

Materialities of Homeplace

Annelise Morris

Accepted: 20 July 2016 / Published online: 28 March 2017
© Society for Historical Archaeology 2017

Abstract In this article, I discuss a semiotic approach to thinking archaeologically about the processes of racialization in the African diaspora. Within this, I employ the concept of “homeplace” as an archaeological, ideological, and memorial site. I situate my archaeological narrative in persistence rather than resistance, highlighting how narratives of persistence allow for and empower social agency in the past not solely situated in or responsive to systems of oppression.

Extracto En el presente artículo, debato un enfoque semiótico del pensamiento arqueológico sobre los procesos de racialización en la diáspora africana. Dentro de esto, empleo el concepto de “hogar” como un monumento arqueológico, ideológico y conmemorativo. Sitúo mi narrativa arqueológica en persistencia en lugar de en resistencia, destacando cómo las narrativas de persistencia permiten y empoderan a la agencia social, en el pasado no situada únicamente en sistemas de opresión o receptiva a sistemas de opresión.

Résumé Dans cet article, j’étudie une approche sémiotique à la réflexion archéologique sur les processus de catégorisation raciale dans la diaspora africaine. Dans ce cadre, j’emploie le concept du « chez soi » comme site archéologique, idéologique et commémoratif. Je situe mon récit archéologique en

persistence plutôt qu’en résistance et souligne comment les récits de persistence permettent et valorisent une représentation sociale dans le passé, qui ne se situe pas exclusivement dans les systèmes d’oppression ou qui n’y est pas seulement liée.

Keywords African diaspora · archaeology · historical archaeology · homeplace · archaeologies of racialization · materiality

Introduction

As historical archaeologists, we study the pasts of capitalist society. Since racialization is constitutive of modernity and capitalism, it then follows that we must critically engage with those racializing processes. Thus, we need a rigorous theoretical and philosophical toolset if we are going to be able to consider our pasts in ways that dynamically examine the “changing same” of the African diaspora through time (Baraka 1991). It is important that we interrogate the ways in which what we “see” when we investigate archaeological sites are the material aspects of the social worlds created by racialized people faced with living in a society structured in dominance and inequality (Hall 1980). In this article, I discuss how a semiotic framework can help archaeologists understand processes of racialization in the past. I examine the idea of race itself as a materiality and the implications of this for archaeological work. To do this, I explore ideas of “homeplace” and memorialization, asserting that an archaeology that excavates homeplace

A. Morris (✉)
University of California, Berkeley, 2251 College Building,
Berkeley, CA 94720-1076, U.S.A.
e-mail: amorris@siprep.org

brings into being identities and pasts through the sensory experience of excavation and the materials it explores. In this project, I point to how moments of memorialization happen on the scale of everyday life, especially as we excavate them. I use the term “homeplace” after bell hooks, situating it as the center of the community at this site, my family’s historical (and present-day) house and farm, but also an important social and political space (hooks 1990). I will continuously discuss how maintaining this space is both a social and political act that ensured the social and economic persistence of the family who kept it.

I am both an archaeologist excavating at this site and a descendant of the pioneers who created it. As sites of memory and persistence, homeplaces are important sites in the African diaspora. I frame homeplace, then, as (like all spaces) a created space. Our homeplace allows us to understand that we African Americans are a people with a history in a world that tries to make us invisible. Homeplace makes us. Homeplace, in some ways, exists tangential to the systems of oppression that created our racializations in the first place (for a discussion of these proximities, see hooks [1990]). Examining the homeplace as an archaeological site represents an opportunity to think about how, through creating and maintaining homeplaces as “sites of support and resistance” (hooks 1990), Black farmsteaders created meaningful lives for themselves in a society structured in racialized inequality. Here I draw on bell hooks’s framing of homeplace as more than just a place, but a familial institution that represents a humanizing, decolonized space for Black families. In her words, hooks situates homeplaces “not as property, but as places where all that truly mattered in life took place” and, as such, represent a rich archaeological and memorial assemblage for an understanding of the African American past (hooks 1990:41). As an archaeologist, I would describe a homeplace as an inalienable thing that is kept beyond economic circulation and handed down through generations, making it a powerful place (Weiner 1992). As a member of this community, I would describe our homeplace as a house that is more than timbers, a farm that is more than just food; as the place where our memories live and where we keep our past for our present (Basso 1996). In this way, an archaeological exploration of our homeplace is not only an exercise in learning about our past, but also a way of keeping and remembering our past in the present moment.

The Historic Archaeology Project of Lawrence County (HALC) is an oral-historical, documentary, and archaeological examination of a cluster of farmsteads owned by free African Americans in southeastern Illinois. This part of Lawrence County has been home to Black farmers since as early as 1806, and descendants of these original families still live there today. I am one of these descendants, as well as the co-principal investigator of the project. Excavations have focused on two households, the first, dating from 1845 to 1923, and the second, a standing house that my family considers to be its homeplace, dating from approximately 1875 to the present. Excavations have also focused on two farmsteads, the first owned by free Black farmer Mason Morris and his wife Patience from 1845 to 1875, and then by their daughters, Martha and Evaline, from 1873 until approximately 1923. The second, which members of my family consider our homeplace, was built by Mason’s grandson William in the late 1880s and continues to be occupied in the present by his descendants.

