Reparative Preservation through Immersive 3D Documentation: Cultural Memory, Spatial Justice, and Gullah Geechee Futures on Daufuskie Island

by

Wil Jones

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Authored by: William Jones
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 16th, 2025

Certified by: Holly Harriel, EdD
Associate Professor of Democracy and Civic Engagement
Strategic Advisor for Community Practice and Clinical Education, CoLab

Accepted by: J. Phillip Thompson
Professor of Political Science and Urban Planning
Master in City Planning Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

This thesis advances a reparative framework for cultural preservation by combining immersive documentation with co-authored digital storytelling to support Black spatial memory and community sovereignty. Grounded in fieldwork on Daufuskie Island, South Carolina—a historic Gullah Geechee community confronting dispossession and cultural enclosure—the project co-creates Daufuskie3D (https://daufuskie3d.org/), an interactive website that presents annotated 3D scans, oral histories, ambient videos, and symbolic interface design rooted in Gullah epistemologies.

It is guided by two research questions: How can immersive documentation support reparative preservation for communities at risk of spatial erasure? And what frameworks—technical, ethical, and political—ensure digital practices reflect Black cultural values, descendant authorship, and community control? Drawing from Black geographies, wake work, vernacular cartography, and speculative design, the thesis introduces a conceptual distinction between visualization and analysis tools to examine how different modes of spatial capture shape visibility and authority. The project finds that immersive tools, when grounded in ethical design and descendant authorship, can function not simply as representational media but as reparative infrastructure—supporting visibility, stewardship, and spatial return in communities confronting erasure.

The Daufuskie3D website serves as both platform and method. Its spatial interface draws on Gullah visual language, including Underground Railroad quilt codes and spiritual symbolism, while its non-linear navigation resists conventional heritage taxonomies. Rather than flattening culture into content, the site embraces ambiguity, withheld spatial detail, and narrative restraint as ethical design principles. Developed in partnership with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, a sixth-generation Gullah cultural steward, the project repositions preservation as participatory, situated, and future-facing. It offers Daufuskie3D as both a working prototype and a methodological contribution

toward reparative immersive practice—centering digital preservation as a strategy of memory, sovereignty, and cultural regeneration within the Black diaspora.

Keywords: Immersive Documentation, 3D Scanning / LiDar / Photogrammetry, Cultural Preservation, Gullah Geechee, Daufuskie Island, Reparative Preservation, Black Geographies, Digital Heritage, Speculative Design, Counter Cartography, Counterpublic, Spatial Justice, Oral History, Afrofuturism, Digital Public, Digital/ Web Archive, Cultural Stewardship, Ethical Design, Participatory Design, Underground Rail Road, Return

Thesis supervisor: Holly Harriel, EdD
Title: Associate Professor of Democracy and Civic Engagement, Strategic Advisor for Community Practice and Clinical Education, CoLab

Acknowledgements

This thesis engages the Black intellectual and political traditions within MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. It builds on a lineage of scholar-practitioners who have used planning to advance equity, participation, and community-based technological access.

I begin by honoring Mel King—Adjunct Professor Emeritus in DUSP, organizer, educator, and policymaker—whose work continues to shape this department and the city of Boston. From the Tent City movement to the Roxbury Incorporation Project and the Mandela Initiative, King approached planning as a strategy for Black self-determination. In 1997, he founded the South End Technology Center (SETC) to expand community access to digital tools. Its 2003 partnership with MIT's Center for Bits and Atoms catalyzed the global Fab Lab movement, reframing fabrication as a public resource.

Dr. Ceasar McDowell, Professor of the Practice of Civic Design and current director of SETC, extends that legacy through participatory infrastructures that center voice, power, and democratic process. His Civic Design Framework and Real Talk Boston project shaped this thesis's approach to engagement and design. I first cited his work in my application to MIT, and his mentorship has continued to guide me throughout my time in the program.

Dr. Holly Harriel—Associate Professor of Democracy and Civic Engagement, and my thesis advisor—was advised by Dr. McDowell during her own time as an MCP student in this department. Her thesis explored how GIS could serve civic engagement in the CDC sector, a question that deeply influenced the methodological design of this project. That advisory lineage—McDowell to Harriel to me—has shaped both the form and ethics of this work.

This project applies immersive documentation to questions of spatial justice, cultural memory, and community authorship. It reflects the commitments of those who came before, and the infrastructures they built to expand access to planning, technology, and cultural preservation. This project brings the work of these ancestor's full circle. It extends their commitments into new terrains—immersive documentation, digital preservation, and reparative spatial practice—while remaining grounded in their belief that technology must serve the people and that planning can be a tool for liberation. Its methods and ethics are shaped by the institutions they built to challenge exclusion and expand public access to planning, memory, and representation.

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All images created by author unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

This thesis is both a media project and a spatial research platform that investigates how immersive technologies can support reparative cultural preservation in Black geographies. Built as an interactive website—***Daufuskie3D.org***—it presents annotated 3D scans, soundscapes, oral histories, and spatial interfaces that document vernacular Gullah sites on Daufuskie Island, South Carolina. The platform is not a supplement to the thesis—it is its central site of inquiry. Through digital form and field-based content, it asks how immersive documentation might function not merely as representation, but as a tool for memory, advocacy, and repair.

As a media thesis submitted through MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning, this project departs from the traditional written format. Media theses are designed for work whose insights emerge through digital practice—projects that rely on interaction, spatial design, storytelling, and visual experimentation to investigate research questions that exceed the boundaries of text. This format is essential to the project's methodology: it enables findings to be experienced rather than just described. In this case, the website form directly supports the central lines of inquiry, allowing for the layered presentation of field scans, oral testimony, spatial annotation, and sound—all of which are critical to this project's reparative goals.

Two research questions animate this work:
(1) How can immersive documentation methods—such as photogrammetry and LiDAR scanning—support reparative cultural preservation for communities at risk of spatial erasure?
(2) What technical, ethical, and political frameworks are needed to ensure that digital preservation practices reflect Black cultural values, community control, and descendant authorship?

To explore these questions, the thesis combines field-based 3D scanning, oral history collection, collaborative annotation, and digital storytelling, developed in partnership with community members—most centrally, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, a sixth-generation Gullah cultural steward. Together, these components form Daufuskie3D, a prototype for immersive preservation rooted in relational ethics, descendant knowledge, and counter-narrative design.

The written chapters that accompany the platform move from historical context to theoretical framing to methodological reflection.

- **Chapter 1** situates Daufuskie as both a geographic site and a symbolic landscape of Black land struggle, drawing out the stakes of cultural survival, erasure, and

speculative return.

- **Chapter 2** examines the legal and spatial structures of land loss through the lens of heirs property and the afterlife of slavery.
- **Chapter 3** centers the interpretive work of Ms. Robinson, whose cultural and spatial stewardship challenges dominant preservation frameworks.
- **Chapter 4** critiques extractive models of heritage tourism and introduces immersive media as a vehicle for narrative sovereignty and community-led engagement.
- **Chapter 5** elaborates the project's conceptual framework—including Black geographies, wake work, vernacular cartography, and speculative design—and introduces a key methodological insight: the distinction between visualization and analysis tools in immersive documentation workflows.
- **Chapter 6** addresses the infrastructural and ethical dimensions of spatial capture, including platform limitations, data ownership, and questions of digital stewardship.
- **Chapter 7** outlines a framework for reparative immersive practice—one that connects immersive tools to community authorship, infrastructural equity, and spatial return.

The appendix includes key project artifacts and documentation: a comparative chart of scanning tools used in the field, hardware and platform specifications, technical field notes, and a copy of my *Personal Theory of Practice*, written at the end of my first semester of graduate school. This document articulates the foundational commitments—relationality, spatial justice, and cultural authorship—that shaped the conceptual and ethical direction of the thesis from its earliest stages.

This is not a comprehensive archive of Daufuskie. It is a methodological offering—one shaped by the constraints and possibilities of digital tools, the guidance of Gullah elders, and the urgency of protecting Black cultural geographies before they disappear from view. Preservation, in this light, is not backward-looking commemoration. It is a forward-facing practice of care—one that must be designed in dialogue with those who carry memory and fight to sustain it.

Chapter 1: Daufuskie as Site and Symbol

Daufuskie Island, situated just off the southern coast of South Carolina between Hilton Head and Savannah, occupies a liminal space—geographically, historically, and culturally. Spanning only five miles long and three miles wide, it is bordered by the Cooper and New Rivers and faces the Atlantic Ocean. Its separation from the mainland has long shaped both its vulnerability and its resilience: Daufuskie has remained physically unbridged, socially peripheral, and administratively neglected conditions that have inadvertently preserved one of the most intact Gullah Geechee landscapes, even as they have reproduced longstanding forms of exclusion and dispossession.[1]

Now included within the federally designated Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, Daufuskie stands as one of the most critical sites for understanding the continuity and disruption of Black land stewardship in the post-Emancipation South. The island's relative isolation—electricity did not arrive until 1952—has insulated it from many of the infrastructural transformations that reshaped surrounding coastal regions. But that same isolation has also contributed to systemic underinvestment, rendering the island both a repository of memory and a site of slow neglect. This project positions Daufuskie not only as a physical geography, but as a terrain of cultural survival and speculative return.

Historically, Daufuskie was home to several large plantations, including Melrose and Haig Point, where enslaved Africans cultivated Sea Island cotton, indigo, and rice. During the Civil War, following the passage of the Confiscation Acts, Confederate landowners fled the island. Union troops seized control and subdivided plantation tracts into smaller parcels, which were then sold to formerly enslaved people. In a profound act of self-determination, many Black families pooled their savings and purchased land, establishing a landowning community grounded in agriculture, oyster harvesting, praise house worship, and cooperative labor.[2]

By the early 20th century, Daufuskie was home to nearly 3,000 Black residents. The island supported an economy based on communal oyster canning operations and subsistence farming. The built environment retains traces of earlier eras of labor and cultural expression—most notably through the tabby ruins that remain along the riverbanks. Introduced to the region in the 17th century, tabby—a durable building material composed of lime, sand, water, and oyster shells—gained widespread use in the

[1] Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission, *Management Plan*, National Park Service, 2012.
[2] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 1 (March 29, 2025).

18th and early 19th centuries across the coastal Southeast.[3] On Daufuskie Island, tabby was used in constructing cisterns, plantation infrastructure, and slave dwellings, including the arc of one-room tabby cabins at the North Slave Settlement at Haig Point, built between 1826 and 1833.[4] These structures—among the most intact tabby slave dwellings in Beaufort County—are laid out in a curved formation rather than the rigid grid typical of plantation quarters, potentially reflecting African spatial logics or communal layout traditions.[5] Today, many of these dwellings stand as roofless ruins, vulnerable to erosion and neglect. Though materially fragile, they hold spatial memory—testaments not only to ancestral labor and architectural ingenuity, but also to the epistemologies of care and place that continue to shape Gullah identity.[6] Yet their cultural and historical significance is obscured by inaccessibility: the site lies behind the gates of a private residential community and golf course, closed to the public and descendants alike.

The early 20th century brought new pressures. The boll weevil infestation devastated cotton crops, while industrial pollution from the Savannah River contributed to the collapse of Daufuskie's oyster industry—one of the island's most vital and community-sustaining economies.[7] As incomes declined and public services eroded, residents began migrating to the mainland in search of educational access, employment, and infrastructure. By the 1980s, land loss through partition sales, tax foreclosures, and speculative development had severely fragmented Black landholdings across the island.

Ironically, the same conditions that prompted Black outmigration also fueled Daufuskie's rediscovery by outsiders. Pat Conroy's 1972 memoir, *The Water is Wide*, based on his brief tenure as a white teacher on Daufuskie, framed the island as an isolated, timeless world on the brink of disappearance. While the book drew national attention and led to a film adaptation, it reinforced narratives of Gullah life as primitive and endangered, rather than self-sustaining and adaptive. This framing aligns with a broader tradition of white literary and preservationist narratives that sentimentalize Black communities while erasing the political and legal structures that place them at risk.[8] In the decades since, Daufuskie has become a contested site of memory: a living archive of Black history increasingly enclosed by gated communities, luxury development, and curated tourism.

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[3] Colin Brooker, "Tabby Making: Materials and Fabrication," in *The Shell Builders: Tabby Architecture of Beaufort, South Carolina, and the Sea Islands* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2020), 76–79.
[4] Colin Brooker, "Tabby Construction Details: Design and Workmanship," in *The Shell Builders*, 96–97.
[5] Colin Brooker, "Slave Dwellings and Settlements," in *The Shell Builders*, 120–124.
[6] Jola Idowu, "Tabby Concrete: An Eroding Architectural History," *Places Journal* (September 2024), https://placesjournal.org/article/tabby-concrete-black-indigenous-history/.
[7] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 2 (April 18, 2025); Brooker, "Tabby Making," 77.
[8] Pat Conroy, *The Water is Wide* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

Today, Daufuskie remains both symbolic and material: a microcosm of Black land struggle in the Lowcountry, and a place where spatial memory, community resistance, and digital preservation converge. It is not just the subject of this project—it is its foundation. Understanding Daufuskie as both a site and a symbol allows us to see more clearly what is at stake: not just buildings or parcels, but the worldmaking practices of a people who have long inhabited the margins—and made them sovereign. As the following chapter shows, the symbolic weight of Daufuskie cannot be separated from the legal and economic systems that have threatened its Black landholders for over a century.

Theoretical Framework

This project is grounded in a theoretical framework that bridges Black geographies, spatial justice, speculative design, and digital ethics. Rather than treat immersive documentation as a neutral act of preservation, it engages cultural memory as a political and speculative intervention—situated in the afterlife of slavery, shaped by racialized spatial extraction, and oriented toward descendant futurities. The concepts outlined below animate Daufuskie3D's methodological choices, narrative structure, and visual form, offering a critical vocabulary for understanding not only what is represented but how and why it is rendered.

I. Black Geographies and Spatial Refusal

Black Geographies is the primary analytic framework guiding this thesis. It offers the tools to interpret Daufuskie Island not simply as a site of cultural loss or heritage, but as a living geography shaped by racial capitalism, fugitive memory, and practices of spatial refusal. Building on the work of Katherine McKittrick, Clyde Woods, and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Black Geographies insists that Black spatial life is produced not merely through displacement, but through acts of endurance, refusal, and imaginative reconfiguration. It holds that space is not neutral terrain, but a product of historical and ongoing systems of enclosure, extraction, and racial violence. As McKittrick writes, Black geographies are "a terrain of struggle"—simultaneously shaped by oppression and animated by practices of resistance and place-making.[9]

Daufuskie Island exemplifies these tensions. Its geographic isolation once served as protection from the racial violence of the mainland, enabling the survival of Gullah lifeways and language. But this very separation now renders it vulnerable to neglect, speculation, and cultural enclosure. The spatial production of Daufuskie—its tabby ruins, overgrown cemeteries, and disappearing family compounds—must be read not only as evidence of erasure, but also as sites of Black knowledge, resistance, and place-making. Here, space is simultaneously a repository of ancestral stewardship and a battleground of contested belonging.

Katherine McKittrick's *Demonic Grounds* reminds us that Black geographies are not defined solely by erasure, but by creativity and spatial agency. Her theorization of the "loophole of retreat"—drawn from Harriet Jacobs' garret, where she hid for seven years and narrated her life unseen—offers a powerful frame for understanding how constrained spaces become platforms for witnessing, memory, and resistance.

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[9] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xii.

McKittrick emphasizes that such spaces "underscore a geographic awareness that is integral to Black life," revealing how agency and knowledge persist even in sites designed to confine.[10] Jacobs, writing from what she called her loophole, "narrated her life from the last place they thought of"—a phrase that resonates across the histories and landscapes of Black fugitivity. In the context of Daufuskie, the loophole becomes a metaphor for the digital realm itself: a precarious but protected space where memory can be held, rearticulated, and made visible beyond the reach of erasure.

Daufuskie3D participates in this tradition of spatial counter-production. Though built in the digital realm, its form and function are rooted in Gullah traditions of embodied mapping—narrating place through trees, gestures, songs, and ancestral presence. The platform becomes a digital loophole: a spatial workaround, a witnessing tool, a counterpublic infrastructure constructed within the constraints of institutional preservation yet oriented toward Black sovereignty. Its manifestation of spatial refusal mirrors the quotidian acts of resistance practiced by Gullah descendants on the island—especially women like Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, who's interpretive and preservation labor resists settler-colonial logics not through confrontation, but through presence, narration, and care. Though discussed in greater detail in a later chapter, her work embodies the epistemological traditions that this thesis seeks to honor knowledge carried in the body, stored in the land, and transmitted through protective storytelling. As McKittrick and Woods write, "[Black] counter-cartographies work through alternative spatial knowledges that hold potential for justice."[11]

The use of immersive tools in this context is not a gesture of aesthetic enhancement or technological novelty. It is a spatial tactic—a form of digital maroonage that asserts the enduring presence of Black place-making. To document these lands, stories, and practices is not to fix them in place, but to refuse their disappearance. It is an invitation for future generations to see, remember, and reimagine Daufuskie—not as a relic, but as a living geography of Black freedom.

II. Wake Work and the Afterlife of Slavery

If McKittrick's Black Geographies reveals how Black spatial life is structured through both erasure and creative resistance, Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake* offers a complementary lens: one that names the continuity of racial violence and asks how we attend to it. Where McKittrick maps struggle onto the material production of space, Sharpe theorizes what it means to live in the afterlives of slavery—in the wake of the slave ship, in the hold of archival silences, and in the breach between presence and

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[10] Ibid., 97.
[11] Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, eds., Black Geographies and the Politics of Place (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007), 8.

disappearance.[12] Together, their work frames this thesis not just as a study of cultural memory, but as an attempt to practice what Sharpe calls wake work: the ethical and imaginative labor of mourning, remembrance, and refusal.

Sharpe's concept of wake work provides a critical orientation for both the methodology and the design of this project. In documenting Gullah Geechee cultural memory amid land loss, heritage commodification, and institutional neglect, I adopt wake work not just as metaphor, but as method: a form of digital practice grounded in care, mourning, and speculative repair. Wake work, in Sharpe's terms, is not about resolution—it is about holding space for what remains, attending to what has been disappeared, and insisting on the continued presence of Black life and knowledge despite systemic attempts to erase them.[13]

On Daufuskie, the wake appears not only in the weathered tabby ruins or overgrown graveyards, but in the legal and infrastructural mechanisms that made them vulnerable: heirs property law, speculative development, state divestment, and zoning regimes that privilege leisure over lineage. These are not discrete policy failures—they are the spatial instruments of an afterlife. To work in the wake is to refuse neutrality in the face of this history. It is to interpret every vacancy and vine-covered home not simply as the passage of time, but as the ongoing accumulation of racialized loss.

This thesis frames the gathering and layering of oral histories, land records, ambient sound, and 3D scans as a mode of wake work: a process of attending to absence while crafting tools for continuity. Sharpe writes that "the sign of the slave ship marks and haunts contemporary Black life," yet from this haunting, communities generate "sites of artistic production, resistance, consciousness, and possibility for living in diaspora."[14] In her terms, this is a "practice of counter-memory"—one that reorients the gaze toward the interiority of Black life rather than its surveillance or disappearance.[15] This resonates with the goals of *Daufuskie3D*, which seeks not only to preserve what remains, but to visualize the struggle for survival itself—to treat fragmented memory not as failure but as evidence of endurance.

This framing also shapes my approach to technology. Immersive media, often celebrated for its aesthetic or educational potential, risks aestheticizing trauma or abstracting community stories into consumable content. Wake work demands a different posture—one that values opacity, partiality, and restraint. This project therefore asks: What does

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[12] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 15.
[13] Ibid., 18.
[14] Ibid., 22–23, 130.
[15] bid., 128.

scanning obscure? What does a polished render erase? When should immersion pause to protect the sacred, the soft, or the still-forming?

In this spirit, *Daufuskie3D* is not a triumphal act of digital preservation. It is a platform that labors in the wake—with care, with mourning, and with vision. It creates a space not only for what survives, but for the labor of survival itself—and for imagining futures where Gullah memory is not merely preserved as artifact but sustained as presence.

III. Plantation Futures

Plantation logics are not confined to history—they persist in the present as spatial systems that regulate land, memory, and value. This thesis engages Katherine McKittrick's concept of *plantation futures* not only as a frame for analysis, but as a terrain of intervention: a way of identifying, disrupting, and reimagining the racial geographies that structure Daufuskie Island and its preservation politics. In *Plantation Futures*, McKittrick argues that the plantation "is an ongoing locus" of racial-spatial control whose logics continue to shape contemporary geographies—from gated communities to tourism zones to carceral landscapes.[16] These afterlives are not metaphorical—they manifest in material arrangements of land, labor, and value, sustained through privatization, real estate speculation, and the racialized curation of heritage.

On Daufuskie, plantation futures are visible in the resorts and gated developments that now occupy land once cultivated and stewarded by Black families. In real estate brochures that romanticize "Lowcountry charm" while displacing Gullah descendants. In preservation projects that foreground colonial nostalgia but ignore oral history, kinship, and sacred Black geographies. McKittrick writes that such sites emerge from a process through which "the lands of no one" became "bound to a geographic language of racial condemnation."[17] What appears as abandoned or uninhabited is often a site of extraction—where Black life was made invisible to render land desirable.

Historic preservation has, in many instances, operated as a soft mechanism of this extraction. On Daufuskie, it has mythologized aesthetic decisions, commodified cultural markers, and rendered Gullah presence palatable only when detached from the people who sustain it. The plantation's violence persists not only in architecture or agriculture, but in the bureaucratic systems that determine what counts as "historic," what is saved, and who decides. As McKittrick puts it, "some live in the unlivable," and doing so "condemns the geographies of the marginalized to death over and over again."[18] This

[16] Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," Small Axe 17, no. 3 (2013): 1–15, 4.
[17] Ibid., 7.
[18] Ibid., 8.

repetition is visible in zoning ordinances that devalue family compounds, tax regimes that dispossess without warning, and legal structures that treat communal land inheritance as disorder.

Against this backdrop, *Daufuskie3D* intervenes by treating cultural sites—like the Robinson Family Home and the Tabby Ruins—not as romantic relics or aesthetic artifacts, but as spatial testimonies of endurance, refusal, and care. Through immersive documentation, these sites are not flattened into visual spectacle but layered with oral annotation, ambient sound, and contextual silence. Unlike conventional preservation renderings, which often privilege visual clarity and formal completion, this platform embraces grain, partiality, and presence-in-absence. For example, sacred sites are deliberately under-rendered or omitted based on community guidance, preserving dignity through spatial restraint. In this way, *Daufuskie3D* does not seek to simulate the past—it holds space for it.

These layered memory practices reflect what McKittrick calls "secretive histories": the stories embedded in plots of land—both literal and narrative—that resist full capture by dominant cartographies.[19] These histories are neither hidden nor lost; they are simply illegible to plantation logics. They reside in hymns, burial grounds, praise house ruins, and the secret initiation rituals of the Oyster Union Society. Through co-annotation, oral interviews, and architectural trace, this project seeks to surface these "resistance plots," not as data points, but as living geographies of Black autonomy.

By naming these dynamics as *plantation futures*, this thesis foregrounds the structural stakes of digital heritage work. The goal is not merely to preserve culture, but to challenge the ways preservation itself can reproduce racial capitalism. Immersive tools must not only represent space—they must expose the systems that shape it. The website *Daufuskie3D* acts as a counter-plantation interface: a digital environment that resists nostalgia, interrupts extraction, and centers Black cultural memory as a form of spatial refusal. In doing so, it answers McKittrick's call to develop "decolonial thinking that is predicated on human life."[20]

IV. Vernacular Cartography and Digital Memory

This project adopts vernacular cartography as both method and metaphor, drawing on Nettrice Gaskins's theory of techno-vernacular creativity and a broader Afrofuturist design lineage. Where official cartographies rely on colonial logics—borders, cadastral surveys, and state-sanctioned legibility—vernacular cartographies chart memory, kinship, movement, and refusal. They operate not through GPS or grid, but through

[19] Ibid., 11.
[20] 5. Ibid., 14.

story, intuition, sound, and spirit. As Gaskins writes, techno-vernacular design "incorporates culturally specific strategies developed by marginalized communities that use the tools at hand to document, imagine, and reconfigure their environments."[21]

On *Daufuskie3D*, vernacular mapping emerges in multiple forms. The homepage is designed as a digital quilt, with each tile referencing Underground Railroad quilt codes that once encoded escape routes, spiritual guidance, or covert resistance. The navigation logic itself draws from Afro-diasporic traditions—recursive, layered, and nonlinear. Instead of orienting users through fixed landmarks or dropdown menus, the interface encourages intuitive wandering. Hover effects, video loops, and micro-animations function not as aesthetic flourishes but as narrative cues—subtle acts of call and response. This is not cartography as grid but cartography as groove.

