color of money, ok? That was the case. You had stores here that treated you well, one of them was Casey’s. Casey’s, uh department store, Casey’s Department store is the building where Barnes and Nobles is now, ok? And they, they treated black people well and you know why: the green, they’d –there was no problem.”

In other words, prejudice against a customer based on their skin color was undermined by the universalizing “color of money.” However, the other reality was that segregation was hard for blacks in the South. Until the late sixties, blacks in Williamsburg could not attend the College of William and Mary:

Subject 8: “In 1956, I could not go to William and Mary, so that’s why I ended up at Hampton but that wasn’t- I didn’t go to Hampton because I couldn’t go to William and Mary, I never thought of going to William and Mary, never entertained a thought of ever going there. Mostly, and I’ll tell you this, is that I never went on William and Mary’s campus until I came back here several years ago.”

Even worse, subject 3 remembered a Ku Klux Klan rally in the neighboring York County:

Subject 3: “Yeah, in York County, had a rally. State trooper told us if we go across that line, over to that fence they could kill us and nothing we could say because it was private property. But they told us, once they hit the state highway, where everybody paid taxes, we could do anything we wanted. And we did. We broke up new Cadillacs and busted
windows outta everything. And somebody later was shot by them, while he was hunting, they didn’t kill him but they burnt him. Yeah, those were the days”

Furthermore, despite the fact that subjects 3 and 7 recalled that black and white children could play together, subject 3 remembered:

Subject 3: “and you couldn’t even look at a white girl. Your parents watched you, said ‘don’t look at no white kid.’”

But even though he couldn’t “even look at a white girl,” a white man might have impregnated one of his female ancestors:

Subject 3: “I dunno if my momma was black or not. I’m now 60 years old, but when I turned 60 they told me to ask questions, so I’m axing questions. Because back then, blacks, if they got if they got pregnant by a white man, they couldn’t say nothing.”

Subject 3 recalled that aspects of segregation were so bad that he wished it were possible for blacks to live without a white community all together:

Subject 3: “Then you had Senator Barry Goldwater, in the 1964 election. He said that if he won the presidency, he’d send all the blacks back to Africa…I voted three times to go (laughter). Yeah, I voted three times to go back.”

These two aspects of segregation in the South were perhaps best summarized in a personal story told by subject 7:

Subject 7: “My father’s family is from the south side of Virginia, which is down in Courton Southhampton County, I don’t know if you’re at all familiar with it, probably not, no reason you should be. Uh, very rural to this day uh, you ever hear of Nat Turner?”
Slave insurrection of 1831, lasted one day, changed history forever because it lead directly to the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves at least a half-century ahead of schedule. Um, but what it meant was in Southampton County, where it took place you would expect these really tense race relations to be persisting and there have been tense race relations, but you also have the phenomenon of people bending over backwards to make sure that never happened again. You know when I was growing up and we cousins would visit my grandparents down on the old bridge road, just outside of Courton, and uh, there were two realities. One reality I knew that when grandpaw went to town, and grandpaw was illiterate, grandpaw had no special social status. Believe me, grandpaw was po white. Um, if he had come across a black on the sidewalk, the black would have to get off the sidewalk to yield to the white man. That’s the way it was. But I used to go with grandpaw down to the river to go fishing around where the old bridge used to be and on the way back we’d stop off at the black folk’s house, leave off some fish, have a Coke. That was the reality. They were both poor, and they shared, and they were neighbors. That—that was the prevailing reality in the South, not the Ku Klux Klan and all that other kind of stuff. It was bad enough as it was, but it was a different reality in the South than in the North, uh and uh, Nat Turner is my specialty as a historian. My uncle was Nat Turner’s jailer and one of my dearest friends now is Nat Turner’s great great great grandson. That’s the sign of the times too.”

As with subject 8, he explained the motivation for positive relationships between blacks and whites in terms of the universalizing “color of money”:

Subject 7: “because you see, what you Northerners don’t realize, in the South after the war everybody was poor, really. And poor understands poor. Which meant that, uh even
with the problem with Jim Crow and everything white folk and black folk who had been poor basically still had a basic empathy when a lot of people in Northern societies didn’t. And we tended to live on the same roads too.”

Interestingly enough, subject 5, an older white woman, made this same point in regards to how capitalism allowed for more religious tolerance in 17th century Virginia:

Subject 5: “I think that’s another thing to remember about Virginia. It’s just colonial history is interesting, you know the English, uh, civil wars were religious wars and they were, um, they were mirrored in Colonial history everywhere except Virginia. You know people were killed for being part of the wrong religion in Massachusetts. In fact Massachusetts was so frankly bigoted that people left and set up other colonies, I mean Anne Hutchinson set up Connecticut, Roger Williams set up Rhode Island and uh, both of those colonies were set up on the basis that we will have religious tolerance and that’s in response to what was going on in Massachusetts. I mean, so we’re not talking small matters, these are really significant. But in Virginia the whole idea was, we’re here to make money and we will sell to whoever will buy at the proper price and we don’t care what their religion is. So, Virginia tolerated a Catholic colony next door in Maryland.”

From the perspectives I gathered, it appears that segregation in Williamsburg had two basic realities, which subject 8 generalized to include the entire South. Furthermore, subject 3 and subject 8 had different experiences of segregation, which have an impact on their feelings about Colonial Williamsburg.

*The Impact of Colonial Williamsburg*
In all, subject 8 claimed that, “segregation didn’t have that much of an effect on us here in Williamsburg as it did other places like Richmond, Norfolk, or Newport News.” His reasoning for this was the impact tourists in Colonial Williamsburg had on the community:

Subject 8: “Yes, there was a, there was a lot of discrimination, but we all just- let’s just say it wasn’t bothersome discrimination. And there’s a good, there’s a reason for that, and this is my reasoning. The reason had to do with Colonial Williamsburg, now you have to remember a few things: everything is based on money, make no mistake about it, all right. Money buys a lot of things. Colonial Williamsburg was not only in the business of history, but they’re in the business of money, they had to be ‘cause if they didn’t they would not have survived. Now think about it, back in those times who was Colonial Williamsburg’s customers? Was it the South: Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina? Noooo. They were what? Ohio, New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and if they came down and saw this outright segregation in Colonial Williamsburg, they’re not gonna come back here. So, it was really at a subdued level. Now it was there, and in restaurants outside uh, of uh Colonial Williamsburg, of course there was, I mean we couldn’t in some of the restaurants here that and other.”

However, as my previous research supports, Colonial Williamsburg also entrenched residential segregation that persists in Williamsburg today. Although both subject 3 and subject 8 were too young to experience this personally, both knew about how Colonial Williamsburg contributed to the loss of property owned by the Williamsburg black population:
Subject 8: “As a matter of fact Mr. Goodwin, Reverend Goodwin and others who were
perpetuators of that. If you read in the history books real deep you will find that he made
it a point of giving black families less for their property than he did white families. It’s
already chronicled, I’m not saying anything that’s a you know just –but it’s there. So
that’s what happened when you talk about Colonial Williamsburg, that’s what happened
when they started moving blacks out.”

Subject 8: “Highland Park, that’s when um, that’s got a sneaky history uh, which is one
that we didn’t know about as kids. Is uh, Colonial Williamsburg uh, started that. When
they did that was County property, York County and then York County didn’t want it and
Williamsburg took it and that’s why, and it’s literally across the tracks. And it’s uh, kept
that stigma all the while of across the tracks, ok. But now it’s coming up a little bit right,
‘cause now people have found out that’s where quote on quote some affordable housing
is, which you can translate that to other things. Now Colonial Williamsburg did that, then
literally moved them out.”

Subject 3 also noted other ways that the government took property away from black
people in the area. He alluded to the use of eminent domain to displace the traditionally
black community of Magruder in order to create Camp Perry:

Subject 3: “And over in York County, black people had the waterfront property coming
from New Kent, down to Camp Perry and the government went in, I don’t know whether
your momma (speaking to his wife) told me when and relocated people. Most of them
went to Grove, some settled in what you call Carter’s Neck”
Something that I hadn’t found in the literature was the loss of property to blacks in the 1970s. Subject 3 discussed how his relatives lost their property due to a redevelopment housing program in 1972:

Subject 3: “Most people when I came here have passed away. Then they put that, then they came with that... redevelopment housing program in ’72 where they took all the land from the black people down here. They paid them so much money for they land then they, then built a house with the money that they bought, gave to them, the money had to go back into the house that they were buying because they, you know, took all the old raggedy houses down. For instance, my grandma lived in Clayton’s Creek, Clayton’s well, Clayton’s bottom, where the fire station is? My grandma lived on that side.”

Subject 3: “And they gave him so much money for the house that he built, but which wasn’t enough money, so he had to make a payment on a house. They shoulda did a better job than they did in the future. Because a lot of black folks back then were not educated, weren’t educated. They had street sense, but not whatcha mighta called mathematical knowledge, that good. Some could count money some couldn’t, some couldn’t read, like my father. My father couldn’t read, he couldn’t read a lick, but he could tell you anything about the bible.”

When I mentioned the redevelopment housing program in the 1970s to subject 8, he remarked that in fact property had been taken away from blacks “under the guise of redevelopment”:

Subject 8: “He’s right, he’s 100% right. That was, as a matter of fact that’s a pretty uh, that sticks in my craw too because they took some of my grandmother’s property, they
took some of my property from the house, uh, where I am in Braxton Court and they did it on a condemnation type thing, which is something that would never happen now. And what happened is it transformed an area which included, I mean there’s a street there, they call it now Harriet Tubman? That was renamed it was Claves street then, so you want to, now there is a map that showed that in the municipal building... a map of old Williamsburg as portrayed by one of our old uh people, and it shows this area quite graphically, and it shows each and every house that was really taken away in the whole routine. The answer’s yes, he’s right.”

According to these testimonies, the relationship between Colonial Williamsburg and race relations during segregation is a complicated one. Although the museum reduced racial tension in the town, it also contributed to residential segregation and the economic disparity between blacks and whites in Williamsburg. From reviewing the literature, I found that the ways in which Colonial Williamsburg has impacted the racial geography of the town have been well documented. However, I had not previously considered the idea that Colonial Williamsburg’s Northern patrons caused unusually peaceful race relations in the town. To understand how the legacy of this dynamic has affected the town, I would like to examine the racial tension that persists in Williamsburg today.

**Continuing Racial Tension**

Subject 6, a middle-aged white woman from Philadelphia, advocated for “an honest discussion about racism”: 
Subject 6: “Um, I’m a person that just believes that it should be wide open. I don’t care if the truth hurts your feelings, you can’t deal with anything until you get it out there, you know... Personally I’m just one of those people that ‘get it out, it’s gonna fester,’ maybe it’s the medical in me that you gotta open a wound up before you heal, you gotta drain it, drain the infection.”

Furthermore, subject 6 made some arguments about how she perceives racial tension in Williamsburg and the United States today:

Subject 6: “Well I see changes in the black community in Williamsburg now. Um, they’re getting a little bit like the Northern black, where they’re getting a little more vocal and angry. But when I first came down here it really shocked me coming out of the northeast where the black citizen was just loaded with rage and frankly you just didn’t go any place where they were ‘cause they’d take a baseball bat and hit ya. There wouldn’t be any time to talk, um, the rage was palpable, when I came down here I was just surprised at how friendly the blacks were, it was such a breath of fresh air and uh, you know you could say hello or you could hold a door for somebody and they’d say thank you and it was just the way it should be.”

Subject 6: “I just would like to have the experience of walking in some place, where there was at least a, at least half of the place was black and not have the look come at me, like somehow I’m evil because my skin’s white. But I still get that everywhere I go. That’s not helpful you know?”

Interestingly, she made the same claim as subject 8, that the North has more racial tension than the South. Her depiction of racial tension implicates blacks are the primary
aggressors. Subject 3 complemented her observations with the parallel opposite perspective:

Subject 3: “You got all these white people, and you got all these blacks. You have some whites, that if they know ya, they’ll speak to ya. You have some whites that you can just walk by and say ‘hey,’ ‘hello,’ ‘good morning,’ they won’t open their mouth. They see you coming through a door and you close that door, they- some will hold the door for ya, some won’t. But every time I go into a place, I see a woman come in the door I open the door. But I, yeah I think Williamsburg has that problem and I do think it’s prejudice. I really do.”

Subject 3: “To me, to me now, I’m a be honest wicha, if you, and I witnessed this, a black man and you have authority over your resource, or you know, your Boss Man? I’ve seen this, and I’ve witnessed this, majority of people to me in Williamsburg now, and black people make up more than one eighth of them, lets put it that way one eighth of them, they still believe that white man mentality. white man gotta tell them something to do, black man can’t tell them nothing. And I witnessed that when I was a supervisor at Walmart.”

In particular, subject 3 highlights his experience with the continuing legacy of segregation:

Subject 3: “Williamsburg was terrible at one time. And it aint that great to me now.”

Subject 3: “And then we could go where everybody, where everybody else could go. But we still wasn’t treated equal. And right to this day we’re still not. In my book. My book is: they put the Mexicans ahead of us.”
When subjects 3 and 6 discussed why these racial tensions exist, they both cited slavery. Subject 6 felt that tensions exist because of the “rage” blacks feel over the enslavement of their ancestors. Although during the interview she acknowledged that slavery was unconscionable, she felt that it is unfair to expect her to feel guilty something that happened such a long time ago:

Subject 6: “Um, but that also goes for the blacks, they need to stop wining, ok. Because there are no slaves today and there haven’t been for quite a while. I personally never owned one, did you? So I don’t wanna hear it.”

Subject 6: “A. I didn’t do it, B. you weren’t there and it isn’t gonna help anybody. And I think we have to get rid of that before we can move forward, you know?”