African American settlers who came to this area in the early 19th century were at first relatively successful in establishing large landholdings for themselves where they were somewhat well-off economically. Documentary evidence suggests the Black population continued to grow throughout the first half of the 19th century, and by the time the first plat map was drawn in 1875 Black farmers owned a significant amount of land in the small township. Evidence in the form of probate records indicates that when Mason Morris died in 1875, he too had substantial farm holdings. After his death, however, the substantial legal and economic exclusion faced by his descendants appears in the 19th-century paper trail, and their land and property holdings decreased dramatically, shrinking to a few mortgaged acres by the 1920s. In such a rural place it became difficult to find employment outside farming and sharecropping. The legal and economic struggles this family experienced provide examples of the kinds of threats of disenfranchisement and displacement African American people living in this community were facing; this was not an isolated phenomenon, as many Black farmers in the area faced similar circumstances. But, while the amount of land owned by Black farmers decreased during these years, the population itself did not, likely due to strategies of persistence that relied on self-sufficiency and community cooperation. While documentary and historical evidence can illustrate the exclusionary social climate of the 19th century to some extent, it is the discarded

material of the past and the curated heirlooms of the present that speak to the everyday practices undertaken by family members to support and sustain their community and their home. I posit that these everyday practices of self-sufficient, rural farming labor are an aspect of the tactics of persistence employed by Black farmers living in a social system not of their own making, structured in dominance and inequality. Drawing on de Certeau's concept of "tactics" (de Certeau 1984), I highlight how aspects of rural life, such as farming, hunting, and home industry, comprise the everyday practices that enabled the long-term sustainability of these communities. I specifically use the term "persistence" to highlight that continued occupation of one's home and land in a system designed to destabilize and disperse Black populations should be acknowledged as a viable life tactic based on valuable knowledge. Examinations of the past that rely solely on strategies of resistance create a narrativity of the Black experience that privileges the viewpoint of the oppressor. A narrative that describes Black history solely in terms of its reaction to White supremacy privileges the agency of oppression as the point of entry into understanding Black life. If all action is described in terms of its relationship to systems of oppression, then the narratives created become solely reactionary—narratives that often end with stories of loss, extinction, and the futility of resisting systems of oppression. As a result, narratives that focus on terminologies and direct strategies of resistance tend to elide the successful daily practices that make life possible and meaningful. This is not to say that archaeologists have not created thought-provoking and complex considerations of acts of resistance; see Ogundiran and Falola (2007) and Weik (1997, 2012). However, here I discuss the benefits of a different perspective, namely, that of persistence, as discussed by Scott (1985), Sheptak et al. (2011), and Silliman (2001). Considering persistence allows scholars to avoid assimilationist narratives and allows for a greater range of social agency, possibilities, and actions by people in the past. A narrative of persistence also allows us as archaeologists to explore the materialities of processes of racialization in the past with more nuance than when seeking often binary clues to resistance struggles. At this site, I would argue that these archaeological, architectural, and textual-material resonances make visible the actions of resistance in African American communities by signifying the labor of persistence. Displacement and disenfranchisement are unfortunately a consistent and threatening theme in the

history of the African American experience in the United States; whether it is from Africa, from family, or from neighborhoods due to gentrification. Holding on to and securing private space is a difficult and often futile process. As bell hooks asserts in her work on the subject: "[W]hen a people no longer have the space to construct homeplace, we cannot build a meaningful community of resistance" (hooks 1990). For African Americans, building our communities and caring for ourselves is a revolutionary act that requires political and material work (Lorde 1988). In a society that systematically displaces communities of color, I see, in persistence through land ownership and occupation and cultivation of a safe, private decolonized space, a quintessential site of resistance for free African Americans in the 19th century.

Situating Race

To situate this framing, I first examine what I understand race and racialization to be. This is not intended to be an exhaustive summary of all archaeologies of racialization. For an in-depth discussion of archaeologies of racialization and where this study fits within them, see Morris (2015) and, also, Epperson (2004), Mullins (2002), Orser (2007), Voss (2008), Harrison (1992), and Battle-Baptiste (2011). Creating a working definition of race and racialization can be difficult, as we know that race is fluid and changeable even in the present moment. Since this is the case, race can be difficult to isolate and understand in the past without creating dehumanizing overgeneralizations and stereotypes of Blackness, Whiteness, and everything in between. Here, I use the term "race" to describe the socially constructed ideologies of biological difference, and I refer to "racialization" to describe the social processes and actions that lead to and enact these social constructions; see Omi and Winant (1986, 2014). Additionally, how "race" is instantiated in the African diaspora is necessarily intersectional with other structuring factors, such as class, gender, and historicity; see Collins (2000). As such, it becomes relevant to consider the ways that the condition of diaspora is articulated through these other factors, or, how the materiality of race is articulated in a particular moment. By "articulation," I refer genealogically to Hall's (1980) conceptualization of race as the "modality through which class is lived" and Edwards's (2003) further exploration of the ways in

which race is “articulated,” in the sense that it is both spoken through and connected with intersectional identities. This idea of race as necessarily intersectional, historically contingent, and socially articulated is especially key for us as archaeologists, since what we end up “seeing” in the archaeological record are these material momentary social assemblages. To this end, I suggest that racialization should be considered as, itself, a type of materiality. Here I envision a materiality that goes beyond the physical reality of an object—in fact, it is not “objectness” or “thingness” at all—rather it is a state of being in the world and recognition of that being. It is a physical and social reality that is assembled in an historical moment. In framing this materiality, I draw on the work of Suzanne Kuchler and others who have explored the interplay (and mutually constitutive nature) of materiality and body in creating social memory, as well as the way in which memory work plays a foundational role in the social mediation of kinship, rights, and power, positing actions of social assemblage as a way of materializing cumulative social memory in a specific moment in time (Kuchler 1987, 1988; Kuchler and Melion 1991).