Annotations on the site do not function as encyclopedic metadata. Rather, they operate as narrative signals, sometimes incomplete or deliberately ambiguous, designed to prompt reflection rather than closure. Quilt code symbology embedded throughout the interface—such as the *North Star*, *Monkey Wrench*, or *Flying Geese* patterns—are not explained directly[22]. Their meanings are encoded, alluded to, or left unspoken, in keeping with their historical use as covert navigational tools during enslavement. These symbols once marked safe houses, escape routes, and spiritual instructions, but only for those who had been taught how to read them. Their inclusion here honors that tradition of layered signification, in which interpretation is offered only partially, and often only to insiders. As Gaskins notes, vernacular design is "layered with signification" and intended for "those who already know."[23] These gestures are not about obscurity—they are about protecting meaning from extraction, about refusing the flattening gaze of universal legibility.

This framework also supports the project's use of speculative media. Rather than reconstructing Daufuskie Island as it was, *Daufuskie3D* invites users to participate in the act of remapping cultural memory from within. The site includes video interviews with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, in which she reflects on her childhood and the history of the land—offering spatial memory through gesture, storytelling, and embodied presence. These oral histories are not confined to static transcripts; they are spatially and visually embedded into the landscape she describes. Her gestures, silences, and spatial references become part of the archive. The videos do not simply relay information—they situate knowing in the body, on the land, and within ancestral

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[21] Nettrice R. Gaskins, "Afrofuturism on Web 3.0: Vernacular Cartography and Augmented Space," in Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness, ed. Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 23–38.
[22] Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, Hidden in Plain View: The Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), page number.
[23] 2. Ibid., 29.

continuity. Rather than offering a chronological tour, the site becomes a temporal collage—less a timeline than a ritual of return. Users are not asked to follow a linear narrative; they are invited to co-compose meaning through encounter.

In this sense, vernacular cartography also offers a critique of heritage datafication. It asks: whose map matters? What stories are made possible when we chart space not by satellite but by song, by soil, by silence? How might speculative digital archives restore the Black spatial imagination where formal maps have only rendered absence?

Daufuskie3D does not claim cartographic authority. It claims cartographic refusal. It resists translation into extractive data models or GIS overlays. Instead, it builds a digital terrain in the tradition of Black speculative design—where memory is mapped not through control, but through care.

V. Immersive Counterpublics and Speculative Design

This project engages counterpublic theory and speculative design not as abstract frameworks, but as spatial practices. *Daufuskie3D* is built as an immersive counterpublic: a digital environment where descendant memory, vernacular aesthetics, and Black geographies form a space for self-determined narration and future-making. Drawing from Nancy Fraser's concept of *subaltern counterpublics*, I understand immersive tools not simply as representational platforms, but as mechanisms for constructing alternative publics—those that make room for knowledge forms, histories, and affective truths often excluded from dominant discourse.[24]

This work is further informed by Afrofuturist theory and Saidiya Hartman's method of *critical fabulation*: a narrative practice that acknowledges the gaps, silences, and distortions of the archive while refusing to fill them with easy resolution. Hartman describes fabulation as "imagination tethered to the archive"—a strategy that blends historical inquiry with ethical storytelling.[25] In this thesis, fabulation informs the way memory is treated on the platform: as partial, layered, and often unresolved. This practice of narrative restraint—where absences are not filled but foregrounded—shapes how *Daufuskie3D* uses annotation, omits certain scans, and resists over-narration. To fabulate, in this context, is not to fictionalize—it is to honor what remains without forcing it into total legibility.

Design choices throughout the platform reflect this commitment. Layered transitions, embedded loops, and nonlinear navigation echo the rhythm of Gullah storytelling—circular, improvisational, and grounded in place. The site resists linear tours and

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[24] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," Social Text 25/26 (1990): 56–80.
[25] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," Small Axe 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

extractive metadata in favor of spatial ambiguity and textured presence. Rather than displaying memory for consumption, it *holds* memory. In this way, the interface becomes a kind of digital hush harbor—a spatial sanctuary structured by care, opacity, and refusal.

This practice aligns with what Michelle D. Commander calls a speculative return: a diasporic engagement with ancestral landscapes that avoids nostalgia and embraces the political potential of imaginative reentry.[26] Through video interviews with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, architectural scans of family homes, and annotated memory sites, the project enacts a return that is not representational—it is participatory. Users walk with memory, hear its inflections, and navigate through descendant voice and spatial trace. Commander emphasizes that such returns are "non-linear, affective, and politically charged"—a formulation that captures the ethos of this work.[27]

Immersive counterpublics also demand design accountability. As articulated in my Personal Theory of Practice, this project is not simply about storytelling—it is about insurgent planning: designing infrastructures that prioritize Black cultural sovereignty, epistemic multiplicity, and ethical stewardship.[28] Immersive tools can easily reproduce extraction, flattening, or overexposure. This thesis resists those tendencies by embedding speculative ethics at every layer of the interface: What is shown? What is held back? Who decides?

In sum, *Daufuskie3D* is not a simulation of memory—it is a spatial inheritance sustained in digital form. It envisions a future in which immersion is not a tool of spectacle, but a practice of return.

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[26] Michelle D. Commander, Afro-Atlantic Flight: Speculative Returns and the Black Fantastic (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 88–101.
[27] Ibid., 93–96.
[28] See Appendix C: Personal Theory of Practice.

Black Land, Memory, and Dispossession

Heirs Property: Legal Instruments of Dispossession

To understand heirs property as merely a legal anomaly is to miss its deeper significance within the afterlives of slavery. Christina Sharpe's concept of the *wake* urges us to consider how slavery continues to structure Black life through atmospheric, juridical, and spatial forms.[29] Heirs property, as it functions in Gullah Geechee communities, is one such formation: a land tenure system born in the aftermath of emancipation, shaped by oral inheritance and collective ownership, yet persistently undermined by legal and planning systems that fail to recognize Black relational geographies. It is not just a technical vulnerability—it is a racialized mechanism of erasure.

Defined as land passed without a will and held collectively as tenants-in-common, heirs property reflects intergenerational practices of mutual care, shared stewardship, and informal governance. Yet under American property law, it is treated as "clouded title"—undocumented, unprotected, and vulnerable to forced partition. Any co-owner may petition a court to sell the entire parcel, a loophole long exploited by developers, speculators, and distant heirs. Legal scholars Zuri Bailey, Ryan Thomson, and Benjamin Green describe heirs property as a "legal technology" that facilitates Black dispossession under the guise of formal neutrality.[30]

On the South Carolina coast, this process results not only in displacement but in disappearance. As Ariel Butkus documents, many heirs parcels are excluded from official GIS systems, rendering them invisible to planners, assessors, and preservation agencies.[31] This spatial omission has tangible consequences: families with longstanding ties to land are often disqualified from disaster relief, historic recognition, and restoration funding. "It's not just that heirs property isn't protected," Butkus writes. "It's that it's not even seen."[32]

That invisibility is not metaphorical. During a field visit to Daufuskie, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson—a sixth-generation Gullah resident and cultural historian—described how her family lost access to ancestral land after a distant heir sold their share. What had once been her grandmother's vegetable garden was redeveloped into a gated enclave.[33] Her testimony reveals how loss unfolds not just in legal documents, but in lived landscapes—

[29] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 39.
[30] Zuri Bailey, Ryan Thomson, and Benjamin Green, "Heirs Property, Critical Race Theory, and Reparations," Rural Sociology 87, no. 2 (2022): 492–518.
[31] Ariel Butkus, The Public Trust Debate: Implications for Heirs Property along the South Carolina Coast (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2021), 14–22.
[32] Ibid., 27.
[33] Field notes, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, Daufuskie Island, April 18, 2025.

places of cultivation, memory, and care made inaccessible or unrecognizable through privatization.

The U.S. Forest Service has attempted to quantify this dynamic. Its 2019 report, *Heirs' Property and Land Fractionation*, maps heirs property concentrations across the Deep South and connects them to legacies of exclusion, segregation, and systemic disinvestment.[34] The report frames heirs property not as an isolated anomaly but as a racial justice issue—evidence of how U.S. law fails to recognize communal ownership systems rooted in kinship, stewardship, and cultural memory.

If Sharpe helps us understand heirs property as a formation within the wake, Katherine McKittrick sharpens our grasp of its spatial logics. Her concept of *plantation futures* reveals how the plantation's spatial, aesthetic, and economic frameworks persist—animating contemporary practices of land theft, speculative development, and enclosure.[35] On Daufuskie and across the Lowcountry, the transformation of once-Black-held land into private resorts, gated compounds, or dormant speculation parcels is not incidental. It is part of a recursive spatial strategy in which communal Black land becomes a site of extraction.

The consequences extend beyond the loss of title. Praise houses, burial grounds, oyster middens, and vernacular dwellings often sit on heirs parcels that are ineligible for preservation grants or formal recognition. Meanwhile, tourism campaigns increasingly market Gullah culture on land from which Gullah families have been displaced. Recent federal reforms—such as the 2018 Farm Bill's provision allowing heirs property owners to access USDA programs—offer limited relief. Implementation remains uneven, and many families lack the legal and technical capacity to clear title, register land, or navigate bureaucratic systems.[36] Scholars such as Butkus have proposed designating heirs property as a form of cultural commons—a public trust that protects collective memory in the same way environmental assets are preserved.[37] Yet such frameworks remain largely aspirational without legal teeth or institutional infrastructure.

It is precisely within this gap—between formal recognition and lived reality—that **immersive documentation can intervene**. Where legal records fail to protect, and public systems fail to see, immersive technologies such as LiDAR, photogrammetry, and 3D annotation offer an alternate form of visibility. On Daufuskie, where sites like Ms. Robinson's family compound or the tabby ruins lack legal designation, these tools have

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[34] U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Heirs' Property and Land Fractionation: Fostering Stable Ownership to Prevent Land Loss and Abandonment, General Technical Report SRS-225 (Asheville, NC: Southern Research Station, 2019), 1–5.
[35] Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," Small Axe 17, no. 3 (2013): 1–15.
[36] USDA Forest Service, Heirs' Property and Land Fractionation, 8–10; Butkus, The Public Trust Debate, 45–48.
[37] Butkus, The Public Trust Debate, 35–38.

enabled preservation through presence. By capturing fragile vernacular structures, annotating memory sites, and embedding oral testimony into spatial models, immersive workflows render cultural continuity not only legible but navigable—offering a new evidentiary substrate for advocacy, planning, and preservation.[138]

A scan cannot substitute for legal title, but it can make visible what legal systems ignore: the kinship logics embedded in land use, the spatial signatures of Black survival, the architectures of refusal. On Daufuskie, these scans do not simply record; they intervene. They provide a platform for descendant storytelling, grant-making, and political mobilization. They challenge the exclusionary cartographies that mark heirs property as marginal, and instead map it as essential infrastructure—cultural, historical, and spatial.

To treat heirs property as a bureaucratic oversight is to obscure its function within a broader architecture of racialized extraction. On Daufuskie, as in many Gullah Geechee communities, heirs property is not just land—it is memory infrastructure. It is sacred ground. To lose it is not simply to forfeit an asset; it is to sever kinship, erase spatial knowledge, and foreclose cultural continuity. In Sharpe's terms, this is wake work: the labor of tending to what slavery leaves behind—not only grief, but geography. And in McKittrick's terms, it is a refusal of plantation futures—those recursive geographies where Black space is continuously rendered disposable. Preservation, then, is not merely a legal strategy. It is an ethical obligation, a political demand, and a technological possibility—one that must be grounded in care, accountability, and spatial clarity.

[38] 10. See Chapter 5, "From Visualization to Analysis," and Chapter 7, "Toward a Reparative Immersive Practice."

Cultural Stewardship

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Cultural Stewardship and the Politics of Representation

At the heart of this project is the work and wisdom of Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson—a sixth-generation Gullah woman born on Daufuskie Island and one of its most vital cultural stewards. A chef, author, historian, and guide, she has dedicated her life to preserving and transmitting the stories, language, and lived experience of Gullah Geechee people. Through the Sallie Ann Robinson Gullah Museum and Heritage Tour—the only Gullah-owned and operated cultural enterprise on the island—she sustains a lineage of place-based knowledge and community-led interpretation.

Born on August 4, 1958, to Albertha Robinson Stafford and Alton Ward Sr., Ms. Robinson attended the Mary Fields School on Daufuskie before continuing her education on the mainland.[39] Her childhood was deeply rooted in Gullah traditions: gardening, crabbing, praise house worship, and the spoken cadences of Gullah language.[40] She was among the handful of students taught by author Pat Conroy during his controversial tenure as a white teacher on the island. Conroy later fictionalized her as "Ethel," a character in *The Water is Wide* based in part on his memory of Robinson during that time.[41] While the book introduced Daufuskie to a national audience, it also signaled a pattern that persists: the shaping of Gullah narratives by outsiders.

Over the past four decades, Ms. Robinson has worked to reclaim and reframe that narrative. She is the author of two cookbooks and co-author of *Daufuskie Island*, a historical photo-documentary published by Arcadia Press. Her cookbooks—*Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way* and *Cooking the Gullah Way, Morning, Noon, and Night*—are more than culinary texts; they are vessels of oral history, seasonal wisdom, and cultural continuity.[42] "I write so the children who come behind us can know how we lived," she explains during her tours, often describing recipes as repositories of memory.[43]

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[39] "About Sallie Ann," SallieAnnRobinson.com, accessed May 4, 2025, https://www.sallieannrobinson.com/blank-2.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Pat Conroy, The Water is Wide (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).
[42] Sallie Ann Robinson, Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way: Smokin' Joe Butter Beans, Ol' 'Fuskie Fried Crab Rice, Sticky-Bush Blackberry Dumpling, and Other Sea Island Favorites (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Cooking the Gullah Way, Morning, Noon, and Night (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007).
[43] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 2 (April 18, 2025).

As a heritage tour operator, Ms. Robinson does not rely on plaques or institutional signage. She narrates the island through embodied memory—identifying trees as landmarks, naming forgotten neighbors, and gesturing toward unmarked graveyards overgrown with brush. Her tours surface the histories left out of preservation frameworks: the labor of oyster shuckers, the traditions of praise house worship, the erosion of family land. In this way, her work exemplifies what scholars of Black geographies describe as counter-mapping practices—forms of spatial narration that refuse settler-colonial land logics and instead center Black epistemologies of place, kinship, and memory.[44] Her interpretive labor is not merely educational; it is political and spatial, asserting a Gullah claim to land and story in the face of erasure.

Her stewardship extends to sacred spaces. Ms. Robinson has led efforts to protect family cemeteries and Black burial grounds that remain unmarked, untended, and increasingly vulnerable to private development. Her advocacy earned her a grant from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund to support restoration and interpretation of these sites.[45] For her, these are not just burial places but sacred grounds—churches in their own right—where communion with ancestors continues.[46]

Perhaps most critically, Ms. Robinson challenges the frameworks through which Gullah culture is consumed—both by preservation institutions and by tourists who arrive with narratives shaped by non-Gullah voices. During our fieldwork, she offered a pointed reflection: "You can't digitize a culture you never sat with. You can't tell the story of this island from Google."[47] This was not just a critique of digital preservation without participation—it was a condemnation of the entire ecology of misrepresentation, in which developers, writers, and tour operators romanticize or distort Gullah life to serve commercial ends.

One example she frequently highlights is the widespread myth of Haint Blue—a commercialized narrative that distorts both the color's spiritual significance and its specific cultural origins. While often associated with St. Helena Island, its use on Daufuskie carried a distinct meaning: ceilings were painted indigo to prevent spirits picked up outside the home from lingering or entering the body during sleep. In popular discourse, however, the practice is frequently misattributed or flattened, with aesthetics elevated over ancestral knowledge. For Ms. Robinson, this kind of mythmaking is not harmless. Her critique is not nostalgic—it is political. Cultural preservation, in her view, demands accountability to living people, not just curated histories. It requires

[44] Katherine McKittrick, Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 5–6.
[45] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 3 (April 19, 2025).
[46] Ibid.
[47] 9. Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 2 (April 18, 2025).

participation, precision, and the refusal of myths that exploit or oversimplify Gullah identity.

These critiques fundamentally shaped the ethical terms of this project. Ms. Robinson's insights challenged me to treat immersive documentation not as neutral capture, but as a practice of relational accountability. Every scan, annotation, or narrative inclusion became subject to the question: who is being centered, and who is being served? The decision to work with immersive tools—LiDAR, photogrammetry, and spatialized storytelling—was made not to "preserve" her knowledge, but to honor its context, its consent, and its complexity. These tools became meaningful only when directed by her authorship, guided by her language, and grounded in her worldview. They are not ends in themselves, but instruments of listening and care.

Ms. Robinson's presence within this project is not ornamental—it is foundational. Her practice embodies a different epistemology, one grounded in ancestry, relationality, and self-definition. She reminds us that cultural preservation is not the fixing of a past in place, but the tending of practices that make Black survival and sovereignty possible. In doing so, she challenges institutional gatekeeping and insists on community-authored futures. She has lived what others come to study. She has returned to what others have left behind. And she continues to narrate Daufuskie not as a world in decline, but as one still unfolding.

Heritage Tourism and the Digital Turn: Contextualizing Daufuskie Island

Heritage tourism refers to travel centered on cultural, historical, and communal sites—spaces where visitors seek to engage with the legacies of place. It encompasses both tangible heritage—such as vernacular architecture, family cemeteries, and sacred landscapes—and intangible forms, including oral traditions, spiritual practices, foodways, and rituals of memory.[48] While the sector has become one of the most profitable and rapidly growing in the U.S. South, it is also a site of contestation. When designed without accountability to local communities, heritage tourism can exploit cultural labor, flatten memory into marketable myth, and hasten displacement under the guise of preservation.

These dynamics are particularly visible in the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, designated by Congress in 2006 to recognize the unique cultural contributions of Gullah Geechee people across the coastal Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. The Corridor's Management Plan explicitly calls for a shift away from plantation nostalgia and toward community-based cultural interpretation, economic inclusion, and narrative sovereignty.[49] Yet many sites still lack the infrastructure—visitor centers, interpretive signage, protected access—that would allow Gullah communities to define and benefit from their own cultural heritage. More often, descendants are left out of key decision-making processes, even as their stories are spotlighted for tourists and branding campaigns.

The economic stakes underscore this paradox. In 2010, South Carolina recorded $15 billion in travel spending and $4.7 billion in tourism-generated wages.[50] Cultural heritage tourists—those who travel specifically to engage with local traditions—tend to spend more, stay longer, and seek what the industry terms "authentic experiences." But who gets to define authenticity, and on whose terms? As Deepak Chhabra argues, "authenticity" in tourism is often staged—constructed to meet consumer expectations rather than reflect living, evolving cultural realities.[51] In Gullah contexts, this leads to reductive narratives that privilege surface-level performances—basket weaving, dialect samples, "storytelling"—while obscuring structural issues like land loss, climate vulnerability, and intergenerational displacement.

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[48] National Park Service, Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan (Atlanta: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2012), 43.
[49] Ibid., 66–69.
[50] Ibid., 24.
[51] Deepak Chhabra, Heritage Tourism: Contemporary Perspectives (New York: Routledge, 2010), 34–36.

These tensions raise a critical question: how might Gullah communities reclaim tourism not only as an economic engine, but as a site of self-determined storytelling? Michelle D. Commander's concept of *speculative return* offers a powerful response. In *Afro-Atlantic Flight*, she defines return not as a literal or geographic act, but as a form of diasporic imagination—a creative reengagement with ancestral geographies through memory, story, and design.[52] This project takes up that call. Through *Daufuskie3D*, a community-anchored digital platform, Gullah descendants and diasporic audiences can reenter Daufuskie's cultural landscape through immersive tools: layered LiDAR scans, oral histories, ambient soundscapes, and annotated memory sites. This is not tourism as simulation. It is heritage as relation—a form of presence grounded in witnessing, care, and responsibility.

Daufuskie3D actively resists the extractive tendencies of conventional heritage tourism. Rather than rendering Black cultural sites as aesthetic backdrops for external consumption, it invites what Chhabra calls *visitor mindfulness*—a slowed, reflective mode of engagement that privileges listening over looking.[53] It also reframes the role of branding, rejecting tourism-as-product in favor of what the Corridor Plan terms *virtual stewardship*: the application of preservation ethics to digital space without severing ties to the land, labor, and community knowledge that gave rise to it.[54]

This critique becomes especially sharp when considered against the backdrop of plantation tourism—a lucrative heritage genre in the Lowcountry that continues to flatten Black life into nostalgic spectacle. These spaces, as Commander notes, often aestheticize slavery and minimize Black resistance, offering "consumable narratives devoid of continuity or agency."[55] By contrast, *Daufuskie3D* centers what I describe as *narrative sovereignty*—the right of Gullah people to define their own stories, to control the means of cultural transmission, and to intervene in the market forces that shape collective memory. The immersive interface becomes a kind of subaltern counterpublic, what Nancy Fraser describes as "parallel discursive arenas" in which historically marginalized communities can circulate oppositional interpretations of history, identity, and belonging.[56]

What emerges is not tourism-as-entertainment but tourism-as-witnessing. A reparative digital encounter. A refusal to let the memory of Daufuskie be shaped solely by the demands of the marketplace.

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[52] Michelle D. Commander, Afro-Atlantic Flight: Speculative Returns and the Black Fantastic (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 129–134.
[53] Chhabra, Heritage Tourism, 115–117.
[54] National Park Service, Gullah Geechee Corridor Plan, 162–165.
[55] Commander, Afro-Atlantic Flight, 142.
[56] 9. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," Social Text, no. 25/26 (1990): 67–70.

Preservation Reframed

I. Reframing Preservation

Preservation in the United States has long centered the material—buildings, monuments, and architectural form—often at the expense of the communities that made those spaces meaningful. Codified through the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and reinforced by the National Register of Historic Places, preservation practices have historically privileged colonial aesthetics, individual ownership, and landmark-based significance.[57] These frameworks uphold what the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund (AACHAF) describes as "the dominant logic of preservation," in which resources and recognition accrue to sites already legitimized by institutional power.[58] For Black communities—particularly Gullah Geechee descendants on Daufuskie Island—this has meant that the places most vital to cultural identity often fall outside preservation's reach: praise houses, family cemeteries, oyster society buildings, and kin-based landholdings held as heirs property.

This project begins from a different premise: that memory itself is a form of infrastructure. Following Christina Sharpe's concept of wake work, preservation is not simply the act of conserving what remains. It is the labor of attending to what has been excluded, erased, or rendered invisible—what lingers in the afterlives of slavery, displacement, and land theft.[59] In this context, preservation becomes a reparative spatial practice. It is not just about buildings—it is about relation, refusal, and return.

Andrea Roberts, through the Texas Freedom Colonies Project, has articulated a framework for reparative planning that centers descendant knowledge, oral tradition, and community authorship.[60] Her participatory mapping platform challenges conventional planning tools, showing that Black placemaking lives not just in zoning maps or deeds, but in memory, ritual, and relational stewardship. Roberts frames this as "planning as remembering." Daufuskie3D aligns closely with that vision. The immersive digital archive developed through this project is not just a record—it is a method of remembering with, rather than about. It visualizes stories and spaces neglected by institutional frameworks and affirms that what is vernacular, spiritual, or undocumented is no less worthy of preservation.

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[57] U.S. Department of the Interior, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, 2017.
[58] Tanner Report 2, African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, 2023, 8.
[59] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 15.
[60] Andrea Roberts, "Planning as Remembering: Freedom Colonies and the Creative Craft of Black Placekeeping," in Countering Displacement through Collective Memory, 2024.

A growing chorus of preservationists, planners, and scholars now advocate similar approaches. The National Trust's Sites of Enslavement initiative reframes preservation as repair, emphasizing story, relationship, and care in spaces shaped by historical violence.[61] The Tuskegee University architecture program, under Professor Kwesi Daniels, operationalizes this ethic by partnering with descendant communities to restore sites not for display, but for continuity.[62] These models reject extractive preservation logics that valorize decay while ignoring the people who lived and labored within these structures.