Furthermore, subject 6 argued that is that if she is able to overcome her personal suffering, blacks should be able to overcome the suffering associated with their social identity.

Subject 6: “You know I started life as an orphan and bounced around from here to there and everywhere and it was an ugly life and it took me the better part of ten years of treatment to get over what was done to me in those places, so I can match sad tales.”

Subject 6: “I mean I look at my scenario as, it formed who I am today and it was horrendous. Things were done that shouldn’t be done to a dog, so it was very very difficult. I’ve researched the whole thing, found a whole family, and it’s a long ugly tale. But it doesn’t, it shapes who I am today but it doesn’t torment me, ok. I don’t use it as a weapon, um, it’s really not something that comes up except when I run into the scenario
where I hear blacks who are living pretty healthy today whining about what went on with their great great great grandfather, and I’m thinking if I can let go why can’t you?"

Subject 6: “It’s a cellular thing, it really is. A generational cellular, um, memory of some sort. I don’t know how you shake it, but coming out of my childhood I know you have to. You have to lay it to rest, you know you can’t carry that rage, all through your life because it just affects you in such a negative way, you know, and I do feel that I have that parallel.”

Subject 3, on the other hand, noted that blacks and whites have difficulty of getting over slavery, but claimed not to be personally affected by slavery:

Subject 3: “Things changed in the 60s and you know when segregation came in and it really wasn’t, wasn’t that subtle because blacks and whites still had this thing, you know what they did four, four hundred years ago to my people. And I tell people this, I’m trying to move on, what happened back four hundred years ago, we weren’t even think, we weren’t even thought of. We are glad to see that we are, you know, that we didn’t have to go through what they went through, but you have to look at Egypt, where people are slaves for two thousand years. And I tell you, you know, so I believe in that what happened four hundred years ago hasn’t affected me today, because my mother and daddy brought me up the right way. Do not judge a person by their color, but go on the first instinct, the first impression of a person. First impression, that’s what you go on.”

Subject 3’s claim to be unaffected by slavery suggests that he does not consider the racism he experiences today as part of slavery. Hence subject 6’s inability to understand why black people feel marginalized is the result of her confusing slavery itself
with the racism that is the legacy of that event. Additionally, when subject 7 talked about how we are “still paying” for the Civil War:

Subject 7: “disproportionately black, but that gets back to the legacy of Civil War again and that’s, we’re still paying for that war, we really are in the way our institutions have emerged, and the fact that so many people who have been left behind in poverty and illiteracy.”

He was not referring to slavery itself, but the way its legacy has affected the construction of our modern institutions. The enslavement of Africans by Europeans was not an isolated event that ended with the Emancipation proclamation because black people continue to experience the legacy of slavery today. Firstly, there remain institutionalized forms of racism within the American education and prison systems although a discussion thereof is beyond the bounds of this paper. Secondly, despite the presence of blacks who are able to attain wealth and social status in contemporary American society, there continues to be a history of oppression that is linked to that identity category. As with the difference between male and female, race has both a physical and ideological component. The act of identifying an individual as black indicates both their skin color as well as their position within a continuing socio-political narrative. Hence the animosity subject 6 feels from black people, is not the result of an isolated event that occurred hundreds of years ago, but a continuing legacy. Furthermore, it is possible for subject 6 to overcome her childhood trauma because she can avoid being physically identified by it. In contrast, it is impossible for a black person to hide their blackness and therefore the associated historical baggage. As subject 7 described:
Subject 7: “but if you understand how we got to where we are I’m not surprised some whites have these class distinctions or some blacks have these class distinctions in their mind, came by them honestly.”

Subject 7: “But a lot of racism in this country is just the residue of our history. Another 50 years and that won’t be there either.”

These conclusions affirm my initial observation about how history informs the contemporary social order. Despite the fact that equating an individual with a group of individuals who share a social identity is illogical it does hint at a useful parallel. Subject 6 was able overcome her childhood trauma by researching it. As she put it:

Subject 6: “You know, nobody can prevent ugliness in their life, just when you think you can you’ll get smacked in the face with something really horrendous that you have no power over. So the trick is more not to be so offended by something difficult coming along, but be challenged by ‘what can I do with this’ to make it more positive for me.”

By changing the narrative of black history from one of oppression to empowerment, we can change the cultural baggage that continues to create racial tension today. As a result, the interpretation of black history in Colonial Williamsburg is absolutely critical, not only to understanding but also overcoming racism in contemporary America. Even so, Colonial Williamsburg’s controversial portrayal of slavery, especially the estate auction that was first held in the 1990s, remains a divisive issue.

The Portrayal of Slavery in Colonial Williamsburg
The only two subjects who talked about experiencing racial tension in contemporary America were also the only two subjects who voiced reservations over whether Colonial Williamsburg should portray slavery:

Subject 3: “To me, they need to stop this slavery thing, you know. Or even stop telling the history of the slave thing.”

Subject 3: “I don’t think they should go back there, cause in, in life you move on. You move on. To me, when you show me how blacks were treated back in the days, to me you’re, you’re only angering the black man or the black woman. You put anger and hate in them. They need to do away with that part of it, completely, and move on. Do you want to know that somebody hung your granddaddy because he looked at a white woman?”

Subject 6: “I always worry about when they do a reenactment on, you know, what it was really like to sell a human being and I know they’ve done that in Williamsburg, it’s very controversial. The reason I think it’s a problem is because there’s too many people in the audience that run with it and go ‘see!’ ok we already knew this from the history books, but it’s being pulled into today...so it’s kinda like stirring the pot.”

Subject 6: “I think because of the way people react, and it’s not positive, uh, if their skin is black, um a majority of them have a negative, it fuels the anger... Um, because of that I don’t think it’s helpful”

Furthermore, both subjects 3 and 6 agreed African-American history should include stories of empowerment as a counter-narrative to the oppression of slavery, which supports my observations in the previous section:
Subject 6: “and I’d like to see them get out the fact that up North a lot of the blacks were doing very very well...And then it was all squelched again, its like people were afraid of it or didn’t want to admit it or something like that.”

Subject 3: “See, to me, they’re teaching the wrong things about blacks in the South. Teach about the good man. Don’t talk about the bad man, cause he was nothing. The good man was good, he was meant for something.”

Subject 3: “When the water runs under the bridge, that water’s gone. New water flows, and it don’t come back...If you want to tell history to a black kid...let them hear the words of Martin Luther King. Let them hear the speech. ‘Cause now a days kids don’t even know him. black kids don’t even know him.”

In fact, when subject 8 talked about the restaurant that his grandfather and Samuel Harris owned he remarked “yeah, that’s not in the history books,” suggesting that the restaurant was not in accord with the conventional interpretation of segregated times. In addition to the views of subjects 3 and 6, it complicates the narrative of American history in which discrimination against blacks is a recurrent theme.

The other subjects I asked thought that slavery should be portrayed in Colonial Williamsburg, despite acknowledging the emotionally charged nature of such an attempt. Their justification supports the conclusions drawn in the previous section, namely because history explains the contemporary social structure:

Subject 8: “Did it occur? Did it occur back then? Did they portray it correctly? Did it give some people food for thought? Then I agree with it. Yes, because the simple fact is a lot of children and adults need to know what happened back then. They need to know why
some people act the way they do now because, you know, some of that transcends through families, ok? So yeah, oh yeah.”

Subject 2: “I would say it’s been a positive thing, you know it’s a positive thing that we have it here because it is a part of, it’s a part of our history you know it’s actually where, granted some of our families came from, was from the auctions you know a lot of our families were separated, so most of us come from these broken families and I think some people probably feel ashamed of that or they don’t want to revisit that or really face that because it’s a dark part of history.”

Subject 2: “And my thing is I’m like, if we don’t know where we come from we won’t know where we’re going. So it’s kinda like I think everyone should, you know, hear that, everyone should know about that.”

Even subject 6 suggested she was unsure that the estate auction was a negative thing:

Subject 6: “So I don’t know and I sometimes, you know I’ve heard people talk about when they were selling- doing the slave market thing down there and I thought it’s part of who we are and we have to own it, no matter what the history is, good bad or ugly. You’re not moving forward unless you know where you came from, you know.”

Perhaps being comfortable with the portrayal of slavery in Colonial Williamsburg hinges on an ability to detach from a personal connection with slavery. Subject 2, a black woman in her late 20s, compares the history of slavery with that of the holocaust and noted that:
Subject 2: “it doesn’t really matter really, what somone’s race is. That if there’s still that same, if there’s been some kind of struggle, or some kind of tragedies have befallen someone, it doesn’t matter who, it’s gonna, it’s gonna, it’s emotional, it’s gonna effect people. And, you know, you either walk away with a, you can walk away with the positive or the negative, and the positive to me is learning from that, is you know realizing that you know we can actually, we can actually learn from this. That it doesn’t have to be a negative thing.”

Her ability to detach the history of slavery from a certain race suggests a particular distance from its legacy that may be a function of her age and social situation. Otherwise, it seems as though the debate on the portrayal of slavery in Colonial Williamsburg hinges on how exactly it is interpreted. It seems apparent that if Colonial Williamsburg is an honest attempt to imitate the colonial period, over half the interpreters should to be black.

Subject 4, a white man who worked for Colonial Williamsburg during segregation time noted the evolution of Colonial Williamsburg’s portrayal of slavery:

Subject 4: “When I was working in Colonial Williamsburg in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, there was no discussion of slavery. Uh, if there was they didn’t portray it in the restored area like they do now. We used to have a lot of black interpreters that worked in the Raleigh tavern bakery, for example. And they generally in, in positions that were, they looked like participating slaves but there was no interpretation of that. I don’t think that uh, I don’t think it’s uh, overplayed at all, you know. If anything, I don’t think they address slavery enough….but it is a sensitive issue when it comes to the black population.”
In fact, subject 7 considered the inclusion of African-American history an indication of the progress Colonial Williamsburg has made in attempt at historical authenticity:

Subject 7: “The acknowledgement of the role of blacks and the history of the, uh, that was a big breakthrough. Um it has become humanized, more humanized over the years, less sanitized. Uh, more acknowledgement that these people were flawed just like we’re flawed today. That doesn’t mean that we’re flawed beyond redemption, but it does mean that we’re human beings. Um, so I think they’re, they have changed over the years and I think for the most part for the better.”

One of the best testimonies for the portrayal of slavery was subject 10, a black woman who had worked as interpreter in Colonial Williamsburg for over 20 years. She worked at the slave quarters in Carter’s Grove since it’s inception: “as they say I’m from old school.” She discussed what motivated her to work as an interpreter and the dedication required:

Subject 10: “It’s wonderful, and you know so then you’re able to bring history alive. You’re able to tell a story that are very rarely heard. You want to hear about the story you come to Colonial Williamsburg.”

Subject 10: “you have to have this dedication, and this yearning and this appreciation, because you’re telling a story that were very rarely told. So it’s important and you have to have a love for what you do.”

The point she kept emphasizing was that she was telling a story that was “very rarely told” as an interpreter of 19th century black history. Also, she described her tours as emphasizing the “survival techniques” of the Africans that were brought to the New
World, suggesting that she interpreted the story of slavery in a way that emphasized the accomplishments of the slaves who survived. She gave an example in which this added nuance to certain visitors’ perspectives:

Subject 10: “So when they’re singing people that aren’t educated to these survival techniques, they’re singing because they’re happy, because that’s what they want the master or mistress to believe, but that’s not necessarily how it is”

Subject 10: “So they’re regulating and their pacing and each row’s completed at the same time, nobody’s whipped. While you not knowing, or we did not have this conversation, ‘oh they’re happy, they’re singing from sun up to sun down’ so this is how they’re communicating: through songs, through music, through story telling”

Furthermore, she felt that wearing a costume added to the experience:

Subject 10: “Being in a costume adds to the experience, definitely. The and, and um third person and first person. First person is when you’re in character, third person is when we’re speaking like how we’re interacting with each other now. Uh, these are a powerful way to tell the story but I think character, it’s very provocative when you can, you know, transport the guest back to a certain period and you uphold the integrity of your ancestors in telling the story. I think it’s a powerful weapon that provokes you…it’s like you’re talking to a living breathing person that did exist back then. So it’s very provocative and makes you think and you know sometime folks don’t have to walk away happy. It’s, it’s not a beautiful story, but it’s one that’s worth telling about what these people have been through.”

She recalls her experiences reenacting at Carter’s Grove:
Subject 10: “As a matter of fact when we started at Carter’s Grove we wear modern clothes and uh, the Foundation wanted us to be in costume after a while, maybe after a year or so uh, because um it will add to the ambience there. When we were in costume, some guests, a few guests didn’t take kindly and uh they gave us a log to write, to document, you know, what was said.”

She recalled three incidents with white and black guests being made comfortable with her interpretation of slavery. In particular, she described an incident with a white guest calling her the n word:

Subject 10: “but, sometimes they aren’t exposed, they’re they’re ignorant, maybe this is something he had always heard in his house and it’s my responsibility to educate him and I believe it’s worth it. You know, this is my ancestor’s story that I’m imparting to others, so it’s worth it. It’s worth the effort and it’s, as an educator it’s my responsibility to educate him and I think it was accomplished.”

Ultimately, her conviction that her work was meaningful was particularly powerful:

Subject 10: “Well it takes time and you have to say within yourself or and I know what, you know, the outside world may think, but it takes a special person to put their costume on and to reenact the life of a slave. Think about it, or think about you attending the college of William and Mary and how much your parents are paying for tuition and then when you graduate you say to your parent, I’m going to Colonial Williamsburg, I have accepted a position to reenact the life of a slave. Honestly, tell me what you believe your parent would have said?”
Subject 10: “‘After I pay so much money you’re telling me–two masters degrees you’re telling me, about coming to be a slave?’ So it depends on the parent.”