I also draw on Webb Keane’s work, which formulates a semiotic analysis of material things that challenges the dualistic separation between ideas and things, of body and mind (Keane 2005). For Keane, “the goal is to open up social analysis to the historicity and social power of material things without reducing them to either being only vehicles of meaning, on one hand, or ultimate determinants on the other” (Keane 2003). Toward this goal, the idea of objects as mediators of social lives and social processes is particularly salient. Keane asserts that “by emphasizing the mediating role of semiotic ideology in the consolidation of objects as components of social life,” one can access the “historicity implicit in semiotics,” emphasizing that signs give way to more signs in historically and socially contingent chains of signification, by which meanings of objects are allowed to be situated in particular historical moments and to change through time without undermining past meanings and networks of “possible causal relations” (Keane 2003). At the same time, recognizing the possibility and futurity inherent in things requires the recognition that causality is not unavoidably inherent in objects and their materiality. These semiotic concepts prompt scholars of material culture to consider the situated creation of meaning through making: making things, laboring, and interpreting. This mode of thinking also allows the

recognition of the entropy inherent in social life. A materiality of race could be considered a semiotic analysis that views the “interpretant” as the momentary arbiter of social norms (Preucel and Bauer 2001). This would suggest that a moment of racialization happens when someone “reads” the body (or any other racialized aspect of a person) in a particular way, mapping difference onto a subject in that moment. Key here is the unevenness of these moments; race can be seen as a categorization that gives the impression of being static, but by nature is in a constant state of interpretation and assignation. Utilizing these theoretical tools, we as scholars can recognize multiple, socially contingent moments of meaning in the past (Joyce 2007), as well as our own ideas and biases as present interpretants. This is made particularly clear by Anna Agbe-Davies’ analysis of the archaeological implication and interpretations of “tradition” (Agbe-Davies, this issue). Thinking through the different archaeological instances and interpretations of blue beads, Agbe-Davies highlights how a semiotic approach allows archaeologists to understand the ways in which the historical contingencies inherent in the archaeological record can allow rich interpretations of the past that only archaeology can access (Agbe-Davies 2016). Importantly, an emphasis on the situated multiplicity of potential meanings does not necessarily have to be translated as ambiguity of meaning in a particular moment; rather, a semiotic analysis allows for meaning to be relational, meditative, and historically contingent (Preucel and Bauer 2001; Bauer 2002). When considering an object biography of the changing processes of racialization, all reinterpretations of the objectified body are of interest for what they can reveal about the historically constituted social implications of these changes, since race is constantly negotiated and reinterpreted (Meskell 2004). If objectification is the process by which subjects are created and recreated, then materiality is a key part of this process. At issue here is not the “body-as-thing” or the “other-as-thing,” as Mbembe and others have suggested (Gilroy 1993; Mbembe 2001, 2003), but, rather, the socially mediating properties of the epidermal experience of Blackness. Here I employ the concept of materiality to trace the movement of historically situated moments of negotiating epidermal objectification. I suggest that a framework of materiality can explore the ways in which the physical realities of Blackness (as the African diaspora is situated in the U.S.) act as an active social mediator of the processes of racialization stemming

from global capitalist modernity. Considering racialization as a material process subject to processes of objectification foregrounds the reality that it is situated in the body and provides an opportunity to explore the material trajectories of African American embodied experience. Yet, it also highlights that, while the momentary expressions of racialization are fluid and negotiable, they are not infinitely so. As a social mediator, the epidermal reality of non-White skin insists that there will always be constraints on social movement and interpretation. In the same sense that material things can be understood as “mediators” of social realities, so too can the epidermal and embodied experience and projections of race be imagined. To further illustrate the limits of the socially possible created by embodied realities, I draw on the work of feminist scholars, such as Patricia Hill Collins, Henrietta Moore, and others, who point out the instability and variability of embodied categories while at the same time asserting that while they vary cross culturally and are socially constructed differently, the immutable aspects of the female embodied experience are reached at some point. Key here is an understanding of intersectionality and its resulting material and social oppressions, as pioneered by Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1986; Collins 2000, 2006). Carby (1996), for example, asserts that, while one cannot take for granted the shared experience of Black womanhood, one has to acknowledge the effect of what she calls “triple oppression of gender, race, and class” in creating categories that can only be negotiated up to a certain point. Spillers (1987:66) discusses the negotiation of these realities as “including human biology in its intersections with the projects of culture.” Moore (1994) also points out that, while sociocultural treatment of that category varies, the reality is that after a certain point it cannot account for the universal subordination of women. Indeed, the ways in which people locate, traverse, and negotiate both embodied and culturally situated difference creates the conditions of possibility for these varied and historically contingent identities.

Further exploring the physiosocial constraints in the African diaspora, Telles’s (2004) sociological study of the impacts of skin color in Brazil highlights the limits of social interpretation and mobility. His study asserts that, while the transnational diasporic sociocultural and historical processes that create processes of racialization in Brazil are distinct from the United States, darker-skinned people still have statistically lower incomes,

less social mobility, and experience other kinds of discrimination that result in harsher life chances. In the U.S. this limit is also highlighted by historical cases of how “races” that did not share the epidermal experience of African Americans eventually attain “Whiteness” (Brodkin 1998).

It is a fact of the kind of Blackness produced by the rule of hypodescent in the United States that some epidermal experiences of racialization are more negotiable than others; see Hobbs (2014) and Malcomson (2000). In the case of the Black pioneers who were my ancestors—the current embodied reality of the community, the shifting documentary record, and photographs where I have them would suggest that some of these settlers would likely have been considered fairly light skinned. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that with the ability to negotiate the color line comes a privilege and a mobility not afforded to all people who identify (or are identified, as the case may be) as Black. This is an important aspect of analysis because it speaks to this family’s ability, at certain times, to negotiate the color line in specific, malleable ways and yet highlights the limits of that negotiation, acknowledging the very unevenness and arbitrary nature of race (Hobbs 2014). In some ways the examination of this family highlights the ambiguity and material nature of what is understood to be racialization.

For an historical example of ambiguity and movement along the color line, I turn to the documentary records associated with this site. In the 19th-century historical literature (local county histories), one of my family’s direct ancestors, Samuel Morris, has been described as “Black as a tar keg” and, yet, at the same time was the owner of a large, slaveholding plantation in Kentucky (Finley 1878). In this narrative, the local historian (Finley) describes him as a notably pious and prosperous man, as if these qualities excuse his Blackness, though only situationally. Within a generation, one of his sons was mysteriously hanged in a jail cell, while the rest left Kentucky for Illinois. In the eyes of this history, Samuel Morris’s Blackness is made material and sticks, like tar, to his identity, and money cannot quite lighten it enough. Later family histories recall that another ancestor, Emily Morris, was nearly disowned by her family for marrying my great-grandfather William because he was so dark skinned and she was quite light.

