

Daring to be Dramatic: An Examination of the Live Interpretation of Slavery at Two  
Living History Museums

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LIVE INTERPRETATION OF SLAVERY AT LIVING HISTORY MUSEUMS

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## LIVE INTERPRETATION OF SLAVERY AT LIVING HISTORY MUSEUMS

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### **Abstract**

Daring to be Dramatic: An Examination of the Live Interpretation of Slavery at Living History Museums

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This research identifies how two living history museums, at two different points in time, developed programming that specifically aligns with their property's historic role in the American slave trade. In order to achieve a greater understanding of how these museums continue to craft these programs, this research examined how interpretive teams designed these experiences, the subsequent principles and practices that guided their development, and their suggested recommendations for future endeavors. Findings indicate several themes that may be particularly useful to institutions who aim to depict the reality of slavery through theatre and live interpretation including; achieving authenticity through research, considering how oppressive imagery may affect youth audiences, ensuring institutional support, providing options for discontinuing visitor participation, establishing the role of the audience in participating in the program, developing community support, and allowing for visitors to debrief with one another following their experience.

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*For my mother,  
Debbie*

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## LIVE INTERPRETATION OF SLAVERY AT LIVING HISTORY MUSEUMS

### CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Museums have long held an enduring place in the public psyche, a time-tested and trusted source for visitors to seek truth and historical fact. As the range of institutions considered “museums” continues to encompass venues from aquaria to traditional anthropological and ethnographic institutions, living history museums have set themselves apart. While living history museums continue to inform the public through theater, this mode of interpretation may present unique opportunities and challenges when addressing historic issues of social injustice. A handful of institutions have created programming around difficult topics such as slavery and describing the way in which they have approached the design process may prove useful to others who dare do the same.

Living history museums are mission-based and have an opportunity to deliver difficult parts of our history as forthrightly and accurately as they are able to. As Rex Ellis, a former educator at Colonial Williamsburg, argued:

The slave experience is more readily understood when slaves are seen as human beings caught up in an inhuman situation. When they are shown laughing, crying, hurting, loving, hating, wondering, and struggling with the same human emotions as their captors, the institution of slavery ceases to be something separate from the human experience (p.6).

Many sites such as Thomas Jefferson’s historic estate *Monticello*, Colonial Williamsburg, and *Mount Vernon*, amongst others, have attempted theatrical experiences dealing with slavery, however, the field lacks a set of models or guidelines on how experiences like these can be employed in a more lasting and impactful way (Robert DeHart, et al. Lecture, may 2014).

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The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Williamsburg, Virginia held an experimental “Estate Sale” in the fall of 1994. While the intent was never to continually hold such estate auctions over the imagined sale of human chattel, the program still remains one of the most influential pieces of dramaturgy within the scope of living history museums ever performed. More recently, building on the groundwork set forth by Colonial Williamsburg, Conner Prairie Interactive History Park located in Fishers, Indiana created “Follow the North Star,” a program that asks visitors to take on a second-person interpretative role with the theatrical support of professional interpreters in third person as they negotiate the follies of the Underground Railroad. “Follow the North Star” has gained the attention of museum professionals and African American historians alike. This study juxtaposes these two programs, both unique for their respective times, in an attempt to understand their development and define what types of themes and practices can help mold similar programming at living history museums.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research is to describe how two living history museums, at two different points in time, used live interpretation to portray instances of slavery.

### **Research Questions**

1. How and in what ways did these living history museums design experiences portraying slavery?
2. What principles and practices guided the development of the interpretation of slavery in these two programs?

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3. What are some unique considerations that developers at these two living history museums made as they sought to interpret slavery?
4. What types of “best practices” are emerging in the field as examined through the lens of these two programs?

### **Significance**

This research is significant to the field because it offers museum professionals an innovative method of engagement and is replicable in museums of virtually any size. Utilizing Museum Theatre to interpret instances of slavery represents an emerging trend that is just beginning to be addressed in the current literature.

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### CHAPTER TWO: Review of the Literature

Three bodies of literature help form the basis for what is understood about the live interpretation of slavery: Postmodernism with a specific emphasis on exploring the difficulties associated with interpreting African American history contemporarily, discussions on the emerging role of Museum Theatre/live interpretation on the traditional institutional scene, and Immersive Learning Theory.

#### **Postmodernism**

For the purposes of this research the socio-cultural focus on African American history will be examined through the postmodernist informal learning lens. In this piece “postmodernism,” will refer to the historiography surrounding the African American narrative in contemporary cultural dialogue. Postmodernism generally gives a skeptical treatment of the hegemonic historic trajectory and draws influence from Marxist theory that tends to focus on the history of the *everyday* individual.

There are a number of problems affiliated with presenting both an accurate and authentic African American story in museums. First and foremost, since their establishment, museums were created to preserve and house artifacts of the dominant classes, therefore, few relics, especially as they pertain to living history institutions, exist in perpetuity to help tell the story of African Americans in the United States (Pollard, 1999). Furthermore, the staggeringly low literacy rates of those who might have otherwise accounted for first-person narratives have led to a discourse that is contrived.

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As a matter of fact, most African ethnic groups shared their history through oral storytelling, much of which failed to survive Americanization (van Balgooy, 2015).

Not only have certain inherent barriers prevented the telling of a holistic African American history, certain cultural constructs have worsened it. In the case of Colonial Williamsburg, which was founded prior to the Civil Rights Movement (<http://www.history.org/Foundation/cwhistory.cfm>), little thought was given to preserving the material culture of what were then, second-class citizens. This idea of the interplay between institutional history and the greater historical context helps frame the postmodern discussion differently in the informal sector than its formal cousin. In research examining the authenticity of African Americans in Colonial Williamsburg Handler and Gable found that in Williamsburg's constantly changing interpretation of historical themes their "historical sensibility [was] a product of the present, not the past" (p.222). It wasn't until the 1960's, when museums began to experience a crisis of relevancy, that minority issues made their way into the public consciousness (Shafer, 2012). John R. Kinard and other community activists urged museums to serve as community centers and encouraged them to increase their accessibility to become "catalyst(s) for social change" (Schwazer, p.21). While museums began exploring historic issues of social injustice and protest in the 1960's it wasn't until two decades later in the 1980's, particularly in the southern United States, that museums began to deal more fully with the African American historic narrative (Levine, p.28). As of 2008, the Association of African American Museums found that only 159 museums in the United States reported developing or facilitating some type of exhibit or program dealing with

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African American commemoration (Ibid). As a matter of fact, the first substantial exhibit to deal with slavery produced by the International African America Museum (IAAM) amounting to approximately \$75 million, has yet to even open (Levine, p.39). Since many museums still fail to deal with the plight of those enslaved in traditional exhibitions the live interpretation of it is less understood and often balked at by living history institutions (Bridal, 2004).