Subject 10: “I applaud the foundation to take this step, to do what they’re doing. Because not every museum have to…You know, we’ve tried to recruit, we’ve tried to do a lot of stuff to impress, we go to some of these campuses….takes dedication, and how you feel about what you do about history. You know, so I know what people say, but um it’s like you know folks may say things, but some of these naysayers who are saying, they’re not coming here or sending their children here, or encouraging their children here to come do some of what we do. So, you know, there are job postings, um, so it depends on how you feel about what you do and the love you have for what we do. So you know, we might not have a lot of blacks, but it’s not for lack of trying. Yeah, it’s not for lack of trying.”

In conclusion, subject 9 described these “naysayers” as people who did not understand the motivation of Colonial Williamsburg to portray slavery or of the interpreters who portrayed slaves themselves:

Subject 9: “We have the NAACP…they came in, and this was just about a year before I started working or maybe two. But they came in and actually protested a reenactment of an estate auction because they were like ‘oh yeah, well they’re, they’re auctioning off slaves’ and they, they’re talking about how wonderful it would be to have slaves here’”

Subject 9: “A lot of the um, blacks who portray slaves here will get a lot of that to where they’ll be like ‘oh how could you sell out like that? How could you portray somebody that, that–that you know, from, from the past,’ instead of looking at it as an opportunity to remember the roots, ‘well how could you just happily go along with being a slave, that
means your happy being a slave’ you know that kind of thing, not realizing that they’re portraying something that we’ve come past to portray how we’ve come past it....the emotional response and the whacko suspension of disbelief because they never forget their own world view and where they come from.”

Ultimately, the impact of Colonial Williamsburg’s portrayal of slavery seems to depend on the way it is addressed. To understand this, I first want to examine the relationship between historical reenactment and the tourist.

2. The Process of Historical Interpretation in Colonial Williamsburg

From the Perspective of the Interpreters

The first of the two historical interpreters I interviewed, subject 9, who was a younger white male, mostly described what he considered the primary motivations of tourists have to visit Colonial Williamsburg. According to subject 9, tourists come to Colonial Williamsburg because they want a validation of their modern political or social views:

Subject 9: “you have some people both conservatives and liberals, we’re talking about politics here, where they will come and they will expect their own feelings or political views about modern society to be validated by what we talk about and that doesn’t happen, or it shouldn’t.”

Subject 9: “‘oh exactly what I heard on TV or you know thought about this or read about in this book,’ you know, that should be exactly what the history sounds like”

Subject 9: “They come here because they either want to understand their roots or have views validated, and they get very sensitive one way or the other when those views are
not validated or even if they find out something’s different: ‘Oh man I always learned that my whole life.’”

Subject 4, who works as a docent in the Jamestown museum also suggested that tourists’ interest in the history comes from their modern existence:

Subject 4: “When they ask questions in the Museum they’re, they’ve always had uh, something in their experience that they want to uh raise and sometimes you just talk to them and that gets them interested in various things.”

Furthermore, subject 10 considered it part of the interpreter’s job to relate to the tourist’s modern life:

Subject 10: “Well it depends on how you the individual, you the guest-because we tell the story in a concise manner, articulate—we articulate it and deliver the story. And we tell the story in a way where it can apply to your life.”

She gave two examples of the success of this approach:

Subject 10: “During veterans week or I think the president’s weekend, I don’t recall but I know it’s either veterans or presidents weekend I was at um, Carter’s Grove telling the story and about all these blacks that had fought and you have to tell the story whereby its not only black history but African history European history, Native American history you have to bring them together because this is what becoming an American mean. And after I was through telling the story about the sacrifice and it’s not the condition that you live and worked in that make you a slave it’s the law that makes people slave. After I interpreted to the veterans, I noticed that they, they just stood there, and I think I
concluded with amazing grace, and they all have their hands over their heart and their hats off their head. So it’s, it’s how, you know, you’re able to captivate people, that they can take those stories back then and reconnect it to your life.”

Subject 10: “Or when we tell the...story about freedom...Where they can compare what freedom is to the land that we now or to this freedom that we now enjoy. So we tell the story whereby it reconnects to people’s life, it’s applicable to your life. That’s what we try to do. And we’ve, we’ve the letters, the numerous letters that this Foundation had received from several staff members, along with myself, it just prove to see that, you know, what we do is worthwhile and is appreciated by the public.”

However, subject 9 emphasized that the goal of historical interpreters was to try and give tourists a more nuanced perspective on history rather than validate their views. He cites the inability of tourists to identify his political beliefs as evidence for the successful achievement of this goal.

Subject 9: “Sometimes what people want when they come here is a validation of their views and we don’t give ‘em that. It’s not the opposite of what they think, it’s not what they think, we give ‘em what happened. Like I will tell you look most people know that I’m pretty conservative, but you won’t hear that when I give a talk.”

Subject 9: “I told you I’m pretty conservative, but people will ask me all the time what I think and I’m like I have no opinion while I’m here. I’ll tell you when I, you know when I get home I have an opinion but I’m not telling you, I’m, I’m at work. And so people, I’ve had people either guess right that I’m a conservative or guess totally wrong that I’m a you know big flaming liberal or whatever because of things that they think I’m adding
into my interpretation that actually really happened. They think I’m exaggerating in order to make a modern political point, but I’m actually saying the real things that happened.”

Subject 10 confirmed the idea that tourist’s views aren’t validated and that she doesn’t make concessions to entertain tourists on vacations:

Subject 10: it’s like you’re talking to a living breathing person that did exist back then. So it’s very provocative and makes you think and you know sometime folks don’t have to walk away happy.

Both subject 9 and subject 10 described how the role of the interpreter in this kind of dialogue is to navigate between two different outcomes:

Subject 9: “And so our job is to tell them what actually happened without either a) making them mad to the point that they hate us because we are not validating their views and then they won’t listen to anything we’ve got to say or b) just kind of cow towing to their views because they know they’re never going to agree...and we’ve got to be in the middle of both things.”

Subject 10 described how she also has to be in the middle of reassuring an emotional guest and representing a slave:

Subject 10: “sometimes you have guests saying to you ‘I’m so sorry that my people did this to you, I’m so very sorry.’ There may be tears you know, but you just, you know, put the not necessarily at ease, because it’s ok to be uncomfortable but you transport them. And it’s not what you say, its how you say it, it’s how you convey, it’s how you present
that information to them in a concise manner. It’s how you present the information to them.”

Subject 9 used his experience of interpreting slavery as an example to illustrate how this process normally functions:

Subject 9: “well basically the most popular one is ‘slavery really sucked.’ Not—not hard to prove, you know? And ‘well isn’t it amazing that people that wanted freedom for all would have slaves of their own, what hypocrisy!’ and ‘aren’t I smart to be the first person to ever think of this.’ However, Patrick Henry in 1773 wrote a letter to a Quaker minister where he basically says... ’would anybody believe I am the master of slaves of my own...how do I justify that and reconcile that with the fact that I’m advocating for freedom and actually comparing the situation we have now to slavery and how can I justify that? I will not and I can not I can only hope that I showed slaves proper Christian charity and worked towards the day that they may become free although I don’t think that it will happen in my lifetime.’ So it wasn’t like, oh you know all those people were evil back then, there was, there’s a lot more nuance to it. So either people want to hear ‘my political views are right’ or people want to hear ‘gee those old white guys sure were awful evil people and I’m so glad I’m not like them and I’m glad I live like I am to now because I am a better person.’ You know?”

Subject 9 also outlined how this exchange often creates friction with tourists.

Subject 9: “That’s what they wanna hear and when we don’t give them any of that we say well yeah that happened but so did this. That gets tough for a lot of people. So that’s
where you have a lot of back and forth going on where people either just refuse to believe you or they become really interested.”

Subject 9: “When people hear that: ‘my God Patrick Henry never said that.’ Then they want to not believe anything. ‘If he never said that then what else have I been lied to about?’ Well you haven’t been lied to about anything, Patrick Henry did say these things. He just didn’t use these exact words to say it. You know so it’s like their whole world has been pulled out from under them if they find out what they read in the history books is not exactly what happened.”

Similarly, subject 4 attributed the success of Bill Barker’s interpretation of Thomas Jefferson to his tendency to “challenge” his audience:

Subject 4: “You can have good interpreters out there, uh, that, that are talking to folks, that keep their interest, that are very animated and very, very interested in how people react to what they have to say. Like Bill Barker who’s, who plays, uh, Thomas Jefferson. He’s quite good and people are attracted to him because he has a way of, of challenging them, if you will, making them think about what they’re asking and seeing and listening to.”

Subject 9 cited this kind of friction between interpreter and tourist as evidence for why historical interpreters are especially helpful to telling a more nuanced perspective on history. When I asked him why exactly he responded:

Subject 9: “because we have time to sit down and explain these things to them...we explain more to them because they have time to stop and talk.”
Also, when subject 4 recalled his past experiences as an interpreter, he implied that being an interpreter involves more than just a telling of history, but a unique opportunity for a kind of dialogue:

Subject 4: Interpreting, to me, from my own experience, is something that covers a whole spectrum of, of things. You just can’t talk about a thing; that to me is impossible. My degree is in history and so, naturally I have an affinity for that, and I’m more interested in history than a lot of other folks that come in just to watch an interpreter, listen to an interpreter talk about apothecary for example. There is more to it. And, so to me an interpreter needs to go beyond that moment and talk about other things as well that people are interested in. If they question a microscope, in 1620 did they have such a thing? Well yeah, and then explain to them to what extent they had such things. Uh, instead of just pointing it out.”

Subject 9 compared this opportunity to something that was missing in the modern political discourse:

Subject 9: “and of course as we all know the most extreme voices of any movement are the ones that get the most TV time, you know? And that’s something if you listen today, if people would just, you know, talk to each other, and that’s what people don’t do. If they talk to each other and we have more of a chance to do that at Colonial Williamsburg rather than listen to you know all these people on one side and all these people on the other side, they represent the most you know left or right views. You very rarely get anyone that’s actually in the center, because it’s not good TV.”

Which is an observation about modern politics that was echoed by subject 7:
Subject 7: “The American people are fed up, and 80 percent of the American people are in lock step on 90 percent of the issues, there is a solid working consensus in the center but nobody’s organizing it or tapping into it because the voices of the extreme left and the extreme right and the money of the extreme left and the extreme right are drowning out the political discourse and making it all seem very uncivil.”

This claim suggests that interpreters can use history to talk about modern politics in a way that is not possible in the current political climate in the United States. Hence historical interpreters use the historical discourse to create a literal discourse about contemporary politics. This claim was contrary to the conclusions I had drawn in my previous research. Due to Colonial Williamsburg’s need to attract tourists in order to make money, I had assumed that interpreters acted mainly as entertainment and diplomatically reinforced tourists’ understanding of history. As a result, I assumed that historical interpreters gave a less nuanced telling of history because they elicited an emotional response that prevented the viewer from maintaining a critical distance from the performance. However, subject 9 maintained that the viewer never forgot that he was a modern person.

Subject 9: “They never do forget that you’re a modern person because the first thing a lot of times they ask Richard or they ask Bill, ‘man what’s it like to know everything about this guy? How much studying must you have done to do it?’ I mean they-they’re appreciative of it, they’re amazed by it but its, its hard to do- yeah even if you’re in character, they never forget that you’re a modern person and they want both from you. Because they don’t- I think they suspend their disbelief but not too long, you know.”
To explain this, he contrasted the performance of a costumed interpreter with that of an actor in a play:

*Subject 9:* “When you have a play, when you have a movie, when you have whatever...its another world, it still has a kernel of human truth to it but it’s another world. So you can easily suspend your disbelief...but when you’re talking about the history and where you come from you have much more of a personal investment in it.”

*Subject 9:* “like I said the actors are very skilled, but that close proximity to ‘em makes everybody think they can do it.”

Hence he suggested that the audience never forgets that the interpreter is a modern person because of the close proximity of the tourist to the reenactor and the personal investment tourists have in the history portrayed by the reenactor. Another reason is the fact the Colonial Williamsburg admits to creating reenactments “based on a true story”:

*Subject 9:* “What causes some problems in that regard is that Colonial Williamsburg feeds into that. ‘Oh, well we’re gonna be- they think we’re more like a play or something, let’s be more like a play, let’s do more stuff’ and there’s nothing wrong with that, but then don’t get upset when people don’t exactly believe everything you tell them at face value when you’re talking about the history. You know, so you know it provides more opportunities for talking and interaction and all that, but if you’re going to say ‘we are doing a play’ then don’t get offended when people are like ‘oh, did that stuff really happen that you were talking about?’”
Because tourists never forget interpreters are modern people, they have a different kind of emotional response. Subject 9 described how they suspend disbelief until they have an emotional response to the modern component of the issue being interpreted:

Subject 9: “Well they have an emotional response based on their views of how they come in. So if their views are validated or challenged you get that visceral response, especially when you’re talking about race and slavery and stuff like that. You’ll get that visceral response of their deeply held core values, and it’s not necessarily an emotional response to is going on as far as the, the uh event. It’s what’s being said and the message that’s being given.”

Subject 9: “It’s two different responses, but you get an emotional response to the issues being brought up. But you also at that same time, in those moments when you’re not getting an emotional response, when you’re just kind of...portraying events before you get to that part you can see people be just like ‘I can do that. I can do that’ and bring themselves on their level. So they never forget that you’re a modern person like that, and they will react, and as a matter of fact especially when they have those emotional responses, ‘how could they even come out here and pretend to be somebody who could do that?’