Daufuskie3D is part of that shift. On Daufuskie Island, the project documents sites that have been fenced off, allowed to decay, or interpreted without Gullah voices. Many are private homes still owned by descendants, but no longer occupied—structures deteriorating due to generations of deferred maintenance. Despite their cultural significance, these sites are rarely prioritized by local preservation organizations. Instead, they are frequently treated as ruins for recreation, photography, or worse—vandalism. One example is the Robinson Family Home, whose windows were forcibly removed by trespassers.[63] These are not abandoned places—they are living evidence of a community's spatial and familial history.

Other structures, like the Oyster Society building, speak to the economic and cultural labor of Daufuskie's Black residents. Once central to the island's oyster industry—a historically Black, women-led economy—it has been physically refurbished but remains unopened to the public. Although it could serve as a site of memory and education, it currently sits unactivated, disconnected from the descendants whose histories it embodies. These are the kinds of sites Daufuskie3D seeks to document: not decaying shells of the past, but repositories of care, labor, and endurance that remain overlooked by dominant frameworks.

The AACHAF report *Preserving African American Spaces* calls for a preservation strategy that is both cultural and structural: one that expands what counts as "significant," uplifts community-authored histories, and uses digital tools to broaden access and stewardship.[64] Daufuskie3D enacts that strategy by using immersive methods—3D scans, oral history, ambient sound, and spatial storytelling—to elevate sites and stories too often excluded. Rather than merely visualizing space, the platform deepens narrative engagement, providing both a record and a tool for advocacy, resource mobilization, and pedagogical use.

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[61] Repair Work at Sites of Enslavement, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2022.
[62] "At Tuskegee University, an Architecture Professor Leverages Historic Preservation Goals to Meet Community Ones," National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2023.
[63] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 3 (April 19, 2025).
[64] Preserving African American Spaces: Growing the Places that Matter, African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, 2024, 34–36.

This is particularly urgent on Daufuskie, where sites like the Robinson Family Home remain in critical need of preservation. Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson has launched a grassroots effort to restore the home, distributing QR-coded donation stickers at the end of her tours.[65] But her campaign is limited to those who can physically visit. While media coverage offers some visibility, the scans featured on Daufuskie3D—contextualized by oral testimony and spatial annotation—convey the home's urgency and significance in ways that static images cannot. With AR and VR capabilities, the project creates new channels for engagement—allowing descendants, funders, and broader publics to connect with these spaces in place-aware, emotionally resonant ways. In this sense, Daufuskie3D contributes to the Action Fund's goals by making descendant-defined preservation accessible, fundable, and experientially powerful.[66]

To reframe preservation, then, is to ask not what is most architecturally intact, but what is most spiritually, historically, and communally held. On Daufuskie, preservation is not about nostalgia or aesthetic recovery. It is about making space for stories that refuse erasure. It is about continuity—not just of form, but of presence. Through this lens, preservation becomes not the fixing of a past in place, but the tending of a future still unfolding.

II. Preservation as Wake Work

Christina Sharpe describes the *wake* as the enduring afterlife of slavery—a spatial and temporal condition that shapes Black life through loss, precarity, and systemic erasure.[67] *Wake work*, in her framing, is the practice of attending to that condition with care. It is a methodology of witnessing, resisting, and remembering within systems that refuse to see. This section argues that preservation, in the context of Black land loss and cultural erasure, must be understood as wake work: a practice of care, refusal, and memory-making in the aftermath of dispossession.

Rather than restoring a fixed past, preservation as wake work tends to what remains—material traces, spiritual sites, cultural fragments, and ancestral infrastructures that persist in the face of disappearance. The overgrown cemetery, the collapsed roofline, the stories passed from elder to youth: these are not remnants. They are acts of survival. They carry forward the presence of people, practices, and places that institutions have long failed to protect.

On Daufuskie Island, this manifests in sites that are both sacred and precarious. Family compounds where multiple generations once lived are now subdivided or condemned.

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[65] Field notes, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, Daufuskie Island, April 18, 2025.
[66] Tanner Report 2, 17.
[67] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 14–15.

Homes passed through heirs property sit shuttered or deteriorating, not for lack of care but for lack of structural support.[68] Cemeteries like the one behind the Robinson Family Home remain unmarked, vulnerable to overgrowth and encroachment. These are not peripheral spaces. They are the ground on which memory is made and kept.

Wake work, in this context, is not symbolic—it is spatial. It requires mapping what is unmarked, remembering what has been removed, and holding space for stories that have no archive. This is the work of Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson when she gestures toward a tree where a neighbor once lived or calls out the names of those buried beneath her feet. It is also the labor of immersive documentation: capturing not only what can be seen, but what must be narrated, interpreted, and held in relation.

Through field scanning, oral history, and digital annotation, *Daufuskie3D* builds a counter-archive of wake work. In one 3D scan, the collapsed ceiling of a Gullah home frames the sky like an open wound. An annotation notes where a family altar once stood. This is not a simulation of the past—it is a record of rupture, and a call to repair. These digital environments do not claim to restore wholeness. Instead, they trace what Sharpe calls "the past not passed": the enduring presence of histories that refuse to stay buried.[69]

In doing so, wake work becomes a bridge—from memory to action, from loss to reparation.

[68] Ariel Butkus, The Public Trust Debate: Implications for Heirs Property along the South Carolina Coast (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2021), 14–22.; Zuri Bailey, Ryan Thomson, and Benjamin Green, "Heirs Property, Critical Race Theory, and Reparations," Rural Sociology 87, no. 2 (2022): 492–518.
[69] Ibid., 9.

III. Speculative Cartographies: Afrofuturism 2.0 and Digital Re-Mapping

To extend this spatial analysis into the realm of technology and aesthetics, the framework turns to Nettrice Gaskins' concept of vernacular cartography, introduced in *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness*. Gaskins outlines a mapping practice rooted in Black cultural expression—assemblage, remix, and embodied narrative—that resists state-sanctioned geographies.[70] This project builds on her formulation by treating spatial annotation, ambient videos, and digital quilting as speculative tools of cultural authorship, extending vernacular spatial practices into immersive design.

Through LiDAR and photogrammetry, a new kind of augmentation emerges—one that overlays physical terrain with ancestral, symbolic, and narrative knowledge. The memory-site page for the Robinson Family Home exemplifies this approach. While Sketchfab's upload limitations prevented the full environmental context from being rendered—including a storage shed, family land boundaries, and surrounding forest—the annotations allow for layered narration, embedding personal and cultural memory beyond the scan's visual field.[71]

Platform limitations, such as Sketchfab's file size and texture constraints, obstruct the rendering of full spatial fidelity.[72] But these technical gaps also intensify the speculative function of annotation: enabling users to layer memory onto what is absent, not only what is seen. This constraint becomes generative, encouraging interpretive engagement. Users are invited to click symbols, follow embedded audio, and navigate between models, building a nonlinear sense of place through interaction. Despite its partial rendering, the Daufuskie3D interface constitutes a form of vernacular augmented reality—one that resists settler aesthetics by activating descendant memory, story, and improvisation.

Inspired by the techno-vernacular creativity of Houston Conwill, Estella Majozo Conwill, and Sanford Biggers, this project incorporates a digital quilt interface as a symbolic and navigational map[73][74]. Each memory site—whether church, homestead, or

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[70] Nettrice R. Gaskins, "Afrofuturism on Web 3.0: Vernacular Cartography and Augmented Space," in Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness, ed. Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 27–37.

[71] "Upload Limits," Fab Support, accessed May 5, 2025, https://support.fab.com/s/article/Upload-Limits.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Houston Eugene Conwill, JuJu (master's thesis, University of Southern California, 1976), UMI Number: EP58177, published by ProQuest LLC, 2014.

[74] Nettrice R. Gaskins, "The African Cosmogram Matrix in Contemporary Art and Culture," Black Theology: An International Journal 14, no. 1 (2016): 28–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/14769948.2015.1131502.

burial ground—is represented by a quilt code historically associated with the Underground Railroad. These codes, long debated as navigational semaphores used by enslaved people in flight, function here not as historical claims but as symbolic devices—anchoring each spatial entry in a Black visual and mnemonic tradition.[75]

For instance, the First Union African Baptist Church is represented by the Carpenter's Wheel, a secondary code that, according to oral tradition, referenced Jesus as the "master carpenter." While enslavers interpreted spirituals like *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* as religious longing, such songs often encoded direction—pointing west-northwest toward Ohio and freedom.[76] Similarly, the navigation menu that appears on every page of Daufuskie3D takes the form of the Drinking Gourd, or North Star, an emblem historically tied to maritime escape routes from Cleveland or Detroit to Canada.

While still evolving, the quilt interface has been partially implemented on the website and serves both symbolic and functional roles. Users engage with it by selecting quilt blocks that link to memory sites, where 3D scans and oral histories unfold within a broader spatial cosmology. Each interaction reveals embedded relationships—between land, family, and spirit—through symbols that resonate across diasporic traditions. In this sense, the interface is neither linear nor exhaustive; it is designed as an exploratory archive, inviting affective navigation and open-ended return.

The cultural significance of this design took on new relevance with the unveiling of Sanford Biggers' *Madrigal* (2024), a sculpture installed at MIT's Edward and Joyce Linde Music Building. Biggers, who treats quilts as vernacular art and spiritual archive, refers to himself as a "late collaborator" with their unknown creators.[77] His work transforms quilt patterns into monumental abstraction, recognizing them as spatial technologies of resistance. In alignment with this vision, Daufuskie3D treats quilt codes not as static historical artifacts, but as living infrastructure—expressive, insurgent, and communal.

Within this framework, the quilt interface functions as a digital cosmogram: a speculative, recursive, and symbolically encoded map. It remaps cultural space in dialogue with ancestral technologies, vernacular aesthetics, and Black epistemologies of memory and mobility. It is both interface and ideology—a spatial composition that challenges Western cartographic norms and affirms Black narrative sovereignty in the digital realm.

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[75] Eleanor Burns and Sue Bouchard, Underground Railroad Sampler (San Marcos, CA: Quilt in a Day, 2003).
[76] Ibid., 15–17.
[77] "Madrigal, 2024," MIT List Visual Arts Center, accessed May 3, 2025, https://listart.mit.edu/art-artists/madrigal-2024.

IV. From Visualization to Analysis: A Spectrum of Documentation Tools

This section introduces a core insight from this project: that the power of immersive documentation tools lies not only in what they capture, but in who controls the processing of that data. The distinction between *visualization* and *analysis* technologies is not merely about resolution or price—it is about infrastructure, access, and the capacity to tell stories with consequence. Visualization tools, typically mobile, lightweight, and cloud-enabled, allow for the rapid generation of visual representations. Analysis tools, by contrast, require local processing, technical fluency, and robust computing environments. The former democratizes viewing; the latter enables spatial reasoning, conservation planning, and legal advocacy. And the choice between them often determines which sites—and which communities—are seen, interpreted, or preserved.

These categories exist on a continuum. At one end are visualization tools, such as smartphones and tablets paired with apps like Scaniverse, Polycam, and Luma AI.[78] These tools use photogrammetry and LiDAR sensors to generate lightweight mesh models, processed on-device or in the cloud. Their primary strength lies in their accessibility: they require no technical training, cost less than $1,200, and allow for quick uploads to platforms like Sketchfab. In the field, this means a single user can document a site in minutes and publish it online without ever opening a 3D editing program.

At the other end are analysis tools—professional-grade terrestrial scanners like the Leica RTC360 and BLK360, paired with specialized software such as Leica Cyclone Register 360 Plus.[79] These devices produce millimeter-accurate point clouds that capture the spatial relationships of buildings, objects, and terrain with forensic precision. But this power comes at a cost: the devices range from $22,000 to $80,000, and the datasets they generate can easily exceed 200GB per site.[80] Processing such data requires workstation-class computers, 128GB RAM, advanced GPUs (such as the NVIDIA RTX 4070 Ti), and deep familiarity with 3D workflows.[81]

The difference is not just technical—it is epistemological. Visualization tools process data *for* the user. Analysis tools require the user to process data themselves. This creates

[78] Apple, iPhone 16 Pro Max Technical Specifications, https://support.apple.com/; Polycam, Pricing, https://polycam.ai/pricing; Scaniverse, How to Use, https://scaniverse.com/
[79] Leica Geosystems, RTC360 and BLK360 Specification Sheets, https://leica-geosystems.com
[80] Field notes, Daufuskie documentation sessions, April 2025
[81] Tuskegee lab specs: 13th gen Intel Core i9, 128GB RAM, NVIDIA RTX 4070 Ti, 64-bit OS

vastly different relationships to knowledge production. In a visualization workflow, scanning concludes the labor. In an analysis workflow, scanning is only the beginning.

These stakes came into sharp focus during the documentation of the Robinson Family Home.[82] Using the RTC360, we captured six interior and exterior scans in under twenty minutes. Once imported into Cyclone, Dr. Benjamin Daniels of Tuskegee University aligned and registered the scans, creating a high-resolution, geospatially accurate 3D model suitable for architectural modeling, historical restoration, and interpretive planning. This process required access to lab infrastructure, software licenses, and the technical fluency to troubleshoot point cloud alignment—a level of capacity not available to most descendants or community members.

This gap reflects a deeper form of infrastructural inequality. Just as heirs property regimes have structurally excluded Black landowners from legal protections, digital preservation systems risk excluding communities from interpretive sovereignty by concentrating analytic capacity in well-resourced institutions. As Andrea Roberts writes in her work on Texas Freedom Colonies, preservation is as much about political leverage and archival control as it is about material survival.[83] A mobile scan shared on Sketchfab can raise awareness. But an analysis-grade model can support zoning appeals, grant applications, historical nominations, and public memory campaigns.

The contextual difference between tools is also critical. Using the RTC360, we documented the full perimeter of the Tabby Ruins in roughly ten minutes with four scans. The iPhone 16 Pro Max, using Scaniverse, took more than twice as long and failed to capture the environmental features—slope, trees, foundation layering—that shape interpretation.[84] The BLK360, while lower resolution than the RTC360, proved more versatile in unstable areas: it could be handheld in tight spaces where the RTC's tripod was unsafe to deploy. As Tuskegee's documentation notes show, choosing the right tool depends on structural condition, lighting, and intended use case.[85]

In this light, visualization and analysis are not just technical choices—they are political ones. They determine what kinds of cultural memory are made legible, to whom, and for what purposes. The risk is not just under-documentation, but misrepresentation. A scan without context becomes an object without story, flattened into an aestheticized relic.

Recognizing this spectrum has shaped this project's methodology. Visualization tools enabled rapid community-centered documentation and storytelling; analysis tools, deployed through institutional partnerships, produced archival-grade outputs for future

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[82] Field notes and interview with Dr. Benjamin Daniels, Tuskegee University, April 2025
[83] Andrea Roberts, Texas Freedom Colonies Project, https://www.thetexasfreedomcoloniesproject.com/
[84] Field notes, scan comparison of Tabby Ruins using iPhone vs RTC360, April 2025
[85] Technical notes from Tuskegee University documentation lab, shared April 2025

conservation and advocacy. This hybrid approach positions immersive documentation not just as representational practice, but as reparative infrastructure—providing the evidentiary base and narrative depth needed to mobilize resources, generate public visibility, and support community-led claims to land, memory, and repair.

V. The Weight of Data: Compression, Compromise, and Digital Legibility

Even the most rigorous field documentation is ultimately shaped by the limitations of digital platforms. The technical ceilings imposed by public-facing 3D hosting services like Sketchfab—including file size limits (500MB for free users, 5GB for enterprise), polygon caps, and reduced metadata support—force users into a cycle of compression, simplification, and loss.[86] This creates a second layer of erasure: not in the act of capture, but in the act of sharing.

During this project, we encountered these constraints when uploading the Robinson Family Home scan. The original intention was to publish the full environmental context of the site, including adjacent family land, vegetation, and a neighboring shed that appeared in the original point cloud. However, Sketchfab's file size and rendering limits necessitated a pared-down version. Models had to be decimated, textures compressed, and key spatial relationships deleted to meet the platform's caps.[87] These omissions were not curatorial decisions—they were architectural losses enforced by platform architecture.

The stakes are not trivial. When a Gullah home appears on Sketchfab as a floating model, detached from the land it stands on, it suggests a portability and placelessness that runs counter to its lived significance. The model may look "complete" to a casual viewer, but it has been stripped of ecological, familial, and spatial context. What remains is a visual icon, not a cultural system.

This disconnect reflects deeper questions of data stewardship. Hosting platforms optimized for creative industries or game development are not designed to handle the scale, sensitivity, or relational metadata required for heritage preservation. They privilege compression over completeness, visual appeal over evidentiary integrity. As a result, even high-fidelity documentation tools are undermined when the datasets they generate must be truncated for public view.

This issue is not unique to Sketchfab. Cloud-based mobile apps like Polycam and Scaniverse also face storage bottlenecks, limited export formats, and unpredictable rendering across devices. Their interfaces are designed for usability, not longevity. And while they enable wide participation, they also raise questions of ownership, control, and long-term access to data.[88]

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[86] "Upload Limits," Fab Support, accessed May 5, 2025, https://support.fab.com/s/article/Upload-Limits.
[87] Field notes, Robinson Family Home model preparation, April 2025.
[88] Polycam, Pricing, https://polycam.ai/pricing; Scaniverse, How to Use, https://scaniverse.com/

The result is a double bind. Community-driven projects are encouraged to digitize cultural sites for visibility, but the very platforms that offer visibility often enforce invisibility—of context, of scale, of nuance.

The consequence is not just technical; it is epistemological. When compression drives curation, we risk presenting cultural fragments as wholes, and visual representations as stand-ins for spatial relationships. In the absence of intentional hosting models, immersive preservation remains compromised not at the moment of scanning, but at the moment of showing.

VI. Storage, Stewardship, and Sovereignty

Cultural preservation in the digital age demands more than capture—it requires infrastructure. Without sustained systems of storage, access, and governance, even the most advanced documentation risks becoming fragmented, inaccessible, or forgotten. In immersive workflows, the size and complexity of 3D datasets—from point clouds to photogrammetry meshes—introduce a new axis of inequality: archival burden. Unlike physical artifacts, these digital materials require high-capacity drives, cloud infrastructure, GPU-intensive rendering environments, and long-term storage strategies. Without such systems, digital documentation risks becoming a memory held in limbo—precise yet unusable.

During this project, we faced these tensions directly. The high-resolution point cloud of the Robinson Family Home captured by the RTC360 was only legible once processed using Leica Cyclone Register 360 Plus on a professional workstation at Tuskegee University.[89] Without this access, the scan would have remained an unintelligible cluster of raw data. And even after processing, questions of long-term hosting, platform stability, and stewardship remain unresolved. Cloud-based platforms like Sketchfab offer short-term visibility but cap file sizes, compress models, and offer no guarantees of permanence.[90] While useful for public engagement, they are insufficient for archival continuity.

These conditions raise urgent questions about who bears responsibility for data stewardship, particularly in community contexts where resources are limited. In many ways, storage is sovereignty—not just over files, but over timelines, narratives, and permissions. When cultural records are hosted on commercial platforms, the terms of preservation are dictated not by the communities they concern, but by corporate infrastructure and platform policy. Their compression defaults, subscription fees, and interface designs do not account for collaborative annotations, relational metadata, or permissions across descendant communities.[91] While Sketchfab allows users to place annotations on scanned assets, these annotations can only be created and edited by the account holder who uploaded the model. The platform does not currently support collaborative ownership or shared editing rights—posing a challenge for community-based documentation efforts that rely on multiple contributors or seek shared custodianship over interpretive metadata.[92]

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[89] Field notes, RTC360 processing at Tuskegee University, April 2025.
[90] Sketchfab, "Plans and Limitations," accessed May 4, 2025, https://sketchfab.com/plans.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

One can consider PLACE's data trust model as a provocative alternative. PLACE (Place-based Landscape and Community Ecosystem) proposes a governance model in which community members, researchers, and institutions collaboratively hold and manage spatial data for mutual benefit.[93] This "data trust" model recognizes that digital land records, environmental models, and heritage scans are not inert—they carry cultural, legal, and spiritual meaning. PLACE's approach centers values like reciprocity, transparency, and local custodianship in the infrastructure itself. While this project has not implemented such a structure, its ethos resonates: digitized cultural heritage deserves governance structures aligned with the communities it represents.

At present, most Gullah families on Daufuskie do not have access to such infrastructure. Consider Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, whose grandmother's house is deteriorating due to age and deferred maintenance. She shares QR code stickers with visitors at the end of her heritage tours, directing them to a GoFundMe campaign in hopes of raising funds for preservation.[94] Her reach is limited to those who physically attend the tour. While a short local news feature and some photographs offer additional visibility, these materials rarely convey the scale of urgency or the emotional gravity of the site. Her stewardship extends beyond storytelling. It requires logistical coordination, emotional labor, and public engagement in a context where institutional support remains minimal.

Here, immersive documentation becomes a tool of spatial advocacy. By producing annotated 3D scans of the home and publishing them online, this project offers a more vivid, embodied account of the house's current condition. Users can orbit, zoom, and inspect the damage—viewing the porch collapse, the wood rot, the tilted foundation. With AR and VR integrations, these environments can be experienced in new ways by funders, descendants, and preservationists who cannot travel to the island. Unlike a static photo or grant narrative, these scans offer a dynamic and evidence-based platform for mobilization—supporting visibility, resource allocation, and future planning.

In this way, Daufuskie3D contributes to the preservation goals articulated by initiatives like the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, offering not just visual assets but infrastructures of legibility. The project reveals what is possible when immersive documentation is aligned with the politics of care and the ethics of shared custodianship. But it also points to the limitations of our current preservation ecosystems, in which those doing the work—like Ms. Robinson—must bridge structural gaps alone.

To meet the scale of dispossession, we must build infrastructures capable of holding memory with the same precision with which we now capture it. This requires not only

[93] "Theory of Change," PLACE.org, accessed May 4, 2025, https://place.org/data-trust-model.
[94] Field notes, Sallie Ann Robinson heritage tour, April 18, 2025.

scanners and software, but community governance, public investment, and sustained technical stewardship. Without these, documentation remains visualization—evocative, yes, but ultimately unmoored. One can consider this project an invitation: to help build the connective tissue between memory and material support, between representation and repair.

Ethical Considerations of Spatial Capture

Spatial technologies offer powerful tools for preserving cultural memory, but without ethical frameworks rooted in consent and community control, they risk reproducing the very extractive systems they seek to resist. High-resolution capture tools—such as LiDAR scanners, aerial drones, and 360° imaging rigs—do more than document physical space; they encode power. Left unchecked, these technologies can transform communities into commodities, memories into assets, and sites of resilience into objects of surveillance.[95]

On Daufuskie Island, these tensions were not abstract. Our team arrived equipped with a suite of professional tools, including a Leica drone capable of scanning the island's terrain in high detail, a tripod-mounted RTC360 scanner, and a handheld BLK360. But technology alone does not confer legitimacy. The drone, in particular—large, visible, and audibly intrusive—risked breaching spatial and cultural boundaries. It signaled a top-down gaze, reminiscent of surveillance rather than stewardship.[96]

Rather than deploy the drone—which could have efficiently mapped spatial relationships but risked violating community norms—we chose instead to prioritize tools that supported trust, conversation, and co-presence. We began with less conspicuous technologies like mobile LiDAR on iPhones and iPads, introducing each tool gradually and collaboratively. Our approach was to move at the speed of trust, demonstrating value while remaining attuned to questions of power, consent, and community priorities.[97]

This ethical posture resonates far beyond Daufuskie. Consider *Phoenix in Gaza*, a VR project led by Dr. Ahlam Muhtaseb in collaboration with the x-Real Lab and supported by Ruha Benjamin's Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab. Created in the midst of violent siege, it preserves Palestinian cultural landscapes with immersive fidelity—but also raises

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[95] Ruha Benjamin, Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).
[96] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, March 29, 2025.
[97] Ibid.

concerns: in militarized contexts, detailed spatial data can quickly shift from a mode of remembrance to a mechanism of surveillance.[98]

Similarly, Dr. Kwesi Daniels' laser scanning of heritage sites in Rome underscores the power and precarity of accessible documentation. These scans offer tools of survival in one context and tools of speculation in another—reminding us that technologies of capture, without proper governance, can serve both cultural stewardship and erasure.[99]

Spatial data is not neutral. It carries memory, belonging, and vulnerability.