Perhaps responsible for the relatively recent contribution of museums to the African American narrative is a contentious public memory of it. As Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry contend, “In the United States, our public memory of slavery contributes to historical accounts in which slavery has little or no part, aside from its role in the history of African Americans, and of a few wealthy southern plantation-owning families” (p.16). When the fact that slave history is only a small part of America’s collective past is combined with a skewed African American historical identity, interpreting the African American experience becomes even more difficult.

Contemporary African American identity has been linked with a post-emancipation sense-of-place. Because slaves were absolved of their African identity and then placed in an oppressive economic regime, they were forced to carve out a largely objective identity rather than a cultural one. It wasn’t until they were allowed to establish a new identity as a free individual that they began to account more fully for their own historical narrative.

When ruminating on the historical disconnect of African Americans the two provided,

Dismantling old narratives and replacing them with new, and historically more accurate alternatives may be healthy and productive. But this process can generate resistance, resentment, or outright disbelief, and requires careful thought and sensitive handling for a successful outcome. When people confront information which does not fit within the narratives that inform their

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identities, they tend to experience serious mental confusion, powerlessness, despair, victimization, and other cognitive and emotional difficulties. The process of integrating a new historical narrative into one's identity, and reconciling it with core beliefs and values, is a gradual one, involving fits and starts, and is mostly an unconscious process (Ibid.).

The identity crisis that Gallas and DeWolf Perry point to has manifested in the difficulties associated with presenting their history, especially in museums and within the context of live interpretation since it attempts to capture the much more qualitative and emotional aspects of their story. When historic sites and museums have had to grapple with how to present America's scarring history of human subjugation, they have often "interpreted it incompletely, or perpetuated myths about the presence and lives of enslaved people" (p.13). This jigsaw presentation of history has come to be understood as the result of modernist trends that tended away from a close examination of the African American experience.

In their book *Beyond the Turnstile: Making the Case for Museums and Sustainable Values*, Holo and Alvarez suggest that museums often fail to recognize that they "need... ..to be able to communicate to [visitors] how [they] manipulate reality by [their] presentations, by [their] hierarchies, by [their] own opinions being represented as fact" (p.138). Likewise, in her work *Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon refers to this type of misrepresentation as "historiographic metafiction," the "intensely self-reflexive" and yet paradoxical claim to historical events and personages (1989). If we apply this theory to the interpretation of African American history particularly in the vein of slavery we observe that museums

Do not rewrite, refashion, or expropriate history merely to satisfy either some game playing or some totalizing impulse; instead they juxtapose what we think we know of the past from official archival sources and personal memory with an alternate representation that foregrounds the

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postmodern epistemological questioning of the nature of historical knowledge, they determine which “facts” make it into history? And whose facts (p.71).

Thus, experiences that deal with African American history, especially within the context of live interpretation, tend to emphasize heroic narratives rather than those that remind patrons of their sordid past; and the “who’s?” historic facts being focused-on tends towards the hegemonic narrative rather than the plight of the disenfranchised.

### **Museum Theatre/Live Interpretation**

Live interpretation or Museum Theatre offers a unique set of challenges to museums. It is its relative uniqueness however, that also makes it ideal for presenting the African American narrative and helps fill the gap left by sparse archeological records and material culture. With this in mind, examining the dynamics of drama and its contemporary impact on interpretation and exhibition at museums is key.

As the trend of Museum Theatre emerges more prolifically on the traditional museum landscape facilitators and educators responsible for developing programming are finding this work both challenging and effective. As Leahy and Bruton contend “With this programming instead of solely concentrating on the artistic merit of the work, there is a stronger investment in what the work is about, its themes, and their relationship to the audience” (p.206).

In her book *Exploring Museum Theatre*, Tessa Bridal devotes a chapter to discussing how using Museum Theatre and live interpretation to depict “difficult” topics comes with its own unique set of considerations, yet, if treated with care, it can not only be effective, it responds to the criticism museums have historically received for focusing on more heroic narratives (2004). As she notes, museums were under fire, particularly in

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the 1960's, for portraying a "conflict-free past" as patrons experienced dissatisfaction with the way museums were addressing the "human story" (Ibid). Even anthropological and natural history museums were accused of ignoring the exploitive features of artifacts and their collectors- individuals who had essentially stolen cultural property for spectacle and monetary gains (Ibid.). Still, museums strove to respond to this crisis of validity in the post-modern era by tackling social justice issues through theatre. Bridal identified several museums including, Colonial Williamsburg, Plimoth Plantation, The Science Museum of Virginia, The Lawrence Hall of Science, The Kentucky History Center, The Rochester Museum and Science Center, and The Hidalgo County Historical Society, who had created theatrical programming around socially sensitive historic issues (Ibid.). In studying how each of these institutions approached their programming she developed a set of three guidelines for working with difficult or controversial subjects, 1. "Make every effort to ensure that the information presented is well-documented and researched." 2. "Confrontations and discussions should occur between performers and their audience." And 3. "Make sure that the audience feels invited to consider the issue from various perspectives" (p. 138). With these considerations in mind, Museum Theatre presents a particularly valuable way of presenting history and interpreting the more intangible aspects of them such as evoking emotion and stimulating empathy.

Echoing Bridal's emphasis on audience engagement through hands-on participation, Catherine Hughes discusses how Museum Theatre can successfully tackle controversial issues through a Boalian approach. Brazilian director Augusto Boal's "Forum Theatre" was an experimental performance model where actors turned the action

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of a theatre piece over to the audience; Hughes suggests, “With slight modifications Boal’s approach to audience involvement offers museum visitors an active opportunity to bring their own perspectives and experiences into the discussion an exhibit creates” (p.13). When designed and strategized correctly, museums can utilize Boal’s model to bring about visitor inquisition, asking them to reflect on their own ethics and values and step away from the risks they take with a stronger, more traditional “curatorial voice” (p. 15). In this sense, she contends, there is no better way for museums to approach difficult topics than through theatre (Ibid.).