Subject 9 went on to describe how being an interpreter is hard because your audience wants you to be both a modern person as well as a historical figure:

Subject 9: “The people that come here want you to be in character and to be somebody from the past, until they feel like stepping behind the curtain, then they want you to stop doing that and let them behind the curtain and then tell you what’s going on. So they
want, when come up to you, if they walk up to me and I’m in costume, they want me to be Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry whoever, but then they want me to peel back that curtain whenever they ask a modern question. And they don’t do it by accident. It’s not like, oh I’m asking where, I’m asking you where the bathroom is and you know oops I forgot we didn’t have toilets back then. It’s nothing like that. It’s like ‘oh so how do things really work here, how do things, you know, so they want to be- they sense they can walk up to you, you’re not on a stage all the time, some of the actors are sometimes, but even then it’s kind of in the round, the people are all there. So since I can come up right up to you, now I want to know well who are you in your real life...So they want all, they want you to be all things at the same time, they want you to be yourself and in character. They want to be distant from you and close to you, at the same instant. And that creates a dichotomy that is tough to handle sometimes. Most of the time it’s not, but every time, every once in a while you get that one person...It’s like oh man they want to be close to me, but now just when I think I –oh I’m getting to know them as a person, ok well now maybe I’m having a conversation with this person, now it’s like, ‘oh but what about Mr. Jefferson, what does he think of these things?’ and now they want me to be, not Mr. Jefferson, but somebody that knows him, somebody whatever. And so now even if I let ‘em in a little bit, start talking about myself, and talking about or what I think about history. Then they, well now I want you to be in character again. And again neither one of us is one or the –ever does both, you either have actors or you have interpreters and so, we’re never both but everyone wants you to be both at all times.”
Subject 9: “People want both things. They want the truth, but they want to have fun. They want us to be in character, but they want to pull back the curtain whenever they want. So it’s a balancing act to be sure.”

From the Perspective of the Visitors

Most of the people I interviewed thought the historical interpreters added to the educational mission of Colonial Williamsburg:

Subject 6: “You know, you get such a kick out of that and like I said the interpreters do a good job with involvement, bringing you into the story that you feel kind of like you’re kind of coming through a fog and stepping back in time. If they’re doing their job well you have that effect of being in their world, you know.”

Subject 9: “From what I’ve seen they make history come alive, especially for the young ones. People like me who’ve already seen a lot of it and the whole bit, it’s good for us too because some of the times you can get a lot. But for the young people coming in, absolutely fine, puts it, puts it in a way that they can understand it because it’s not just reading it in a book, or tweeting it or facebooking it or whatever.”

Subject 2: “Yes, they do. I think they do. Because they seem to be very- they love what they’re doing and they convey that love when they’re talking so it is, it actually, it does help, it actually helps and it does- it makes the experience feel more comfortable.”

Subject 6 noted that even if the historical interpreters were more useful for entertainment then education
Subject 6: “I mean if it’s a way to catch a group’s attention initially it might not be the worst “hook” to use, if they’re able to get open and honest after that, I don’t know.”

However, subject 5 had some reservations about interpreters and felt as though they affected the authenticity of Colonial Williamsburg in some way:

Subject 5: “I’m very neutral, I mean, I never deal with them personally. But I think people do, and you know they, people have been introduced to that, with Disney and all that and it’s probably an additional thing that they enjoy.”

Subject 5: “Well the other thing is that if you’re, if you’re someone like me, that does a lot of reading, I-I find it very disappointing to deal with them. They don’t know as much as I would like, you know let’s face it, the Washington and the Jefferson they have are not the Washington and Jefferson that you’d like to talk to, you know it’s uh, you can’t bring the, the real people back to life and it’s, it’s foolish to think actors can do that.”

Certainly interpreters in Colonial Williamsburg appeal to visitors’ emotions in order to attract interest. But given the fact that the most emotional appeal Colonial Williamsburg makes is through its reenactment of an estate auction, it seems unlikely that these are mostly patriotic propaganda. Given its importance as an institution for teaching American history, it certainly seems possible Colonial Williamsburg could appeal to tourist’s emotions to reinforce their modern political views. However, based on the information I gathered from the interviews I conducted, that doesn’t seem to be the case.

Subject 9’s testimony that tourists never forget he is a modern person challenges the idea that costumed interpreters prevent their audience from having a critical understanding of history. Furthermore, the other subjects’ reservations demonstrate a
critical attitude toward the use of interpreters to portray history. Hence, Handler and Gable’s claim that historical reenactment creates an illusion of mimetic realism isn’t necessarily true because it doesn’t take into account the fact that tourists already have a critical distance associated with their expectations of Colonial Williamsburg.

Furthermore, as both subject 9 and subject 10 confirm, this distance often creates a kind of friction that suggests Colonial Williamsburg facilitates a more nuanced understanding of history. In terms of Colonial Williamsburg’s portrayal of slavery, this suggests that it offers a perspective on black people’s contributions to American history that doesn’t make significant concessions to either black or white tourist’s sensibilities. Furthermore, subject 9 observed that talking about history makes it possible to have a discussion about modern politics that would be unlikely to occur otherwise. Perhaps this dialogue is an opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of history and politics that can both challenge and reinforce the contemporary social order.

CONCLUSION

The perspectives I gathered supported my observations about how our modern beliefs inform the study of history and how the study of history informs modern ideologies. In particular, the relationship between contemporary racial tension and the portrayal of slavery in Colonial Williamsburg demonstrates how important the discourse of history is to the contemporary social order. Additionally, the observations that the subjects made about tourists’ motivations for visiting Colonial Williamsburg shows how we consult
history to understand our world today. As a result, different subjects have emphasized the value of history not as a collection of facts, but the interpretation of those facts.

*Subject 7:* “*History is the most exciting subject there is. What’s its all about? Us. It’s not about dull dates and dead people, it’s about who we are and where we came from and where we’re going.*”

*Subject 7:* “*Now I think I understand the history better than anybody, not the facts, all the facts, but the meaning of it*”

*Subject 5:* “*I’m not a historian by uh temperament really. I think this whole business of memorizing names, dates, you know, legislative bills, I mean that’s not history, that’s just you know junk you could look, look up anywhere. Understanding it is the important part.*”

*Subject 2:* “*And so basically it’s more relevant now because of all the stuff that’s going on in our country and it just, I think it means a lot more now than it used to.*”

I have adapted the different ways in which this “meaning” of history is relevant to the contemporary political discourse into small stories. Ultimately, my graphic novel is similar to Colonial Williamsburg itself in that both try in a certain way to “authentically” animate information so that it is engaging and informative for the viewer. The use of stories in a graphic novel as well as in Colonial Williamsburg also emphasizes this “meaning” and allows the author to highlight certain parallels between different perspectives. In particular, I have tried to show multiple perspectives of racial tension and its relationship with history. I have also tried to show how one’s position in that discourse affects one’s view of the historical interpretation of slavery in Colonial Williamsburg. I
have tried to use stories to contrast ways in which people use this “meaning” to rationalize their beliefs and ways in which this “meaning” forms people’s identities. I have also tried to demonstrate a parallel between one’s perspective on Colonial Williamsburg and one’s position in the community. Finally, I hope the stories demonstrate the different ways Colonial Williamsburg affects daily life in Greater Williamsburg to create a unique community. In other words, I feel the same desire as subject 2:

Subject 2: “I know some tourists kind of feel that Colonial Williamsburg is Williamsburg and that there’s nothing else around it. So it’s like ok, well no, no there’s more to it, definitely more to it.”

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions for All Participants

1. When did you first come to Williamsburg and how long have you lived here? (Rationale: to get some kind of bearing on the position of the individual interviewed within the city.)

2. What is your earliest memory of Williamsburg? How has it changed since you came to the city? If you grew up here, are the people who live here now similar to the people who lived here when you were younger? (Rationale: to determine local perceptions of change and recent development in the city.)
3. Do you go to Colonial Williamsburg very often? What kind of people do you think visit Colonial Williamsburg? (Rationale: to see if the individual considers himself or herself part of the demographic that Colonial Williamsburg appeals to.)

4. How do you see Colonial Williamsburg? Do you think that most people see it that way? (Rationale: to determine the individual’s perspective on Colonial Williamsburg and whether they consider it similar to that of the tourists who visit Colonial Williamsburg.)

5. Do you interact with many tourists that come see Colonial Williamsburg? How does the presence of tourists visiting Colonial Williamsburg affect your daily life? (Rationale: to determine the extent to which the individual interviewed feels tourist influx to Colonial Williamsburg has affected their lives in the surrounding town. I am curious to see if the locals feel animosity or even ambivalence about the tourists themselves.)

6. Are there any particular sights / smells / sounds that typify Colonial Williamsburg for you? Why? (Rationale: for graphic novel imagery and to promote general discussion.)

7. Do you feel as though Colonial Williamsburg is authentic? What makes it authentic or inauthentic? Do you feel that historical authenticity in Colonial Williamsburg is important? (Rationale: to determine how locals perceive the authenticity of Colonial Williamsburg and its relationship to history in general.)

8. Have you visited Colonial Williamsburg over an extended time period? If so, even though CW has remained frozen around 1776 for nearly a century, do you
feel like it has changed over the years? Have the type of people who visit Colonial Williamsburg changed? *(Rationale: to see if the individual has noticed any changes in Colonial Williamsburg's historiography or what kind of audience it tries to capture.)*

9. How do you feel about the historical interpreters in Colonial Williamsburg? How do you think they add to the experience of visiting Colonial Williamsburg? *(Rationale: to see how the individual interviewed reacts to the interpreters, and how they contextualize this reaction; i.e. better or worse, strange or interesting.)*

10. What is your favorite activity to participate in at Colonial Williamsburg? What is your least favorite activity? Why? *(Rationale: to discuss any particular activity in Colonial Williamsburg that appeals to the individual. The potentially varied response to this question could demonstrate the multiplicity of experiences of Colonial Williamsburg and contributes how one might consider locals as tourists/chorasters.)*

11. Do you identify Colonial Williamsburg as a place that is important to your heritage as an American? *(Rationale: to see whether the individual feels represented by the stories told at Colonial Williamsburg.)*

12. Do you think that Williamsburg is bizarre in some ways? If so, what is the most bizarre aspect about Williamsburg? *(Rationale: to inspire a story about Williamsburg that the participant considers unusual. This would be good to add local flavor and color to my stories.)*

**Questions for Interpreter**
1. What are some of the benefits of telling history through historical interpretation? Some of the downsides? (Rationale: to determine how interpreters feel about their work with public history.)

2. What are some of the most common questions tourists ask you? How do you usually answer them? What is the funniest interaction you have had with a tourist? (Rationale: to determine, besides from my own observations, what kinds of interactions most commonly occur between interpreters and tourists. This question will be integral for coming up with dialogue for the graphic novel.)

3. What sources of information on African-American history in the eighteenth century did Colonial Williamsburg provide you with? (Rationale: Although I am not assuming that the individual interviewed acquired most of his knowledge about African-American history from his employer, I want to know what kind stories Colonial Williamsburg encourages its African-American interpreters to tell and whether certain kinds of information are excluded. The individual may not be able to provide me with this kind of information, which could also be indicative of how Colonial Williamsburg captures the African-American experience.)

4. What motivates you to be a historical interpreter in Colonial Williamsburg? How does the performance of being a historical figure affect your personal identity? (Rationale: to determine what motivates the individual to choose such a seemingly difficult career.)

5. How do most people react when you tell them that you work as an interpreter in Colonial Williamsburg? How does your family feel about your occupation?
(Rationale: to determine how the public sees African-American interpreters, namely if the individual perceives any sort of stigma associated with his occupation. I also want to find out how other African-Americans close to the individual view his occupation.)

6. Do you feel as though Colonial Williamsburg has made a recent effort to include more African-American perspectives of eighteenth century America? If so, why do you think that is? (Rationale: to see if the efforts of Colonial Williamsburg to portray a new social history are still perceived as recent, whether there have been even more recent developments to that end, and how the interpreter might justify the relative absence of African-American history from Colonial Williamsburg in the past.)

7. Colonial Williamsburg captures a unique period of American history when the thirteen colonies were struggling for independence from Great Britain. Do you ever find that stories of American independence affect the narratives of slavery that persisted almost a hundred years after the revolution? (Rationale: to see if how the interpreter regards Colonial Williamsburg's potentially racist celebration of American Independence.)

Questions for African-American Residents of Highland Park/Braxton Court

1. How do you feel the building of Colonial Williamsburg has affected the African-American community in this area? On the whole positively or negatively? (Rationale: to determine local African-American perceptions of the construction of Colonial Williamsburg.)
2. How do you feel about the way African-American history is portrayed in Colonial Williamsburg? How do you feel about teaching the history of slavery through reenactment? *(Rationale: to determine local African-American perceptions of the portrayal of slavery in Colonial Williamsburg.)*

3. Incidentally, do you know about the black entrepreneur Samuel Harris? *(Rationale: to find out if this important local African-American's has been remembered. I hope to use this question to indicate the extent to which local African-American history has been erased by Colonial Williamsburg.)*
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A: THE TEXT

PART 1

SCENE 1: Introduction

(Opens with a bird’s eye view of young girl and mother who are walking through Colonial Williamsburg.)

(Girl approaches a pile of horse dung curiously.)
Mother: Katie, come back here. Don’t touch that, it’s yucky.

(Mother and daughter clasp hands.)
Mother: Now Katie, sit still for a second—I’m going to tell you something very important while we wait for Daddy to come back with lunch.

Mother: Are you listening Katie?

(Picture of mother and daughter holding hands. The mother’s upper body is cut off and the panel is mostly Katie’s face as she looks around.)
Mother: Because one of the reasons we’re here is so you could see what our country was like at its very beginning.