From a distance, a 360° video may appear as a simple visual record—but embedded within it are ambient sounds, ghosted reflections, and personal artifacts, often captured unintentionally.[100] In scanning these environments, we are not merely creating digital models; we are reconstructing lived worlds. That responsibility extends beyond representation—it includes safeguarding what has been shared, even inadvertently.

Ironically, some current technical limitations offer incidental protection. For example, Sketchfab's file size caps and compression constraints force selective uploads. But such constraints should not be mistaken for ethical safeguards. Protective curation must be intentional, rooted in consent and community-defined priorities—not imposed by commercial hosting platforms.[101]

This project does not presume to resolve these dilemmas. But it seeks to model an alternative: a practice of ethical immersion that privileges consent, fosters collaborative authorship, and recognizes the political stakes of digital preservation. In doing so, it builds on earlier sections of this thesis that position immersive documentation not as spectacle, but as spatial advocacy. Projects like this one can provide the evidence base and narrative depth needed to mobilize broader recognition, material support, and reparative investment.

When we capture space, we hold more than a digital asset—we hold a fragment of collective life. Ethical data stewardship must become a shield for cultural survival, not a silent accomplice to its erasure.

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[98] "Phoenix in Gaza," Just Data Lab Projects, Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab, accessed May 4, 2025, https://justdatalab.org/projects/phoenix-in-gaza.
[99] Field notes, conversation with Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Tuskegee University, April 19, 2025.
[100] Field notes, 360° documentation review, April 2025.
[101] Sketchfab, "Plans and Limitations," accessed May 4, 2025, https://sketchfab.com/plans.

VII. Toward a Reparative Immersive Practice

To engage in preservation within Black geographies is to intervene in an ongoing structure of loss. For Black communities dispossessed of land, cultural infrastructure, and archival visibility, the act of preserving memory is inseparable from the politics of repair. In this context, reparative preservation is not simply a technical effort to record what exists—it is a spatial practice aimed at reconstituting what has been taken, disfigured, or erased. This section frames immersive documentation as a form of *wake work*, following Christina Sharpe's call to attend to the afterlives of slavery through care, witnessing, and world-building.[102] It also draws from Katherine McKittrick's theorization of Black spatial knowledge, positioning immersive tools not just as representational devices but as instruments of spatial redress.[103]

Where prior digital heritage efforts have emphasized visualization and access, this project advances a reparative immersive framework—one that centers descendant sovereignty, narrative accountability, and Black geographies. On Daufuskie Island, where family homes, praise houses, and sacred landscapes are fragmented by heirs property law, gated development, and tourism economies, these tools offer a method of continuity. They do not freeze memory in time—they reassert presence in the face of removal.

Immersive tools are particularly suited to capturing relationships otherwise illegible to formal planning documents: the orientation of a praise house to the tree-line, the compound logic of intergenerational homes, the erosion of a tabby wall across seasons. Multi-scalar scanning and point cloud modeling enable us to document not just objects, but contexts—place as lived, rather than surveyed. This work does not aim to preserve a fixed past, but to cultivate the conditions for return, care, and reactivation.

But the power of these tools lies in their use, not their novelty. Who holds them, for what purpose, and with whose consent determines whether they replicate extractive logics or resist them. This project models a relational methodology shaped by oral history, co-annotation, and the stewardship of elders like Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson. As she reminds us, "You can't tell the story of this island from Google." Preservation begins with proximity, not interface.

This reparative orientation expands what immersive documentation can do. 3D scans can function as tools for cultural education, legal advocacy, and spatial reengagement. VR models enable diasporic descendants to inhabit ancestral space. AR overlays embed

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[102] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
[103] 2. Katherine McKittrick, Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

oral history into physical sites. In this sense, immersive documentation becomes more than archival—it becomes infrastructural.

Yet this work also raised urgent questions about data ownership and digital sovereignty. When a third-party platform like Scaniverse went temporarily offline during development, it became clear how fragile our memory systems are when tied to proprietary infrastructure. Future immersive preservation efforts must contend with co-ownership, decentralized storage, and long-term viability. Models like PLACE's spatial data trusts offer one path forward, where data remains locally held, governed, and accessible. Equipping communities not just to document space, but to manage and host that data, is essential. Without such infrastructure, even the most careful preservation can be lost to platform volatility or obsolescence.

This project was guided by two central research questions: How can immersive documentation methods—such as photogrammetry and LiDAR scanning—support reparative cultural preservation for communities at risk of spatial erasure? And what technical, ethical, and political frameworks are needed to ensure that digital preservation practices reflect Black cultural values, community control, and narrative agency?

Through its engagement with Gullah Geechee memory on Daufuskie Island, this thesis argues that immersive tools—when deployed with care, relational consent, and community guidance—can function as reparative infrastructure. They visualize endangered cultural landscapes and provide tools for recognition, redress, and return. This methodology resists extractive documentation in favor of stewardship, proximity, and descendant authorship.

The limitations of this work—modest scan coverage, limited platform interactivity, and a small participant cohort—point toward the need for durable technical infrastructure and broader descendant participation. Future iterations must support multi-voice storytelling, institutional partnerships, and collaborative data governance that extend beyond a single thesis timeline.

What lies ahead is not just the scaling of immersive documentation, but the building of systems that embed it within HBCUs, cultural organizations, and local governments. That means training practitioners, securing long-term hosting, and advocating for immersive media as legitimate preservation infrastructure.

Preservation, in this light, is not an act of backward-looking commemoration. It is a forward-facing practice of care. And it must be designed in dialogue with those who carry memory—not only to honor what was, but to safeguard what might still become.

Conclusion: Toward Stewardship Beyond the Scan

Preservation is not the fixing of the past in place. It is the material work of repairing continuity. For Black communities whose histories have been excluded, displaced, or mythologized, preservation must extend beyond the archive—it must operate as a reparative spatial practice. This chapter has framed immersive documentation not simply as a representational tool, but as an intervention into the spatial afterlife of dispossession.

This project contributes a framework for reparative immersive practice: a methodology that combines spatial analysis, narrative restoration, and community stewardship to contest erasure and seed new forms of return. Drawing from Black geographies, digital heritage, and memory studies, it demonstrates how immersive technologies—when shaped by descendant priorities—can become instruments of care, evidence, and reclamation.

Daufuskie3D puts this into practice. Through annotated scans, community-guided tours, and the visualization of imperiled memory sites, the platform documents what is at risk while enacting what might still be restored. From the Robinson Family Home to the Tabby Ruins, it surfaces stories and spaces that would otherwise remain inaccessible to funders, policymakers, and descendants. These models are not just invitations to bear witness—they are calls to invest in Black spatial futures.

And yet this project also gestures beyond itself. Its methods illuminate what is needed: embedded XR labs at HBCUs and cultural institutions, policies that treat immersive heritage as infrastructure, and frameworks that recognize community-led documentation as preservation in its most vital form. These models do not ask to be preserved; they demand to be used—as tools for legal claims, fundraising, education, and return.

To preserve under conditions of loss is to build while mourning. But it is also to dream while building. This is the work of reparative preservation: not simply preserving what was, but protecting what still might be. This project marks a beginning—not an endpoint, but a portal.

Memory Sites

Tabby Ruins

The Cultural and Material Legacy of Tabby on Daufuskie Island

Tabby is a concrete-like material composed of lime, sand, water, and oyster shells, historically used along the southeastern coast of the United States. Though its architectural lineage is often traced to Spanish colonial and North African influences, tabby in the Lowcountry was shaped most directly by the labor, knowledge, and adaptation of enslaved Africans.[104] As Brooker notes, “Tabby is not just a material but a historical narrative encoded in lime and shell.”[105]

Introduced in the 17th century, tabby gained widespread use in the 18th and 19th centuries throughout Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida, prized for its resilience in humid coastal environments. On Daufuskie Island, it was employed in constructing dwellings, outbuildings, cisterns, and plantation walls. The remnants of the North Slave Settlement at Haig Point include some of the most intact tabby slave dwellings in Beaufort County.[106] Built between 1826 and 1833, these one-room structures are laid out in a gentle arc along the Cooper River—a deviation from the rigid, linear grid typical of plantation quarters. This curved orientation may reflect a blend of African spatial logics, environmental responsiveness, and community structure.[107]

Tabby’s construction process was highly skilled and labor-intensive. Oyster shells were burned in open-air kilns to create quicklime, a task requiring careful heat control and material expertise. This lime was then slaked with water and combined with sand and whole shells to form a wet mixture. Builders poured the mixture into wooden molds in successive “lifts”—individual layers about 12 to 18 inches high—allowing each to dry before adding the next.[108] These lifts can still be read in the walls today, visible as

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[104] Edwin C. Brooker, Tabby Making: Historic Materials and Methods in the Coastal Southeast, revised 2020, 1–2.
[105] “Tabby Concrete: An Eroding Architectural History,” Preservation South Carolina, 2.
[106] Edwin C. Brooker, Slave Dwellings and Settlements in the Coastal Southeast: Architectural Documentation and Interpretation, 2020, 3–4.
[107] Ibid., 5–6.
[108] Edwin C. Brooker, Tabby Construction Details: Historic Construction in the Coastal Southeast, 2020, 4–6.

striated horizontal bands. As Brooker writes, “the very rhythm of tabby—its pours and pauses—marks the repetition of labor under bondage.”[109]

This construction technique likely drew on African, Indigenous, and European traditions, but was innovated on-site by enslaved people with intergenerational building knowledge. The laborers who made and laid tabby were not simply following orders; they were applying and adapting techniques to suit coastal materials, plantation demands, and climate conditions.[110]

Despite its hardiness, tabby is vulnerable to erosion from salt spray, plant intrusion, and structural neglect. Today, many tabby structures on Daufuskie exist as roofless ruins. Yet their endurance speaks to the skilled labor of their builders and the cultural memory embedded in the material. The tabby dwellings at Haig Point are not passive remnants—they are what Brooker calls “active carriers of spatial memory and cultural presence.”[111]

However, despite this deep cultural significance to Gullah descendants of Daufuskie Island and African Americans more broadly, the tabby ruins at Haig Point are not publicly accessible. The site lies behind the gates of a private residential development and golf club, where access is restricted to property owners and their guests. As of 2024, the Haig Point Homeowners Association lists annual membership dues exceeding $37,000—a barrier that renders this important heritage site effectively inaccessible to the very communities whose labor and lives it embodies. This raises urgent questions about who has the right to memory, access, and preservation on land shaped by Black histories.

The tabby structure featured in this 3D archive was documented using a Leica RTC scanner. Though situated along the Robert Kennedy Trail—a publicly promoted cultural heritage route—it is notably less visible than other stops. Unlike the better-known ruins at Haig Point, which are maintained within a private golf development, this site bears no interpretive signage beyond a single post directing visitors into the woods. It has received no apparent preservation treatment or structural stabilization, and remains hidden in plain sight. The contrast between this structure and the curated, gated ruins of Haig Point underscores how visibility, investment, and interpretation remain unevenly distributed—even within efforts to commemorate Black heritage.

[109] Brooker, Tabby Making, 4.
[110] Brooker, Tabby Construction Details, 5–6.
[111] 8. Brooker, Slave Dwellings and Settlements, 3.

First Union African Baptist Church

A Living Legacy on Daufuskie Island

Established in the aftermath of Emancipation, First Union African Baptist Church has served as a spiritual and cultural cornerstone of Daufuskie Island for over a century. Its origins trace back to 1879, when John I. Stoddard subdivided the Mary Field Plantation and sold 12 acres to formerly enslaved individuals for the establishment of a church and cemetery. The land was purchased in 1881 for $82, and the first church was constructed that year. This original structure was destroyed by fire in 1884 and subsequently rebuilt near the original site—a testament to the resilience and faith of the island's Black community.[112]

Throughout the early 20th century, the church functioned not only as a place of worship but also as an educational space for local children. From 1916 through the 1920s, Reverend Richard Thomas, a visiting preacher from Savannah, traveled monthly to the island to serve communion and conduct spelling bees, blending spiritual nourishment with academic development.[113]

As economic pressures and limited opportunities prompted outmigration during the mid-20th century, Daufuskie's population declined, leading to the church's temporary closure. In 1968, under the leadership of Reverend C. L. Hanshew, Director of Missions for the Savannah River Baptist Association, and with assistance from Pastor Bruce Newby of Bluffton Baptist Church, services resumed at First Union. That same year, the church hosted its first Vacation Bible School, marking a new chapter in its ministry.[114]

From 1976 to 1985, Reverend Ervin Greene led the congregation until he was called to pastor the Brick Baptist Church on St. Helena Island. In 1986, Elder Marion Taylor and his wife were sent as Special Project Missionaries by Rev. Hanshew. Later that year, Elder Taylor was called as the church's pastor. Under his leadership, Vacation Bible School and Sunday School resumed in 1988, an Usher Board was installed, Revival was reinstituted in church programs, and Lawrence Jenkins was installed as a Deacon and Trustee. In June 1998, the church's Anniversary Celebration was resumed, and in October of that year, an annual Homecoming Day was established.[115]

In July 1998, Dr. Clarence Edmondson accepted the church's call to be pastor. Under his guidance, the congregation grew, and in 1999, the church was incorporated and became

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[112] First Union African Baptist Church, "History," https://fuabchurch.org/about/history/.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

recognized as a congregation within the Savannah River Baptist Association. In 2000, Vacation Bible School and Children's Sunday School resumed under the direction of Sister Shirley McKenzie and continues today under the leadership of Trustee Melissa Davis. After 17 years of service, Pastor Edmondson retired in 2015. Aaron Crosby, who had served as Associate Minister under Pastor Edmondson for three years, was called to succeed him and now serves as the current pastor.[116]

The church underwent restoration in the 1990s and remains open for worship, with Sunday services welcoming all. A replica of a traditional praise house—once common in Gullah Geechee religious life—sits behind the church, honoring the spiritual traditions that have shaped the community for generations.[117]

Now listed as a historical landmark, First Union African Baptist Church stands as a living testament to faith, resilience, and the cultural legacy of Daufuskie Island.

[116] Ibid.
[117] 6. Duke Wright, "Daufuskie Island History and Artisan Tour," The Not So Innocents Abroad, January 9, 2023, https://www.thenotsoinnocentsabroad.com/blog/daufuskie-island-history-and-artisan-tour.

Praise House

A Sanctuary of Sovereignty and Spirit

On Daufuskie Island, the Praise House was more than a site of worship—it was a crucible of freedom, governance, and Black spatial self-determination. Often the first structure built by formerly enslaved people after Emancipation, the Praise House became the heartbeat of Gullah Geechee community life. Reclaimed through shouts, scripture, and collective care, these modest wooden buildings held immense cultural and political power.

Behind the First Union African Baptist Church stands a replica of such a structure, erected in homage to this history. A sign posted outside the replica recounts:

> "'The Praise House' setting took place circa 1830 and marked the first social setting for the African during plantation life. Although its appearance was that of a Christian concept, the African found it difficult to embrace a 'belief' of human kindness absent example. Within the 'Praise House' the African created, for the first time, a form of government and social order of membership and community to deal with all issues of life. This happened after the Civil War. Most services were held on Thursday evening with 'Praise Shouts' and scripture readings. It was not necessary to be led by 'a man of cloth.'"[118]

The Praise House tradition reflects a hybrid spiritual and sociopolitical practice rooted in West African cosmologies and reimagined under the duress of enslavement. Praise Houses offered a sacred space for religious expression, education, dispute resolution, and community governance—often operating independently of white institutions.[119] On plantations, these structures were deliberately small. Slaveholders feared large gatherings could incite rebellion, so they imposed spatial restrictions. Yet within these limits, Gullah communities cultivated powerful rituals of survival and resistance.[120]

Services in the Praise House often featured the *ring shout*—a circular, counterclockwise movement involving clapping, stomping, and call-and-response chants. This embodied

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[118] Transcribed from the interpretive sign outside the Praise House replica behind First Union African Baptist Church, Daufuskie Island, South Carolina.
[119] "Praise Houses," Gullah Religion, Kenyon College Digital Archive, https://digital.kenyon.edu/gullah_religion.html.
[120] Patricia Leigh Brown, "Sprawl, Climate Change, Fading Memories Endanger Praise Houses of the South," The New York Times, November 23, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/23/arts/design/praise-houses-geechee-gullah.html.

form of worship persisted in secret and continues to this day in Gullah communities.[121] The Praise House thus served as both a physical and metaphysical center—a site of spiritual resilience, cultural memory, and collective autonomy.[122]

The replica Praise House on Daufuskie evokes not just architecture but cosmology. Its placement behind the church is symbolic, echoing how praise houses predate formal churches in many Gullah communities. As Victoria Smalls, Executive Director of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, notes: "Prayer houses are the spiritual foundation of who we are in America—as enslaved people and as free people. They have helped us stay attached to our African lineage as a form of resistance, resilience, and strength."[123]

Today, Praise Houses are endangered by climate change, suburban sprawl, and fading memory. Only a handful remain intact across the Gullah Geechee Corridor. Their preservation is not simply architectural—it is existential. It affirms the legitimacy of Black vernacular sacred spaces, and the sovereignty practiced therein.[124]

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[121] Frank Anderson Jr., Gullah Christianity: An Analysis of the Ethical Dimensions of Gullah Culture and Their Implications for the Practical Theology of Contemporary African-American Churches (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000), UMI Number: 9993521.
[122] South Carolina Department of Archives and History, "First Union African Baptist Church (Site S108BL0008)," South Carolina Historic Properties Record, http://schpr.sc.gov/index.php/Detail/properties/15582.
[123] New York Times, "Praise Houses, Once a Staple of Gullah Geechee Culture, Are Being Preserved," November 23, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/23/arts/design/praise-houses-geechee-gullah.html.
[124] Ibid.

Robinson Family Home

Intergenerational Memory and the Architecture of Belonging

As one of the last intact vernacular homes on Daufuskie Island still owned and maintained by a Black family, the Robinson Family Home is emblematic of both cultural survival and spatial vulnerability—a dual condition that this project addresses through immersive preservation. Built in the 1930s by Sallie Mae Robinson, the grandmother of cultural historian Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, the house remains a vital anchor of memory, place, and kinship. Three generations of Robinsons were born and raised here, and the structure now stands as a rare testament to Black landholding and domestic continuity in the Gullah South.

The home was recognized as a contributing structure in the 1982 National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Daufuskie Island Historic District.[125] It originally featured a gable-front roof, a rear shed addition, and was flanked by a smokehouse and barn—typical of the domestic compound layouts found across Sea Island settlements.[126] While these outbuildings no longer survive, the main structure remains intact and spatially evocative, expressing the aesthetics and pragmatics of subsistence farming families whose land-based lives were shaped by both isolation and deep-rooted kinship networks.

In a landscape increasingly fragmented by heirs property litigation, speculative development, rising flood risk, and the collapse of intergenerational transmission, the Robinson home resists erasure. It offers an alternative lineage of care and cultural resilience, rooted not in formal systems of preservation but in the embodied, everyday stewardship of descendants. Today, the home is in urgent need of restoration. As part of *The Gullah Geechee Memory Project*, this site was scanned using LiDAR and photogrammetry in partnership with Tuskegee University's Taylor School of Architecture and Construction Science. The resulting digital model captures not only architectural geometry but the spatial texture of familial intimacy and survival.

Preserving this structure is not merely a matter of historical documentation. It is a reparative act. In Christina Sharpe's terms, the home is a site of *wake work*—a refusal to

[125] National Register of Historic Places, "Daufuskie Island Historic District," South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1982.
[126] Field notes, Daufuskie Island, Day 2 (April 18, 2025); site documentation in partnership with Tuskegee University.

allow Black memory and land-based inheritance to be submerged beneath the rising waters of both climate change and systemic neglect.[127]

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, who serves as both steward and narrator of this space, has long embodied the role of cultural guardian. A sixth-generation native of Daufuskie, she operates the island's only Gullah-owned heritage tour company, leads public preservation efforts—including cemetery restoration and oral history collection—and continues to advocate for equitable investment in Black cultural infrastructure. Her work has been nationally recognized, including support from the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. More than a caretaker of a single property, Ms. Robinson is a living archive: her stewardship extends the life of this house, but also the lifeways it holds.

In this context, the Robinson Family Home functions as both memory site and call to action. Its digital preservation is only one layer of intervention. Equally vital is the material restoration of the home itself, the recognition of its historical and cultural significance, and the sustained support of those—like Ms. Robinson—who continue to defend Black spatial sovereignty through lived practice.

[127] 3. Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

Methodology

I. Methodological Framework and Research Aims

This project pursues two central research questions:

1. How can immersive documentation methods—such as photogrammetry and LiDAR scanning—support reparative cultural preservation for communities at risk of spatial erasure?

2. What technical, ethical, and political frameworks are needed to ensure that digital preservation practices reflect Black cultural values, community control, and narrative agency?

Underlying these are broader inquiries into how 3D documentation can serve as a catalyst for economic empowerment and reparative justice within the Gullah Geechee community of Daufuskie Island; how speculative world-building in Web3 environments can facilitate the preservation of Gullah narratives; and what role immersive digital spaces can play in sustaining cultural memory, storytelling, and spiritual practices across diasporic communities.

I entered this project with a belief in the promise of 3D documentation but with little clarity about the extent or character of that promise. I knew there existed a spectrum of tools—from phone apps and 360° cameras to professional-grade Leica LiDAR scanners—but I was unsure how they compared or which were appropriate for which contexts. Initially, my aim was simply to use these tools as a means of digital archiving. But a more pressing question emerged: what else can these tools do—especially in the hands of those most affected by cultural erasure?

Rather than presuming these tools to be inherently reparative or empowering, I turned to the community to define what value immersive documentation might hold for them. This project became an investigation not only of tool functionality but also of collective meaning-making, symbolic repair, and narrative sovereignty.

II. Theoretical Commitments and Grounded Method

This thesis is grounded in an interdisciplinary methodological framework that brings together qualitative research, grounded theory, critical spatial practice, Black

geographies, speculative design, and immersive media production. Central to this approach is the belief that cultural memory is not only located in formal archives or static monuments, but in the layered, ephemeral, and spiritual landscapes of Black life.

Grounded theory was selected as the core methodological framework for its emphasis on generating theory from lived experience, rather than imposing preconceived frameworks. This allowed theoretical insights to emerge through fieldwork, interviews, documentation, and interface design. Rather than arriving at Daufuskie Island with a fixed hypothesis, I arrived with questions, and allowed the project's shape to emerge from conversations, refusals, repetitions, and resonances.

This methodological stance aligns with my Personal Theory of Practice (Appendix A), which frames the planner's role as a steward of freedom in and through the built environment. That practice insists on collaborative authorship, redistribution of resources, and the design of tools that are legible not just to institutions but to the communities they affect. As I've written elsewhere, "planners must concern themselves with and prioritize the universal realization of liberation as the goal and outcome of the aggregate components of planning." In the context of preservation, this means moving beyond the logic of simulation toward one of speculative reparation: documentation as invitation, archive as call.

This theory of practice also foregrounds the politics of epistemology. I sought not only to collect or represent stories, but to design an infrastructure through which knowledge could circulate—between generations, across platforms, and outside of the institutional gaze. These commitments guided every phase of the research process: from how I asked questions, to what I scanned, to how and where the work is published.

III. Design Rationale: From Immersive Ideals to Web Accessibility

While I originally envisioned this project as a virtual reality (VR) experience, I ultimately chose a web-based platform for three reasons: accessibility, technical capacity, and epistemological alignment.

VR offers a powerful modality for immersion, but it also introduces barriers—particularly for the community at the heart of this work. VR headsets are expensive and not yet widespread, especially in rural and historically under-resourced communities. Developing for VR would also have required working through third-party app stores, raising concerns about data sovereignty and stewardship of sensitive cultural information.

Equally important, I did not possess the technical skills to develop an interactive VR environment that honored the project's symbolic, spatial, and narrative ambitions. Producing a minimal or poorly executed experience would have undermined the very claims this project seeks to make about cultural specificity and dignity.

But this shift was not simply reactive—it was principled. It emerged from a deeper understanding of how immersive preservation must be practiced: not just through technological immersion, but through narrative and epistemic immersion. A website allowed me to create an accessible, annotated, multi-modal space that reflects Black oral traditions, symbolic reasoning, and vernacular aesthetics.