Although it hasn’t been until recently that the introduction of dramatic interpretation in science centers, encyclopedic museums, and other traditional institutions has challenged living history museums to improve; Alan Brown and Jennifer Novak-Leonard observe, “People are thinking about the experience of culture differently [now] than in the past, placing value on a more immersive and interactive experience than is possible in the past” (p.6) and here, living history museums deliver a much more authentic experience than theatre alone can. Unlike traditional museums living history museums tend to focus on heritage “...the process or a performance in which certain cultural and social meanings and values are identified, reaffirmed, or rejected...” (Jackson & Kidd, p.237), and through performance become “...something we do in the present with the past for our present purposes” (Jackson & Kidd, p.69). It is, as these authors argue, the context rather than the object itself that resonates most powerfully with the public; it is this, coupled with the emotional and environmental cues that living history museums achieve, that create a more candid visitor response.

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It's easy to see that live interpretation is a dynamic and fluid phenomenon that is capable of representing so much more than just a historic event. To better understand its multidimensional applicability it's important to discuss how it is being employed contemporarily. There are two basic types of interpretation generally associated with Museum Theatre and a third with special relevance to living history museums. First-person interpretation is the most common form utilized; it is the basic interpretive role whereby a facilitator acts as a specific character within a historical context (Roth, 1998). First-person interpretation is the classic hallmark of reenactments at historic sites. Third-person interpretation is typically an observational role whereupon a participant simply acts as himself (Ibid.). Kevin Moore created an adaptation of the first-person role that he refers to as "do-it-yourself first-person interpretation," that he contends leads to a markedly deeper level of participation (Moore, 1997). Here, the visitor is still largely an observer, however, they become an active participant through a combination of objects such as artifacts and historic props, setting, and/or costume (Ibid.). "Do-it-yourself first-person interpretation" often includes hands-on facilitated learning activities at historical sites and living history museums that offer insight into the lifestyle and mores of people in the past. "Do-it-yourself first-person" shares much of the characteristics affiliated with "second-person interpretation". This relatively new idea in the realm of Museum Theatre is also being applied to experiences that ask participants to assume an identity that is not their own, such as a fictitious or generic historic character (Magelssen, 2006). To better understand the relationship between immersive learning, participatory reenactments, and the role of the visitor, especially in the second-person interpretive role, it is crucial to

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discuss what Scott Magelssen refers to as “simming.” Simming describes the type of engagement that occurs when spectator-participants take part in simulations (Magelssen, 2014). Living history sites are amongst the best-equipped institutions to provide experiences where visitors can “sim,” providing them the opportunity to engage with actors and one another as Bridal and Hughes champion.

The interplay between the basic tenets of Museum Theatre and the visitor experience is critical in contributing to our understanding of how difficult topics are being portrayed at living history institutions. Not only does live interpretation help museums to engage audiences in unconventional ways, it adds a distinctly emotional consideration to the development of experiences dealing with controversial issues.

### **Immersive Learning Theory**

While both case study programs featured in this research are highly immersive, the theory of immersive learning tends to focus on technologies that allow for students to learn through experiences that situate them fully in real-life experiences. Less is understood about the leaning efficacy of reenactments such as those featured in this study. Immersive learning is defined as the process by which a learner gains new skills or insight as the result of a simulation or a training regimen where they are fully steeped in an environment meant to replicate a specific scenario (Pagan, 2013). While immersive learning is typically associated with virtual simulations, these technological advances that take cues from the gaming industry are able to authentically enact situations that might otherwise be dangerous, costly, or difficult to replicate. The most common immersive learning strategies tend to focus on the recreation of high pressure, realistic scenarios.

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The most notable examples include those utilized by the military in first-person shooter and anti-gravity simulations used to train pre-service astronauts, to negotiate “high risk” situations.

According to Koreen Olbrish Pagano three design elements constitute a fully immersive educational experience for visitors, “performance objectives” what you do, “creating the world” where you do it, and “performance metrics” how success is measured (2013). Although immersive programming at museums typically encompasses the first two elements of Pagano’s design, they have increasingly tended towards visitor outcomes that include content retention (the educational aspect) and emotion. Here, we can account for the behavioral change that is commonly affiliated with immersive learning theory. As *Immersive Learning: Designing for Authentic Practice* suggests, “Immersive learning should be designed to change behavior and improve performance” (p.46), the behavior change accounted for in many immersive environments that deal with issues of social injustice strive to solicit empathy. The importance of creating outcomes beyond those of the traditional scope of learning theory archetypes is reflected particularly in Immersive Learning Theory through what theorists refer to as the “emotional responses of flow” (Pagan, 2013). “Emotional responses of flow” gauge the learner’s rate of content retention by attempting to explain how the juxtaposition between emotion and the level of challenge to the learner create an optimal environment for learning. When learners are highly challenged and also faced with a certain level of anxiety, they are likely to learn a great deal; likewise, when they are less challenged and in a subsequently relaxing environment they fail to fully apply themselves and gain new

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skills. The optimal balance between the two is where educators can expect to see the most significant level of learning occur, this is referred to as the “Flow Channel” (Ibid.).

In order to better understand how immersive learning reflects the work of live interpretation at living history institutions it is helpful to understand how simulations are situated within the larger theoretical framework. Immersive learning encompasses a number of mediums categorized by the type of authenticity they achieve for learners. These mediums range from the most basic “real-world” scenarios such as on-the-job training to completely reconstructed realities, each one soliciting a different attitudinal outcome and conversely, a hierarchical learning outcome. The most basic medium is “real world with additional context,” these simulations are low-risk training opportunities in the environment that the student will eventually be asked to demonstrate their skills, the second most extensive medium is “free will/open environment;” this type of immersion involves the recreation of virtual worlds that replicate what a learner may be exposed to at a later time (Ibid.); the third most immersive environment is referred to as “competition;” here, new skills are born out of the challenges presented in constructed immersive environments, most notably simulation-based computer or video games (Ibid.). Finally, the most rigorous immersive environments are simulations; they require learners to make decisions contextually within the parameters of the immersive schema (Ibid.). These types of simulations are the lifeblood of live interpretation at living history institutions and are worth further consideration for their application within an educational context.

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Despite the lack of literature surrounding living history museums' pioneering work in immersive learning environments, it is safe to say that there is significant insight to glean from the practices that inform their visitors and the benefits of teaching with a historical purpose in mind. Living history institutions and other more traditional museums have long sought to educate their visitors by fully immersing them deep in an unfamiliar past. This concept is known as "presence" by immersive learning theorists and is defined as "The extent to which the learner feels like she is connected or present immediately within the immersive learning environment" (Pagan, p.18). Above all other institutions of their type, living history museums are best able to achieve a true sense of presence and open a door to the learner's untapped potential.

