America’s Family Tree

**Presenters**
Sharon Leslie Morgan
Rachel Unkefer
Objectives

- REVIEW America’s historical trauma
- TEACH basics of family research
- PROMOTE racial healing
EVERYONE is inherently interested in their ancestry

- 2nd most popular hobby after gardening
- 2nd most popular internet destination after pornography

MOST want to know

- Who am I?
- Who am I related to?
- What traits have I inherited?
INSPIRATION: My enslaved ancestors

- LESLIE Tom & Rhoda
- GAVIN Bettie, Owen, Catherine & Seborn
- MORASS Harriett
- REEVES Easter
- NICHOLSON Samuel, Count, Virgil & Lucy
- WILLIAMS Jem & Susie
- OWEN Mary
- HUGHES Alsey

COUNTLESS missing parents, children & siblings
American Legacy
EVERYONE has an immigrant ancestor

- Some arrived on the Mayflower, some were kidnapped & transported unwillingly on slave ships, some came voluntarily through Ellis Island, some crossed the Rio Grande, some flew on airplanes...

- Native Americans are the ONLY people indigenous to America

  - Even they came from somewhere else (50 thousand years ago)
Historical Trauma

- Native American genocide
- African slavery

“the elephant in the room”

- Human rights violations to the Nth degree!
  - Destruction of cultures
  - Destruction of families
  - Bigotry
  - Racism
  - Sexism
  - Homophobia
  - Xenophobia
  - Oppression
  - Persecution
  - Discrimination
  - Disenfranchisement
  - Criminalization
  - Medical experimentation
  - Sterilization
  - Lynching
  - Violence
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”
African Americans are exceptional

- The ONLY people in America doomed to generational slavery based on race via a system codified in law that endured for more than 245 years

  - Families torn apart
  - Biological relationships lost
  - 10 generations affected
TransAtlantic Slave Trade

- 12+ million people stolen from Africa
- 4 centuries (16\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th}) of triangular trade that connected economies of 4 continents
- Every nation in Europe and every colony/state in America benefitted from the economic rewards of slavery

5% of survivors enslaved in America = 500,000 people
Slavery in America

- 1619 -- Portuguese ship arrived in Jamestown Virginia with 20 Africans from Angola on board
- 1640 -- slavery made legal
- 1650 -- hereditary slavery based on race institutionalized
  - Yearly average of 74,000 slaves imported into American colonies
- 1808 -- international slave trading declared illegal
- 1830-1860 -- westward expansion fueled internal slave trade
  - 1.2 million black people displaced from Atlantic states to deep South
- 1865 -- 4 million people released from bondage after Civil War
“.... the expansion of slavery in the first eight decades after American independence drove the evolution and modernization of the United States. In the span of a single lifetime, the South grew from a narrow coastal strip of worn-out tobacco plantations to a continental cotton empire, and the United States grew into a modern, industrial, and capitalist economy.”
Who owned slaves?

- 1 in 70 people were slaveholders
  - Most slaveholders were Scots-Irish
  - Average slaveholding = 10 people
  - 80% of free adult males in South did not own slaves
  - Owners of 200+ slaves = less than 1% of total, but held 20-30% of all slaves
- In 1860, 394K people held 4M people in bondage
26 owned slaves
19 relied on slave labor for their livelihood
1 did not own slaves but owned a slave ship and invested in plantations using slaves (Robert Morris)
Some emancipated their slaves (Richard Bassett & John Dickinson)
Some opposed slavery and supported abolition (Jacob Broom & William Samuel Johnson)

49% of 55 delegates to Constitutional Convention owned slaves
Presidents

12 of first 18 American presidents owned slaves

- George Washington (200)
- Thomas Jefferson (650)
- James Madison (108+)
- James Monroe (40+)
- Andrew Jackson (160)
- Martin Van Buren (6)
- William Henry Harrison (?)
- John Tyler (?)
- James K. Polk (15)
- Zachary Taylor (100+)
- Andrew Johnson (8+)
- Ulysses S. Grant (1+)
Slave Traders

- DeWolf family = Most successful slave trading dynasty in American history
  - Transported 10,000+ Africans to the Americas
  - When patriarch James DeWolf died in 1837, he was the second-richest man in America
North v. South

- New York & New England “boomed as the South’s business partners…”
- “The nation’s busiest fleet of slave ships sailed from Rhode Island”
- “Cotton Lords” in Massachusetts, Maine & New Hampshire dominated the international cotton market
- Connecticut companies “imported tons of elephant ivory… that destroyed the lives of 2 million African slaves”
European Americans