This decision also responds to a personal and political imperative. Though immensely proud of my work, I have watched my own family—unfamiliar with the jargon and assumptions of liberal city planning—struggle to engage with my writing. The disconnect is not the result of disinterest, but a consequence of academic conventions that reward epistemic conformity over communal legibility. Within neoliberal institutions, legitimacy is often measured by citation counts and technical rigor, rather than by resonance with those whose lives are at stake.

By choosing a media thesis over a traditional one, I sought to design for resonance—to create work that could be understood, critiqued, and extended by the very people whose stories it aims to hold. This is why Daufuskie3D.org includes 3D scans, videos, oral history excerpts, archival overlays, and ambient sound. The platform was built not as an exhibit, but as a memory vessel—one that is navigable across devices and accessible across literacies.

IV. Site Architecture and Speculative Interface Design

The Daufuskie3D website is organized into two sections: Memory Sites and Thesis. This bifurcation reflects the dual function of the platform—as a community-facing repository of cultural memory and as a scholarly site for methodological reflection.

The architecture was custom-built in HTML and CSS, with layout refined through iterative testing. Navigation is achieved through hover-responsive tiles, scroll-based transitions, and overlay popups. These design choices prioritize intuitive exploration and gesture-based interaction, particularly for mobile devices.

Inspired by techno-vernacular creativity (Gaskins 2016), the site rejects generic museum-style interfaces in favor of symbolic and affective navigation systems. Buttons, fonts, and animations reference Gullah aesthetic traditions, including Underground

Railroad quilt codes. The interface itself becomes a form of speculative cartography—where the act of clicking or hovering reactivates ancestral knowledge systems and spiritual geographies.

Rather than guiding the user along a fixed interpretive path, the site invites nonlinear, recursive engagement. In this way, it embodies many of the characteristics of Black oral traditions—layered, relational, and improvisational. Annotations are not exhaustive metadata fields but contextual prompts that mark spiritual associations, historic tensions, and communal memory. These are drawn from field notes, oral histories, and on-site observations.

Supporting media—including drone footage, ambient audio, and archival materials—are embedded to create multisensory orientation and narrative depth. Sites were chosen based on architectural distinctiveness, communal relevance, and feasibility of capture. Technical documentation used a combination of photogrammetry (via Scaniverse and Polycam) and LiDAR scanning (via RTC360 and BLK360), with post-processing in Cyclone Register 360 and publishing via Sketchfab.

V. Fieldwork and Documentation Approach

This research utilized a field-based documentation approach combining community engagement, immersive media capture, and comparative technology analysis. Between March and April 2025, three research trips were conducted to Daufuskie Island, South Carolina. These trips aimed to document significant Gullah Geechee cultural sites through 3D scanning, 360° videography, and aerial photography. A range of hardware and software tools were employed to capture, compare, and evaluate the quality, cost, and accessibility of different spatial documentation technologies.

Day 1: March 29, 2025 — Preliminary Documentation

The first research trip to Daufuskie Island served as a preliminary documentation effort. Golf carts were rented for a self-guided tour, during which initial visual and spatial captures were conducted.

Sites Documented:

- First Union African Baptist Church (Sanctuary and Pews)
- African Praise House
- Mary Field Cemetery

Tools Used:

- *iPhone 16 Pro Max* (Scaniverse app — LiDAR and photogrammetry)
- *Insta360 X4* (360° video capture)

Notes:
Captures provided foundational material for later, more targeted documentation efforts.

Day 2: April 18, 2025 — Community Engagement and Light Documentation

The second research trip emphasized relationship-building and cultural learning. The day was spent touring the island with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, a sixth-generation Gullah Geechee Daufuskie native. Documentation was minimal, with a focus on deepening trust and understanding the cultural significance of sites from a community perspective.

Sites Documented:

- Mt. Carmel Baptist Church (Billie Burn Museum)
- Oyster Union Society Hall
- First Union African Baptist Church
- Mary Fields School
- Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson's Home

Tools Used:

- *iPhone 16 Pro Max* (Scaniverse app — Gaussian splats, video, photography)

Notes:
Captures were secondary to learning and relationship development, with mobile LiDAR and 2D media prioritized for feasibility.

Day 3: April 19, 2025 — Comparative Technology Documentation (Tuskegee Collaboration)

The third research trip focused on high-fidelity documentation and comparative analysis of capture technologies. In partnership with Dr. Kwesi Daniels and Tuskegee University's Architecture Program, two major sites were documented.

Sites Documented:

- Taby Structure (Rob Kennedy Trail — Public)
- Robinson Family Home (Private)

Tools Used for Taby Structure:

- *iPhone 16 Pro Max* (Scaniverse app)
- *iPad Pro* (Polycam app)
- *Leica RTC 360* (Leica Cyclone software)

Tools Used for Robinson Family Home:

- *Leica RTC 360* (Exterior LiDAR scanning)
- *Leica BLK2GO* (Interior LiDAR scanning)
- *DJI Mavic Pro* (Aerial photography and videography)

Notes:
Comparative scanning allowed assessment of cost, quality, and context capture. Time constraints prevented full drone photogrammetry. Mobile devices were deemed insufficient for large-scale building scans.

VI. Data Collection

Sampling Strategy
Building on the field-based documentation efforts outlined in the previous section, this project engaged a multi-modal strategy for data collection. Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, focusing on those with deep intergenerational ties to Daufuskie and roles as cultural stewards. This included Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, Dr. Kwesi Daniels, and other informants engaged through oral history, site tours, and archival exchange.

Data Sources

- Oral interviews and guided site tours (audio-recorded)
- Field notes taken during and after documentation days

- 3D scans using mobile and professional-grade tools
- Archival materials (cookbooks, property records, historical maps)
- Observations from heritage tours and community interactions

Collection Procedures

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted in-situ, often while walking
- Sites were scanned using a mix of photogrammetry and LiDAR
- Video and audio footage were collected to enrich spatial data
- All interactions were recorded with verbal consent

VII. Data Analysis

A modified grounded theory approach guided the analysis:

- Open coding of field notes and transcripts identified recurring concepts such as "narrative sovereignty," "spiritual infrastructure," and "symbolic repair"
- Axial coding grouped these into larger analytic categories aligned with the project's theoretical frames (e.g., wake work, Black geographies)
- Memo writing supported synthesis between interviews, design decisions, and speculative theory
- Themes achieved theoretical saturation when they consistently informed both analysis and design, including decisions about interface logic, site selection, and annotation structure

VIII. Ethical Considerations

All participants gave informed verbal consent. In cases where cultural sensitivity required discretion—such as cemeteries or tabby ruins—documentation was omitted or adjusted per community direction. Data was treated as a shared asset, not a resource to be extracted. No personal identifiers were published without explicit consent.

The digital platform is structured to allow viewing but not downloading, protecting against the misappropriation of culturally significant content. This reflects a commitment to interpretive sovereignty and culturally situated data ethics.

IX. Reflexivity and Positionality

As a Black descendant of land stewards and cooperative organizers in the U.S. South, my positionality shaped every stage of this project. I approached Daufuskie not as a detached researcher but as a learner, witness, and co-archivist. My reflexive journal became a space to document tensions between institutional demands and community obligations—particularly around the politics of representation, spiritual landscapes, and visual exposure.

I do not claim neutrality. My commitment to speculative, reparative design is both political and methodological. It asks not simply how memory can be preserved, but how tools might be co-designed to surface ancestral wisdom and catalyze new futures. In this sense, my methodological stance is both archival and aspirational: grounded in field data, but oriented toward freedom.

X. Limitations

This research is bounded by time, technical access, and platform constraints. Fieldwork was conducted over three days across three trips, limiting the depth of interviews and scope of documentation. Several important sites could not be scanned due to private ownership or ecological conditions. Sketchfab's size limits further constrained spatial fidelity. Despite best efforts, some stories remain untold and some places unmapped.

Still, this project serves as a prototype: a test case for what community-informed, digitally grounded preservation might look like under real-world constraints.

XI. Conclusion

This methodology brings together fieldwork, immersive technology, cultural theory, and narrative design to argue that preservation must be reimagined not as static simulation, but as speculative, participatory, and reparative spatial practice. Through grounded, ethical, and culturally situated methods, this project demonstrates how immersive

tools—when held in community—can activate memory, challenge erasure, and create openings for justice across time.

Findings

I. Introduction: Framing the Findings

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from immersive fieldwork, community collaboration, and iterative design experimentation on Daufuskie Island between March and April 2025. These findings are grounded in primary sources—including oral histories, annotated walk-throughs, interviews, 3D scans, and video documentation—as well as relevant secondary materials such as preservation guidelines, institutional reports, and historical records. Together, they offer insight into how Gullah Geechee cultural memory is preserved, negotiated, and protected through situated practices—and how immersive tools may accompany, rather than extract from, that process.

The central community voice represented in this chapter is Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson—a sixth-generation Gullah native of Daufuskie Island, author, cultural historian, and the island's only Gullah-operated heritage tour guide. Her embodied knowledge and interpretive labor helped shape the project's direction, scope, and ethical orientation. Her participation was documented with informed consent and continued involvement throughout. Additional insight was provided by Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Department Head of Architecture at Tuskegee University, whose collaboration during the final documentation phase helped ground the project in a longer tradition of Black architectural stewardship.

The six findings presented here are organized thematically and reflect patterns observed through documentation, conversation, and field-based decision-making:

1. **Cultural Listening and Ethical Immersion** — relational accountability, refusal, and narrative trust
2. **Tools and Power** — access, constraint, and responsiveness in fieldwork
3. **Visualization vs. Analysis** — tool outputs, workflows, and accessibility
4. **Preservation as a Reparative Framework** — gaps between institutional norms and cultural value
5. **Heritage Economies** — cultural visibility and structural exclusion
6. **Institutional Memory and Bridge-Building** — documenting ethical, cross-institutional collaboration

Interpretive analysis is reserved for the following Discussion chapter. What appears here are grounded observations—emergent patterns that surfaced through shared space, relational guidance, and iterative documentation practices.

Finding 1: Cultural Listening and Ethical Immersion

Foregrounding trust, refusal, and narrative accountability

This finding highlights how cultural listening—rooted in trust, invitation, and narrative accountability—shapes what can and should be preserved through immersive tools. On-site collaboration with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, a sixth-generation Gullah native of Daufuskie Island, revealed that immersive preservation is not a technical gesture, but an ethical orientation. What began as a documentation effort quickly became a lesson in refusal, stewardship, and care.

> “This house just speaks to me in every way,” she said. “My mom had five girls. I'm the middle child. I'm the only one born in this house.”[128]

Her connection to the house was not sentimental—it was territorial and epistemic, a living geography shaped by memory, labor, and refusal. As she walked me through its rooms and the surrounding landscape, she layered the physical environment with narrative. “My grandmother had nine pecan trees here, but the pine killed them out... I’ve been doing the work and been able to get people to just volunteer,” she explained. “It’s sad—it’s getting your people who need to be part of it not just join it.”[129]

For Ms. Robinson, restoration was never an individual task—it was a call to collective responsibility. Her work to preserve and restore the house became a platform for reorganizing family structure around shared care. She described the process of assigning roles, organizing meetings, and establishing a plan for generational stewardship. These reflections consistently framed the home not as an artifact to be frozen in time, but as a spiritual and social anchor—one that demanded both continuity and adaptation.

This ethic of care extended well beyond the home. Across multiple field visits, Ms. Robinson led walk-throughs of historical sites, unmarked burial grounds, praise house ruins, and oyster processing facilities. During these moments, she regularly corrected

[128] Transcript – Full Interview, 00:01:52
[129] Ibid., 00:04:43–00:05:05

institutional signage, challenged misattributed histories, and refused common tourist myths—like the overuse and misinterpretation of "haint blue" paint or false claims about where popular films were shot. These acts of correction were not simply factual—they were cultural interventions rooted in lived experience and a refusal to let misrepresentation solidify into public record.

In several instances, Ms. Robinson also expressed frustration with how her guidance was ignored or overwritten by local institutions and tourism initiatives. Field notes reflect repeated moments where her refusal to participate in extractive preservation models—such as those led by boards she had once served on—signaled a broader ethic of protection. Her pedagogical style was improvisational, site-specific, and delivered through layered storytelling that connected memory, space, and responsibility.

> "That's not the right color… Why you put it there? So they just ignore me."[130]

These refusals weren't about trivia—they were about reclaiming authorship over Gullah memory. "You gotta get the people who born and raised here… and help them build so we can build together."[131] Her approach to storytelling and stewardship makes clear that preservation is not simply about access or exposure—it is about ownership, relationship, and the right to narrate.

> "It's just not about talking about it. It's about doing something about it."[132]

For Ms. Robinson, preservation is action. Ethical immersion begins with listening—but it culminates in doing. Her work reminds us that immersive documentation must be grounded in invitation, not intrusion; in participation, not performance.

Finding 2: Tools and Power

Observing how access and constraint shaped digital documentation in the field

This finding explores how differences in documentation tools shaped not only what was captured on Daufuskie Island, but how and under what conditions it could be captured. In practice, tool choice affected flexibility, timing, proximity to community guidance, and the degree to which the documentation process could remain responsive to place. The more mobile and lightweight the tool, the more adaptable the documentation process became.

[130] Ibid., 00:07:40
[131] Ibid., 00:03:46
[132] 5. Ibid., 00:06:12

Over the course of three research trips, I used both mobile photogrammetry tools (Scaniverse and Polycam) and professional-grade LiDAR systems (Leica RTC360 and BLK2GO), in collaboration with Dr. Kwesi Daniels and the Architecture Program at Tuskegee University. While both toolsets produced usable models, their workflows revealed stark differences in mobility, infrastructure demands, and post-processing requirements.

The Leica RTC360 produced millimeter-accurate point clouds suitable for architectural modeling and long-term conservation. However, its cost, size, and setup constraints limited its use to formally staged, pre-approved sessions. It required advanced training, tripod placement, careful lighting conditions, and powerful software to align and render the data. These constraints shaped not only when and where the device could be used, but also the tone of the engagement. Unlike mobile tools that allowed me to move in sync with community rhythm, Leica sessions required separation—logistical, technical, and sometimes spatial.

In contrast, mobile photogrammetry tools enabled a more responsive, context-sensitive approach to documentation. Using only an iPhone or iPad, I was able to scan vernacular structures like praise house ruins during earlier visits when the priority was relationship-building rather than high-fidelity capture. These tools allowed me to respond to spontaneous invitations and shifting conditions—scanning discreetly, navigating uneven terrain, or adjusting lighting using handheld flashlights. Though the resulting models lacked the spatial precision of LiDAR, they could be generated quickly, reviewed in real time, and circulated with minimal infrastructure.

Field notes from sessions at the praise house and Ms. Robinson's yard underscore the importance of this flexibility. While no community members directly participated in the act of scanning, Ms. Robinson's presence actively shaped the documentation. She narrated the history of sites, identified culturally significant features, and indicated when it was appropriate—or inappropriate—to record. Her interpretive labor helped root the process in local knowledge, even as the capture itself remained technically mediated.

The comparative scanning session on April 19, 2025—conducted with Dr. Daniels and students from Tuskegee—further clarified the trade-offs between tool types. At the Robinson Family Home, we used the RTC360 and BLK2GO scanners to capture exterior and interior data, along with drone imagery for site context. These scans produced high-resolution models ideal for archival and architectural use, but required substantial time, infrastructure, and post-processing before becoming usable.

These observations emphasized that the usability of documentation tools in the field depended not only on their technical specifications but also on the conditions of access,

environmental responsiveness, and relationship to community presence. Mobile tools allowed for quick adaptation to changing circumstances and could be used during moments of relational trust or spontaneous invitation. Professional LiDAR tools required scheduled coordination, preparation, and specific site conditions. These differences consistently shaped how documentation proceeded—and when it was possible at all.

Finding 3: Visualization vs. Analysis

Observing how tool function shapes workflow and accessibility

While the previous finding focused on logistical and relational dynamics in the field, this finding addresses a related theme that emerged through the documentation process: how different categories of digital tools—visualization tools and analysis tools—shaped workflows, timelines, and the accessibility of outputs. This distinction surfaced during implementation, as it became clear that the tools were not interchangeable in terms of what they produced or how those outputs could be used.

Visualization tools such as Scaniverse, Polycam, and Luma AI were used to capture 3D mesh models of select structures on Daufuskie Island, including the First Union African Baptist Church and the praise house ruins. These tools were operated on mobile devices and allowed for quick, lightweight scanning that could be processed on-site and shared within minutes. Field notes from these sessions reflect how this immediacy allowed for rapid review, adjustments, and integration with other forms of documentation, such as audio and video. The simplicity of the workflow made these tools especially useful for preliminary captures and community-oriented storytelling.

Analysis tools—including the Leica RTC360 and BLK2GO—were used in collaboration with Tuskegee University during a formal documentation session at the Robinson Family Home. These tools produced high-resolution point clouds suitable for architectural and conservation-grade modeling. However, the data generated by these devices required days of post-processing, including scan alignment, reduction, and scaling. Field notes describe how this workflow delayed interpretation and required access to advanced computing environments, such as Tuskegee's Cyclone Register 360 lab. The final outputs were not immediately usable and had to be re-rendered in simplified formats for broader sharing.

This difference in workflow timelines and processing requirements shaped how the tools could be used during the project. Visualization tools made it possible to embed scans into narrative platforms almost immediately, while analysis tools required longer

timelines and technical expertise to generate legible outputs. This distinction influenced not only when the data could be used, but also how and by whom.

These patterns were observed consistently throughout the project. While both categories of tools were valuable, their utility varied based on context, constraints, and intended outcomes. Visualization tools supported rapid iteration and integration with qualitative media. Analysis tools produced more detailed spatial documentation but often required institutional resources to be interpreted and shared.

Finding 4: Preservation as a Reparative Framework

Centering memory, consent, and community-defined value

This finding emerged from the contrast between conventional historic preservation standards and the preservation priorities voiced and enacted by community members on Daufuskie Island. While institutional frameworks often focus on architectural integrity, material age, or regulatory eligibility, the work conducted during this project consistently pointed to a different set of values: relational context, cultural continuity, spiritual significance, and narrative care.

One key moment occurred on April 19, 2025, when Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson invited me and Dr. Kwesi Daniels to document her grandmother's home using professional LiDAR tools. Though not formally recognized by any preservation body, the structure was described by Ms. Robinson as central to her family's story and Gullah heritage. She spoke about her own birth in the house, the pecan trees that once shaded the yard, and the role the space played in gathering extended family. Its importance was rooted not in its architectural form, but in the memory it held.

Across multiple conversations and field visits, it became clear that many culturally significant sites—family compounds, tabby ruins, burial grounds—were not represented in public registers or tourism literature. Despite their historical importance, these spaces remained unprotected, often vulnerable to disrepair or redevelopment. Ms. Robinson frequently pointed out examples where preservation efforts on the island had prioritized aesthetics or colonial histories over Black spatial life. In one case, she noted how signs were placed at white-owned homes while culturally significant Gullah sites went unmarked.

Field documentation practices throughout this project were shaped by these insights. Certain sites were deliberately excluded from scanning based on community feedback. Others were documented selectively—choosing exterior scans or limited annotations in

response to concerns about privacy, overexposure, or potential misuse. The goal was never to maximize coverage, but to document with care and consent. These decisions reflected a different orientation toward preservation—one focused on protecting cultural memory rather than rendering it fully visible or legible to external audiences.

What became consistently evident was that the preservation practices valued most by those stewarding Daufuskie's memory were not necessarily those aligned with formal recognition. Sites were preserved through use, story, and seasonal return. They were interpreted through gestures, walking tours, and intergenerational memory—not plaques or zoning protections. The immersive documentation process had to adapt accordingly: moving at the pace of trust, deferring to community knowledge, and prioritizing the context in which a scan was made over the technical fidelity it produced.

This finding highlights a recurring theme: that preservation, for the Gullah community, is not just about safeguarding material structures—it is about sustaining cultural life. The approaches observed and practiced during this project emphasized narrative authority, spatial care, and the importance of consent at every stage of documentation. These practices invite a broader reflection on what constitutes preservation—and who gets to decide.

Finding 5: Heritage Economies

Observing the gap between cultural visibility and material support

This finding emerged through interviews and site observations that pointed to a consistent pattern: while Gullah culture is central to Daufuskie Island's public identity and tourism economy, those actively sustaining that culture—through storytelling, preservation, and community engagement—often lack access to financial resources, institutional partnerships, or infrastructure support.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson is regularly featured in brochures, signage, and community history materials as one of the island's most prominent cultural stewards. During fieldwork, her name appeared in curated exhibits and tour references, and several residents and visitors described her as essential to the preservation of Gullah life on the island. However, in our conversations, Ms. Robinson shared that this visibility had not translated into material support. She noted that while her work was frequently cited or echoed in public narratives, she was often left out of grant applications or decision-

making processes. "They want the culture, but they don't want to support the people who carry it," she explained.[133]

Fieldnotes from visits to key sites reinforced this theme. While cultural signage appeared at places like the Billie Burn Museum and along walking paths, Gullah-descendant contributions to those histories were not always reflected in staffing, design input, or interpretive planning. In one instance, Ms. Robinson explained that her former role on a local historical board had been removed without clear justification, even as her knowledge continued to be referenced in their materials. At another site, she pointed out that preservation resources were allocated to colonial-era buildings, while Black homes and cemeteries remained unmaintained.

Participants noted that tourism activity often draws on Gullah imagery, cuisine, and stories, yet descendants remain underrepresented in decisions about how that heritage is marketed or shared. Ms. Robinson described having to repair or finance infrastructure for her own tours—despite the broader visibility and economic value her work generated for the island's tourism landscape. She also recounted instances of non-Gullah guides adopting her routes and narratives without collaboration or attribution.

These field-based accounts consistently pointed to a gap between symbolic recognition and material investment. While Gullah history is acknowledged in public-facing spaces, the people most responsible for preserving and performing that history frequently face barriers to funding, access, and control. The immersive documentation process surfaced this pattern not only through interviews, but also through logistical disparities encountered during site visits—such as the lack of signage or public protection for culturally significant Gullah structures.

This finding emphasizes that preservation and heritage work on Daufuskie cannot be separated from economic questions. Cultural labor is ongoing, relational, and resource intensive. Participants expressed concern that without structural support, visibility alone may not be enough to sustain future generations of Gullah stewardship on the island.

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[133] Sallie Ann Robinson, interview with author, April 18, 2025, Daufuskie Island, SC. Transcript, Transcript – Full Interview.txt.

Finding 6: Institutional Memory and Bridge-Building

Documenting the impact of cross-institutional collaboration grounded in Black educational lineage

This finding emerged through the collaborative documentation process between MIT and Tuskegee University, specifically during the April 19, 2025 fieldwork session. That day marked the most technically comprehensive scan of the project, during which I worked with Dr. Kwesi Daniels, Department Head of the Robert R. Taylor School of Architecture and Construction Science (TSACS), to document both the Robinson Family Home and a nearby tabby ruin using professional-grade LiDAR scanners and drone imagery.

Our collaboration was grounded not only in shared technical goals, but in a recognition of the historical ties between our institutions. Robert R. Taylor, MIT's first Black graduate, served as Tuskegee's founding architect and curriculum designer—establishing a tradition of Black-led spatial education that continues through Dr. Daniels's leadership. By working together on this documentation effort, we extended that lineage into contemporary preservation practice focused on Black cultural memory and land.

In the field, Dr. Daniels and I coordinated scan strategy, tool deployment, and environmental adjustments using the RTC360 and BLK2GO scanners. Our decisions were shaped by both technical conditions and the responsibilities that come with documenting a site of personal and cultural significance to Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson. The collaboration allowed us to ensure thorough coverage while remaining attentive to spatial sensitivity and relational trust.

Following the fieldwork, Dr. Daniels conducted post-processing and alignment using Tuskegee's LiDAR infrastructure and Cyclone Register 360 software. I advised on this process, providing context for the scans, reviewing registration drafts, and offering input on resolution, export settings, and organization of files. This shared workflow allowed us to generate high-fidelity documentation suitable for both architectural analysis and narrative integration.

Although MIT supported aspects of my research during this thesis process, the website and platform for Daufuskie3D were created and maintained independently. I purchased the domain (www.daufuskie3d.org) personally and built the web environment outside of institutional hosting systems. This decision reflects a deeper commitment to long-term stewardship and public accessibility, grounded in a desire to ensure that the platform remains accountable to the community it represents.