At the cross section of these three ideas, we can hope to better understand the work that living history museums do as they seek to interpret slavery and begin to extrapolate the unique developmental considerations they must make.

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### CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

The purpose of this research was to describe how two living history museums, at two different points in time, used live interpretation to portray instances of slavery.

This case study involved two institutions that have attempted the live interpretation of slavery and, via semi-structured interviews, asked museum professionals at those sites to describe the successes and failures they experienced with their respective programs, the perceived audience impact of the programming, any special considerations associated with the programming, and thoughts on the future trajectory of interpreting slavery at living history museums. Interview data was coded to show common themes and differences using a general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). Findings were then used to develop a set of recommendations based on themes cited at both institutions. The interviews included questions (see appendix), which addressed the four core research questions of this study:

1. How and in what ways did these living history museums design experiences portraying slavery?
2. What principles and practices guided the development of the interpretation of slavery in these two programs?
3. What are some unique considerations that developers at these two living history museums made as they sought to interpret slavery?
4. What types of “best practices” are emerging in the field as examined through the lens of these two programs?

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### Site Selection

These two programs were chosen because they were considered revolutionary at their respective times of implementation. Colonial Williamsburg's Estate Sale gained attention in mass media for publicly addressing a socially sensitive issue in their regular daytime programming. While the historic presence of slaves had, and continue to be, represented at Colonial Williamsburg, programming had not been created with the specific intent of depicting the *sale* of slaves (Newport Daily News Press, 1994).

Conner Prairie's "Follow the North Star" program addresses such issues through the emerging interpretative technique of "second-person." In doing so they create an unprecedented visitor experience that evokes a more personal and empathetic feel (<https://www.connerprairie.org/Newsroom/2014/Fugitive-Slave-Experience-Forces-Participants-out>).

### Interview Participants

The nature of the museum professionals selected to complete the semi-structured telephone interviews were chosen based on their involvement in the development and/or current operation of the programs. The sample size consisted of 2-3 museum professionals at each site.

### Colonial Williamsburg:

- Christy Coleman: Current CEO of The American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar and former Director of African American Interpretation and Presentation at Colonial Williamsburg.

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- Rose McAphee: Current Training Specialist for the Department of Training and Historical Research at Colonial Williamsburg; former Lead Interpreter for African American Interpretation and Presentation at Colonial Williamsburg.
- Harvey Bakari: Current Manager of African American Initiatives at Colonial Williamsburg; former Work Interpreter for the Department of African American Interpretation and Presentation at Colonial Williamsburg.

### **Conner Prairie Interactive History Park:**

- Rosemary Arnold: Education Programs Manager at Conner Prairie Interactive History Park.
- Michelle Evans: Current Interpretation Program Developer at Conner Prairie Interactive History Park; former Guest Experience Manager at Conner Prairie Interactive History Park.

### **Instruments**

The semi-structured telephone interviews consisted of twenty questions. Interviews ranged in length from forty-minutes to approximately one hour and were audio recorded. Responses were analyzed across each interview, and grouped according to the four primary research questions, which were categorized in subsections designated: “Institution and Values” that aimed to establish a full description of the program in the study and its host institution, “Program Development and Approach” to help explain the institution-wide developmental process of the program and how it fit within the museum’s mission and scope, “Strategies, Outcomes, and Goals” that compared the developmental process to the resultant program as well as identified the unique

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considerations made in developing this type of programming, and finally, “Future of the Field” that worked to determine the future application of programs of this nature and suggested “best practices.”

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### CHAPTER FOUR: Results

Based on data collected from interviews with five museum professionals who helped develop and facilitate each of the two programs, several themes emerged.

#### **Themes:**

- Achieving authenticity through historic research
- A consideration of how oppressive imagery might affect youth audiences
- Ensuring institutional support
- Providing an option to discontinue the program
- Establishing the role of the audience clearly
- Developing community conscience and/or support
- Allowing for visitors to debrief with staff and one-another

#### **Part I. Institution and Values**

##### *1. How and in what ways did these living history museums design experiences portraying slavery?*

*“Follow the North Star” Conner Prairie Interactive History Park, (Fishers, Indiana):*

Since its conception in 1999, two programs have been established under the auspices of the “North Star” development team. The first program is intended for younger audiences and is tailored to suit school groups who visit Conner Prairie during field trips. This program is not described at length. It was, however, considered as a contributor to the spectrum of contextual themes that emerged in this study’s results. The other, a public program, is intended for mature audiences, and is the focal point of this research.

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Conner Prairie's previous interpretation of slavery was limited; as Rosemary Arnold explained, "It depended on the interpreter if you got any [information on] slavery at all" (Interview on April 14, 2014). Although African American interpreters had long represented the historical presence of African Americans in "Prairietown," Conner Prairie's recreated settlement in Fishers, Indiana, program coordinators had avoided engaging visitors in a dialogue about the historic roots of slavery in the area because of its status as a "free state" within the historical park's chronological scope (Ibid.).

A noteworthy element of "Follow the North Star" is their unique brand of second-person interpretation. This relatively new concept discussed previously in Chapter 2, asks visitors to play a role, real or imagined, in the experience. In this case, participants assume the role of an escaped slave negotiating the perils of the Underground Railroad. Front line interpreters then help facilitate the program in first-person as historically relevant figures.

Once guests have elected to participate in the public program they check-in at the ticket desk and are brought into an auditorium to watch a video that gives them some contextual information about slavery and African American life in Indiana and are delegated their second-person interpretive role as a slave. Visitors then board a tram to an adjacent property on the edge of Conner Prairie's grounds where they are instructed to vacate and become the focus of a slave auction. An interpreter playing an auctioneer separates the men and women into "bucks" and "breeders" where they are instructed how to behave appropriately as an obedient slave (Ibid.).

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The guests are then presented to “buyers” in a mock slave auction where interpreters create the illusion of their helplessness and inferiority; the group is then split up through the auction process into two groups. The groups are instructed to chop wood and partake in other typical labor obligations a slave might have endured in nineteenth century America. Once the visitors have completed their task they are given the option to continue to partake in remedial labor activities or flee to potential freedom by two female interpreters, “the Merricks,” that represent the typical Indiana family of the time. The Merricks belong to the American Colonization Society and attempt to conceal visitors along their journey in their barn. Having put themselves at risk, the Merrick women urge visitors to vacate their property after which guests are approached by a character known as the “former fugitive.” The man tells participants that he escaped to freedom with his master who migrated west. The former fugitive plans to travel back down south to rescue an enslaved family member (Ibid.).