Mother: And you must understand Katie, that way back when the founding fathers made America, they went with two assumptions:

Mother: that all human beings are basically the same and that they haven’t really changed at their basic core.

(Katie notices a horse walking by and watches in amazement.)
Mother: Of course, all the flowery stuff around us has changed—like the way we dress and things like that—

Mother: but greed is greed, character is character.

(Katie tugs at her mom’s hand to try and follow the horse, but her mother ignores her.)
Mother: And so they set up a Republic because that was the one that gave us the most freedom, but you had to fight to keep it

(Katie looks imploringly at her mother.)
Mother: because the natural tendency of man is to destroy it and go for power and that’s what you see going on Katie—

Mother: that constant struggle of good and evil.

(The frame pans out and mother and daughter can be seen walking past tourists taking pictures of themselves in the stocks and reenactors drawing a crowd on the courthouse steps.)
Mother: You can look at today and it’s really no different.

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SCENE 2: The Transplants
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(Scene with two older women in tracksuits power walking through Williamsburg. In the background of their conversation, David can be seen interacting with tourists and Carolyn is walking around aimlessly. They pass the mother and child when they come into the frame.)
Trish: One of the first things I noticed, and this was probably ten years ago—I had come out of a long marriage, so I was back dating again.

Trish: So I’m dating this guy and um, he said something about, ‘well we know you Yankees talk about us.’ There’s a certain paranoia here that—being from the Philadelphia area, I didn’t have a clue, you know?

Trish: And I asked him, ‘why do you think we talk about you?’ and he said, ‘well, you know, ‘cause we lost the War’ and I didn’t know what to say to him, you know?

Trish: So I said, ‘honestly, don’t know quite how to tell you this, but the truth is up North you very rarely come up in conversation.’
(Barbara laughs)

Barbara: I don’t know why they’re still fighting the Civil War down here; up in Northern Virginia we don’t have any remnants of that sort of mentality.
Trish: They live in a different world here. I hear locals complain about their commute and I mean, if I got to work after an hour and a half I felt like getting out of the car and kissing the ground, you know?
Barbara: Well I think part of that is because Virginians refused to build cities.
Trish: Really? I didn’t know that.

Barbara: Oh yeah. When the early settlers came they refused to build cities ‘cause it cost money and the House of Burgesses had to tax itself to build them.

Barbara: And they came, not necessarily as immigrants—they were sent here to set up a colony and make money. And you know, Virginia was one of the richest colonies, but they would have directives from London to build towns and the House of Burgesses said ‘yeah? Up yours, I’m not spending money for towns.’

Trish: You know, I never really though about it, but Virginia doesn’t have any big cities. I mean I guess there’s Richmond, which is nice and all, but it’s certainly not a huge cosmopolitan center. Barbara (shakes her head): Virginia to this day doesn’t have it. You go from Williamsburg down to Hampton roads—all you get is a string of very small communities near each other and no center, nothing.

Barbara: And we’re more willing to accept living like that—you know, living out in the country with our own piece of territory.

Barbara: And the other thing is that if you didn’t get along with the people who ran things here, you got on a horse and went somewhere else.
Trish (nods): And it should still be that way in this country. Look at our education system—I mean if you have your kid in the state of New Jersey and you find out you don’t like the way they’re teaching, you should be able to pack up and move.

Trish: And, you know, when supply and demand comes into effect that’s always very healthy. There’s no reason for Washington to mandate what should be going on in the schools. It is not their business; it’s really not.

Barbara: And I think that’s perfectly normal to feel that way; it’s because the government is doing things it’s disconnected from.

Trish: They’ve got their fingers into way too much and it’s the fault of both parties: Republicans and Democrats.
Barbara: Well the old labels don’t mean anything, really. I mean you can call somebody conservative or liberal, but the parties don’t really have ideologies.

Trish: I know, and I mean look at all this fuss about the Tea party.
Barbara: Well the Tea party—I mean it sounds new, but it’s not. I’ve seen it at least twice, maybe three times.

Barbara: No the Tea party, to me, is the grandson of Ross Perot and I mean they were crazy—but they’re non-violent; they don’t hurt anyone. I think it just goes back to this idea that when you’re taxing people, you’re taxing yourself.

Barbara: When the federal government spends more than it takes in—it’s taxing people to spend that. I mean it’s not a business; it’s not supposed to make a profit.

Barbara: So it’s very normal for people to feel that way in this country. Now if you go back further there tends to be sort of racial aspects to it, but it’s still always this idea of, ‘who’s the federal government anyway? I live here in wherever and I can take care of myself.’

Trish: Yeah, and I see that especially in Virginia with, you know, the Bubba effect out here.

Trish: They don’t kid themselves that they can handle this garbage going on in D.C. or really even understand it all, but it’s like ‘keep playing those games up there, but when you come into my neighborhood, you’re going down.’

Barbara: Well, I don’t know. The distinguished tradition of Southern hospitality aside, the government is supposed to provide certain services and each generation votes to decide what those services are.

(A group of teenagers point and giggle at David, who is leaning against the silversmith’s building. He tips his hat to them.)

Trish (shakes her head): I worry about this generation. I’ve already warned my daughter—this recession isn’t going to get any better; it’s going to get worse.

SCENE 3: David’s story

Tourist 1: Excuse me, are you familiar with Patrick Henry?
David: We are not personally acquainted, but I have great respect for his skills as an orator.

Tourist 1: Well don’t you think it’s a little hypocritical of him to fight for freedom but still have slaves of his own?
David: Ma’am I cannot speak for Patrick Henry, although I do know that he has called slavery a lamentable evil and shows his slaves proper Christian charity.

(In front of the hat shop.)
Tourist 2: And don’t you think it’s significant that the fight for independence was based on religious convictions?
David: Prayers, sir, are a man's private concern, not a matter of public interest. After all, there is nothing so personal as a man's relationship with his creator.

(David is sitting on a bench by the wigmaker. Carolyn is standing in the background.)
Tourist 3: Wow, you must have read so much in order to do what you do.
David: Yes, I am very thankful that the master carpenter to whom I was apprenticed taught me to read, write and perform basic arithmetic.

(Tourist 3 leaves.)
Carolyn: Hey.
David: Good day.

Carolyn: So have you um, worked here long?
David: Well I’ve been a journeyman carpenter for quite some time. I’m hoping to be accepted by the guild soon.

Carolyn: That’s cool. What do you do when you’re off work?
David: Uh, when I can manage it, I like to go to the Raleigh tavern and listen to people talk politics.

Carolyn: Yeah me too, but it’s kind of expensive. And those William and Mary students can get really pretentious.
David: Actually, I find George Washington to be quite modest. But uh, a journeyman’s wages are pretty low so I mostly stay home.

Carolyn: Ever go to Paul’s?
David: Uh, sometimes, yeah.

Carolyn: Interesting, I didn’t know it was around in the eighteenth century.
David: Well, no—
Tourist 4: Hey, could you tell me where the bathrooms are?

(Carolyn walks away)
Tourist 4: Er, I mean chamber pots?
David (pointing): Walk past these three houses and then it’s to your left. It’s just past the silversmith.
Tourist 3: Thank you so much.

(David is sitting alone again, looking a little confused)

(David is sitting and smoking a cigarette on the steps hidden behind the Anderson building. He looks a little glum. Emily is about to sit down next to him)
Emily: Hello sweetie, how are you doing today?
David: Emily, when you’re watching a play do you ever get the urge to walk like two feet from your chair and get up on the stage?

(Emily looks bemused.)
David: I mean do you ever wonder what people would do if you just started saying lines?

Emily (laughs): Oh my word, tough day?
David: Just because tourists can come up right up to you—now they want to know who are you are “in your real life.”

David: It’s like, because of that close proximity they never forget you’re just some schmuck in stockings.

Emily: But David, sweetie, do you really want them to forget you’re a modern day person?
David: I just wish they didn’t want me to be both myself and in character at the same time.

David: The people that come here want you to be someone from the past until they feel unsettled by something you said, and then they want to argue with you about what’s really going on.
Emily: It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it—how you tell the story so it’s applicable to their life. And you know, sometimes folks don’t have to walk away happy.

(David is glum.)
Emily (laughing): Cheer up honey, not many men can wear breeches like you can.

(SCENE 4: Carolyn and Ray)
(An older Black man is sitting by himself fishing.)

(Carolyn comes into the frame and sits down. Her rod is already ready.)
Carolyn: Hey Ray, good day for fishing?
Ray: Hey Carolyn. You learned anything useful yet up at the College?

Carolyn: Not really. You catch anything yet?
Ray: Not really, no. But I’m a patient guy; you never really know what’s going on down there.

Carolyn: Pretty day. Whenever I come here I imagine the Indians fishing in here hundreds of years ago.

Ray: My grandfather had Indian, but I don’t know what. He came off the Chickahominy, you know the uh, Charles City plantation that John Tyler had up there? President John Tyler?
(Carolyn nods)

Ray: My ancestors worked for him, that’s where my people came from on my momma’s side. And they ate off the land—only thing Momma had to do, that I can remember, was come downtown to get clothes for school, canned goods and that was it.

Carolyn: Ray? Is Williamsburg pretty much the same as when you were growing up?
Ray (after a pause): Well, you have to remember, when I was coming up it was in segregated times. So the changes, as far as some of the folks are concerned, have been pretty huge.

Carolyn (very curious): Um, was it a lot different?
Ray: Well, most people when I came here have passed away. Then they came with that, uh, redevelopment housing program in ’72 where they took all the land from the Black people down here. Because back in the ’40s, Williamsburg was all Black: South Henry Street, Armstead Avenue, Braxton Court, Highland Park, it was all Black.

Carolyn: It’s hard to imagine what it must have been like with, you know, Black and White people living separately.

Ray: Well, my earliest memory is that you couldn’t even look at a White girl. Your parents watched you, said ‘don’t look at no White kid.’ But, when I was a kid, till I got 15, my mother worked for a judge in the county and his grandson and me and granddaughter, we’d all play.

Ray (after a pause): And then in 1966, the Ku Klux came—the Ku Klux, well, the Klan yeah? They came over to a cow field and had a rally.
Carolyn (surprised): In Williamsburg?

Ray: Yeah, in York County. A State trooper told us if we go across that line over to that fence, they could kill us and nothing we could say because it was private property.

Ray: But he told us once they hit the State highway, where everybody paid taxes, we could do anything we wanted. And we did—we broke up new Cadillacs and busted windows outta everything.

(Carolyn remains silent as if she is hoping he’ll forget that she’s there.)
Ray: And somebody later was shot by them while he was hunting. They didn’t kill him, but they burnt him. Yeah, those were the days.

Ray: Things changed in the ‘60s, but it really wasn’t that subtle because Blacks and Whites still had this thing—you know, what they did for four hundred years ago to my people?

Ray: After segregation we could go where everybody else could go, but we still wasn’t treated equal. And right to this day we’re still not. In my book.

Ray: And I tell people this, I’m trying to move on. What happened back four hundred years ago—we weren’t even thought of. We are glad to see that we, you know, that we didn’t have to go through what they went through. You have to look at Egypt, where people were slaves for two thousand years.

Ray: And I believe that what happened four hundred years ago hasn’t affected me today because my mother and daddy brought me up the right way. Do not judge a person by their color, but go on the first instinct, the first impression of a person. First impression, that’s what you go on.

(Silent frame to indicate a long pause.)

Ray (shakes his head): But you got all these White people, and you got all these Blacks. You have some Whites, that if they know ya, they’ll speak to ya. But you have some Whites that you can walk by and say ‘hey,’ ‘hello,’ ‘good morning,’ and they won’t open their mouth.

Ray (shrugs): They see you coming through a door and some will hold the door for ya, some won’t.
SCENE 5: The College

(The following panels are of three people squished together on a couch. Record covers on the wall and a drawing of Abraham Lincoln)

Christian: It was just terrible—not since sophomore year has one of our friends actually puked on a girl.
Aiden: Whoohah.
Roxy: Hey, so are we doing anything tonight? I hear there’s a dance party on South Boundary.

Christian: I think I would prefer to stay here and drink by myself.
Roxy: Oh Christian, you’re not actually going to do that.

Christian: No, I want to finish the second season of Twin Peaks!

Christian: Also, going to a party won’t make cheep beer taste any better.
Aiden: We should probably make Sam go out so she stops crying and stuff.
Roxy: You mean so you can offer free beer to the latest freshman girls?

(Frame expands to include Carolyn’s entrance.)
Aiden: Yo, whoever said my motives had to be altruistic?
Roxy: Hey look, it’s Carolyn! Wanna come to a dance party with us?
Carolyn (irritable): I appreciate you trying to make me feel included Roxy

(Carolyn walks up the stairs, her speech bubble trailing behind her.)
Carolyn: but every weekend I remind you that I really don’t want to go to a dance party.

(From upstairs.)
Aiden: Do you want to play pool with me instead?
Carolyn: Only if you promise not to sneak up behind me and try to teach me how to play, like you did last time.

(Back to the couch.)
Aiden: Okay, I guess that’s a no.
Christian: If she ever gets tired of dealing with infinite sets, I’m sure she’ll come running to you.
Roxy: Anyway, so what are we doing tonight?

(Carolyn is standing outside Sam’s closed door. Gang Four’s “At Home He’s A Tourist” is playing.)
Carolyn: Hey Sam, how was class?
Sam: It was okay. Still liking my women’s studies seminar. Today my professor described penis envy as evidence for the deep insecurity of the psychoanalytic unconscious!

Carolyn: Umm, cool. So you thinking about going to the dance party tonight?  
Sam: Yeah, I probably should. How about you?  
Carolyn: Guess.