This collaboration with Tuskegee also opened possibilities for future curricular engagement and resource sharing. Both Dr. Daniels and I retained archival copies of the scans, with the understanding that they may be used in preservation coursework or student documentation projects at Tuskegee. Meanwhile, I continued to develop the narrative infrastructure and digital interface for Daufuskie3D, integrating the documentation into a platform that prioritizes community context and descendant voice.

Reflecting on the collaboration, Dr. Daniels shared: "This kind of work isn't just technical—it's cultural. It's about how we as Black institutions honor our history and use our tools to support communities that have long preserved stories on their own terms."[134]

This finding illustrates how field-based preservation can be strengthened through partnerships that are not only technical, but historical and ethical. Rather than symbolic, this collaboration modeled a form of bridge-building—connecting institutions, generations, and knowledge systems in support of a shared commitment to Black memory work.

VIII. Conclusion: Immersion, Accountability, Continuity

Across all six findings, a consistent pattern emerged: immersive documentation is shaped not only by technical workflows, but by relationships, constraints, consent, and cultural context. Each tool choice, field decision, and narrative element was influenced by trust, timing, and the responsibilities of working in living memory landscapes.

These findings reflect what surfaced during the course of fieldwork and collaboration—from what was possible to scan, to who guided the process, to how and where the resulting models could be shared. They do not offer definitive conclusions, but rather trace the contours of a preservation practice grounded in proximity, accountability, and care.

Together, the findings emphasize that preservation is not just about what is recorded, but how that recording happens, in whose presence, and toward what purpose. These insights now lay the groundwork for the Discussion chapter that follows, which considers how the patterns observed here might inform broader frameworks of reparative documentation, immersive design, and digital cultural stewardship.

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[134] Kwesi Daniels, conversation with author, April 20, 2025.

Discussion

Introduction: Interpreting the Work of Immersive Preservation

Immersive preservation must be understood not as a neutral process of recording, but as an act embedded in relationships, power structures, and historical continuity. The findings presented in the previous chapter reveal that documentation alone is not enough—what matters is how, with whom, and for what purpose that documentation unfolds. This chapter revisits those findings through interpretive analysis, drawing from both theoretical frameworks and my lived experience of designing Daufuskie3D in relation to Gullah memory work.

Throughout this project, preservation revealed itself to be a speculative and ethical process. The aim was never to freeze Daufuskie in time, but to sustain the conditions under which its cultural life—its stories, sites, and stewards—might continue to adapt and flourish. The platform, like the scans themselves, functions as a vessel for continuity. It protects certain forms of knowledge while sharing others. This layered structure reflects Gullah traditions of encoded storytelling, spiritual secrecy, and symbolic protection—practices that resist extraction by embedding meaning and access thresholds into the design itself.

The decision to create parallel infrastructures—one public-facing and one protected—was not a technical workaround, but a methodological choice grounded in narrative consent and community stewardship. Not every site should be digitized. Not every story should be shared. The work of immersive preservation requires not just representation, but restraint. It demands attentiveness to the cultural consequences of visibility and the ethics of digital care.

This chapter is organized thematically around the six findings presented earlier, now reinterpreted through the frameworks of Black geographies, wake work, techno-vernacular creativity, and speculative design. It also draws on my personal theory of practice, which holds that immersive media must be shaped by relational accountability, spatial ethics, and reparative intent. What follows is an interpretive reading of those findings—structured around six themes—and animated by the question that shaped this entire process: how might immersive preservation serve as a reparative, relational, and future-building practice?

I. Relational Ethics and Refusal in Immersive Preservation

Immersive preservation, when practiced in communities shaped by dispossession and erasure, must begin not with scanning, but with listening. Early in this project, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson asked a question that became a moral anchor: “Are you a researcher for them or for us?” Her words reframed the work—not as a technical task, but as an ethical relationship. They made visible the stakes of documentation in a landscape where cultural preservation has too often meant institutional capture.

From that point forward, every decision—what to document, how to annotate, which tools to use, and where to share—was made in relation to Ms. Robinson’s guidance. This shift moved the project from extraction to accompaniment. I came to understand that immersive preservation could not proceed unless it was grounded in what I call narrative consent: a practice that exceeds institutional notions of informed consent by emphasizing relational trust, spiritual stewardship, and long-term accountability to community memory holders. Narrative consent requires proximity—not just to people, but to place, practice, and story.

Christina Sharpe’s concept of *wake work* provides a critical frame for understanding this shift. To work in the wake, Sharpe argues, is to dwell within the afterlife of slavery, to attend to ongoing structures of racial violence and disappearance, and to make deliberate space for what remains.[135] In this project, wake work meant more than recording oral histories or scanning ruins. It meant listening for what was unsaid. It meant refusing to digitize certain spaces—even when technically possible—because presence did not equal permission. Refusal, here, was not a limitation but an ethical method.

These principles were not merely philosophical—they informed the structure of Daufuskie3D itself. The platform does not simulate the island as a totalized landscape; it fragments and withholds. Certain memory sites are named but not rendered. Others are shared only through gesture, voice, or ambient sound. These absences are intentional. They signal that what matters most is not completeness, but care. As Saidiya Hartman reminds us, “care is the antidote to violence,” and in spaces where cultural memory has long been extracted or ignored, care becomes both methodology and refusal.[136]

Ms. Robinson articulated this ethic of protection herself, during one of our conversations: “I don’t mind showing people what we got, but some things don’t belong

[135] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 15–18.
[136] Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” Small Axe 12, no. 2 (2008): 14.

to everybody."[137] Her statement wasn't just about visibility—it was about stewardship. The digital cannot be neutral when the cultural is sacred.

In response, the platform was designed with thresholds embedded into its architecture. Instead of maximizing immersion or exposure, it asks users to pause, interpret, or accept that some knowledge is not for them. This design logic reflects Gullah traditions of encoded storytelling and symbolic secrecy, where the unspoken often carries as much weight as what is told. Refusal, in this context, is not absence—it is sovereignty. It preserves the right not to be rendered for external consumption, and instead insists on memory as something co-stewarded, protected, and sustained.

Relational ethics, then, are not a soft addition to the technical rigor of immersive preservation—they are its foundation. Without them, even the most precise scan risks becoming extractive. With them, even partial documentation can become an act of holding space.

II. Tools and Power: Storytelling as Spatial Control

I began this project assuming that the most powerful immersive experiences would emerge from the highest-resolution scans. The professional-grade LiDAR models of Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson's home confirmed that assumption—at least technically. The Leica RTC360 and BLK2GO produced dense, high-resolution point clouds that captured the architectural complexity of the site with forensic precision. But what surprised me was not the scan itself—it was the degree of narrative control it afforded. That control, more than any pixel count, proved to be the real determinant of what stories could be told, protected, or reframed.

Each documentation tool used in this project—whether a Leica scanner, an iPhone, or a platform like Sketchfab—enabled a different kind of story. This became especially clear in the documentation of Ms. Robinson's home. A full cinematic walkthrough was not possible. There was no electricity in the house. The lighting was inconsistent. The floors were unstable, and time on the island was limited. Video capture, which would have required stabilization equipment and controlled interior lighting, wasn't feasible. But using Sketchfab's annotation tools, I was able to create a guided tour through the 3D model—layering spatial storytelling with contextual text and directional navigation. This offered a different kind of immersion: one that was sequenced, annotated, and directional, yet still allowed viewers the agency to explore freely.

[137] 3. Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, interview with author, April 2025.

What mattered was not just the ability to document space, but the ability to guide someone through it. Sketchfab's annotations acted like narrative anchors—steering users toward particular moments in the model and allowing oral history fragments to become visible in place. Navigation arrows recentered the camera, ensuring that viewers didn't get lost in the data cloud. Unlike video, which flattens the viewer's gaze into a single path, annotated 3D models provided structured freedom—a method of storytelling that was both interactive and guided. And unlike raw point clouds hosted elsewhere, this interface provided space for curatorial authorship.

For descendant communities whose stories are often narrated without their input, the ability to design interactive, annotation-rich spatial experiences is critical. Sketchfab didn't just offer a platform—it offered a form of spatial authorship, where memory could be embedded in the land, not abstracted from it.

Each technological tool constrained or expanded what could be done. The BLK2GO's handheld design enabled interior scanning in tight, unstable spaces—something the RTC360's tripod could not safely accommodate. But the BLK's data lacked the color fidelity and environmental context that the RTC could offer. The RTC360 required careful setup and clear perimeter paths, limiting spontaneity. Its use inside Ms. Robinson's home would have taken hours and introduced safety concerns. Instead, the BLK completed a full interior and porch scan in under fifteen minutes.

These differences in workflow mattered. They shaped not only what was captured, but when, where, and under what conditions. Processing time varied dramatically—mobile scans could be reviewed and shared within minutes, while professional-grade LiDAR datasets required days of alignment and downsampling before interpretation could begin. These tools and timelines shaped who could access the work, who could collaborate on it, and who could see themselves in the outcome.

This dynamic aligns with Nettrice Gaskins's theory of techno-vernacular creativity, which highlights how culturally grounded improvisation emerges in response to systemic constraint.[138] The field improvisations on Daufuskie—flashlight-assisted scans, handheld workflows, mid-tour captures—were not signs of limited capacity. They were strategic acts of alignment between tool, user, and cultural context. They affirmed a core principle in my personal theory of practice: that immersive tools must be wielded in service of relational ethics, cultural sovereignty, and situated design.[139] Tools must not simply capture space—they must honor the hands, stories, and conditions that shape it.

[138] Nettrice R. Gaskins, "Afrofuturism on Web 3.0: Vernacular Cartography and Augmented Space," in Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness, ed. Reynaldo Anderson and Charles E. Jones (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 23–38.
[139] See Appendix A: Personal Theory of Practice.

Even with access to full-resolution models, platform limitations restricted what could be shown. Sketchfab's file size constraints meant not every layer of data could be made public. But rather than treat this as a loss, I began to see it as an opportunity to practice narrative restraint. We chose, deliberately, to withhold certain scans—not out of scarcity, but out of care. That restraint, born from technical limitation, became an ethical stance. As articulated in my theoretical framework, this reflects a broader ethic of immersive refusal—a refusal to flatten Black memory into a consumable object, and a commitment to preserving meaning through selective sharing.

In these moments, storytelling became inseparable from stewardship. The tools did not just capture cultural heritage—they shaped how it could be presented, navigated, and understood. Design decisions—about what to annotate, what to render, what to omit—were not technical enhancements. They were acts of care, protection, and narrative authorship. In a context where cultural memory has often been extracted, immersive tools must be designed to accompany, not consume.

This experience reaffirmed that immersive preservation is not simply about capturing high-quality data—it is about framing cultural experience in ways that protect, honor, and extend descendant knowledge. As immersive tools become more widespread, the field must reckon with how design choices shape cultural futures. Preservation is not just a technical act—it is a political one. And the most powerful tools are those that allow us to act not only as documentarians, but as ethical stewards of memory in digital form.

III. Visualization vs. Analysis: Processing as Determinant

A core insight of this project was that immersive preservation is not only shaped by what tools can capture, but by who can process—and how quickly. The distinction between visualization and analysis emerged less from differences in image quality, and more from how each mode shaped authorship, access, and control over storytelling. While scanning tools are often categorized by resolution, cost, or technical fidelity, this project revealed a more consequential distinction: between those designed for immediate visualization, and those built for infrastructure-dependent analysis.

Visualization tools—like the iPhone 16 Pro Max paired with Scaniverse or Polycam—enabled fast, intuitive scanning in the field. These mobile platforms were ideal for documenting sites in real time: the Praise House, First Union African Baptist Church, and tabby ruin spaces could be captured quickly, viewed immediately, and uploaded for interactive use within minutes. Their ease of use allowed for spontaneous documentation under the guidance of Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson and supported a responsive, relational approach to immersive storytelling.

Analysis tools—like the Leica RTC360 and BLK2GO—produced highly precise, georeferenced point clouds. But that precision came at a cost: data from a single site often exceeded 200GB, requiring professional-grade software (Leica Cyclone), extended post-processing, and access to high-performance computing hardware. At Tuskegee University, these scans were processed on a 13th-gen Intel Core i9 machine with 128GB RAM and an NVIDIA RTX 4070 Ti GPU. The contrast was stark: mobile tools enabled immediacy; professional tools required institutional infrastructure.

This divide wasn't just technical—it was epistemological, shaping what counts as valid knowledge and who is authorized to interpret it. As you moved from capture to processing, it became clear that the toolset dictated more than workflow—it determined what kind of memory could be made visible, and who could narrate it. Visualization tools processed the data for you, enabling rapid community engagement and storytelling. Analysis tools required manual registration, file optimization, and software fluency—putting interpretive power squarely in the hands of trained professionals or institutions.

In immersive preservation, access to the scan is not access to the story. The tools that demand institutional infrastructure for processing also determine whose stories get paused, polished, or postponed—and whose can unfold in real time.

That distinction shaped the ethics of the work. In documenting the Robinson Family Home, the BLK2GO allowed interior spaces to be scanned quickly and safely, where the RTC360's tripod-based workflow would have been unsafe or impractical. But while the scan itself was captured in the field, the story couldn't be told until days later—after alignment, mesh generation, and data reduction. The delay between capture and legibility had consequences: it shifted the act of interpretation away from the field and toward the lab, and from Ms. Robinson's narration to post-production.

Field notes from April 18 describe the emotional weight of Ms. Robinson walking us through her yard, gesturing toward sacred spaces, and identifying where rooms once stood. The scan captured dimensions; she provided meaning. In that moment, it became clear that the most advanced tool was not the scanner—but the storyteller.

These choices reveal what Christina Sharpe calls the afterlife of slavery—the lingering infrastructures that shape whose knowledge is visible, and whose remains obscured.[140] Visualization tools allowed for rapid, relational co-documentation. Analysis tools, in contrast, enacted a kind of procedural delay that mirrored broader dynamics of institutional control over Black spatial data.

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[140] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 11–22.

What emerged was a framework: visualization supports immediacy and accessibility; analysis supports precision and durability. Both are necessary—but their roles must be understood contextually. For example, the mobile scans of tabby ruins or praise house interiors could be embedded in interactive story-driven platforms like Sketchfab. But when advocating for historical designation, conservation funding, or legal recognition, the analytic fidelity of RTC360 data becomes essential.

That distinction—between visual and analytic use—was not just about data quality. It was about the terms of access. Professional tools produce datasets that can support evidentiary claims—but only when communities have the capacity to interpret, store, and deploy them. In the absence of that infrastructure, high-fidelity data risks becoming extractive: stored on servers, shown in exhibits, but disconnected from the people it is meant to serve.

This insight aligns with my personal theory of practice, which frames immersive preservation as a relational and reparative process.[141] Fidelity is not only a technical measure—it is a situated, political one. Who has the power to scan is just as important as who has the power to process. And where that power sits—on a mobile device in the field, or in a post-processing lab hundreds of miles away—has real implications for cultural sovereignty.

Ultimately, the distinction between visualization and analysis isn't about tool type—it's about purpose. Both modes have value. But recognizing their differences forces a shift in how immersive work is designed and governed. Visualization tools support storytelling, relational accountability, and collective authorship. Analysis tools support planning, advocacy, and historical preservation. This project chose to use both—but always in service of a larger question: not just *what can this tool see*, but *what kind of memory does it make possible—and for whom*?

IV. Preservation as Reparative Framework

I came into this project thinking of preservation as a largely technical and historical process—centered on accuracy, completeness, and formal documentation. What surprised me was how little that framing applied to the spaces and people I encountered on Daufuskie. What mattered most was not fidelity to form, but fidelity to relationship. The most urgent preservation work was not about protecting architecture—it was about protecting memory, community, and the right to remain present.

[141] See Appendix A: Personal Theory of Practice.

Preservation is often framed as a neutral act: a technical process of safeguarding buildings, artifacts, or landscapes for future generations. But on Daufuskie Island, it became clear that preservation—like memory—is always political. It determines what is considered valuable, who is allowed to speak for the past, and who gets to benefit from that recognition. For the Gullah Geechee, formal preservation has too often meant exclusion. Sacred sites remain undocumented. Family homes are denied historic status. Memory work is divorced from the people who sustain it.

This project revealed that preservation is not just a matter of what gets saved—it's a matter of who gets to define what is worth saving, and who gets to benefit from it. Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson's home, for instance, is a living archive of Gullah family life. It contains generations of knowledge, spatial rhythms, and land stewardship. And yet it does not qualify for state or federal preservation funding—not because it lacks value, but because it fails to meet criteria rooted in colonial architectural aesthetics and property formalism.

During our second trip to the island, Ms. Robinson led us through the yard and surrounding land, describing what used to grow there. "My grandmomma field used to be over there," she explained, pointing out what was once an okra field. She gestured to wild blueberry bushes and sparkle berry trees: "We were never hungry because there was a lot of nuts and berries." The land held not just memory, but sustenance. Her knowledge reframed the yard as a cultural landscape—a site of inheritance that existed far outside any formal register.

Other culturally significant sites face different but equally insidious forms of erasure. The Oyster Union Society Hall, once a burial and benevolent society for Black residents, is no longer governed by those descendants. Though the structure is physically maintained, the narrative presented on-site misstates its purpose and erases its organizing legacy. Attempts by Gullah descendants to correct these inaccuracies have gone unanswered. In this case, preservation has not meant recognition—it has meant narrative enclosure, severing the site from the community that gave it meaning. This is preservation as display, not restitution.

The tabby ruins I scanned remain completely unpreserved. Overgrown and unnamed, they sit on remote land with no signage, no protection, and no interpretive infrastructure. Their neglect is not incidental; it is structural. Because they are located on land with little speculative value, they have been allowed to decay—off the radar of developers and preservation boards, which are often composed of the same individuals. By contrast, the tabby structures that have been preserved are behind gates, accessible only to residents of private resort communities. These are not merely protected—they are curated for capital, while descendants of those who built them are excluded from access.

This dynamic is a textbook example of what Katherine McKittrick calls Plantation Futures: the persistence of plantation logics in contemporary spatial arrangements.[142] On Daufuskie, the plantation is no longer an agricultural enterprise—it is a preservation regime. Heritage is protected when it reinforces property value; it is erased when it threatens ownership structures. This is how the past is made profitable: through controlled narrative, exclusionary access, and curated decay.

Across Daufuskie, cultural memory is brokered through ownership. Recognition is contingent on alignment with the island's dominant economic vision—a vision shaped not by Gullah descendants, but by developers, absentee landlords, and the preservation committees they control. As Christina Sharpe reminds us, this too is part of the afterlife of slavery—where Black geographies are not only forgotten, but actively misread, managed, or withheld.[143] The structures of spatial extraction continue under the guise of preservation.

In this context, preservation must be reimagined as a reparative practice—not simply recording the past, but reactivating the conditions for cultural continuity, spatial justice, and community self-determination. The goal is not to freeze time, but to restore power and ensure that the benefits of preservation accrue to those whose lives and histories make preservation necessary in the first place.

Throughout this project, preservation was redefined as something participatory and recursive. When Ms. Robinson invited me to document her grandmother's home, it was not an act of extraction—it was an invitation into shared stewardship. What followed were decisions rooted not in archival standards, but in consent, trust, and care. Where could we scan? What should remain undocumented? Which stories should accompany the render? These decisions reflect a preservation ethic shaped by wake work—Sharpe's term for the labor of holding space for what has been disappeared, and insisting on the presence of Black life in the wake of historical erasure.[144]

This ethic shaped both the technical workflows and the design of Daufuskie3D. Sacred spaces were deliberately under-rendered or omitted based on community guidance. In some cases, models were edited to remove interior details or spatial cues that could invite unwanted attention. Unlike conventional preservation renderings, which often aim for exhaustive documentation, this platform embraced grain, partiality, and narrative opacity. What mattered was not the model's completeness, but its alignment

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[142] Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," Small Axe 17, no. 3 (2013): 1–15.
[143] Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 11–22.
[144] Ibid., 18–23.

with the cultural context it was designed to serve—and the priorities of those it was intended to benefit.

This is what I've come to understand as reparative documentation. It is not preservation for the sake of history, but for the sake of continuity—for the people who remain, and the descendants still to come. In this model, scans are not ends in themselves. They are infrastructures of return—tools that make visible what preservation standards have ignored, and that support future claims to land, memory, and presence. Crucially, they also form the basis for descendant benefit—through visibility, voice, and the ability to narrate one's own cultural legacy.

Reparative preservation reframes the very purpose of immersive technology. It asks not just how well a space is documented, but how responsibly it is held—and for whom. It treats storytelling not as an annotation, but as an architectural layer. In this way, it echoes what scholars of Black Geographies describe as counter-mapping: a method of spatial narration rooted in care, presence, and refusal.[145]

Preservation, then, is not merely about saving places—it is about defending the cultural lifeways those places hold. It is not a practice of capture, but of accompaniment. And in the wake of erasure, it must become a form of care capable of holding what institutions have refused to see—and capable of ensuring that those who sustain cultural memory are the ones who stand to benefit from its survival.

V. Heritage Economies: From Cultural Extraction to Reparative Value

On Daufuskie Island, Gullah culture drives the tourism economy—but Gullah people are largely excluded from the benefits it generates. Their stories attract visitors. Their labor animates landscapes. Yet the wealth produced by this cultural capital flows elsewhere. This contradiction—between symbolic recognition and material exclusion—is at the heart of the island's heritage economy. Daufuskie3D emerged as a response to this imbalance: an immersive platform designed not simply to document, but to redistribute.

As the island's only Gullah-operated heritage tour business, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson stands at the center of this system. She brings visitors from across the country to experience Daufuskie's cultural sites, recounting oral histories, pointing out sacred landmarks, and naming ancestral homes. But while her voice shapes the visitor

[145] 4. Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, eds., Black Geographies and the Politics of Place (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007).

experience, the financial benefit rarely returns to her or to the broader Gullah community. After her tours, spending flows toward white-owned shops and restaurants. Preserved sites—those with formal signage, curated narratives, or state protection—are typically inaccessible to descendants or situated within gated communities like Haig Point, a private residential enclave where access is restricted and Gullah memory is aestheticized but unwelcome.

This project revealed the starkness of that economic contradiction. Sites that have been preserved and commodified—tabby ruins behind gates, praise houses repackaged for tours—are those already aligned with real estate value and development interests. The places that matter most to descendants—like Ms. Sallie Ann's grandmother's home—remain underfunded, under-recognized, and unsupported. Preservation, in this context, is not a neutral act of cultural care—it is a sorting mechanism. It decides which memories are worthy of funding, and who gets to benefit from their circulation.

This is where Daufuskie3D offers an intervention. Not just by preserving space, but by tethering immersive technology to real-world causes and claims. The project does not frame documentation as an end in itself. It uses scanning, modeling, and annotation as means of funneling capital directly into preservation that centers descendant stewardship. In this sense, the project treats immersive documentation the way nonprofits treat photography or videography: as a storytelling asset designed to support fundraising, advocacy, and direct investment.

This became most clear during the third research trip, when, after viewing a prototype of the site, Ms. Robinson offered a new suggestion: "Why don't we scan my grandmother's home?" That moment reframed the scope of the project. No longer was it only about diasporic return or representational repair. It became about active support for a living Gullah resident fighting to preserve her family's land and home. I had received a QR code for her GoFundMe page the day prior, at the conclusion of her public heritage tour. The code linked to a modest fundraising campaign with a single photograph and brief description—an appeal that, like the house itself, had been left largely unseen.

The home had no electricity, no exterior lighting, no stable flooring—conditions that made conventional fundraising photography difficult and undermined the visual case for its preservation. But immersive scans offered something different: a sense of scale, of disrepair, of potential. They showed not just where Ms. Robinson grew up, but where her grandchildren could grow into stewards of Gullah memory.

This is the material promise of Daufuskie3D: to make cultural significance visible and fundable. The scans act as advocacy tools. The models become storytelling instruments.

The annotations surface what institutional records have overlooked. In this way, data becomes leverage—not for institutional gain, but for descendant futures.

This realization aligned with Ms. Robinson's broader vision for the land—not just as a family site, but as a base for community benefit. She spoke of creating opportunities for Black businesses and designing a future in which the land could help generate capital for other Gullah families still fighting to remain on the island. Though those plans remain evolving and private, they reflect a powerful shift: from preservation as protection to preservation as possibility. Daufuskie3D supports that shift by making the value of these sites visible—not only historically, but economically.