After being aided by the former fugitive, visitors meet a poor southern white male character named Jacob Williams who has come upon hard economic times due to the increase of cheap, slave labor. Once the guests have resisted the attention of Jacob Williams they come into the care of a Quaker family who offer to hide them from slave catchers. The Quaker family not only fend off a slave hunter who comes to their door, they offer guests food and inform them of the critical role Quakers played in successfully navigating the Underground Railroad.

Finally, participants meet the Ward family, a free black family, who provide visitors shelter and advice about living as free African Americans in Indiana. An

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omniscient character referred to as “the prophet” appears shortly thereafter. The prophet signifies the end of the experience and establishes what the historic options would have been for fugitive slaves in Indiana. The prophet also discusses with visitors what fugitive slaves may have done upon leaving Indiana including traveling to “free” settlements in Michigan or making the perilous trek across the Canadian border.

“Follow the North Star” concludes by inviting audience members back to Conner Prairie’s “Welcome Center” where they participate in a guided dialogue with staff and other participants about their experience in the program as well as the African American slave narrative.

*1994 “Estate Sale” Colonial Williamsburg, (Williamsburg, Virginia):*

Williamsburg began including African American Interpretation in 1979 (Interview with Rose McAphee, April 8, 2015). The programming developed prior to the 1994 Estate Sale was largely meant to educate audiences about traditional, and often lost, African cultural practices, and the unique family dynamic of enslaved people in the Colonial Era. “We concentrated mostly on the culture and relationships (of African Americans in the colonial period),” said Harvey Bakari. Some of the programming prior to 1994 included daytime events in third-person and some limited first-person evening events. Some of the programs at Williamsburg included, “Affairs of the Heart” which dealt with misogyny, “Williamsburg in Black and White,” which identified the essential struggles of living in the colonial period as an African American, “Jumping the Broom” which taught visitors about African American culture through relationships in the context

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of being enslaved, and “Remember Me” a program that shed light on the difficulties associated with transitioning between life in Africa and the New World.

The 1994 “Estate Sale” was a component of a special weekend-long event held in conjunction with the Columbus Day holiday known as “The King’s Ascension Weekend,” or, as it was advertised to visitors, “Publick Times” (Interview with Christy Coleman, April 1, 2015). “The King’s Ascension” celebrated the historic meeting of the House of Burgesses when colonial business matters were conducted (Ibid.). Prior to the year of the estate sale, Williamsburg had interpreted another less gritty aspect of the slave trade, as Christy Coleman described,

In previous years, [the Department of African American Interpretation and Presentation had] done (interpreted) the day before the sale (estate sale). We had always done this program where a family was dealing with the fact that they were going to be split up because the sale was going to take place the next day, so their friends and family would gather the night before and discuss what that meant (Ibid.).

It was the expansion of this familial farewell that spurred the development of the estate sale in 1994.

The reenactment involved the sale of four slaves, two men and two women, who had once belonged to the late Alexander Purdy (Interview with Rose McAphee, April 8, 2015). The first slave offered for purchase was a male carpenter sold to the highest bidder, shortly thereafter, a female slave was auctioned off and ultimately purchased by another interpreter portraying her husband, a free black man. Finally, two slaves, a husband and his pregnant wife were offered for purchase. The husband was auctioned off prior to his wife for labor to a white interpreter. When his wife was offered for sale her

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husband's buyer attempted to purchase her as well and was outbid, culminating in the separation of the family (Interview with Harvey Bakari, April 14, 2015).

### **Part II. Program Development and Approach**

#### ***2. What principles and practices guided the development of the interpretation of slavery in these two programs?***

This section illustrates the development process for each program and the extent to which museum professionals at each site considered the visitor experience and its impact on their institutional culture.

#### **Achieving authenticity through historic research**

Interviewees at both sites spoke to the importance of historical accuracy in the development process for the live interpretation of slavery at their institutions. Although Williamsburg's Estate Sale has been synonymously linked with a "slave auction" in media coverage, it was not, and the distinction between the two is imperative as it helps highlight Williamsburg's commitment to historic accuracy. As Christy Coleman explained, the differentiation between an estate sale and an actual slave auction also helps shed light on the importance of maintaining historical accuracy in the development process,

We met with the research department and said "these are the criteria we're looking for in terms of the kind of things we want to do; we think an estate sale is better for a number of reasons;" and historically, lining newly arrived Africans on the steps of Williamsburg would never have happened, it would never ever, ever, have happened in the capital city so we could not be historically accurate and depict something like that (Interview on April 1, 2015).

She continued, "The research department found a number of samples of estate sales where two or three or four enslaved members were sold for labor" (Ibid.). When

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discussing some potential best practices for the live interpretation of slavery she added, “You’ve got to do your homework, you’ve got to investigate and to know what you’re doing. You’ve got to have your research to back you up because your challengers will come.”

Harvey Bakari agreed,

The fact of the matter was that we found documentation for Mr. Purdy auctioning off his property, and that’s what we did in the reenactment, we auctioned off chairs and lamps before we got to the enslaved people, so we found documentation so we could base it off a historical event and we used that documentation to deal with people after the reenactment (Interview on April 14, 2015).

As Bakari points out, not only is it understood that the position of the museum is to portray events with historic accuracy, the interpretation of issues of social injustice is one that they can expect to receive significant backlash. This additional level of insurance is undoubtedly the key to the future of programming dealing with difficult topics. As Coleman warned, authenticity is key in conducting the live interpretation of slavery: “it’s got to be both emotionally and historically honest”.

When speaking to the importance of creating an authentic experience for visitors Michelle Evans of Conner Prairie’s “Follow the North Star” assured, “We tried to make it as realistic as we possibly could based on what we know *did* actually happen to fugitive slaves; we don’t want it to be the ‘Disney’ version of history and pretend like they (fugitive slaves) all made it to Canada and lived happily ever after because that just isn’t *true*.”

Interview data also revealed the barriers developers faced when ensuring historic accuracy at Conner Prairie. Both Michelle Evans and Rosemary Arnold spoke to the difficulties associated with portraying instances of slavery in a location that was

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designated as a “free state” at the time of their institution’s historic chronology and the hardships of conducting an emotionally provocative program that was true to its historic roots.