Census records, in particular, offer an insight into the fluid and emergent character of race through time. I was able to find census records for the

majority of the Morris family members living at the site from 1840 to 1940 (Fig. 1). In examining census records as materialities of racialization, it is important to note that these entries are not self-reported. A census taker would travel through the neighborhood, stopping at each house to record what he saw. These documents represent a specific moment of racialization being written from bodies into history. In the 1840 census for this family, the entire household is recorded as “Free Colored People,” but by 1850 this terminology has changed to “Black.” Just before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1860, these same families were “Mulatto.” Then from 1870 to 1910 everyone became Black again, until 1920, when the term “Mulatto” was resurrected. After that, in the 1930 and 1940 censuses, “Mulatto” becomes “Negro.” At this specific site, these same people were not changing their bodies over time, rather, the understanding of what race and color are, along with their articulations with class and gender, are what is negotiated and changed over time. It is a salient example precisely because it is so extreme; this is a rural place where families and their children and their children’s children remain in the same households for their entire lives. This is a household where people are born and live out their lives, and their racial designation may change many times throughout their lifetimes precisely because social circumstances change. No bodies move, but the color line does; and in this documentary moment its fluidity is mapped on the body of the Other (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940).

Photographs of folks at the homeplace also highlight epidermal variability, even within a small kinship group. What is relevant here is not an objective argument about what the phenotypic realities of these families were, but the idea that what “race” actually is in any given moment exists in constantly negotiated social processes, memories, class, gender, and epidermal materiality. In some ways, the fluidity of skin color reflects how the memory and materiality of race become constitutive of one another. It is embodied and performed as it is remembered by previous generations, which may or may not reflect the current generation’s actual experience and practice. In other ways, the memory of race can be just as powerful as race itself; in this case, the materiality of race is embodied memory. These brief historical examples serve to highlight that, while the

White/non-White duality is a real fact of the African American experience in the United States, in practice the actual phenomenological experience of non-White people leaves room for negotiation, movement, and ambiguity. If race is a materiality, then the historical and social memory of Blackness is embodiment personified.

The utility of this analysis is that it frames racialization as coalescing and emergent, changing and moving through space and time. Such a framing allows racialization to be materialized differently in a given context, in each situation historically constituted and dispersed, yet with a material and phenotypic embodied reality. By dispersed, I mean that its materiality is externally extant in the minds and bodies of those agents in momentary participation. This materiality only exists as it is interpreted and enforced by human agents and their social and cultural practices. As such, the materiality of race can be understood as historically constituted, in that it is constrained by the historical and sociocultural environment of the space and time it inhabits. At the same time it is necessarily physical; and, in the case of race, it has an embodied epidermal reality. This is not to say that race is not a social construction—it is. In fact, the consideration of race as a materiality allows the understanding that it is a physical reality situated in the body, but constructed in the minds of others. That is to say, a person does not have a static “race,” but, instead, that a person experiences a series of moments in which one’s embodied reality is racialized by other forces (be these other people or social systems and processes). So, an archaeology deploying this theoretical orientation considers racialization materialized both historically and bodily, but also mediated by its physical reality. This framing allows us as archaeologists to deploy our understanding of racialization as something real to the human experience in the present as well as the past, allowing a dynamism that avoids simple objectification of race, but at the same time admitting that there is an experiential, embodied aspect to its lived experience. Considering racialization as a materiality allows us the opportunity to think archaeologically about its momentary instantiations (Joyce 2012). If race does indeed exist as a series of socially and materially assembled moments, then it follows that with effective intellectual methodologies historical archaeology allows us to “see” these moments and should thus enable us to create more nuanced interpretations of the African diasporic past.



Fig. 1 Census data imposed on family photos. (Figure by author, 2014; photos ca. 1920, courtesy of Eleanor Morris.)

Race as Materiality and the Materialities of Race

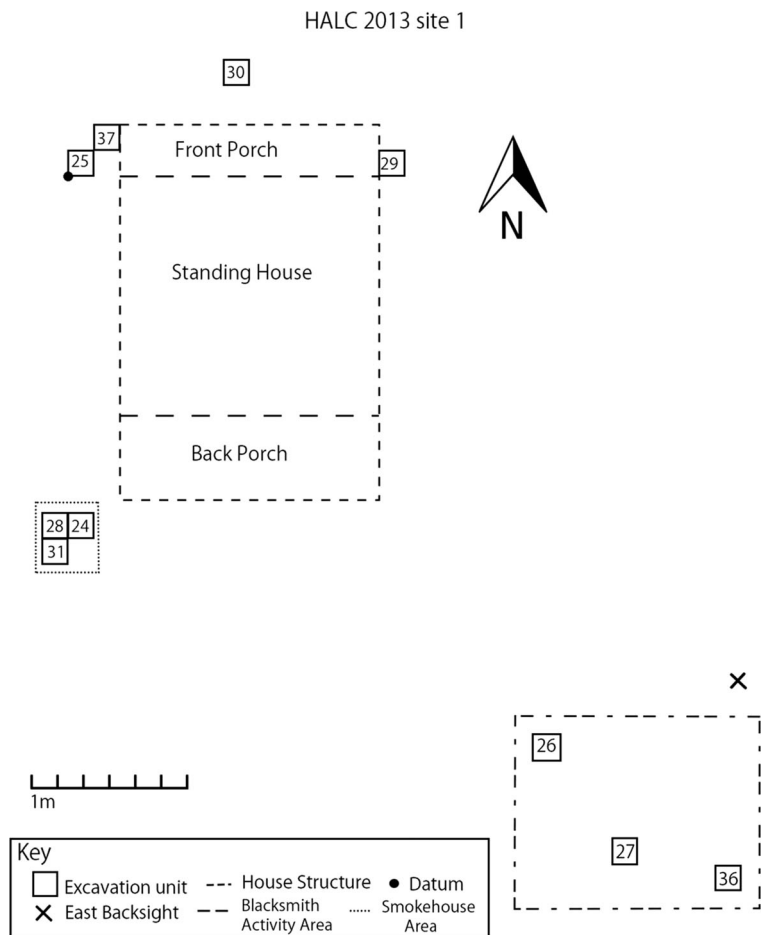
So, if race can be understood as a materiality, what are the materialities of race? I move now to a discussion of archaeological fieldwork and findings at the HALC sites. For the sake of brevity, I focus on small subassemblages that, succinctly, best highlight the ways that archaeological materials can offer insights into the complex historically situated moments of racialization in the past.