This strategy reflects what Michelle D. Commander describes as a speculative return—a reengagement with ancestral space that resists nostalgia and builds toward a different future.[146] The platform does not simply present memory. It proposes a way of sustaining it—economically, spatially, intergenerationally.

But these returns are not just speculative. They're protective. Ms. Robinson recounted the damage that visitors have inflicted on her family home over the years: "...they used to come and get in this house. Smoke, drug, drink, all kind of stuff. I see beer can and cigarettes."[147] At one point, even the windows were removed—literally extracting the marrow from the bones of the structure. What is often romanticized as "heritage" is, in practice, routinely disrespected. This violence—quiet, persistent, and normalized—illustrates how tourism can strip cultural sites of dignity even as it claims to honor them. Immersive documentation offers an alternative: a way to direct attention without demanding access, to build interest without exposure.

Crucially, the project also challenges the prevailing dynamics of heritage tourism. As noted in the *Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan*, cultural tourism can be a vehicle for descendant benefit—but only if narrative sovereignty and economic inclusion are prioritized.[148] That vision remains largely unrealized. Daufuskie3D begins to model what it could look like: a digital environment grounded in community consent, framed by descendant priorities, and activated as an economic asset for those who maintain the culture it depicts.

This model aligns with what the Plan calls *virtual stewardship*: applying preservation ethics to digital tools without severing them from the labor, land, and community knowledge that make those tools meaningful.[149] Rather than commodifying culture for external audiences, Daufuskie3D invites users into a layered experience of care,

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[146] Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation Futures," Small Axe 17, no. 3 (2013): 4–9.
[147] Transcript of interview with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson, April 2025.
[148] National Park Service, Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan (Atlanta: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2012), 66–69.
[149] 4. Ibid., 162–165.

witnessing, and participation. Its immersive media are not designed to simulate Gullah life for outsiders—they are designed to sustain it for those within.

As outlined in my *Personal Theory of Practice*, memory work must also be material work. The value produced by cultural representation must circulate back to the communities from which that culture emerges. In this way, Daufuskie3D does not simply display Gullah heritage—it contributes to its continuity. It is not preservation for preservation's sake. It is a mechanism for redistribution: of narrative authority, of spatial memory, and of financial support.

Looking ahead, the platform will continue to grow—not just as an archive, but as a base for programming, investment, and public education. The 3D model of Ms. Robinson's home is already being integrated into outreach efforts to support its repair and long-term stewardship. The goal is to secure funding not only to preserve, but to build anew—to ensure that Daufuskie remains a place where Gullah descendants can live, teach, gather, and thrive.

VI. Institutional Memory and Bridge-Building

Too often, institutions treat cultural memory as a resource to extract rather than a relationship to uphold. This final theme centers institutional memory as a responsibility: not a static archive, but a set of reciprocal relationships that must be tended with care. It asks what it means to build partnerships that do not reproduce the extractive logics of the university, but instead support the continuity of Black knowledge, design, and place-keeping.

This question came into focus through my collaboration with Dr. Kwesi Daniels, architect and department chair at Tuskegee University, whose leadership was central to the high-fidelity documentation and post-processing of the Robinson Family Home. Dr. Daniels brought not only technical expertise, but a deep commitment to cultural stewardship—a lineage grounded in Tuskegee's historic mission to train Black architects, planners, and builders in service of their own communities. Over the course of the third research trip, we used Leica RTC360 and BLK2GO scanners to capture exterior and interior datasets of Ms. Sallie Ann's home, processed them through Tuskegee's high-performance computing lab, and aligned them using industry-grade software to produce archival-quality models. These scans now serve as both a record and a tool—anchoring descendant claims to the site, while enabling future planning and restoration efforts.

This was not a symbolic collaboration. It was infrastructural. It reflected a mutual investment in the long arc of preservation, not just as a technical endeavor, but as a reparative one.

The partnership also activated the legacy of Robert Robinson Taylor, the first Black graduate of MIT (Class of 1892) and the founding architect of Tuskegee's campus. Taylor's career exemplified what it means to wield technical education in the service of Black institutional power. He used design, engineering, and material innovation to instruct new generations of Black builders—crafting not only structures but systems of self-determination. In a 1911 address at MIT's 50th anniversary, Taylor stated:

> "The Negro has all too long been the object of charity and of condescending treatment… A more wholesome attitude is to help him to help himself. There is nothing in the world more stimulating than the sense of independence which comes from the ability to earn an honest living."[150]

That ethos—of building tools for communal autonomy—shapes this project as well. It guided how decisions were made, how labor was shared, and how resources were allocated. At a time when many elite institutions are reexamining their relationships to historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), this partnership offered a model for ethical institutional memory. MIT did not fund this work. I did. The domain name for Daufuskie3D was purchased out of pocket. The infrastructure—technological, narrative, emotional—was built by and with community. Tuskegee was not a beneficiary. It was a co-architect. And that distinction matters.

In a moment when many institutions rush to celebrate "Black innovation," it is critical to ask who gets cited, who gets resourced, and who gets remembered. This project challenges the idea that innovation must be new. Instead, it argues that bridge-building is itself a radical act of return. To invoke Taylor is not to romanticize the past. It is to activate a living legacy—one that connects digital infrastructure to the longer arc of Black self-determination, design, and cultural stewardship.

This collaboration also reaffirmed a personal commitment: that immersive preservation must not rely on institutional infrastructure for continuity. The decision to independently own and host Daufuskie3D.org was both practical and political. It ensured that the site could remain live regardless of MIT's involvement and set a precedent for community-centered custodianship of digital memory. In this sense, the infrastructure behind the platform—its code, its hosting, its labor—became as much a part of the preservation as the scans themselves.

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[150] Robert R. Taylor, "The Scientific Development of the Negro," Technology and Industrial Efficiency: A Series of Papers Presented at the Congress of Technology, 1911, MIT Archives.

The bridge between MIT and Tuskegee is not just historical. It is directional. It points toward a future in which institutional power is used not to gatekeep, but to accompany. Not to own, but to support. Not to curate culture from above, but to build the tools that allow it to speak for itself. It demonstrates that meaningful collaboration must go beyond citation. It must be co-designed, co-located, and committed to shared outcomes, rooted in care and descendant sovereignty.

What was built in this project was more than a digital model. It was a scaffold for future partnership—an example of how spatial justice work can be carried out across institutions, disciplines, and generations, without diluting its ethical foundation.

Conclusion

A Reparative Framework for Immersive Preservation

This thesis has proposed a new model for cultural preservation—one that uses immersive technologies not as neutral tools of record, but as instruments of repair. Through 3D documentation, annotated spatial storytelling, and community-grounded collaboration, *Daufuskie3D* demonstrates that preservation can be participatory, situated, and guided by those whose cultural knowledge it seeks to uphold.

Focused on Daufuskie Island—a site of enduring Gullah Geechee presence and ongoing displacement—this work challenges dominant paradigms that privilege monumental architecture over vernacular life. It reframes preservation as a forward-facing act: not about fixing the past in place, but about protecting futures and honoring the lived knowledge embedded in Black space.

The central contribution of this thesis lies in its methodological fusion: combining mobile and professional-grade scanning technologies with relational protocols, narrative sovereignty, and theoretical grounding in Black geographies and techno-vernacular creativity. It introduces a new distinction between visualization and analysis tools, while emphasizing that the real stakes lie not in resolution, but in responsibility.

More than a digital archive, *Daufuskie3D* is a prototype for a reparative immersive practice—one that invites cultural institutions, planners, and technologists to reimagine who preservation is for, and what it must do in the wake of historical omission.

As environmental precarity and digital acceleration reshape the built environment, the urgency of community-centered, justice-oriented preservation grows. This thesis offers not an end point, but a beginning: an invitation to co-create practices that are accountable to the past, generative in the present, and emancipatory for the future.

Next Steps

The work initiated here will continue—strategically and structurally—across three key domains:

1. Strengthening Institutional Partnerships:

A sustained collaboration with Tuskegee University will expand the educational and technical components of this project, including co-taught modules, field-based

workshops, and return visits to Daufuskie Island. These trips will support both continued documentation and the development of Gullah-led cultural economy and preservation strategies.

2. Securing Long-Term Support and Stewardship:

The *Daufuskie3D* platform will serve as a public-facing proof of concept to engage funders, preservation networks, and cultural heritage institutions committed to ethical immersive practice. By sharing the work through exhibitions, presentations, and grant outreach, the goal is to secure ongoing support and build a sustainable ecosystem for Black-led digital preservation.

3. Launching Ground3D: A Cooperative Spatial Data Venture:

This summer, the core insights of this thesis will be advanced through **Ground3D**, a new social venture incubated in MIT's Delta V accelerator. Directly inspired by this project, Ground3D explores cooperative data governance models for community-driven 3D documentation. The platform will support neighborhoods, cultural groups, and institutions seeking tools to document, interpret, and steward their environments on their own terms.

Together, these efforts continue the reparative vision of this thesis: to build systems that not only preserve culture, but return control to those whose memory, labor, and place-based knowledge have too often been left out of the archive.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Tool and Platform Comparative Overview

Table 1: Tool and Platform Comparative Overview

Tool / Platform	Purpose	Strengths	Weaknesses	Implications for Preservation
iPhone 16 Pro Max	Mobile capture	Portability, accessibility, LiDAR sensor for quick scans	Limited resolution; no control over data processing	Good for community-led visualization; limited for archival precision
iPad Pro	Mobile capture	Higher processing speed; large screen for control	Overheats during long scans; limited for dense scenes	Stronger mobile option for community capture; still "visualization-first"
Scaniverse	Mobile app (photogrammetry)	Easy 3D model creation and sharing	Cloud dependence; lower resolution	Great starter tool, but insufficient for high-fidelity archives
Polycam	Mobile app (photogrammetry)	Device/cloud processing options; easy web embedding	Data loss during optimization; upload size limits	Useful for quick cultural visualizations; less reliable for detailed reconstruction

Leica RTC360	Pro terrestrial scanner	Ultra-high fidelity; fast scans; auto-registration	Very expensive; requires trained operator and backend infrastructure	Essential for forensic, architectural, and heritage-grade documentation
Leica BLK360 (Gen 2)	Portable terrestrial scanner	Balance of portability and detail	Lower range than RTC; heavy data processing	Ideal when mobility is key but analytical power still needed
Leica BLK2FLY	Aerial drone scanner	Captures landscapes and hard-to-reach areas	Highly visible; expensive; raises privacy concerns	Transformative for mapping landscapes; politically and ethically sensitive
Cyclone REGISTER 360 PLUS	Point cloud processing	Handles massive datasets; generates georeferenced models	Requires high-end hardware; steep learning curve	Crucial for archival-grade spatial analysis and evidentiary modeling
Sketchfab	Web platform for 3D viewing	Accessible; public-facing; interactive viewer	File size limits (5GB); commercial licensing limitations	Excellent for public access and visualization; insufficient for full archival stewardship

Cloud Platforms (e.g., Polycam/Scaniverse)	Cloud storage & light processing	Easy uploads; user-friendly interfaces	Risk of platform dependence and data loss; no long-term cultural guarantees	Only viable for temporary visualization; unsuitable for long-term preservation or data control

Appendix B: Tools and Platform Overview

I. Purpose of Tool Analysis

This section details the core hardware and software platforms utilized during the Daufuskie Island field documentation. Specifications were compiled from manufacturer sources to illustrate the technical and infrastructural demands embedded in digital preservation work. Trade-offs between accessibility, performance, and platform limitations critically shaped what could be captured, processed, and preserved.

II. Hardware Tools Comparative Overview

Table 2: Hardware Tools Comparative Overview

Name	Capture Method	Accuracy/Resolution	File Types	Processing	Storage	Key Limitations	Cost
iPhone 16 Pro Max	LiDAR + Photogrammetry	Sub-centimeter (consumer-grade)	USDZ, PLY, OBJ	Cloud or device	~1–2 GB per scan	Limited range; indoor optimization	~$1,199[1]
iPad Pro (2022)	LiDAR + Photogrammetry	Slightly improved (~5m range)	USDZ, PLY, OBJ	Cloud or device	~1–2 GB per scan	Indoor optimization; outdoor noise	~$1,099[2]
Leica RTC360	Terrestrial LiDAR	±1mm @ 20m	E57, RCP, LAS	Local (Cyclone Register)	50–200 GB projects	Requires lab-grade processing	~$70,000[3]
Leica BLK360 Gen 2	Terrestrial LiDAR	4mm @ 10m	E57, RCP, LAS	Local (Cyclone FIELD/360)	~200–600MB per scan	Proprietary workflows; expensive	~$22,000[4]
Leica BLK2 FLY	Autonomous	5cm accuracy	LAS, E57	Requires Cyclone	5–20 GB per flight	Weather-dependent; costly	~$87,000[5]

	Drone LiDAR						
DJI Mavic Pro	Photogrammetry (camera)	3–5cm (after processing)	JPGs (for processing)	Photogrammetry software needed	~5–10 GB per site	No direct depth capture	~$999[6]

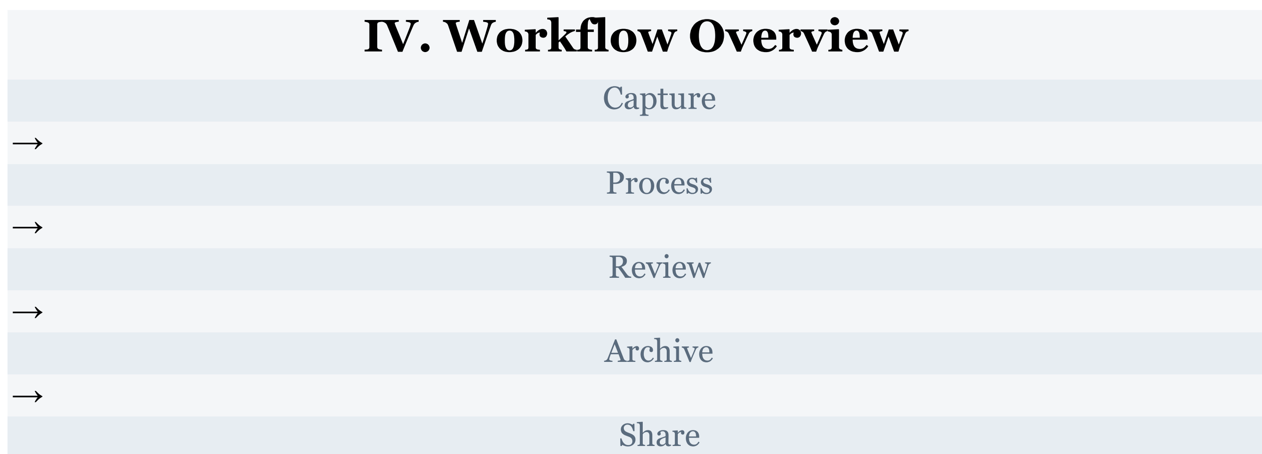
III. Software Platforms Comparative Overview

Table 3: Software Platforms Comparison Overview

Name	Capture/Function Type	File Types	Processing	Hosting/Sharing	Key Limitations	Cost
Scaniverse	Mobile LiDAR/Photogrammetry	OBJ, USDZ, STL, PLY	Cloud or device	Direct link/share	Limited scale, no batch features	Free[7]
Polycam	Photogrammetry & LiDAR Capture	OBJ, GLTF, USDZ, PLY	Cloud-based	Direct embed/share	Limited exports on free plan	Free or ~$70/year[8]
Cyclone Register 360 Plus	Point Cloud Registration	LGS, E57, RCP	Local	Export only	Requires technical expertise	License (inquire)[9]

Sketchfab	3D Hosting & Visualization	GLB, GLTF, OBJ, PLY	Server-side	Embed/annotate/share	5GB upload limit on premium	Free/$180+/year[10]

Table 4: Workflow Overview



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Appendix C: PTOP

Wil Jones
Gateway 11.200
Professor Delia Wendel
Module 2 Final Paper - Personal Theory of Practice
12/10/2024

In the simplest terms, my role as a planner is to steward freedom in and through the built environment.

The role of the planner – my role – is to produce and support the work of practitioners of freedom dreams. With my ancestors and the principles as guideposts, I will contribute to liberating movements and redistribute resources to freedom makers. To do this, I will use technical knowledge gained from professional and academic experience – participatory engagement techniques, knowledge of overlapping systems within the built environment (land-use, zoning, economic development, environmental & ecological sustainability, and transportation), and digital and analogue design techniques – to support, build, and contribute to liberatory movements.

I am committed to the task of redistributing social resources and power. In concert with those in and outside of colonial/neo-liberal institutions, my work is concerned primarily with building cooperatively stewarded intuitions. I recognize that the environments that I have been formally educated in, and subsequently worked in have afforded me a material and (limited) social privilege, limiting my liberatory imagination. It is for this reason that I am attracted to collaborative pathways of world-building and seek to use and redistribute resources to build with people of the under commons. I view participatory deliberation as a tool for developing value-based criteria relating to good outcomes. Participatory engagement and deliberative democracy are two strategies/processes that I will use to arrive at new kinds of knowledge and wisdom drawn from a range of situated perspectives.

I recognize the limitations of participation and am grappling with the tensions between process and outcomes. I will work to generate new forms of participatory deliberation and engagement for the purpose of identifying values that will guide and inform outcome specific processes and new insurgent technologies. I am inspired by Naomi Carmon's iteration of the professional urban planner's mission: "Planning with and for People to Enhance Quality of Life for All in the Built Environment". From this, I have arrived at my own conclusions:

1. The quality of one’s life is determined by one’s ability to practice freedom.
2. One cannot have a life of quality under subjugation – there is no “high” or “enhanced” quality of life for the unfree.
3. In recognition of these constraints, the planner, to achieve their mission, must concern themselves with and prioritize the universal realization of liberation as the goal and outcome of the aggregate components of planning (housing, transportation, community development, environmental protections, democratic participation, etc.)
4. Thus, planners must ensure that their work recognizes the conditions and rights and freedom.

Informed by my lived, professional, and academic experiences, I have identified the following *Urban Planning & Design Principles of Freedom.* These ideals were drafted in a notebook and are included in the addendum of this paper (*Figures 1A and 1B*) The ideals listed are non-exhaustive; the list is sure to grow and change as I do. Wil Jones Gateway 11.200 Professor Delia Wendel Module 2 Final Paper - Personal Theory of Practice 12/10/2024
Connectivity – to other humans, to nature. Physical, social, digital.

- Knowledge
- Movement & Circulation
- Love

Futurism

- Radical & Radio Imagination
- Collective vision
- Nature & Environmental Justice
- Archiving (as a gift for future generations)

Alternative, Solidarity Planning

- Co-creating Alternative Futures.
- Mutual Aid & Cooperation Recognizing human capacity to address needs.
- Democracy & communication – role of the planner to support these activities via planning.
-
- Solidarity Economies
- Right to Subversion, Insurgent Economics
- Resource Reallocation.

My own epistemic lens is shaped by growing up in New York City as an African American descendent of Trans-Atlantic African enslavement. I have inherited the

cultural memory of my father's childhood of picking cotton in Jim Crow Tennessee with his 10 siblings and their father, a sharecropper. Simultaneously, a four-generation and counting legacy of public and cooperative housing, mutual aid, and unionized labor has instilled a belief in integrated (public, private, and civic) social safety nets.

I seek to affirm the Black feminist, queer, intellectual, and Afro-and-African-futurist traditions learned both in and out of elite [academic] spaces. I am inspired by these traditions to embark on participatory world-building projects "aimed at building and rebuilding actual structures of social connection and movement ". Building democratic, participatory institutions will require accommodation for multiple epistemologies within my planning process (Unemoto, 2020).

My lens is shaped by a life of navigation across and through various racialized and classed stratifications of the U.S. Education system. Despite being born into racialized poverty, my mother's desire for a better life (via educational and economic mobility) for us manifested in the development and deployment of insurgent practices; tools that enabled me to "make it past the various social selection pressures" that filter marginalized people out of opportunities.

To ensure that I am not reproducing – or even supercharging – the harms of colonial politics, I seek to unlearn deference to and exploitation of standpoint epistemological practices. I work to resist invitations to proclaim my position as a Black man and will retire other attempts of elite capture, opting instead for a constructive approach to communication.

My practice of freedom through participatory and cooperative approaches to the built environment contributes to several conversations in planning literature. My approach to practicing freedom is shaped by the following conditions that I understand to create the conditions of unfreedom:
I hold the following to be true:

- Western states operate under Neoliberal frameworks of governance. Neoliberal logic asserts market rationality as the de facto personal and political logic of the State and its citizens (in any capitalist State). As such, what was considered public (civic and social services) has now been privatized and rendered commodity. Furthermore, it asserts the belief that outcomes must be subject to individual choices or preferences and assumes a neutral state capable of ensuring the rights of free and equal citizens to make choices. (Watson, 2006: 37, 42).

To Borrow from Brown (2003), Neoliberalism should be understood as not simply a bundle of economic policies that extract surplus capital, but as a network of policies,

ideologies, values, and nationalities that work together to achieve capital's hegemonic power. (Miraftab, 2012: 5).

1. The Urban Planning field operates within this neo-liberal context and thus privileges actors that can produce value (i.e. profit) within this system, granting them planning citizenship. It is this group of actors that inform the "public good" for which planning is responsible (Yiftachel. 2009), (Carmon, 2013).
2. Planners have power. Planners act as deputies for neoliberal state power.
3. Participatory and deliberative processes prioritize the desires of planning citizens, which are shaped by and thus further the interests of global capitalism and corporate economy. (Miraftab, 2012: 6, 20).
4. For people of the under commons and on the margins of society, NGO's and CBO's serve as state sanctioned spaces for citizen participation. The formalized recognition of community organization bounds grass roots people power (and the threat to normalized relations and market dependence it represents) to a set of bureaucratic policies and processes that depoliticizes communities' struggles and extends state control within society. (Miraftab, 2012: 5).
5. Participation in the planning process requires those excluded from planning citizenship conform to neoliberal communication practices and styles. Differentiation from norms, values, and ways of knowing of hegemonic neo-liberalism hinders participation (Umemoto, 2001: 181)

It is with (and despite) this framework of unfreedom that I have arrived at a personal theory of practice dedicated to stewarding collaboration through participatory and partnership. I view participatory deliberation as a tool for developing value-based criteria relating to good outcomes. Participatory engagement and deliberative democracy are two strategies/processes that I will use to arrive at new kinds of knowledge and wisdom drawn from a range of situated perspectives. Within my practice, agreement is not the main criterion of success [within the participatory/deliberative process], for I recognize the ways in which power and positionality reinforce normalized relations of dominance and can result in symbolic outcomes of inclusion that further the interests of global capitalism and corporate economy (Miraftab, 2012: 6, 20). Instead, the indicators of success are myriad – joint learning, intellectual, social, and political capital, feasible actions, innovative problem solving, shared understanding of issues, reframing of identities, partnership creation and new institutional forms (Innes, 2004: 8). I believe that emerging technologies like AI image generation and virtual and augmented reality have the potential to increase access to the deliberative process for marginalized people. I recognize the dangers and exploitative power of tech firms, however with radio imagination I envision a new generation of insurgent resistance birthed by increasing community control and use of these technologies.

Addendum:
Figure 4A: Wil Jones Draft Personal Theory of Practice – Planning & Design Principles of Freedom Diagram
Figure 4B: Planning & Design Principles in conversation with Gateway Module 2 Readings.

Theories of Planning cited/engaged:
- Master Planning vs Insurgent Planning
- Reparative & Abolitionist Planning
- Communicative Planning
- "Commons Planning"
- "Just City"

Printing Size:
Large: 72in × 24in
W × H
Scale 100%
Arch-D

12/08/23

TOP – visual/graphic
Reference: Blackspace manifesto
Just City Index

Futurism*
- concern w/ present consequences & impact on future generations
- Nature & ecological justice

■ I will incorporate in my practice the following principles:

■ My planning practice works to realize these ideals:
Rights/ ~~[illegible]~~ of Freedom*
Beings have the right to...
~~Planners must~~
I will consider → The role of the built environment in relation to these ~~[illegible]~~ tenets.