Rosemary Arnold also discussed the presence of an “advisory board” for the program that was intended to help Conner Prairie strategically create a truly accurate experience. The advisory board included a Quaker historian, African American historians and other relevant experts and scholars who met regularly with staff at the museum to ensure the historic integrity of the program.

### **A consideration of how oppressive imagery might affect youth audiences**

Much of the oppressive traits of subjugation and violence are complex concepts for younger visitors to consider. This, coupled with its juxtaposition of how African Americans are treated contemporarily is one that is often difficult for children to fully comprehend. The developers of both “Follow the North Star” and the estate sale at Colonial Williamsburg indicated a careful consideration of younger audiences and how these social issues may be received. As Christy Coleman noted, “One of the things my team was very adamant about was not depicting the sale of children, we did not want children to be subjected to that (slavery)”. Although children had been occasionally utilized as interpretive participants, Christy and her team feared children might be emotionally compromised in reenacting instances of slavery, both from the interpreter and audience’s perspectives. Instead, her team employed the use of a pregnancy suit to imply the historical presence of children in the slave trade.

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At Conner Prairie, “Follow the North Star” developers created their program with the intent of engaging adult audiences. Both Michelle Evans and Rosemary Arnold cited the importance of age considerations in developing programming dealing with the live interpretation of slavery. They noted that inspiration for the program was taken from a simulation of the Underground Railroad at a youth summer camp in Ohio. Much of the development process for “Follow the North Star” focused on modifying the summer camp model to be more empathy inducing for adult audiences. Consequently, the finished public program became the new model for the school-aged programming at Conner Prairie that followed shortly thereafter. The “Follow the North Star” program intended for students was then radically altered from the adult program to be more age appropriate.

### **Ensuring institutional support**

Both Colonial Williamsburg and Conner Prairie attributed their program’s success to a supportive administration. Christy Coleman of Colonial Williamsburg noted two important factors that contributed to institutional buy-in for the estate sale. In considering the controversial nature of the live interpretation of issues of social injustice Coleman mentioned developing a separate “ museum-wide planning team” so that support for the program would transcend her department. She continued, “management said....

...meaning upper management, ‘if you feel that strongly about it, we’ll support you.’”

Harvey Bakari echoed this sentiment in mentioning the importance of museum-wide endorsement of the topic,

If you know you’re going to do something that’s very controversial or sensitive.... ..its important that your institution from the top down is supportive, so that if a donor or some other sponsor says “hey we don’t like this idea,” you have to have that support from the top down, which we did.... you’ve got to have that administrative support.

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Harvey Bakari, Rose McAphee, and Christy Coleman of Colonial Williamsburg discussed the general enthusiasm of their development team around the estate sale, and how they strive to create programming that would challenge visitors' notions of Williamsburg's history was dependent on institution-wide support.

Both Michelle Evans and Rosemary Arnold recalled not only discussing with interpreters the prospect of theatrical programming dealing with slavery but also a wider swath of institutional approval for "Follow the North Star".

### **Part III. Strategies, Outcomes, & Goals**

#### ***3. What are some unique considerations that developers at these two living history museums made as they sought to interpret slavery?***

This segment aimed to highlight some considerations made by the programs' developers that are unique to the live interpretation of issues of social injustice, in particular slavery.

#### **Providing an option to discontinue the program**

Both sites featured some element that allowed for their visitors to quit the program at any time of their choosing. Michelle Evans of Conner Prairie Interactive History Park mentioned that at the introduction of "Follow the North Star" facilitators provide each participant with a white cloth to tie around their head if they'd like to discontinue the program at any time,

...all the participants are given a strip of white cloth, they can keep it in their pocket unless they need it but what its for is that if at any point in this program they just feel uncomfortable, freaked out, they just need to not be in that role anymore, they can tie it around their forehead and that's a sign to our staff to disengage a bit and they can stand to the side and not have to play that role anymore.

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Rosemary Arnold also talked about more subtle ways of addressing visitor comfort at Conner Prairie, “[The interpreters] are comfortable talking about ‘difficult topics’ . . . they read their audience and if a guest is interested in talking about it, they will go there, but if they don’t want to talk about it they won’t go there either”.

Similarly, by nature, Colonial Williamsburg’s public reenactments, such as the 1994 Estate Sale, allow visitors to come and go as they please. Their open-air model generally only indicates to visitors the daily schedule of their programming, and a description of what visitors can expect. Guests may choose the events they attend and vacate the staging areas at their own discretion.

Colonial Williamsburg’s advertising for “Publick Times” included mention of the estate sale and described the program as a “slave auction.” This suggests that many of the visitors understood what the content of the program might entail.

### **Establishing the role of the audience clearly**

When developing the Estate Sale at Colonial Williamsburg, Christy Coleman, the Director of African American Interpretation and Presentation at the time discussed the critical role of front line interpreters in cuing visitors to their role as *strictly* observers. She suggested that her development team had ensured that visitors were warned not to bid on the actors.

Harvey Bakari of Colonial Williamsburg also supported establishing the role of spectators. He noted that protesters at the sale were warned by interpretive staff that they would be asked to leave in the event that they became disruptive.

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The protesters were on the stairs in front of the reenactment and they said “we’re not going to move... ..if you want us to move you’re going to have to arrest us.” At that point it was kind of obvious that the Vice President and Colonial Williamsburg as an institution was not going to arrest protesters, that would not look good, so to my understanding they said, “Fine, if you want to protest and you want to stay on the steps, you may do so, but all that we ask is that you sit down on the stairs so we can go forward with the reenactment”.

“Follow the North Star” establishes the audience’s unique second-person interpretative role in their program description, their website offers:

Become a runaway on the Underground Railroad, fleeing from captivity, risking everything for freedom. Follow the North Star plays out as an intense, living drama where guests become actors on a 200-acre stage, running from slave hunters and working together to navigate the Underground Railroad to freedom. (<http://www.connerprairie.org/Things-To-Do/Events/2015/Follow-the-North-Star>).

Rosemary Arnold, a contributor to “Follow the North Star” also acknowledged the cognoscente of visitors of their role as a “slave” prior to even stepping foot on Conner Prairie’s property:

[Participants have] to pre-register for this program, it’s not something people can just decide on at the spur of the moment, or just walk into off the street.... ..and that means that the majority know what the program is, when participants purchase their tickets it shows us that they wanted to do this; they also have to sign a wavier.

Although their type of interpretation differs greatly from one another, it is clear that both sites recommend maintaining a concrete role for their participants to ensure their program’s efficacy and work toward achieving the optimal empathetic response.