During the 2013 field season, the HALC team excavated 16, 1×1 m units around and beneath the house I have discussed above as the “homeplace.” Fieldwork utilized oral historical accounts, historical photographs, archaeological survey material, and standing architectural clues to excavate different activity areas across the site (Morris 2015). The root cellar, the site of a 19th-century smokehouse, a 19th- to 20th-century blacksmith shop, yard spaces, and the area directly adjacent to the front porch were explored (Fig. 2). This area is located in the “front” or street-facing side of the house

and was targeted because we archaeologists hoped to find materials associated with the social activities that would take place in the front-porch yard area: gathering, visiting, and other social leisure activities. While we did find many artifacts associated with shared meals, visiting, and socializing, one artifact class that was also prevalent in these samples is firearms paraphernalia, namely, shells, bullet casings, and birdshot. Firearm ownership has a long history in the Black community (Johnson 2014). I think this artifact class speaks to the realities and materialities coalescing at this site, especially relevant in the context of a porch that works as both a private and a public place, a space especially important in the 19th and early 20th centuries for social gathering. It is important to assert that the presence of these shells in the assemblage do not suggest actual violence, but, rather, subsistence, social practices, and the implied ability (and willingness) to defend oneself should the need arise.

The exclusionary economic systems that increasingly affected African Americans meant that subsistence

Fig. 2 Map of the excavations at the “homeplace.” (Map by Gloria Keng, 2014.)



practices such as hunting created an opportunity for men (and this practice was highly gendered) to provide for the family despite this disenfranchisement. Importantly, even after the repeal of Illinois’s Black codes in 1865, the state continued throughout the 19th and 20th centuries to enact and enforce gun-control laws that specifically targeted people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and people of color (Tahmassebi 1991; Middleton 1993; Johnson 2014), making it, for much of the 19th century, difficult and at times illegal for Black people to own guns in Illinois. This makes gun ownership, at the outset, represent some level of subversive practice.

Normally, if one were looking for provisioning in the archaeological record one might expect to find remains of larger game, such as deer and wild turkeys, in the faunal remains. But in Illinois overhunting had reduced these populations severely, leaving

them nearly extinct by the late 19th century. The faunal assemblage instead suggests the dietary contributions of smaller game, such as squirrels and quail, most likely from hunting and trapping. This archaeological evidence represents what could be an interesting material contradiction: faunal remains, such as squirrels, that have been historically associated with African American practices, but can, in reality, be seen in many examples of the upland South diet, and material evidence for at least four different weapons that technically may have been illegal for Black people to own, especially in any kind of number (Table 1). Taken together, however, it represents a material moment in which these people were dealing with and at the same time subverting cultural and legal practices. Hunting as a means of sustenance can be seen as both necessary and subversive (Young et al. 2001).

Table 1 Weapons paraphernalia recovered from the 2013 excavations

Locus ID	Activity Area	Metal ID	Object Name	Maker	Count
27-1	Blacksmith shop	36	Shell, rim fire	Super X	1
26-3	Blacksmith shop	179	Shell, .22 long rifle	—	1
39-3	Blacksmith shop	178	Shell, .32	—	1
34-1	Cellar	166	Shell, .22	—	1
34-1	Cellar	165	Shell, .32	—	1
38-1	Cellar	158	Shell, .32	—	1
25-3	Porch and yard	33	Shell, .22 short round	—	1
29-5	Porch and yard	182	Shell, .32 center fire	UMC	1
30-1	Porch and yard	15	Shell, .22	United, High Speed	1
30-3	Porch and yard	3	BB, .177	—	1
30-3	Porch and yard	180	Birdshot, 6's	—	4
30-3	Porch and yard	181	Birdshot, 8's	—	2
30-3	Porch and yard	14	Shell, .22	United, High Speed	1
30-3	Porch and yard	16	Shell, .22 rim fire	Federal	1
30-3	Porch and yard	17	Shell, .22 rim fire	—	1
30-3	Porch and yard	18	Shell, .22, rim fire	United	1
30-3	Porch and yard	13	Shell, .32 center fire	UMC	1
30-3	Porch and yard	12	Shell, .32 rim fire	UMC	1
30-3	Porch and yard	20	Shell, 12 gauge	United Metallurgical Co. New Club	1
37-3	Porch and yard	124	Birdshot, 2	—	1

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, hunting was also an important social practice for men in a rural area, serving as a way to cement social ties or to welcome others to a community. From the oral histories this project collected (Morris 2015), I know of at least one instance where a job that would not have normally been open to him as a Black man was given to one of my ancestors because of the social networks created through hunting with other members of the community (Russell Morris 2013, pers. comm.). Target practice from one's front porch can be seen as recreational, and guns carry a complicated history; so, by conducting the leisure activity of target practice in a highly visible place, I assert that people were not actually participating in a violent activity—in fact, they were participating in a social activity that neighbors might stop and talk about, as well as participate in. This public participation also suggests that both this Black family and its White neighbors, at least in some cases, commonly ignored the laws surrounding guns and who could own them, speaking to yet another dimension of social practice implicated by this material intersectionality. At the same time these items

(and the skilled use of them, demonstrated in this “friendly” way) were indexing the means and skills of defense. All the while the implied violence is inoculated by the social practices that surround gun culture in a rural area (Allen 2007; Springwood 2007; Johnson 2014). I would argue that these artifacts represent a skillful negotiation of social practices that at once underscores Black masculinity by opening previously restricted social networks and showcasing the ability to provide for a family, while at the same time subtly indicating the willingness to defend this same family. Hunting is also one of the last cultural practices from the 19th century that we descendants still living in the area have maintained into the present day; I think this underscores its importance as a social practice. Agriculture is no longer our livelihood; so, although we no longer “need” to hunt for subsistence reasons, we continue to do so together as a family. In my ethnographic interviews, this has been described to me as one of the ways we continue the stewardship of our land (Russell Morris 2013, pers. comm.). We still keep the guns handed down to us by our great-grandfathers.