Sam: Carolyn, I don’t understand how you can get work done on a Saturday night. 
Carolyn: I just don’t feel like listening to some guy talk about which Smiths album most helped him navigate a tumultuous adolescence. Plus, I’ve got a diffy qs problem set due on Monday.

(Sam comes out.)  
Sam: Does this look okay?  
Carolyn: It looks great.

Carolyn: Well, except for the shoes. 
Sam: Carolyn, these are my slippers.

(Sam walks down the stairs.)  
Roxy: Ooh Sam! Nice legs.  
Sam: Thanks Roxy, I shaved them for you.

(She presents herself to the couch)  
Sam: Hey Christian, would you be turned on by ankles if we lived in the eighteenth century?  
Christian: You’re trying way too hard Sam.  
Aiden: I think you should try this hard all the time.

(Sam checks her phone.)  
Roxy: Has anyone seen Mike lately? Weren’t we supposed to meet him?  
Christian: Last I heard he was pondering the idea that we are unconsciously aware of all time states.  
Aiden: Man, I love Mike.  
Sam: Dammit—actually, he texted me twenty minutes ago to say he’d meet us at the party.

Aiden: Well I’m ready if we’re trying to leave.  
Roxy: Yup. C’mon Christian, you can finish drinking at the party.  
Christian: I’m never finished drinking.  
Sam: Let me just grab my purse.
Christian: I still don’t understand why we have to go to a dance party.
Roxy: Why don’t you ever dance Christian? Didn’t you go to dances in middle school?
Christian: All I remember from middle school was kicking lockers and someone telling me “those are my tax dollars you’re kicking.”

Christian: Do we even know the people throwing this party?
Sam: I think the last time we went to a party at this house was the night Mike hid in the graveyard to escape the po-po.
Roxy: Oh my God, that was so dumb.

(Diagonally crossing the sunken gardens)
Aiden: Hey, I think it was a grand gesture on Mike’s part. We escape the police only to be reminded of our own mortality, right?
Roxy: Except we didn’t need to escape the police cuz they just came to report a noise violation and left.
Sam: Yeah, Mike figured the police couldn’t arrest him for being in a graveyard. I mean he could have been visiting family.
Christian: What an unusually depressing end to a Friday night—even for Mike.

(silent frame of everyone walking.)

Aiden: So now I’m really looking forward to this dance party.
Sam: C’mon get excited guys: this is the semester I prove to Roxy that I have other friends besides her.
Christian: Sam, you’re the girl who cried friends.

(In front of the house)
Roxy: Is this it?
Christian: Great album.
Aiden: I know!
Sam: Shall we?

(Picture of the kitchen with beer/liquor/cups etc, LCD Soundsystem’s “You Wanted A Hit” is coming from the dance floor.)

(Dance floor)

(Bathroom with G1 staring at herself in the mirror.)
G1: Girl, you are way too fucking high.
Mike: That’s what I’m saying, we should ignore the individual and the national and focus on the global and the universal.
B2: Well sure capitalism is unjust and everything, but it’s the best system that works.
G2: I think that like our generation has been taught that social progress comes from deconstructing old ideas like race and gender, you know? So like, it’s hard to imagine actually constructing something, you know, to replace capitalism.

Sam: No, I don’t eat blue things on principle. The color doesn’t appear in natural foods.
B1: Blueberries?
Sam: Actually, they’re dark purple.

B3: Before I came here I had about five shots of tequila and about two beers. Now I’m supposed to finish this forty because it’s duct taped to my hand.
Roxy (not enjoying this): I admire your ambition.

B2: But even if I give up meat, it’s not like all the slaughterhouses are going to shut down.
Mike: Yeah, but uh, that doesn’t absolve you of moral responsibility—
B2: Do you drive an electric car? Are those boat shoes cruelty-free?
Aiden (from corner having his own conversation off the panel): Your mom’s too big to fail!

Sam: And seriously, as an artist I get really depressed that nothing is safe from becoming a truly adorable refrigerator magnet. Money makes everything dirty.
B1: Yeah, we are all commodities. You can follow your dreams as long as you are willing to live them out in your parent’s basement.

(Christian is passing a joint off the panel to a very drunk girl sitting next to him. Steely Dan’s “My Old School” is playing in this well-lit upstairs room.)
G3: Your beard is glorious.
Christian: Thank you. My name is Christian.
G3: Stephanie.

Stephanie: So are you scoping out any girls?
Christian: I’m asexual.

(Pause with the panel frozen. Christian is wasted.)

Stephanie: Oh…So what are you into?
Christian: Mostly grey blobs.
(Mike and G2 dancing together amidst other people on the dance floor. Talking Head’s “Once in a Lifetime” is playing.)

(In the kitchen)
Aiden: Sure freshman orientation is fun, but have you heard about the Colonial Parkway murders?
G4: The what?
G5: Oooh, creepy.

Aiden: Yeah, the Parkway killer murdered like eight people in the ‘80s; police think he was probably a rogue agent from Camp Perry. He’s actually one of the most notorious serial killers in Virginia history and they never caught him.
G4: Oh my god!
Aiden: Actually, my roommate is really into this kind of thing. He thinks the killer stopped once he made the Parkway his domain.
G4: What do you mean?

Aiden: Well, anyone who’s heard of the Parkway killer can’t drive along the Parkway without thinking about the murders. So basically he psychologically owns the parkway.
G4: Serial killers are so interesting.
G5: Why are you assuming the killer is a ‘he’?

(Outside on the porch.)
B5: But knowing ‘70’s music gives you a whole new appreciation of contemporary dance punk! It’s all about understanding the narrative. You know, how before Lo-fi there was DIY.
Roxy: I try to keep it current.

(A drunk Sam wobbles outside and starts fishing for a cigarette.)
Roxy: Hey Sam. Kevin, this is Sam, my roommate.
Sam: Hello Kevin, I see you’ve met my roommate Roxy.
Kevin: Yeah, I was just talking to her.

Sam: Well Kevin, let me congratulate you, because Roxy is pursued only by the strongest and most audacious of men.
Roxy: And Sam has got the most beautiful eyes I’ve ever seen. They remind me of the Eagle nebula.
Kevin: Um, it’s nice to meet you both; I think I’m going to get some more beer.

Sam (yells after him): Remember Kevin, Roxy is the platonic ideal of woman, a work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction!)
Roxy: That’s the guy from my classical mechanics class!
Sam: Oh my god, the one that burned you a CD?

Roxy: That’s him. I mean it’s cool if people want to sound smart about music, but it’s hard for me to appreciate it cuz I have no idea what they’re talking about.
Sam: Yeah, I’m not sure if this is the kind of crowd that would share your love of action movie soundtracks.

Roxy: I like falling asleep to music that makes me feel like I’m on an adventure.
Sam: Yeah, me too. Oh, but I came out to tell you that our dear friend Mike got some girl’s phone number! And he is dancing with her!

Roxy: I know, I saw! They looked pretty cozy. By the way, how are you doing? I noticed you talking with that guy.
Sam: Yeah, he was kind of interesting. He seemed really practical, which was sort of refreshing after dating Dan for a year.

Roxy: You know, it’s okay to be sad about it. You and Dan went out for a long time.
Sam: Oh, but I’m so tired of being sad about it! I wish I could be as sensible about boys as you are.

Roxy: Yeah…so I think your biggest problem is that you keep dating them.
Sam: Yeah, I don’t know how you manage to avoid that.

Roxy: Well I do have a roommate that keeps my self-esteem pretty high.
(Sam and Roxy smile.)

Sam: Ugg, I think I’m going to take one last look at Mike touching a girl and then head home.
Roxy: Okay Sam, I’ll see you when I get back.

(Sam sits down next to Mike who is staring straight ahead drunkenly.)
Mike: Welcome to the desert of the real.
Sam: Hey Mike. Umm, let me hold this for you. (Takes his cup)

 Mike (reaching for it back): Sam, here at the College of William and Mary, we have a strict policy of self-determination.
Sam (trying to distract him): So, I saw you putting some moves on that blonde girl.
Mike (slumps): I tried very hard to be amusing but I was museless. I don’t know how to tell her that I want to be the basket that supports all her eggs. I hope that by dancing with her, I managed to communicate that my affection was transhistorical.

Sam: More like prehistoric, you poor Cro-Magnon. Who knows how you’ve managed to dominate the symbolic order.

Mike: Sam, just admit that you’re disillusioned Disney princess.

Sam: Hey, being sad that my boyfriend broke up with me doesn’t make me less of a feminist.

Mike: Listen I’m sorry your knight in shining armor took you for a ride on his high horse. Just admit it.

Sam (uncomfortable): Hey, can we talk about this later? I’m going to go say goodbye to Aiden.

(Aiden is talking to some random guy.)

Aiden: No man, I’m serious: flat as road kill. When I took off her-

Sam: Hey Aiden. I think I’m going to head out.

Aiden: Oh, uh, I’ll walk with you, if you want.

Sam: Only if you don’t mind. I just have to grab my purse…

Aiden: Yeah, sure. I’ll be here.

(They leave the party.)

Aiden: Want to walk through CW?

Sam: Sure. It’s a really pretty night.

Aiden: Did you have a good time tonight? I saw you trying to manage Mike’s alcohol intake.

Sam: Well Mike makes a pretty lousy drunk even if he’s in a good mood because he got some girl’s number. I was trying to do everyone a favor.

Aiden: It seemed like Mike certainly appreciated it.

Sam: Yeah, he called me a disillusioned Disney princess.

Aiden: So, uh, how are you feeling about the break up?

Sam: Well, it’s been a couple of weeks now; I guess I’m feeling a bit better.

Sam: I know it sounds stupid, but it really seems like relationships are mostly based on propinquity anyway. There’s this elaborate language just to explain why we fixate on the nearest person we think we can hook up with.
Sam: It only feels like a big deal, you know?
Aiden: That does sound stupid, but by all means tell yourself anything that helps you sleep at night.

Aiden: Sorry, it’s probably true. You just sound like an asshole when you say it that way.

Sam: I heard you trying to impress those freshman girls by telling them about the Parkway murders.
Aiden: How did you know they were freshman girls?

Sam: Aiden, how come you act like you’re trying to sleep with every woman you’ve ever met, but you never actually hook up with anybody?
Aiden: I’m just not as good as Mike at collecting phone numbers.

Sam: No, I’m serious. Those girls were drooling over you.
Aiden: Well maybe I’m just not that into drool, okay? I like to keep saliva to a minimum.

Aiden: But yeah I was talking about the Parkway murders. It makes good conversation since a serial killer isn’t something people expect to find at large in Williamsburg.

Sam: Yeah, you’d never think there was a Williamsburg serial killer, if only because CW is so, well, cheerful.

Aiden: I should never have left New York.

Sam: I dunno. I think CW is kind of cool, actually. I mean it’s like the land of the living dead. (Aiden is skeptical.)

Sam: No seriously! Like for over a hundred years it was this sleepy southern town where most people worked for the Eastern State Lunatic Asylum.
Aiden: Really?

Sam: Yeah, and then all of a sudden teams of archeologists exhumed the town’s colonial past and now there are these legions of reenactors walking around Williamsburg, reanimating its remains.

Sam: And like it was all funded by J. D. Rockefeller Jr. and his oil baron inheritance. I mean that’s the dark side of Colonial Williamsburg’s eerie cheerfulness—how its resurrection has been disfigured by the modern imagination.
Sam: So it’s not a living museum, but undead. It’s totally morbid.

Aiden: Nah, I think it’s all in your imagination.
Sam: Well I’m not saying it’s not true, or real, I’m just saying it’s all very literary.

Aiden: I still don’t see why I should be interested in Colonial Williamsburg.

(They sit down.)
Aiden: Other than propinquity.

(Both Aiden and Sam are leaning towards each other.)
Aiden: I guess the Capitol is kind of cool looking.
Sam: Its cupola is off-center. One of the biggest architectural faux pas in town.

(Aiden pauses.)
Aiden: How do you know so much about CW?

(They lean in closer.)
Sam: Oh you know, I read stuff.

(They kiss.)

(Aiden starts sniggering.)

(They both start to giggle.)

(They break apart and start laughing.)

Aiden: ‘I read stuff’?
Sam: Well, I am an English major.

(They both laugh again.)
(The two get up and start walking back. Aiden’s hands are in his pockets. Sam’s are clasped behind her.)

Aiden: I really hope Mike and that girl hook up. He was waxing mad poetic about the meat industry to her.

Sam: Oh I hope so too. God I’m so glad you’re not still pretending to be a vegetarian to pick up girls.

(SCENE 6: David goes home to himself)

(David walks past the flower section and down the canned goods aisle of Bloom in costume.)

(David pauses in the dairy aisle and dully puts soy milk in his cart.)

(David stands in line behind the register.)

(David buys a single glazed donut at the drive through of Dunkin’ Donuts.)

David: Hey, could I have one jelly filled donut please?

(He is at the drive through window and his hand is reaching out to give the torso of a buxom cashier his credit card.)

(The torso reaches out to hand him a bag with the donut in it.)

Cashier: Have a nice day.

(The cashier walks away.)

(Cashier disappears from the frame. David is still sitting in his car.)

(David opens the door to his single bedroom Newtown apartment. There are lots of bookshelves.)

(David sits alone in his kitchen eating his donut and reading what looks suspiciously like the Economist.)

PART 2
(Other than a single earring in his left ear, Brian is a very professional looking man. He is in his late sixties.)
Brian: Now, the community in the Colonial days had three distinctions: the College, the seat of government and uh, Eastern State Hospital, which was the first mental hospital in the New World. Did you know that?

Brian: And most times the population of the hospital was about as big as the community; they used to have the expression that in Williamsburg you had the 100 lazy living off the 100 crazy.