- 1607 – 1st English settlers arrive @ Jamestown, VA
  - 104 arrived; 38 survived winter
- 1617 – Indentured servants arrive
  - Numbers unknown
  - Many came from Caribbean islands
- 1620 – Mayflower pilgrims arrive @ Plymouth, MA
  - 102 passengers; 30 crew

HURT people HURT people
Native Americans

- 10M+ when European settlers arrived
  - 90% wiped out
- 1893 Dawes Rolls (Final Rolls of Citizens & Freedmen of Five Civilized Tribes) created by US Congress
  - 500K Cherokee, Choctaw, Creek, Chickasaw & Seminole ("civilized tribes) forced to register and agree to land allotment plan
  - Emancipated Freedmen included
  - 250K applied; 100K accepted

Records available @ Fold3 & FamilySearch
African Americans

- 500K imported from Africa
- 1.2 million displaced by internal slave trade
- 4M emancipated after Civil War
  - 90% of ancestors enslaved
  - 250K “free people of color”
  - 40 million descendants living today
- Most can only trace back to 1870
Everybody else

79 million people immigrated to America from 1820-2013
Golden Door
Basic Research
Rules for Success

- WORK from known to unknown
- FOLLOW every possible lead
- CONNECT name, date AND location
- DO NOT take shortcuts
- DO NOT blindly accept online references
- DOCUMENT all sources
- DO NOT lose faith (ancestors will guide you)
Software

- Build your family tree & keep track of information and documents
Start with YOU

- Beginning from ONE, the search grows exponentially...
  - Numbers double in each generation = 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64...
  - After 10 generations, there should be 1,024 grandparents

For African Americans, most prior generations are lost

Sharon Antonia LESLIE
(1951- still living)
Oral History

- Family stories are *essential*
- They *always* contain a grain of truth
  - Collect stories from parents and grandparents
  - Interview oldest relatives before they pass away
Research Sources

**ONLINE**

Zillions of records to research, download & print without leaving home

- **SUBSCRIPTION**
  - Ancestry
  - Fold3
  - OurBlackAncestry

- **FREE**
  - FamilySearch
  - Cyndi’s List
  - Google

**OFFLINE**

- State archives
- County courthouses
- Libraries
- Historical societies
- Cemeteries

Eventually, you MUST do old fashioned paper research!
Census Records

- US government required by law to conduct a national census every 10 years
- 1790 was first census taken in America
- Enslaved African Americans documented as “chattel” = property rather than people
- 1870 was first census to record African Americans with surnames
  - 1866 post Civil War Southern state censuses also list names but often without surnames
- By 1880, many people moved and/or changed names
- By 1920, many people relocated from the South
- 1940 census became available in 2012

**TIP**
- Do line-by-line census reads
- Look for family groups
- Look at neighbors
- Check neighboring counties

Tom & Rhoda LESLIE 1880
@ Opelika AL
Slave Schedules

- Every federal census (1790-1860) documented slaveholdings
- Separate schedules included in 1850 & 1860 censuses
- Note entries for “slave houses”
Birth Records

- BMD records usually kept at county level
- Many people born before 1912 did not have birth certificates because they were born at home
- Virginia records begin @ 1853
Marriage Records

Tom & Rhoda LESLIE married 1871 @ Opelika AL
Death Records

Tom LESLIE - 1939 @ Montgomery AL

Rhoda LESLIE - 1954 @ Chicago IL
Land Records

- Federal land conveyance records
  - 3+ million Federal land title records issued between 1820-1908
  - Military Land Warrants to individuals as reward for military service

http://www.glorecords.blm.gov/
### Tax Records

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address 1</th>
<th>Address 2</th>
<th>Address 3</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<td>Johnson</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
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<td>789 Pine Dr</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cotton</td>
<td>101 Cedar Ln</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>222 Maple St</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>90</td>
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</table>

*Note: The table above represents a sample of tax records. Actual data may vary and should be consulted for accurate information.*
Probate Records

- Enslaved people often bequeathed in wills & sold to satisfy debts
- County courthouses maintain estate files, including annual “distribution reports”
Court Records
Freedmens Bureau

- Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands established in War Department by Congressional act in March 1865
- Supervised relief & educational activities relating to refugees & freedmen, including legitimizing marriages, issuing rations, clothing and medicine

www.freedmensbureau.com
Military Records
Newspapers

➢ Community news
➢ Obituaries
➢ Runaway slave ads

Chronicling America
Digitized images from historic newspapers

http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/about/
Other Records

- Funeral programs
- Cemetery cards
- Family Bibles
- Church records
- Insurance records
- Social Security files
- Associations & clubs