By continuing this tradition in the present, we materialize our histories by using the skills we have been given by our pasts. As with excavation, the presence of these materials old and new is bundled with memories handed down with the land, moving us to act and reminding us who we are.

Conclusions

It is here that the concept of “homeplace” is key in understanding the complex ways in which African American communities created their own lifeways. I draw here on Keith Basso’s (1996) concepts of place-making and place worlds in thinking about the existential importance of the homeplace in Black American life. Basso describes place-making as “a universal tool of the historical imagination” and asserts “place-making involves multiple acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways” (Basso 1996:5). It is this remembering and imagining that I assert is active and key in an archaeology of the homeplace; it is memory and its processes that create the homeplace as a sacred place with a deep past, but also project its historical trajectory onto the future. It is this idea that the past is *brought into being* by excavation that is important to an archaeological and historical understanding of people and the places they make. In the case of the African diaspora, the pasts that we archaeologists are dealing with are heavy and multiple—they exist in the moments that we create them. Connerton (1989, 2009) intersects here productively, pointing out how memorialization (on a monumental scale) shapes the ways in which people remember and forget key aspects of the past, creating specific historical narratives in the present. The physical presence of the house today speaks to generations of practices of persistence designed to “keep the Homeplace.” Built in the 1880s to house the increasing numbers of family members living on the homeplace, this house became, as bell hooks states: “a site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist” (hooks 1990). As my Great-Aunt Margaret told me, after I had asked her for stories of her time growing up in the house: “Everyone lived in that house together,” referring to the fact that, by the early 20th century when she lived there, at least three generations of Morrisises called it home (Margaret Harris 2013, pers. comm.). Rooms were added one section at a time, the attic was converted to

bedrooms, and a smokehouse and blacksmith shop were built as the small farm became more and more self-sufficient. These architectural developments, which grew out of the necessity to support an increasingly embattled population, are part of what I would call the material resonances of homeplace. The house exists not only out of practicality, but as a physical reminder of history and the calculated battle against the erasure through forgetting (Connerton 1989, 2009). I would argue that this standing house becomes a site of sustenance and support, but also a memorial space, taking on aspects of inalienability inseparable from humanizing social identity of self and family. This physical space of the house and its extensions becomes many things over time. As a site of support, it becomes a humanizing haven in a racializing system of inequality. It becomes the method by which people survive and thrive in such a system by creating and sustaining networks of mutual support among family members and communities (Wilkie 2000, 2003; Young et al. 2003). By Crenshaw (1986) literally giving the people a roof over their heads and by deploying the productive labor of self-sufficient farming, the family managed to persist here. Over time and partly due to this continued collective effort, the homeplace also becomes a site of memorializing. It is a place where family histories and memories live, and a physical mnemonic space. As such, it is also a site for the constitution of self and identity, creating a sense of selfhood by reiterating connections to place and people through time. In a way, the homeplace functions as a site where time is collapsed, where holidays are observed year after year, homecomings are made, stories are told and retold, and a deep sense of connection to the past is constantly made. It is memory and history made material; highlighting the absence of things from the past by calling forth their memories.

Artifacts recovered from archaeological investigations embody this duality of indexing past struggles and labor for self-sufficiency, while at the same time providing a medium for creating and remembering a shared history, a sense of self, identity, and connections to the past for current stakeholders and members of the descendant community. Analysis of the artifacts recovered revealed consumption patterns that exhibit ways of coping with the economic exclusion experienced by African Americans in a society structured in racialized inequality, for example, artifacts like fruit jars and canning lids for storing food over long winters

when the stability provided by seasonal farm labor has slowed. Large storage vessels suggest the presence of home industries such as dairy production. Patent-medicine bottles evidence home health care where doctors are few or inaccessible altogether. In this sense, the home industries that one expects to find on semi-self-sufficient rural farms of the period do not merely speak to the standard experiences of farmers at the time—these same self-sufficient practices ensure that communities that cannot depend on regular access to the capitalist economy can continue to survive and thrive. Storage practices not only enable a family to stock its resources over time, but also to distribute resources throughout the community via church bazaars and fundraisers. The daily practices of rurality become an insurance against racializing processes that enable minority communities to persist in a society not necessarily socially and legally disposed toward their success. Many of these community members volunteered to work on the site and helped with the project from its inception. Indeed, my archaeological project was in many ways spurred on by many members of the descendant community and their desire to know more about their ancestors' experiences as pioneers in the 19th century and their need to preserve their deep history for future generations. Real interest and engagement with the material aspect of the investigations came with the first walkover survey. We archaeologists were looking for surface evidence of the first homestead built on the site, occupied first by of Mason, his wife Nancy, and their children, then later by their unmarried daughters Martha and Evaline (the current occupied homeplace was not built until the 1880s). The first of three homestead sites to be investigated, this earliest house had left no standing architecture. As we began to find and map artifacts on the surface (much to the surprise of many of the community members assisting with the project), I think the tangible evidence of our ancestors and their labors to found and keep our community had a profound effect on those participating in the project. Finds which particularly resonated with the community volunteers were those most reflective of everyday life, such as spoons, flow-blue ceramics and transfer prints, and a curious thistle-embossed bottle closure, likely used in the kitchen.