### **Developing community conscience and/or support**

Both sites stressed the imperative of engaging with their local community to combat backlash. Christy Coleman spoke to how her development team at Colonial Williamsburg considered the criticism they might receive for holding such an unorthodox program and sought to inform the community in Williamsburg of the sale, “Prior to that event we went and talked to our local chapter of the NAACP, and several other black

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organizations and churches in our community to say ‘This is what we’re getting ready to do, this is what we’re doing’ because they knew the work we had been doing for the last 15 years”.

Harvey Bakari echoed the importance of community engagement in conducting a controversial program, “There was an attempt to outreach to the local NAACP to inform them of the event and to some other entities but there were also other NAACPs that were regional that were not informed about it that became alarmed, there were also students at William and Mary who were not notified who became alarmed.” Without fully informing the community and other applicable organizations of their plans to interpret instances of slavery through theatre people assumed that the reenactment at Williamsburg was meant for spectacle rather than to educate:

...As word began to spread through the media that we were going to do a reenactment of an estate auction, of course the media, they said a “slave auction” most people when they thought of a slave auction would immediately envision Africans who are completely nude or half nude in a loin cloth coming off a slave ship having all their body parts being examined, and there were people who, rightfully so, with that perception thought that it was outrageous that Colonial Williamsburg, a conservative white institution, would portray such a horrific scene. So some people criticized prematurely that we were going to trivialize the history for white tourists and that we were going to sanitize it (ibid).

When discussing some recommendations for guiding the field in the future, Bakari confidently offered, “connecting with your community” and added, “You’ve got to let your community know so that they become aware of the event and they don’t get caught off guard then they can be very supportive if their other regional factions don’t like what’s going”.

Rosemary Arnold mentioned an “African American advisory group ” which accompanied the more scholarly advisory group. The African American advisory group

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helped inform some socio-cultural dynamics in the development of “Follow the North Star;” the advisory group, she offered

[Were] educators community leaders, church leaders, etc., there were about a dozen people in that group, and they sat down and we talked about it. We walked through the program.... .in what it was like at that point in the development. They made some suggestions, talked about language, talked about how far can we go? Can we say the ‘n’ word or not?....

She later discussed the importance of focus groups with community members and the insight that developers gained through their feedback, “...we had a wide base of the black community who knew about the program and understood the process we had gone through,” contending that it helped create a greater awareness and subsequent base of support for the program within the community. Additionally, Marcel Riddick, one of the program’s developers, insisted on community-wide publicity for “Follow the North Star.” She appeared on local African American talk radio shows and local university radio stations to discuss the experience and engage with the local community.

### **Part IV. Future of the Field**

#### ***4. What types of “best practices” are emerging in the field as examined through the lens of these two programs?***

The theme resulting from this section of interview data revealed some trends emerging on the topic of the live interpretation of slavery. They also revealed retrospective takes on recommendations offered by developers at Colonial Williamsburg and utilized in “Follow the North Star.”

#### **Allowing for visitors to debrief with staff and one-another**

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In reflecting on the 1994 Estate Sale Christy Coleman noted, “you’ve got to be willing to step outside yourself, and communicate with your audience, especially if you think there’s a risk you’re taking”. Although Colonial Williamsburg failed to fully engage their patrons in a dialogue about what witnessing the 1994 Estate Sale meant, it certainly may have proved helpful in combatting the criticism they received in the aftermath of the program. Harvey Bakari added to this idea,

...there was one big criticism that was legitimate, and that was that the audience really didn’t get a chance to know the characters being auctioned, they just saw the event, which in one way that is historical. If you were in Williamsburg and saw an auction you didn’t know those people, you just knew the characters being auctioned, but in another way, in terms of getting to know who the people were and really understanding the impact of it on the individual.... ..we could’ve done something where the audience got a chance to meet the people prior to being auctioned off and that would’ve created a more visceral connection between the audience and the enslaved people being auctioned.

In recognizing the value of encouraging a discussion about the historical hardships of slavery, Colonial Williamsburg incorporated some post-estate sale discourse that Bakari spoke to:

...the following year she (Christy Coleman) brought in some panelists, not just historians but a sociologist.... ..following up the auction with a panel discussion the following year on the anniversary is one way that we dealt with it (engaging the visitors in a facilitated dialogue about what they had witnessed).

In understanding, the importance of allowing for visitors to discuss their experience with interpreters and one another, developers of the Estate Sale acknowledged that it should be a consideration when composing a set of future “best practices.”

Likewise, in the closing element of “Follow the North Star” audiences are engaged in a guided dialogue to unpack the turbulent experience they have just completed. In an effort to better understand the plight of the enslaved, “The whole group will go back into our ‘Welcome Center,’ a modern building where [they].... ..sit down

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with one of our staff members and just sort of talk through the experience and ask questions, and process.” This debriefing session resulted from the suggestions made by a psychologist who sat on the “advisory board.” Both Michelle Evans and Rosemary Arnold spoke to how informative the debriefing process has been for Conner Prairie’s staff and how it has spurred new considerations for other programs there.

### **Limitations**

This research looks at two specific programs at two different points in time, both addressing similar topical content. It is not intended to be a survey of the ways in which living history museums interpret slavery. Other limitations may include: Geographic location of site and program, Social climate at the time of program implementation, and differences in program structure, as well as design and delivery.

Geography played an immense role in differentiating these two programs. Conner Prairie’s historical scope proved that Indiana had indeed been a “free state” during the historic period it portrays to visitors while Colonial Williamsburg was not. This created an immediate fissure between the social contexts of each site. Visitors are left with a much different view of the historic plight of African Americans in Virginia where slavery persisted much longer than in Conner Prairie (Indiana) where African Americans have been portrayed with much more independence.

Similarly, the social climate at the time of conception of the program may have influenced how each program was developed and the types of considerations their creators made. The six-year differential between the inception of the programs may be

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responsible for notable changes in attitudes towards the live interpretation of slavery across the two sites.

In addition to social timing, the duration of the program proved problematic. It is impossible to determine the true longevity of the Estate Sale at Colonial Williamsburg and its subsequent success or failure without replicating the program more than once. While the estate sale, as noted by developers, was intended to be a one-time occurrence, Conner Prairie has had the option to alter their program in order to make it more amenable to their visitors.