Resource Reallocation
Democratized decision making
Fugitive Legacies
Alternative economies
Movement & Circulation → Freedom
- bodily autonomy
- access
- safety
Self-determination*
Autonomy (Political)*
Connectivity*
- to other humans
- to nature
- physical, social, digital

*Play & recreation
Love → eros, philia, agape
*Knowledge → Afro & Indigenous ways of knowing: myths, spirits, legends, lore.
- Knowledge as a condition of growth & innovation.
- The dehistorization of people – via ~~through~~ genocide, natal alienation through enslavement, assimilation through colonization, censorship of speech & academics – is recognized as an act of violence and subjugation.
∴ The preservation, democratization, and dissemination of knowledge must be supported and enabled by planning.*

*Economic Autonomy
- Right to access, participate in, and establish multiple (or none) markets
- Democratized/alternative economies – Solidarity economies
- Right to subversion, insurgent economies
- Role of planner is to support the development & maintenance of alt. economies via resource reallocation.

Difference epistemological ~~Difference~~ – Common ground & understanding
↳ see pg 16 (2 pg back)
Mutual aid* & Cooperation
- recognizing human capacity to cooperate to address needs*
- Democracy & communication → role of planner to support these activities via planning

~~Planners role as~~
Working off of Naomi Carmon's asserted definition of the planning expertise and mission:
"Planning with and for People to Enhance Quality of Life for All" in the Built Environment"

Quality of life for all ⟷ Public Interest
↳ The quality of ones life is determined by ones ability to practice freedom.

■ The planner, to achieve their mission, must concern themselves with, and prioritize the universal realization of liberation (by all individuals as well as relevant groups) ~~[illegible]~~ as a result and outcome of the aggregate components of planning – housing, transportation, community development, environmental protection, and more.

→ Thus planners must ensure that their work recognizes the conditions and ~~rights~~ of freedom

■ One cannot have a life of quality under subjugation; there is no "high" or "enhanced" quality of life for the unfree.

12/10/23

Figure 1: Wil Jones Draft Personal Theory of Practice – Planning & Design Principles of Freedom Diagram

12/10/23 PTOP Essay

Places, dilemmas, problems, or communities that motivate my theory (200-300 words)

- Soul City
- poverty
- Displacement
- African Americans & Indigenous communities
- citizen vs. insurgent planning – inclusion
- Participation & cooperation under neo-liberalism

// Iris Marion Young, 5 Faces of oppression.

Works to cite (refined) / put in conversation

- Johnson, Ferguson
- Watson, Deep Difference –
- Salomon & Cho, Ableism in Communicative Planning * –
- Stafford, Disability Justice & Urban Planning * –
- Zitcer & Lake, Love as a planning method –
- Demos, Sites Collective Counter Memory –
- Umemoto, Epistemology & Participatory Planning –
- Taiwo, Standpoint Epistemologies –
- Gantt, MCP Thesis –
- Soul City Prospectus –
- Carmon, Planning Societal Mandate
- Dozier, A Response to Abolitionist Planning –
- Miraftab, Insurgent Planning - Planning Theory – –
- Bhan, Southern Urban Process –

Difference Continued

- epistemological
- redistribution (economic)
- Consensus & deliberation as inputs for decision making

Key Themes:

Connectivity

Futurism

Solidarity / Alternative Planning

Deep Democracy in conflict w/ Deep Difference w/ regards to consideration & value of outcomes.

Figure 2: Planning & Design Principles in conversation with Gateway Module 2 Readings.

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Naomi Carmon, “The Profession of Urban Planning and its Societal Mandate” in Policy, Planning, and People: Promoting Justice in Urban Development ed. by N. Carmon and S. Fainstein (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 2013): 13-31.
Deshonay Dozier, “A Response to Abolitionist Planning: There is No Room for ‘Planners’ in the Movement for Abolition.” Planners Network (August 9, 2018)— rebuttal to UCLA Pamphlet on Abolitionist Planning (see supplementary)

Farnak Miraftab (2012). "Colonial Present: Legacies of the Past in Contemporary Urban Practices in Cape Town, South Africa." Journal of Planning History 11(4) 283-307.
*Gautam Bhan, **Read 639 to top of 642 (sections I-II-III); skim rest** "Notes on a Southern Urban Practice," Environment and Urbanization 31, 2 (2019): 639-654.*
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Figure 1A - Wil Jones Draft Personal Theory of Practice – Planning & Design Principles of Freedom Diagram Wil Jones Gateway 11.200 Professor Delia Wendel Module 2 Final Paper - Personal Theory of Practice 12/10/2024
Figure 1B – Planning & Design Principles in conversation with Gateway Module 2 Readings.

Appendix D: Interview Transcript

Appendix D: Oral History with Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson

Conducted by Wil Jones (Author) with Dr. Kwesi Daniels
Location: Daufuskie Island | Date: April 18, 2025

Wil Jones (Author): Can you tell me a little bit about your grandmother's house?

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: My grandmother house was this, my mom said my grandmother house was given to my grandmother when she was a young girl. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. On young and back then people used to give horses and buggies and a mule or something to get you started. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.
And this house wasn't built here. This house was rolled here. That's why I know this house is older than what they're saying. They're saying, um, 1930s, I think this house is like maybe 1920s. And they put all the porches and stuff around it. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. But they rolled it. They used to roll how it was gonna log at one point. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. This island in the 1920s as well. This island was cleared of trees.

Wow. This
whole island, they had a timberwood company here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. They cleared it of trees so they could actually move stuff compared to what we have today with all these trees. Such a fascinating story. My grandma, my mom used to tell us. And that's what keeps me going. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Is knowing that they passed down these story. Now what we gonna do with it? Are you gonna just have the story and do nothing? Are you gonna have the story and do something about it?

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: If I didn't, I was so afraid to bring a literally strike a Mac because they used to come and get in this house. Mm. Smoke, drug, drink, all kind of stuff. Oh wow. I say I see beer can cigarette.

Wil Jones (Author): Yeah.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: This house just speaks to me in every way. Yeah. I know. My mom had five girls. I'm the middle child. I'm the only one born in this house. My other sisters were born in Savannah. Wow.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: So that's the connection Right. That I have is deeper than just being
Grandmama house. And I was born here. My granddad used to sit on this bench and tell a story. I remember him sitting on this bench tell, watching us run up and down this road. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Playing because all this was clear. These are young bushes here. He used to tell us when he was a little kid, um, how you, when the tide was low, that bench right over there, this one right here mm-hmm. When Ty was

low, how you could actually walk from the fussy Hilton head. Yeah. But they dredged it out on Hilton head because of the big ship and boats.

Wil Jones (Author): Right.
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: People coming in and building and not preserving or understanding the structure of the ground versus the building they putting on it. Right. And, and Melrose,

Wil Jones (Author): I had a conversation with, uh, with Kenneth mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, he was telling me a little bit about how they're trying to, how they have, uh, some work going on with some Gullah gentleman who do, uh, basket weaving with the grass basket

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Weaving, even preserve the place

Wil Jones (Author): That he says he wants to put in a a, uh, that he's working with them to, to basically put a new shop in and using the sea grass that they've used to wall off the beach area. Uh, as, uh, for them, for those gentlemen to teach classes on the resort for basket weaving from that. That was his response when I asked him about the, uh, what contribution Melrose is having with local Gullah businesses.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: What about the people here? Right. Why you getting somebody from over there?

Wil Jones (Author): So those, those gentlemen that he named aren't even from no dusky?

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: No.

Wil Jones (Author): Oh, wow.Wow. It's two brothers. Yeah. No they're not. Wow.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: No.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Not from here. Right. And they always think just because they get a black person and meet, you got to get the people who born and raised here. Right. And you gotta help them build a so we can build together. You know why bloody point was called? Bloody point.

Wil Jones (Author): Please, share, share more.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Um, bloody point is called Bloody Point. Because of the massacre of the Indian, the European came and massacred the Indians to take the land. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And as I've told people before, the USA, when it before the European brought the slave here, there were only Native American Indian living here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. That's why when I hear people tell about you need to

go back where you come from, I mean we all gonna have to get on a fricking boat. 'cause ain't none of us from here. Exactly. Only the native Indian was from here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Let's not go there. And that's when you stop 'em. I know. I'm right. And why you trying to avoid it? Just

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: To, to help her. Uh, came in and said, well you gotta restore 27 2008 mm-hmm <affirmative>. By 2011,
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: My grandmother had nine pecan trees here, but the pine killed them out. So all these pine going, they're young pine too. Wow. But look how many stump you see on I cleared off mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: From this house that

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Wow. It was growing up in here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I mean, I've been doing the work and I've been able to get people to just volunteer. Mm-hmm

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: <affirmative>.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Oh, miss shout we gonna help you. And I get it. It's sad is getting your people who need to be in part of it not join it.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: Mm. They went from not wanting it and they're like, why are you, why are we not tearing this down? It was just

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: One person. Oh yeah. Oh, I've been asked why we don't tear that house out. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I think her grandmama would turn over in her grave if she found out y'all tear that house down like that.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: The minute they start seeing it moving mm-hmm <affirmative>. The minute they start seeing possible people can't believe it's possible.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Exactly.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: The minute they start seeing it's possible. Yeah. Now everybody's interested.
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: That's what my family on board now. 'cause I've been doing this for three years, trying to get their attention. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And then all, oh, you need to tear that. I said, y'all, I said this so much can be done with this house. This house has a wraparound porch. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. You know, the fun and the joy and, and things we can do. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Bringing our grandchildren, our great-grandchildren here. Um, it is crazy, crazy. But now they see what I'm talking about. And the guy, he was question me, same guy I told, talked to and I, he said, well Michelle what? I said, listen, it's just not about talking about it, it's about doing something about it. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Right? Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

So first of all, you need to get your family on board because you ain't gonna be able to do it by yourself.
Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Right. So everybody can be in agreements.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Right now we working on getting, we got the family coming together, we gotta have a meeting. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Mm-hmm <affirmative> we gotta pick officers. Mm-hmm
<affirmative>. Okay. We gotta pick work that choice work. Like I told them, once this house is done and I get ahead of myself, everybody gonna have a a job. They're gonna have to be somebody to make sure that the reservation is, is being booked. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, we gotta make sure somebody come in and make sure the house clean, right? Mm-hmm <affirmative>. We gotta make sure we have maintenance for the yard. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. We gotta have, make sure we have maintenance for the house. Mm-hmm
<affirmative>. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. We gotta make sure that somebody paying the bill mm-hmm <affirmative>. Mm-hmm <affirmative> no one job for everybody. One person get a piece, uh, something to do and no pressure be on it on others. Exactly. Exactly. And that and it was like, Hmm. Didn't think about it.

Wil Jones (Author): Yeah. Yeah.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Well there's a color called Hank Blue. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, and I'm not far as I know when I was growing up, that didn't happen here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. If something happened beforehand that I'm not aware of, I can't speak on it, but the picture of the house they have with the color blue on it is not the blue that wear off evil spirit 'cause they have on it. It wears off evil's spirit and their little saying. Yeah. And I'm saying, but that's not true 'cause that's not the right color. How you gonna label something and it's not Right. People used to paint the ceiling Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Porch house inside for pink glue and it was to wear off evil's spirit. Now, um, growing up we weren't into spirits and all that stuff because we know people died. We know people sometime don't go to the light or whatever they're supposed to be going to, but 'cause our parents never had give us, um, talk to us anything to be fearful of. Mm. I could walk this island right now if the doggone Gators run around
here. I'm just getting of fricking gators. You not gonna get them. Do I used to walk this island at night?Mm-hmm <affirmative>. No. Just a flashlight or something. But you can't do that now because these big old gators, they walk too at night and they ain't getting a part of Sally. The color itself, I just don't like how it's they have in the museum. Right. What they say is not right. And I've told them that's not right. Why you put it there? Mm-hmm. Right. So they just ignore me.

Wil Jones (Author): Right. Wow. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. When was the first time you heard Gullah Geechee as tour on a tour boat?

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: On a tour book

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: On when I came over. 'cause we did the, the word shuffle wasn't here now the way of life and the, the dialect was here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. But it wasn't labeled. She say, aren't you from this island that you live in? Yes. She said, and you call, I'm like, well whatever that is <laugh>. I mean, how am I table? I don't even know what the heck she calling me. Right, right. 'cause I was never told mm-hmm <affirmative> that I was by my parents or anybody on this island. So why I'm taking it from somebody else thinking because I live here. A lot of people think the fussy is, um, Gullah, Gullah Island. I'm like y'all, this is not Gullah Gullah Island <affirmative>. That was a show. Right. That was a show. And that was done on Nickelodeon. And the two people that did it was from St. Helena.

Wil Jones (Author): Does that happen a lot? Where people attach the, the general Gullah Geechee, what they know about it to the

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Fussy? Oh yeah. They lie because they're being lied to. Mm. Being lied to is what I call it. Um, I corrected yesterday, the same lady we were talking about. She thought the same. She say, isn't that Gull? I said, no ma'am. She, she called up Daughters of the Dust. I said, not Dsky. That's not Daufuskie. She say what? <laugh>? I'm like, no. People are connecting these islands choose stories that don't belong to them. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Of course these island did. The people did a lot of things, but certain things weren't done certain time and place here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. At all. Right. If something like the painting of the shutters and stuff, first of all these houses were not beautified. Did this house look like you've been painted outside recently? <laugh> even 20 years ago or 30 years ago. Do it look like it was painted? Didn't no, outside wasn't the beautification of what people did. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. It was the inside. You could walk in them house and clean it. I mean amazing. Wow. But it don't look like that us stop judging the book by his cover. Yeah.

Wil Jones (Author): <laugh>. Absolutely. That's why I found your, your tour is so important. And it seems to me a big part of what you are doing in terms of preservation is also myth correcting.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yes. Setting, setting the record straight.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: The history book, the Brown History book. A young lady was living in ha point and we were going to a Pat Conroy um, signing. 'cause I always go to his signing and catch him. He was really a white guy with a black heart. I'll be honest with you. He did not like, and I must say that I'm saying this on your thing, you not like white people. <laugh>, he was white. You got some people like that. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. You got black people don't like black people <laugh>. Right. Okay. Right. But it was amazing how he would let them know, you know, you wrong. And he didn't bite his tongue or anything to try to figure out. Not understand. 'cause there's some things that you understand. Why would people listen to people who not from here, who don't have the actual history and then spread the word. I had two black lady come from Savannah, been on a tour and I was telling about the moss, how moss is an herb are healing her. And she said,

oh no. She said, we went on a tour in Savannah and they told us, don't touch the moss 'cause it's prickly.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: I went and grabbed some moss. I said, do this seem prickly to you, <laugh>
<laugh>. She said, now it's soft. Mm-hmm <affirmative> I said, because she just listening or taking with somebody else. Say and never touch that moss. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Now why you gonna talk about something that you have never even touched? It makes no sense to me. Right. And why you telling a lie that you don't even know that it ain't the truth. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. A lie ain't the truth. But anyway.

Wil Jones (Author): Right. No, I know what you mean. So, and they these, I went to Philadelphia and I was in New York. Uncle I did a trip to New York. They were selling a low pack of moss for $10. This must have been like 20 years ago. I'm in the wrong freaking business.

Wil Jones (Author): <laugh>. Truthfully,
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: My grandmomma Phil used okra field used to be over there and that I'm your grandma. Put another little RA field back there. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. She used to have her okra. She used to love okra. I do not like. Ok. So the okra field was,

Wil Jones (Author): Can you point to it?

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: You see where that tree is over there? Yeah. That area back and the day I was born, my mom had just cut okra to cook

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: And that day to eat when she finished washing clothes and mm-hmm
<affirmative>. Hanging the clothes out and she dished up the rice and um, she said the minute she took that okra gumbo and put it on that rice of grape paint here, I was like, get me outta here. I don't eat okra <laugh>. I still don't eat today. Wow. Really? I love eating some. Oh no. I cook the heck of it, but I will not. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Eat it. It's just a birthmark. I see y'all. It's a birth m I'm not allergic to it. I just can't stand it. <laugh>. Yeah. <laugh>. How don't some people feel like we a strawberry lady say, oh, I feel like yeah. Strawberries. I can't stand strawberries. I like strawberries. <laugh>. Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. So thereare our difference in this doesn't work.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: I wanna show you something please. As a child. Um, I wanna see this
one. I first, you see this over here?

Wil Jones (Author): Yes.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: We used to use so much stuff as our entertainer. Ah. I That one up. Oh I got some here. I'm trying to find two kind of same size. Strip those hard pieces out and make

Wil Jones (Author): Stuff

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Like we used to make bracelet and necklace. Not necklaces but rings.
Mm-hmm <affirmative>

Wil Jones (Author): I Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Told those kids, I said, y'all gotta get creative. Y'all too bored. We couldn't use that word as a child growing up being bored. We had to find things to do. Just classes of little things like this. I was showing some kids this, they were amazing. They're like, oh my gosh, how did you do that? And I used to do a yellow palm as well.

Wil Jones (Author): <laugh>

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: To just pull, push and pull. I watch that clock tomorrow. I gotta be at the hate point gate. I'm going to sing in Hate Point tomorrow. Oh wow. Two church service. I'm going to sing. Jesus, I love calling your name.

Wil Jones (Author): Amen. Beautiful song for beautiful

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Easter Sunday. It's all beautiful. And if you ever wanted to come back a great time to meet more native mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow there it's

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: This so pretty. Hold

Wil Jones (Author): That one more time. Sure. <laugh>. That's gorgeous. <laugh>

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: And y'all used to just do this for fun. Yeah. Just do it for fun. Get the stuff here and make rings and bracelets and all kinds of stuff. What types of stuff?

Wil Jones (Author): Mm-hmm

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: <affirmative>. You have to find something to do. And having something to do meant exploring, being, making stuff useful. Right. My

Wil Jones (Author): God,

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: I used to climb that tree there all the time. We have a lot of wild grape and stuff. Used to be here. We were never hungry because there was a lot of nuts and berries and

Wil Jones (Author): Right. Always something to forage.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yes.

Wil Jones (Author): And so this is what you grew up doing as a, as a little girl

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Here too. Oh yeah. We did this all the time. I'm gonna start your new one and you can take it with you. Okay. Put it through here

Wil Jones (Author): And

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Then you pull that

Wil Jones (Author): And you put it

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Through here

Wil Jones (Author): And
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Then you pull that and then you pull it through here. Pull that. You just gotta straighten it up sometime. 'cause it'll twist. Makes it,

Wil Jones (Author): Yeah.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: It's nice. And we get the yellow one and make it, I do a strip of green and a strip of yellow and it's so pretty.

Wil Jones (Author): <laugh>

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: These are good. Push it in there and pull from the other. Oh that's cool. <laugh>

Wil Jones (Author): You

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Like that? Teaching kids just unique stuff with the plants around.

Wil Jones (Author): So back here is just 10 acres undeveloped land.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yeah. Belong to us. It's in Timberland. So if we actually was to do anything with it, they say you gotta pay three or five years back tax of regular tax. Okay. And then you can use it.

Wil Jones (Author): What would you do with the 10 acres?

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: I would like to lease it, lease out black businesses and have a whole level of back business back here. Mm. And the people we who own the land will be money will go into an account and whoever in the part of it get their money every month or however. Right.

Wil Jones (Author): Like a Trust and if somebody wanna sel -. like a trust.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yeah. If somebody wanna sell, we'll buy 'em out and keep it as

Wil Jones (Author): That way. Oh I like that.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yeah. Because then generations will be pro, you know.

Wil Jones (Author): Right. Getting

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: From

Wil Jones (Author): It. Exactly.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Cut this out.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow. You had a swing. You said there was a swing up there? Oh yeah.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: I'm put another swing on one of these on the tree.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: A rope swing. So when guess come they got something country to do. So right up I got no sign. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

Wil Jones (Author): But

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Right. And fence with that. That separates this property from the 10 acres.

Wil Jones (Author): Yeah.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: What a tree fell. I didn't know that fell. But that's the separation of the 10 acres.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow.
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: All our property all the way back to the church in the street. Come and go! Lemme show you another thing we grew up on. These are wild blueberry bushes.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow. These

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Are wild blueberry bushes. Thank you. We got patches of them.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yeah. And then that bush there is called a sparkle berry bush. We used to eat these things, eat these berries. Sparkle berry bush. But our property go all the way to where you saw the gates. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Back here.

Wil Jones (Author): Wow. Wow. This is incredibly, your family has such a treasure trove.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: We got family. I wanna sell. Go ahead. Gimme a price. Mm-hmm

Wil Jones (Author): <affirmative>. But this, this would be the black business area.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Wow. And nobody could touch us back here.

Wil Jones (Author): Right.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Because we have the interest go to the road. Mm-hmm <affirmative>.

They can't stop us from, we can enter here or enter this out

Wil Jones (Author): This way. Right.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: But we own all of it.

Wil Jones (Author): Exactly.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: But I would like to see black business back here. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Come prosper. And we need a lot of them. I don't care if it mechanic shop or carpenter shop. But you got 10 acres. That's a lot of land. It is. To put business back here. Sure. Is. This would be the property that would make money for black folks if they came in and we had it varied once we caught up on the tax and surveyed it and mm-hmm <affirmative>. People coming and start building their little shopping here.

Wil Jones (Author): Right. And you feel I <laugh> and this this would, this would create employment opportunities so that yes. Younger generations could stay on the island.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Right. Thank you. Thank you.

Wil Jones (Author): That's part of your goal.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yes. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. To bring people back home because these business will help need, they gonna need employees. Right. That's what I'm talking about.

Wil Jones (Author): Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Yeah. So many dusky original residents in their
descendants are, have moved onto mainland, Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Right? Yes. But they have to mm-hmm <affirmative>. They have to because there's no work here. And you got people who don't wanna start their own business. They wanna rather work for somebody and start their own. But like really y'all mm-hmm <affirmative>. I can't do that. Right. I won't
do it. This would be the place to do it. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. To bring back business in. And like I said, a lot of family might don't want to keep their land. We gonna buy 'em out and we going to get folks to come in and bring business here 'cause we need business here. And I told we ain't gotta sell it. We can lease it. People, um, come and lease and be happy with knowing where they at. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And what they can do. You can bring a gull, uh, somebody who do closing up or any kind of African arch right here. Keep it right
here.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: Sell your stuff and keep it right here. Localized and not spread out all over the island. Right. But people watching, you're coming and going. Right. Alright. We back here then because they don't watch, they can't watch the company going.... Exist. And you put a value on that experience.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Exactly. Mm-hmm

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: <affirmative>. Like this a real value on this experience and all of this is stuff that you can't get anywhere Else.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: No. You ain't gonna get it no place else. No. People call me all the time. I get busload of people coming from places want to come here, but I only have a 14 seat bus. So I'm working on a grant to get a 22 seat bus. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, and I'll have to get somebody who got a CDL license.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: You got 14 but you're giving them a whole tour.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Yeah.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: That same 14 seat bus I grab you and we bring you here. Exactly. And then the bus goes back to pick,

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Somebody can pick somebody Else up.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: And so there's this constant back and forth, back and forth by the, and by the
time, and all you're doing is you're training the trainers to Do this stuff.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: Mm-hmm <affirmative>. Training them to tell the story. So it's your, it might be your niece that's telling the story and other family members are here that are telling the story.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: That's the problem. The major problem is getting them. 'cause I don't want other people

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: But you. But you got you
Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: But them, I mean my family. Yes. They are the one, the part of the story
mm-hmm <affirmative>. But getting them back here. But we got, we don't have housing for people here.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: But when But your, it's your niece or your granddaughter.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: My granddaughter is going off for the nursing, but

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: She's here.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: She's here now. So

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: You get her Yeah. You start with her as the trainer because the reality is you got a lot of money coming off of it.

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: I know.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: Like the amount of money that's coming off of there. She ain't gotta work a day in her life. Yeah. Completely. So she got the age and you pour it on to her and now she's like, this is what mygrandmother passed, said she

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: Interested.

Dr. Kwesi Daniels: Oh, she interested that she, she,

Ms. Sallie Ann Robinson: She, the, if she see the money, she's the capital. She's the money. That would be it. So, we'll that would have to be building. They will come. I'm really believe in it. Yes. I know she would. Let's, um, and, and she can have that nursing experience to mm-hmm <affirmative>. Be a part of. If something come, Hey, I'm, I can handle this. Right. But sometimes people come and they want, well if what something
Dr. Kwesi Daniels: Happened, what do we do? Mm-hmm <affirmative>. So, so just like you told me, told us about the, uh, the bag with the, with the flies. Yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. I know. Given, given the fact that they're, you're so far from the mainland. Yeah. You have the, you have the old ways in how to take care of yourself. Yes, exactly. They ain't gonna be the first person to get bit by a snake. Right. And you know how to treat the person who gets bit by a snake. I will learn, but I don't do snakes. <laugh>, I get what you're saying.