Metal farming implements became a sort of mystery that everyone could attempt to solve: “guess the ambiguous rusty object” became a daily exercise in critical hypothesizing. Suggestions of artifact identification and uses sometimes took the form of remembrances. People would “recall” that the aunts had their own buggy and were very proud of their horses: subsequently many metal objects became potential horse furniture. Part of my analysis here is not just of the 19th-century material culture we uncovered, but the sensory experience of archaeological investigation of homeplace itself; I am interested not only in what this collection says about the past, but also how interaction with these materials creates the past for those living in the present. I would assert that these things have a power, like the physical space of the homeplace, to create and sustain communities of memory. Experiencing the recovery of these material things continues to be the work of preservation and persistence against disenfranchisement and displacement of histories and identities tied to places. As archaeologists we know that past objects engender real feelings in those who excavate them, see them, and experience them. For my community, I think I am not the only one who felt that our past asserted itself through these things, insisting on remembrance. I suggest that these excavations created a moment of memorialization mediated through the experience of objects. The excavations were open to the public and operated in collaboration with the local community. I have discussed the logistical and theoretical implications of this elsewhere (Morris 2014). Many of the volunteers on the project had grown up in the area, either at the homeplace or nearby. As we excavated, the sensory experience of touching these historical materials often spoke to memories of the homeplace's past, a past that is inextricably tied up with the complicated processes of racialization that shaped it. Touching old toys would remind folks of games played on the porch, of mischief, and marbles lost. A spoon that carried the inscription: Indianapolis Hotel, 1913 reminded someone “Oh, yes, had not Great-Aunt Jessie's husband worked there for awhile?” Such stories were excavated with our materials, sleeping until they were pulled to the surface with old marbles and dolls and shards of colored glass. One

volunteer told me he was amazed at the things he had forgotten and the things we were learning, saying: “Remembering our history is God’s work, and we’re doing it here” (Carl Curry 2013, pers. comm.). It is important to realize that memorialization is not merely monumental, but that it takes place in the everyday lives of people, with materials mediating and assembling personhood along with pasts. The homeplace has a materiality that is mediated by stories, things, gatherings, people, depositions, and memories. An African diaspora archaeology that critically engages with the way the memory and materiality of the homeplace is kept, enacted, and excavated can provide insight into the ways that the social materialities of the past are assembled in the present.

This brief example illustrates how, in some ways, the artifacts that I examined through this project constitute some of the materialities of homeplace. In this sense, the homeplace is a memorial and historical landscape, a site for action and the site of remembrance. Material resonances evoke the everyday practices of free African Americans on the frontier, exploring different articulations of racism and its resistances. A semiotic interpretation of these artifacts allows them to be understood as mediators of social life. In this framework, the weapons paraphernalia found at the site can be understood to have multiple social meanings: protection, sustenance, social relations, and even leisure practice. A narrative of persistence allows us as archaeologists to discuss the social mediations of guns, rather than seeing them only as artifacts of violence. As a result, we can think about the ways that guns mediated social relationships, allowing for multiple social interpretations and intentions. This avoids a one-dimensional depiction of a violent Black past, and instead lets us think about the way people sustained their families through hunting and lived their social lives through communal bonding over this shared leisure activity. These materialities index the labor and consumption patterns that enabled these families to resist racializing processes of exclusion by creating, protecting, and sustaining a physical and metaphysical space of homeplace. Also present within these resonances is the power of things to create communities of remembrance that have an investment in the memorialization

histories (which is part of this resistance). Our memories live here, and these things bring them alive; the power of these things inherent in the present-day experience of them continues to physically and emotionally create the space of homeplace.

Other scholars have examined the ways that homes and houses are so constitutive of identities and cultures in the past. I would assert that this is also the case when considering the importance of the homeplace in Black life. By making and keeping the homeplace these families made lives for themselves in their everyday practices, lives whose stories live in the homeplace, lives that we archaeologists experience, memorialize, and bring into being through the process of excavation.

References

- Agbe-Davies, Anna
 2016 How to Do Things with Things, or, Are Blue Beads Good to Think? *Semiotic Review*, Vol. 4 <<http://www.semioticreview.com/>>. Accessed 16 December 2016.
- Allen, Christy
 2007 Gun Rights are Civil Rights: Racism and the Right to Keep and Bear Arms in the United States. In *Open Fire: Understanding Global Gun Cultures*, Charles F. Springwood, editor, pp. 111–124. Berg, Oxford, UK.
- Baraka, Amiri
 1991 *The Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. Thunder’s Mouth Press, New York, NY.
- Basso, Keith
 1996 *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
- Battle-Baptiste, Whitney
 2011 *Black Feminist Archaeology*. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- Bauer, Alexander
 2002 Is What You See All You Get?: Recognizing Meaning in Archaeology. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2(1): 37–52.
- Brodin, Karen
 1998 *How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says about Race in America*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ.
- Carby, Hazel
 1996 White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood. In *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg, editors, pp. 110–128. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Collins, Patricia Hill
 2000 *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness,*