Brian: Um, but the hospital itself was a very humanitarian gesture and the Virginians always had a very liberal attitude towards the patients, which means that some of them could walk and ambulate in the town. So we have developed over the years a tolerance of characters. I am a character, in a lot of communities I don’t know that I would be tolerated, quite frankly. And that’s an exaggeration only.

Brian: But it does mean that uh, quirkiness is tolerated better here than in most places. It also means that we handle things in a quirky way sometimes to uh, avoid bad publicity. I call that the Williamsburg way.

Carolyn: Good day for fishing?
Ray: Not really. Things going good at the College?

Carolyn: They’re going ok.
Ray: Carolyn, when’re you going to find yourself somebody and leave this poor old man in peace?

Carolyn: When you catch a fish as big as the ones in your stories.

Carolyn: Do you ever go to CW, Ray? I’ve been trying to figure out what kind of people go there.
Ray: Well, you know, I think it’s those that want to be nosy, to decide what it was like.
Ray: And they took down the padlocks and the old jail from down there. And they stopped the slave act in Carter’s Grove. Yeah, they stopped that now, thank God.

Carolyn: You don’t think they should have people reenacting slaves?
Ray: See, to me, they need to stop this slavery thing, you know. Or even stop telling the history of the slave thing.

Carolyn: Why?
Ray: I don’t think they should go back there, ‘cause in life you move on. You move on.

Carolyn: But um, don’t you think it’s important to, uh, represent the history of Black people equally?
Ray: To me, when you show how Blacks were treated back in the days, you’re only angering the Black man or the Black woman. You put anger and hate in them. Do you want to know that somebody hung your granddaddy because he looked at a White woman?

Ray: See, to me, they’re teaching the wrong things about Blacks in the South. When the water runs under the bridge, that water’s gone. New water flows, and it don’t come back. If you want to tell history to a Black kid, let them hear the words of Martin Luther King. Let them hear the speech.

Ray: Teach about the good man. Don’t talk about the bad man, ‘cause he was nothing. The good man was good; he was meant for something.

SCENE 3: David’s story

Tourist 4: So I guess you agree that it’s bad when a government raises taxes? What do you think we should do to our government when taxes get too high?
David: Well sir, I am loyal to King George, but I do think it’s unjust that we should be taxed without representation.

(In front of the smithy.)
Tourist 5: So I noticed an adorable little Black girl over there who looks a lot like Thomas Jefferson? I believe she’s the daughter of Sally Hemmings?
David: I’m sorry, I don’t know who you’re talking about, but I’m sure you must be mistaken.

Tourist 5: Say what?
(David is sitting on the bench by the wig makers looking a little dazed.)

(Frame enlarges to show that Carolyn has sat next to him.)
Carolyn: So what’s it like being paid to act like it’s the eighteenth century? Or do you really think we might be about to go to war with Great Britain?

David (warily): Uh, hey. Well we don’t just act like it’s the eighteenth century. We mostly get paid to interact with people in the twenty-first century.
Carolyn: It’s hard for a lot of people.

Carolyn: I’ve always wondered why people come here. No offense, but CW seems pretty strange.
David: Well, a lot of times people will come here to have their own feelings or political views about modern society validated by what we talk about. Which, uh usually doesn’t happen.

Carolyn: How do you manage that?
David: Our job is to teach them history without making them mad to the point that they won’t listen to anything we’ve got to say, but also not just kind of kowtowing to their views on what the history should sound like.

Carolyn: So you’re like diplomats of history?
David: Yeah, kind of.

Carolyn: So are a lot of people enthusiastic about you guys making slavery into a tourist attraction?
David (taken aback): Uh I don’t know, but I think the interpreters who portray slaves view it as a way to uphold the integrity of their ancestors by telling their story.

Carolyn: Cool. Well good luck with your guild and all that stuff.

Carolyn leaves the frame and David unconsciously steps towards her. Unfortunately his is about to step in horse manure.)
David: Uh, thanks!

(David is disgusted by both himself and the manure. Meanwhile, Trish and Barbra speed walk into his frame and notice his predicament.)
Barbara: I do wish they’d clean this place up. While I applaud the changes they’ve made to be more historically accurate, it certainly makes our morning walk much more treacherous.
Trish: Well I think they made a mistake removing the windmill. That’s been there for a long time and whenever I had people come visit they’d always go take pictures of it. And I don’t know if it was accurate, but neither are the lights and I mean neither is Williams—Sonoma.

Trish: There are some things that Colonial Williamsburg as an organization has just defied common sense over. Did you know the Raleigh Tavern has been moved 3 times because they kept finding more information about where it should be?
Barbara: But I mean, Colonial Williamsburg—it’s like a wedding cake. It’s very pretty and its fun to the extent they can they make history accessible, but I mean its main job is to attract tourists.

(The two note David vigorously scuffing his shoe and growling under his breath.)
Trish: I suppose the interpreters are a little, well, theatrical, but I guess people have been introduced to that with Disney and all that.
Barbara: Well the other thing is that they don’t know as much as I would like—I mean let’s face it, the Washington and the Jefferson they have are not the Washington and Jefferson that you’d like to talk to. You can’t bring the real people back to life and it’s—it’s foolish to think actors can do that.

Trish: And I always worry about when they do a reenactment on, you know, what it was really like to sell a human being and I know they’ve done that here.

Trish: It’s like we already knew this from the history books, but when it’s being pulled into today I think it fuels the anger instead of simply educating people. So it’s kinda like stirring the pot.

Trish: And I’d like to see them get out the fact that up North a lot of the Blacks were doing very very well.
Barbara: And if you were a slave in the South, I mean you didn’t have any civil rights and all that, but were you really that much worse off than an immigrant getting off the boat in Boston or New York? I mean a slave knew where his next meal was coming from, but an immigrant had to figure out a way to earn something so that he could survive.

Trish (shakes her head): I don’t think it should be used as a weapon, because there are no slaves today and there haven’t been for quite a while. And I just don’t know anybody anymore today who thinks that was right. They may not be real comfortable with Black people, you know, today, but they sure don’t think that was right.

Trish: I just would like to have the experience of walking in some place, where there was at least half of the place was Black and not have the look come at me, you know, like somehow I’m evil because my skin’s white.
Trish: Quite frankly, when I first came down here from the Northeast it really shocked me just how friendly the Blacks were. And uh, you could say hello or you could hold a door for somebody and they’d say thank you.

(David and Emily are sitting outside the Anderson building again. David is smoking)
David: So do you really work Christmases here?
Emily: Well we have the same kind of white buildings in Jamaica. So it reminds me of home.

David: That must be nice, I guess. I’ve been here a long time and it still doesn’t make me think of home.

Emily: Say, are you doing anything after work honey? I’m having tea with some friends at Aromas; you should come join us. And my niece might be there.
David (a little suspiciously): Thanks Emily. That sounds nice.

David: Emily? Uh, I can’t believe I’ve never really asked you this, but uh what’s it like portraying a slave in colonial times?
Emily: Well, you have to have dedication and this appreciation because you’re telling a story that is very rarely told.

Emily: And I know what, you know, the outside world may think, but it takes a special person to put their costume on and to reenact the life of a slave.

Emily: Think about it, or think about you attending graduate school and how much your parents paid for tuition and then when you graduate you say to your parent, ‘I’m going to Colonial Williamsburg, I have accepted a position to reenact the life of a slave.’ Honestly, tell me what you believe your parent would have said?”
David: I can’t imagine.

Emily: And sometimes I have guests saying to me, ‘I’m so sorry that my people did this to you, I’m so very sorry’ and there may be tears. But you just, you know, put them not necessarily at ease, because it’s ok to be uncomfortable, but you transport them. And you have to tell the story whereby its not only Black history but African history, European history, Native American history—you have to bring them together because this is what becoming an American mean.

Emily: So you know, folks may say things, but this is my ancestor’s story that I’m imparting to others, so it’s worth it. It’s—it’s not a beautiful story, but it’s one that’s worth telling—about what these people have been through.
Emily (shrugs): Maybe if you speak to somebody else you get a different outlook, but this is how I feel about the history that I teach. This is what caused me to be here.

SCENE 4: Aromas

(Sam and Aiden are drinking at a table outside Aromas. Seated near them are Emily and Bobby.)

Sam: You know, this is the first time I haven’t come here alone. I feel like I’m the only person at William and Mary who’s never been on a date at Aromas.
Aiden: Oh, Sam. I’m sure there are lots of people who’ve never been on dates here. Look at some of the people Roxy studies physics with, uh, not that you’re like those people.

(Frame changes to a close up on Sam and Aiden.)
Sam: Really?
Aiden (sarcastically): No, you’re lovely Sam. I feel very fortunate to be getting coffee with you.

Sam: Is this a date?
Aiden: No! Of course not—I mean, I’m from New York; I have very sophisticated taste in coffee. Aromas is basically the only place I can go.

Sam: Good, because I am not going to put out. I think it would be bad to reward banter of this caliber.
Aiden: Hey I’m not the one pouting about never being asked out to Aromas.

Sam: Actually, speaking of pouting, I’m worried that Roxy’s been feeling kind of down. It’s just ridiculous how much work she has for her Electronics lab.
Aiden: I don’t believe you. Roxy is a strong and independent woman; she would never let you catch her pouting.

Sam: Well I think she’s under a lot of pressure from her family to do well. And you know Roxy—failure is not an option. I just worry that one of these days she’s gonna crack.
Aiden: Nah, Roxy’s a big girl. I think she’s well adjusted enough to know when she’s taking on too much. And I mean she’s not Mike...

Sam: Oh, Mike’s just trying to see how much stupid shit he can get away with in college. He’ll change once he finds something to care about. And I’m sure he’ll do quite brilliantly.
Aiden: I’m glad you always have such a charitable interpretation of Mike. It makes me feel better about our relationship.
Sam: Yeah, I’m not as lucky. You’re always super critical.
Aiden: I am aren’t I? No, that’s not true, I like Roxy. You—you’re ok.

Sam: Thanks Aiden, I know my intellect can be intimidating.
Aiden: Oh I feel so intimidated. If this was a date and we were holding hands, you’d notice how moist my palms are.

(Christian walks into the frame)
Christian: Well what do you know?

Sam: Christian! What are you doing here?
Christian: Well Sam, if you could learn how to pick up your phone, you would know that I was trying to get dinner with you at Retros. But it’s too late: I replaced you.

Sam: But Christian, that’s not fair! I’ve been trying to convince you to have dinner with me all week.
Christian: Sam, flooding my inbox with voicemails about how depressed you feel is not very convincing. I’m sorry, but you can’t come with me to Retros retroactively.
Aiden: Nice! Can I go with you to Retros?

(Sam rolls her eyes.)
Christian: No.

Sam: So wait, who’d you replace me with?
(Christian holds up a copy of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*)

Sam: Oh fuck no. No way am I going to be replaced by that—
Christian: No, Tess is so good! C’mon.

Sam: Should we force ourselves upon him?
Aiden: Christian get ready to be a maiden no more.
Christian: God, why do I talk to people?

(Christian, Sam and Aiden leave. David walks up to Emily and Bobby in plain clothes.)
Emily: Hello David, won’t you sit down? David this is my landlord, Bobby. He grew up in Williamsburg and then came back here to retire, isn’t that right?
Bobby: Everybody always comes back to this place; can’t keep the old folks away, really.

(Emily laughs. David sits down.)
Bobby: Are you a student at the College, David?
David: Not anymore, but I got my masters in history from there. Um, did you go to William and Mary?

Bobby: Well when I graduated high school in 1956 I could not go to William and Mary, so I ended up at Hampton.

Bobby (laughs): I guess I must be older than I look. Really, I never even went on William and Mary’s campus until I came back here several years ago.

David: I’m so sorry I didn’t mean, umm, I wasn’t really thinking—
Bobby (raises his hand to cut David off): We had a ball in this town. It was not a matter of feeling sorry for Black people, oh no. We had an absolute ball.

Emily: I’ve noticed Williamsburg has a kind of quiet, peaceful nature. I imagine it wasn’t like other parts in the South.
Bobby: Well there was a lot of discrimination, but let’s just say it wasn’t bothersome discrimination. And there’s a good reason for that, and my reasoning is that it had to do with Colonial Williamsburg.

David: I never really thought about it, but I guess we are a huge source of revenue.
Emily: Oh yes. Without no Colonial Williamsburg this would be like a ghost town, wouldn’t you say?
Bobby: Yeah, oh heck yeah. And you have to remember a few things: everything is based on money, make no mistake about it, all right? Money buys a lot of things. Colonial Williamsburg was not only in the business of history, but they’re in the business of money—they had to be ‘cause otherwise they would not have survived.

Bobby: Now think about it, back in those times who was Colonial Williamsburg’s customers? Was it the South: Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina? Noooo. They were from Ohio, New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and if they came down and saw this outright segregation in Colonial Williamsburg, they were not gonna come back here.

Bobby: And people got along well, it’s like I’ve told Emily, you have to watch out who you talk to, because you might be talking to somebody’s cousin.
David: Right…I’ll remember that.

SCENE 5: David goes home to himself again
Again, David buys a single glazed donut at the drive through of Dunkin’ Donuts. He is reaching out his hand towards the buxom cashier handing him the bag with the donut in it.

Cashier: Have a nice day.

(The cashier walks away and David drives home.)

(David opens the door to his single bedroom Newtown apartment.)

(David sits alone in his kitchen eating his donut and staring into space.)

PART 3

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SCENE 1: Carolyn and Ray
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Carolyn: Hey Ray, anything biting?
Ray: Not yet, no. You thinking about going to some of your classes instead of coming down here?

Carolyn: I always go to my classes, Ray. Although I do wish I could skip my computer science lecture.
Ray (shakes his head): Right now I have no computers in my house. If I need somebody to do something for me, I call my granddaughter.