SEARCH EVERY POSSIBILITY!
Photographs

Photography not commonly available until 1850s
For poor people, photography was a luxury
DNA Testing
Questions to ask

- What are my expectations of DNA testing?
- Which test will best serve my goals?
- Which testing company should I use?
- Who is the best candidate for testing?
- Am I emotionally prepared for what might be revealed?
### What DNA testing can & cannot do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAN</th>
<th>CAN’T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Confirm &amp; supplement paper research</td>
<td>▶ Substitute for traditional research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Confirm genetic relationships</td>
<td>▶ Fill in family tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Give hints about families / surnames to investigate</td>
<td>▶ Prove lack of relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Reunite lost relatives</td>
<td>▶ Give accurate % of ethnicities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Solve all mysteries</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Types of Tests

1. Y-DNA
   = father-to-son

2. mtDNA
   = mother-to-daughter

3. Autosomal DNA
   = both sides
Y-DNA Test

- Males whose surname is unknown/changed
- Males searching ethnicity of surname
- Males who want to confirm common male ancestor
- Males who can serve as proxies on Y-chromosome inheritance line
- Male adoptees
mtDNA Test

• Males or females searching ethnicity of maternal line
• Males or females who want to confirm common female ancestor
• Males or females who can serve as proxies on mitochondrial inheritance
• Male or female adoptees
atDNA (autosomal) Test

- Male & female testers
- Shows inheritance from all ancestral lines
- DNA from each line halved in each generation due to recombination
  - Inheritance/recombination is random
- Estimated to reliably match relatives with a common ancestor up to 5 generations back
- Ethnicity estimates based on reference populations
Who to test?

- You should test:
  - Oldest living generation for as many lines as possible
  - Person(s) with the Y-DNA or mtDNA that will solve your puzzle
  - Cousins who represent different lines

- Don’t bother testing:
  - Children whose parents have both tested
  - Multiple Y-DNA or mtDNA descendants on the same line
Major Testing Companies

23andMe
- Autosomal
- Health oriented
- Chromosome browser
- $99

Ancestry
- Autosomal
- Genealogy oriented
- No chromosome browser
- $79

Family Tree DNA
- Y-DNA, MTDNA & atDNA
- Genealogy oriented
- Smaller autosomal matching database
- Chromosome browser
- Samples stored for future tests
- Projects
- $59+
Sharon’s DNA

Makua
East Africa

Mandinka
West Africa

Scotsmen
Scotland
Epigenetics

- Our experiences and those of our forbears are never gone, even if they have been forgotten.
- Traumatic experiences leave molecular scars that adhere to DNA
  - Africans who survived slavery
  - Jews who endured the Holocaust
  - Chinese whose grandparents experienced the Cultural Revolution
Making Connections
Surnames

- Surnames evolved as the number of people on the planet increased
- Slaves did not have public surnames before 1870
  - Related family members often took different names after Emancipation
  - Many people changed names between 1870-1880

- Only 15% of African Americans took the name of their last slave owner
- Others chose names of:
  - A previous owner
  - The first owner
  - Someone they admired
  - A skill they possessed
  - An aspiration
- Some simply made up a name they liked

One thing for sure....
African Americans did not leave Africa with European names – first or last!
Find Slaveholder

“Nettie Rule”

- Do line-by-line read of 1870 census
- Look for people with surname you are interested in
- From that name, go 10 up and 10 back
- If you find a white person with that surname, they are the likely last slaveholder

- Search white family to prove connection
  - Wills
  - Deeds
  - Court cases
  - Insurance records
  - Personal papers
  - Freedmen records
The Great Migration

➢ From 1916-1930, 7M+ African Americans migrated out of the South to cities in the North, Midwest and West

❖ A second migration occurred from 1940-1970 when another 1.6 million people changed location from South to North
Find Descendants

Slaves
- Begin @ ancestral home
- Search 1870 census
- Search children names on censuses (thru 1940)
- Find recent documents (death certificates)

Slaveholders
- Begin @ ancestral home
- Search surname in that location
- Find slave schedules, wills & deeds

>>> Both >>>
- Prowl social networks
- Post on message boards
- Use city directories & Intellius

* VA * AZ * IL * FL * MO * MI * MN *
What Next?

- DIGITIZE family records
- SHARE family history with others
- CONTRIBUTE information to OBA & other sites

Empower our future by honoring our past
Restorative Justice

- Genealogy = a tool for healing
- Restorative Justice = coming to terms with “done wrong” to “done right”

“The past is our definition. We may strive, with good reason to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it, but we will escape it only by adding something better to it.”

~ Wendell Berry
Closing Thought

“I have a dream that one day ... the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit together at the table of brotherhood.”

~ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Questions?