- and the Politics of Empowerment. Routledge, New York, NY.
- Collins, Patricia Hill
2006 *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism*. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Connerton, Paul
1989 *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Connerton, Paul
2009 *How Modernity Forgets*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé
1986 Race, Reform and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law. Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin Law School, University of Wisconsin—Madison, Madison.
- de Certeau, Michel
1984 *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Steven Rendall, translator. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Edwards, Brent Hayes
2003 *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Epperson, Terrence W.
2004 Critical Race Theory and the Archaeology of the African Diaspora. In *Transcending Boundaries, Transforming the Discipline: African Diaspora Archaeologies in the New Millennium*, Mark E. Mack and Michael Blakey, editors. Thematic issue, *Historical Archaeology* 38(1):101–108.
- Finley, Alex C.
1878 *The History of Russellville and Logan County, Ky, which Is to Some Extent a History of Western Kentucky*. O. C. Rhea, Russellville, KY.
- Gilroy, Paul
1993 *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Hall, Stuart
1980 Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance. In *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism*, Marion O'Callagan, editor, pp. 305–345. UNESCO, Paris, France.
- Harrison, Faye V.
1992 The Du Boisian Legacy in Anthropology. *Critique of Anthropology* 12(3):239–260.
- Hobbs, Allyson V.
2014 *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- hooks, bell
1990 *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. South End Press, Boston, MA.
- Johnson, Nicholas.
2014 *Negroes and the Gun: The Black Tradition of Arms*. Prometheus, Amherst, NY.
- Joyce, Rosemary A.
2007 Figurines, Meaning, and Meaning-Making in Early Mesoamerica. In *Image and Imagination: A Global Prehistory of Figurative Representation*, Colin Renfrew and Ian Morley, editors, pp. 104–125. McDonald Institute of Archaeological Research, Cambridge, MA.
- Joyce, Rosemary A.
2012 Life with Things: Archaeology and Materiality. In *Archaeology and Anthropology: Past, Present, and Future*, David Shankland, editor, pp. 119–132. Berg, London, UK.
- Keane, Webb
2003 Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things. *Language and Communication* 23(3&4): 409–425.
- Keane, Webb
2005 Signs Are not the Garb of Meaning. In *Materiality*, Daniel Miller, editor, pp. 182–194. Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
- Kuchler, Susanne
1987 Malangan: Art and Memory in a Melanesian Society. *Man* 22(2):238–255.
- Kuchler, Susanne
1988 Malangan: Objects, Sacrifice, and the Production of Memory. *American Ethnologist* 15(4):625–637.
- Kuchler, Susanne, and Walter Melion (editors)
1991 *Images of Memory: On Remembering and Representation*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.
- Lorde, Audre
1988 *A Burst of Light: Essays*. Firebrand, Ithaca, NY.
- Malcomson, Scott L.
2000 *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*. Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, NY.
- Mbembe, Achille
2001 *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Mbembe, Achille
2003 Necropolitics. *Public Culture* 15(1):11–40.
- Meskel, Lynn
2004 *Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt: Material Biographies Past and Present*. Berg, London, UK.
- Middleton, Stephen
1993 *The Black Laws in the Old Northwest: A Documentary History*. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT.
- Moore, Henrietta
1994 *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Morris, Annelise
2014 Public Archaeology and Critical Histories: Collaborative Archaeology in Southern Illinois. *Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage* 3(2):159–174.
- Morris, Annelise
2015 “We All Lived in that House Together”: Persistence as Resistance on an Illinois Farmstead, 1845 to the Present. Doctoral dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley. University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Mullins, Paul R.
2002 *Race and Affluence: An Archaeology of African America and Consumer Culture*. Springer US, Boston, MA.

- Ogundiran, Akinwumi, and Toyin Falola (editors)
2007 *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant
1986 *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York, NY.
- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant
2014 *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. Routledge, New York, NY.
- Orser, Charles E., Jr.
2007 *The Archaeology of Race and Racialization in Historic America*, 3 vols. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Preucel, Robert, and Alexander Bauer
2001 Archaeological Pragmatics. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 34(2):85–96.
- Scott, James C.
1985 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Sheptak, Russell N., Rosemary Joyce, and Kira Blaisdell-Sloan
2011 Pragmatic Choices, Colonial Lives: Resistance, Ambivalence, and Appropriation in Northern Honduras. In *Enduring Conquests: Rethinking the Archaeology of Resistance to Spanish Colonialism in the Americas*, Matthew Liebmann and Melissa S. Murphy, editors, pp. 149–172. SAR Press, Santa Fe, NM.
- Silliman, Stephen
2001 Agency, Practical Politics and the Archaeology of Culture Contact. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 1(2):190–209.
- Spillers, Hortense J.
1987 Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book. *Diacritics* 17(2):64–81.
- Springwood, Charles F.
2007 *Open Fire: Understanding Global Gun Cultures*. Berg, Oxford, UK.
- Tahmassebi, Stefan B.
1991 Gun Control and Racism. *George Mason University Civil Rights Law Journal* 2(1):67–99.
- Telles, Edward E.
2004 *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1840 Sixth Census of the United States, Lawrence County, Illinois. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1850 Seventh Census of the United States, Lawrence County, Illinois. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1860 United States Census, Population Schedules, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1870 United States Census, Population Schedules, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1880 Tenth Census of the United States, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1900 Twelfth Census of the United States, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1910 Thirteenth Census of the United States, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1920 Thirteenth Census of the United States, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois, E.D. 145. Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1930 Fifteenth Census of the United States, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois, E.D. 51-3. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census
1940 Sixteenth Census of the United States, Bond Township, Lawrence County, Illinois, E.D. 51-3. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. [Ancestry.com](https://ancestry.com) <<https://ancestry.com>>. Accessed 21 January 2017.
- Voss, Barbara L.
2008 *The Archaeology of Ethnogenesis: Race and Sexuality in Colonial San Francisco*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Weik, Terrance
1997 The Archaeology of Maroon Societies in the Americas: Resistance, Cultural Continuity, and Transformation in the African Diaspora. *Historical Archaeology* 31(2):81–92.
- Weik, Terrance
2012 *The Archaeology of Antislavery Resistance*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.
- Weiner, Annette B.
1992 *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-while-Giving*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

- Wilkie, Laurie A.
2000 *Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840–1950*. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.
- Wilkie, Laurie A.
2003 *The Archaeology of Mothering: An African-American Midwife's Tale*. Routledge, New York, NY.
- Young, Amy L., Michael Tuma, and Cliff Jenkins
2001 The Role of Hunting to Cope with Risk at Saragossa Plantation, Natchez. *American Anthropologist* 103(3):692–704.
- Young, Amy L., Michael Tuma, and Cliff Jenkins
2003 Gender and Landscape: A View from the Plantation Slave Community. In *Shared Spaces and Divided Places: Exploring the Material and Spatial Dimensions of Gender Relations and the American Historical Landscape*, Deborah L. Rotman and Ellen-Rose Savulis, editors, pp. 103–134. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.