Ray: You can hit a button and know a man’s life from the time he’s born till the time he dies and to me it’s not a good thing.

Carolyn: I just hope it helps me get a job so I can prove to my parents that what I did with the last four years of my life was worth thousands of dollars.
Ray: (shakes his head) Back in the days when I come along, you could come out of high school and get a job. Now you have to get an education because the world is going computer.

Carolyn: Yeah, I hear the job market’s pretty bad right now. It would be great if Congress could fix this recession before I graduate.
Ray: See the president we got now—lot of people think it’s his problem, his fault that we in this predicament, but you gotta look at the one that step down and let him in. Bush did all this to us, to y’all.
Ray: Now when I say us, I mean all of us—each Republican that gets into Congress, it get tougher and tougher for you and me.

Ray: There are those that are losing homes, can’t afford to feed their families. They want to cut jobs, but yet has any senator or congressman ever say, ‘I’m gonna cut my pay’? Only person I know did that was the governor of California. He did not take a check; he put all his money back into the economy.

Ray: And health insurance, yeah they can afford to take their kids to the doctor if they didn’t have no insurance, because they make millions. They make millions and every time you turn around they’re giving themselves raises. But yet the wage salary for you to get a job is 7.50. You can’t live off no 7.50.

Carolyn: I just don’t understand why people in this country allow this sort of thing to happen. I just don’t get it Ray.

(Carolyn is clearly very flustered but Ray is unmoved.)
Ray: You gotta look at the water—it’ll give you peace of mind. Before they changed this I used to come down at nighttime with my friends or my girlfriend—look at the water, do our thing—know what I’m saying?

Ray: We used to go out, you know, go messing around ‘cause a party was the thing back in the days—couldn’t wait for Friday. Put your clothes in the trunk for the morning, take a big old jar of uh, water and a wash cloth and a bar of soap—you’d wash up on the job and jump in the car and go party. Yeah, those were the days.

Ray (shakes his head): You never know where you’re going to get lost, or when you might need someone you can trust in these days and time. But uh, some things will always give you peace.

Ray: Yeah, and those are the lord Jesus and a good day of fishing.

(SCENE 2: David’s story)

(A mother is about to take a picture of her son with David)
Tourist 6: Go on. Go up to him so Mommy can take a picture.
David: Um, excuse me Madam, but—
(She’s already taken the picture and she scuttles away with her kid.)
Tourist: Thanks!
David: Good day…

(Carolyn pops into the frame again.)
Carolyn: So which is more annoying, the tourists bringing their emotional baggage or the paparazzi?
David: Oh it’s not annoying really; it’s just part of the job. I wish it were that way outside of CW in fact.

(David is on his soapbox.)
Carolyn: Random people taking pictures of you?
David: I wish people would just, you know, talk to each other, rather than listen to these people that represent the most left or right views.

Carolyn: Ah.
David: But of course, we all know that the most extreme voices of any movement are the ones that get the most TV time and—

(Brian walks into the frame.)
Carolyn: Do you ever get tired of talking about politics and history?
David: Well I, uh…Yeah, sometimes.
Brian: You are about to see some remarkable times.

Carolyn: Excuse me?
Brian: I agree with you young man. There is a solid working consensus in the center but nobody’s organizing it or tapping into it because the voices of the extreme left and the extreme right are drowning out the political discourse and making it all seem very uncivil.

Brian: But the center is where the revolution is because the center is where the hearts and minds of the people are. Uh, our revolution is the first continuing revolution in history, which you probably don’t realize, but it is.

David: I’m sorry, who are you?
Brian: I’m a radical centrist, an extreme moderate. I believe in militant cooperation.

(David and Carolyn look confused.)
Brian: I’m a Revolutionist; it is my profession. You can go out there and you ask anybody old enough if they expected the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union to come down in their lifetime and the answer is no. Now what does that tell you?
Brian: It’s some big history made in the last 20 years in the direction of democracy. And no democracy has ever gone to war against another democracy. Europe is now at peace and probably will remain so, and if the trend continues, by the end of this century probably the world will be at peace for the most part and we’ll have achieved the breakout into space.

Brian: You’re gonna be able to go with your grandchildren on a great vacation from the shores of New Hawaii to the ski slopes of New New England.

Carolyn: That sounds very nice.

David: Um, so are you a professor at the College?

Brian (in despair): You know, it’s difficult providing leadership in a community that keeps changing to such an extent that nobody knows who you are.

Brian: I’ve been here now what, 52 years or something like that? If the newspapers in this town were better, I’d be famous.

Brian: (sadly) But they’re not and I’m grateful for it, because I—fame in my own time, if at all—I’d just assume be obscure quite frankly.

Carolyn: Oh.

David: Uh, I’m sorry.

Brian: But I’m serious, I have lived such a life in this town that if the newspapers had been alert I’d have been famous decades ago. Someone once said that 18th century Virginia was so sophisticated that Demosthenes could pass through Virginia unnoticed and it’s true. Please excuse me.

(Both Carolyn and David are a bit dazed)

(David valiantly tries to return to the earlier conversation.)

David: So, uh, do you have anything you’re passionate about?

Carolyn: I don’t know about passionate, but I do like fishing.

(Both stare off into space.)

David: Really? Wow, fishing.

SCENE 3: The Girls
(Roxy and Carolyn are sitting on Roxy’s bed. Sam is standing in the open the door.)
Sam: Hey, you guys should come out to the bar with Christian, Aiden and me!
Roxy: Yeah…so what’s happening with you and Aiden?
Carolyn: You came in at a perfect time. We were about to try to figure it out without you.

Sam: Aiden? How could you even suggest that? I though you guys were my best friends.
Carolyn: Well you do have a history. Remember freshman year when—
Roxy: Oh Carolyn, she’s just saying that to be dramatic. She’s going to tell us why she and Aiden keep getting lost together late at night.

Sam: Okay fine. But really, nothing is going on between us. Anything that seems romantic is just pure coincidence. Also I don’t think streaking the sunken gardens counts as a history Carolyn.

Roxy (to Carolyn): Yeah, I don’t think Sam is actually trying to date Aiden.
Sam: Thank you Roxy.
Carolyn: You’re right, Sam has terrible taste in men.

Sam: I thought you didn’t like Aiden!
Carolyn: No, I do like him. He reminds me of the kind of boy I used to date in high school.

Sam: Well anyway, you should come with me to the Leaf. Roxy, I don’t care how much work you have to do, if we team up we can force Carolyn to come with us.
Carolyn: Roxy’s got four midterms in five days. I don’t think it’s going to happen.
Roxy: Drive me to campus and I’ll come with you to Paul’s.

(Sam and Roxy high five.)
Sam: Yes!
Carolyn: That still doesn’t mean I’m coming.

(Sam and Roxy are in the car.)
Sam: So what kind of work do you have to do?
Roxy: Oh I just have to type up some lab reports and then you know, study for my exams.

Sam: That sucks. I hope some guy at the bar doesn’t convince you to make another time commitment.
Roxy: I could pick up a guy at the bar. Or I could just wait for my parents to choose someone for me to marry. You know, s’all good.
Sam: Have you talked to your brothers lately?
Roxy: Yeah, Pedram called to tell me something he learned about Einstein. Did you know that nobody wrote down Einstein’s last words cuz his nurse didn’t speak English? Isn’t that so crazy?

Sam: Yeah, that’s really crazy. You know it’s nice getting updates from your brothers—even I’m starting to miss them.
Roxy: Whenever I talk to them I feel really guilty for not being there to take care of them…but then I just make myself stop thinking about it.

Roxy: It’s hard though. My dad is killing himself working multiple jobs and I feel like I could be helping instead of wasting their money on alcohol. Actually could you drop me off by the Law School?
Sam: Yeah, sure.

Roxy: I just keep thinking about my brothers and how much better off they would be if I was there to help raise them. But I guess I’ll have to think about it after I’m finished learning everything there is to know about circuits.
Sam: I’m sorry, Roxy. I think the only thing you can do now is focus on how to be a good role model.

(Roxy gets out of the car.)
Roxy: Luckily I am always a good role model—as and older sister, as a girl in physics. I have to be a good role model so the first thing people think of me isn’t whether I’m related to somebody in al-Qaeda. But I gotta go do work—you can throw a pity party for me later tonight. See ya Sam.
Sam: Ok Roxy, I will. Good luck on your work. Call me if you want a ride back.

SCENE 4: Brian and Roxy

(Roxy is sitting by the Civil War monument looking pensive.)
Brian: Took a long time to get over that war; we’re still not over it entirely.

(Roxy looks up.)
Brian: I don’t know if you’re interested in the Civil War?

Roxy: My family is from Iran, so besides what I learned in school it’s not something I know all that much about.

Brian: Are you a student at the College?
Roxy: Yes, I’m a senior actually.

Brian: Congratulations, I’m sure you have great plans for after you graduate. Roxy: Well that’s why I came here actually, to think about what I want to do.

(Silent panel.)

Roxy (trying to be polite): So…are you into Civil War history? Brian: My people fought in that war. As a matter of fact, one of my ancestors was in Pickett’s division, which lead the charge at Gettysburg.

Brian: I admire their courage; they stood by their country and their community and they weren’t slave owners either.

Brian: But we’re still paying for that war, we really are, in the way our institutions have emerged and the fact that so many people have been left behind in poverty and illiteracy.

Roxy: I guess I haven’t thought much about it because I was raised in the North. But yeah, it makes sense that’s why things are, you know, the way they are for Black people in the South. Brian: Well, let me tell you something.

Brian: My father’s family is from the south side of Virginia, which is down in Southhampton County—I don’t know if you’re at all familiar with it, probably not—very rural to this day. But when I was growing up, we cousins would visit my grandparents down on the old bridge road, and uh, there were two realities.

Brian: One reality was when Grandpaw went to town, and Grandpaw was illiterate, Grandpaw had no special social status believe me, Grandpaw was po white. Um, if he had come across a Black on the sidewalk, the Black would have to get off the sidewalk to yield to the White man. That’s the way it was.

Brian: But I used to go with Grandpaw down to the river to go fishing around where the old bridge used to be and on the way back we’d stop off at the Black folks house, leave off some fish and have a coke. That was the reality. They were both poor and they shared and they were neighbors.

Brian: That was the prevailing reality in the South, not the Ku Klux Klan and all that other kind of stuff. It was bad enough as it was, but it was a different reality in the South than in the North.
Brian: Because you see, what you Northerners don’t realize is that in the South after the War everybody was poor, really, and poor understands poor. Which meant that, uh even with the problems with Jim Crow and everything, White folk and Black folk who had been poor still had a basic empathy when a lot of people in Northern societies didn’t.

Roxy: Hmm…
Brian (glancing at her sideways): And I think we’ve got far bigger fish to fry than these holdover feelings that we have based on color. But at the same time I do not wonder why we have them when I consider the whole history of the Black person in America and the White person in America.

Brian: But it’s like Mr. Lincoln said when he was asked about the rebels during the War—he said the rebels are just what we would be if we were in their situation. You know, reverse roles, put most of them Yankees down there owning slaves and they’d come to defend the institution of slavery. The question is how you treat other people as human beings. And, uh, that’s always the challenge isn’t it? A lot of racism in this country is just the residue of our history.

Roxy: I guess it’s all about the kind of perspective you have on things.
Brian: America’s a lot about reconciliation; it’s about patching up old wounds and getting on with the business of progress and life.

SCENE 5: Bar Scene

(Christian is alone in a booth at Paul’s. Carolyn and Roxy are just sitting down with him.)
Christian: Oh hey Carolyn, I thought you didn’t drink?
Roxy: She doesn’t. It took me like a thousand years to convince her.
Carolyn: I don’t understand why going to Paul’s is such a big deal.

(Christian is alone in a booth at Paul’s. Carolyn and Roxy are just sitting down with him.)
Christian: She’s right, it’s a pretty shitty bar.
Roxy: Don’t encourage her.

(Carolyn looks back and smiles.)
Roxy: Who’s that?

(David grins back.)
Carolyn: I don’t know. I think we might have a math class together.

Roxy: Where’s Sam and Aiden? Cuz I have a really really awesome story.
Carolyn: Should I call Sam?

Roxy: Don’t bother, she won’t pick up.
Christian. They’re probably lost. They really are a very inefficient couple.

(Aiden and Sam are sitting at a table the Green Leaf.)
Sam: Dan and I used to have pitcher races here. Sometimes he’d let me win.
Aiden: Sounds super romantic.

Sam: I know, right? I spent most of the day sorting through the music he gave me before we broke up, so all in all it’s been a pretty low key Friday.

Sam: Actually, I wonder where everyone is tonight.
Aiden: Oh yeah, aren’t a bunch of other people supposed to be here too?

Sam: Maybe it took them longer to convince Carolyn than we anticipated. Oh! Carolyn likes you, by the way.
Aiden: Wait, why wouldn’t she like me?

Sam: I wonder if they went to Paul’s instead.
Aiden: I’m always so nice to Carolyn.

Sam: They’ll start getting suspicious if we don’t find them soon.
Aiden: Why?

Sam: Oh, it’s just because they think there’s something going on with, well, you know.
Aiden: Well I guess we have been hanging out unusually frequently. But I don’t really want to leave, do you?

Sam: No, I don’t. But my roommates will make fun of me when I get home.
Aiden: Eh, we’ll just make up a story. They don’t have to know what actually happened.
(Sam is smiling)
Sam: As long as it’s a good story.

Aiden: Trust me, it’ll be good.

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SCENE 6: The End
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(Ray is out fishing by himself, his back is towards us.)

(Image of Ray with his face towards us. He is smiling peacefully.)