Each case study program portrays a much different aspect of the plight of slaves. “Follow the North Star” depicts the promise of escaping slavery through negotiating the challenges of the Underground Railroad, while the 1994 Estate Sale enacted the sale of human chattel and the potential of a life of servitude and subjugation. The feelings visitors attach to each instance is largely dependent on what they observe and experience, thus, participants are much more likely to critique one positively and to treat the other with disapproval. It is important to consider that connotation may serve as a catalyst for the practices utilized at each site and subsequently, the resultant themes.

Finally, the different types of audience participation used at each site made their comparison difficult. Colonial Williamsburg is known for its traditional brand of first-person interpretation, whereby an educator or interpreter plays the role of a historic character for audiences (<http://www.imtal-us.org/definitions-of-museum-theatre>). Conner Prairie, on the other hand, employs second-person as well as first-person interpretation in “Follow the North Star” (see Chapter 2). Understandably, the visceral reaction of

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audience members watching as opposed to actively participating in the program's activities create much different social outcomes and attitudes.

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### CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that museums, especially living history institutions, continue to think about how best to interpret controversial topics, and are mindful about how that content is delivered to their audiences. Most notably, these two living history institutions continue to address the socially sensitive aspects of their properties' histories and are keenly aware of the responsibility they have in developing interpretation on topics like slavery with authenticity, and with a community-based approach in mind.

The findings bridge an important gap in the literature between the learning value of highly immersive environments and how such programs are developed. In understanding the marriage between their educational value and their design, museums may be better equipped to create programming of this variety and delve further into experiences that deal with historically sensitive issues.

Museums have the power to significantly impact how visitors understand their own history. Because Museum Theatre evokes certain empathy that traditional museum interpretation may not, there is observable educational value in the visceral memory it creates (Sylwester, 1994). Robert Sylwester's research on the relationship between emotion and learning implies that educational programming should focus on metacognitive activities that encourage participants to address their emotions, listen to other participants, and consider the motivations of people who enter their curricular world (Ibid.), and live interpretation at living history institutions does just that. What's

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more, Sylwester found that when learners are simultaneously engaged physically *and* emotionally in an experience four parts of the brain are activated, the Amygdala Complex, Hippocampus, Thalamus, and Hypothalamus (Ibid.), together they help the learner create a memory associated with that experience and therefore, retain more content from it. If it is true, as George Santayana warned, “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” then living history museums may have a unique opportunity to change the future by continuing to address their difficult past.

### **Final Thoughts**

There is still much to be learned about the relationship between performing arts and its application as an interpretive tool in addressing historic issues of slavery and social injustice.

Authenticity proved an imperative theme in the development of both of the programs this research described. Even though each site adhered to the practice of crafting scripts based on primary source findings and secondary historical research, Conner Prairie’s development team worked with a largely recreated historical environment where Colonial Williamsburg did not. Much of the “checkpoints” in “Follow the North Star” are reimagined structures and/or recreated locations that simulate what traveling along the Underground Railroad might have been like (Interview with Michelle Evans, April 14, 2015). If we understand relative sense-of-place to be an important contributor to both the authenticity of the experience as well as visitors’ preconceived notions about the simulation, it is worth expanding this research to better understand how these considerations may have influenced each program’s development.

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### Live Interpretation of Slavery: Living History Museums and Historical Instances of Social Injustice

Tessa Yeaman// Email: [REDACTED]

Thesis Advisor: Nick Visscher, Museology Graduate Program, University of Washington

Phone: [REDACTED]

I am asking you to participate in a research study that is part of my Master's Thesis work at the University of Washington. The purpose of this research is to describe how live interpretation has been designed and performed at living history museums. Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits, and you may discontinue participation at any time. As a reminder, your name and the identity of your museum may be revealed in the final results of this study. This interview will be recorded, and I may quote you in my final paper. I will give you the opportunity to review any direct quotes before publication. If you have any questions now or in the future, you may contact me or my advisor using the contact information I have provided above and will leave with you. Do you have any questions? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

#### Interview Questions:

*The goal of this interview is to establish an understanding of how live interpretation of instances of slavery is being/ has been performed at living history museums. We will talk in detail about how your institution has approached the historical interpretation of slavery beginning with a full description of the experience and what helped drive the development process.*

#### Part I: Institution and Values:

1. Could you describe in as much detail as possible the experience of live interpretation of slavery at your institution?
2. What made your institution decide to enact instances of slavery?
3. Has your institution ever attempted to use live interpretation of slavery since developing the program we are discussing today or prior to its introduction?
4. Prior to your museum's introduction of the experience we are discussing today how did your institution represent the historical presence of African Americans?

#### Part II: Program Development and Approach:

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*Now we're going to move on to a more in-depth discussion of the development process for the live interpretation of slavery at your institution and how it was tailored to best educate the public and suit the aim of your institution.*

5. Walk me through the development process of the experience within your institution.
6. What role do interpretive staff and/or educators play in this experience?
7. Did staff receive additional or specialized training to be able work in this experience?
8. To what extent did your institution consider the public reaction to this experience?
9. Are there any audience restrictions for the experience?

### Part III: Strategies, Outcomes, and Goals:

*Now I'd like to delve into how the planning and development of the programs we're discussing today came to fruition and what hurdles and successes you believe emerged after the experience premiered; then, I'd like to know how it came to meet or fail to meet your institution's initial goals.*

10. What were your institution's initial goals or learning outcomes set forth prior to the completion of the experience?
11. Did your museum plan to gauge the visitor reaction through audience research? If so, how did your institution plan to do that?
12. What successes do you believe your institution's program achieved? Did they emerge immediately or after alterations were made to the program?
13. Did your institution plan to engage the surrounding community or involve them in the planning process?
14. Why did your institution choose the type of interpretation that it did for this experience? i.e. first person, third person, a combination of both or other.
15. Do you think that the type of interpretation, as defined in the last question, create any special audience considerations?
16. Did the historic geographical location of your institution serve as a contributing factor to the development process?
17. How did you communicate or indicate the audiences' role in the experience?

## LIVE INTERPRETATION OF SLAVERY AT LIVING HISTORY MUSEUMS

### Part IV: Future of the Field

*Now, in thinking about the things we've discussed thus far in our interview I'd like you to think about how the live interpretation of slavery can be developed in the future and how it will look if it continues to be represented in your institution and/or in others.*

18. Based on the successes and/or failures of your institution's program what sort of "best practices" might you suggest for the live interpretation of slavery?

19. What changes do you think could have been made or can be made to your museum's program to make it or have made it more successful?

20. What is the best piece of advice you can give to another living history museum in considering the creation of programs that utilize the live interpretation of slavery?