

**Mobile County Training School Class of 1968
Going Back To The Battle House Hotel 50 Years Later!**

Our 1967 Prom Invitation Read - "The Junior Class of Mobile County Training School requests the pleasure of your company at the Junior - Senior Prom on Friday, March Thirty-First, Nineteen Hundred and Sixty-Seven at Eight O'clock in the evening in the Crystal Ballroom at the Sheraton - Battle House Hotel, 26 North Royal Street, Mobile Alabama."

After the passages of the 1965 Civil Rights Act, an organization called the Strikers Social Club in Mobile, began to test the new law's effectiveness. Mr. Curtis Horton, a teacher and coach at MCTS and a member of the Strikers Social Club, informed Fredrick Brown and I, the President and Vice President of the Junior Class, that "we were going to have the first Junior - Senior Prom at the Battle House Hotel in Mobile, Alabama." Fred and I knew if Coach Horton said it, we had to make it happen because Coach Horton never joked about anything. Mrs. Eugenia Burroughs Rankins was the female teacher sponsor on board with that first event.

On our 50th High School Class Reunion, we will reflect and remember some of the sacrifices that were made for us to attend this first historical event. It is our goal to make our 50th Anniversary very special and share it with our elders, friends and descendants.

It is our hope by celebrating this historical event at the highly regarded Battle House, it will serve as confirmation to our elders that their sacrifices were not in vein. Coach Horton and Mrs. Burroughs Rankins are expected to be present at this 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Our theme for this 50th Anniversary event is "Oh Happy Days... Take Us Back".

Anderson Flen, MCTSAA President



M.C.T.S.A.A.

Newsletter

www.mctswhippets.org

February 2019

Mobile Parks and Recreation Department Partnership with MCTSAA and CHESS

By: Katrina Frazier, Former Program Supervisor

One of the most rewarding aspects of working in Mobile Parks and Recreation Department is building community partnerships. The relationship we've made with the Mobile Country Training School Alumni Association (MCTSAA) has allowed us to engage others, as well as the community actively. I'm often reminded of an old African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together". By partnering with MCTSAA and CHESS (clean, healthy, educated, safe, sustainable) group, we are able to identify issues from different perspectives. In doing so, we create more opportunities to engage stakeholders and deliver additional services to our citizens otherwise restricted due to budgetary constraints. It has been exciting to see the community embrace the programs we've introduced as a result of these partnerships. For instance, MCTSAA holds an annual Kite Day and Health Wellness workshop at Hope Community Center with the help of Anderson Flen, James Hope, Calvin Moore and Ijendu Obasi. Their partnership affords us an opportunity to provide a day of "ole school recreation" where there was no computers, electronic devices or television to occupy the participants' time.

As a result of MCTSAA and CHESS Group commitment and dedication to improving the offerings at Hope Community Center, we have received additional sponsorships and created new opportunities to network. Recently, we received a brand new pressure washer from Mr. Saul Smith. This equipment affords us the opportunity to maintain the aesthetic appeal of the building and entranceway. The need to build and sustain community partnerships is more vital now to help establish the framework for tackling long-term issues.



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Africatown Youth and Discovering Scuba Diving: A Pathway to Engaging the Marine Environment

More than 70 percent of African American youth cannot swim, which leads to another sobering statistic. African American children ages 5-19 drown at 5.5 times the rate of other children, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. These drownings are preventable. Getting our youth safely in the water to learn an important life skill such as swimming can be challenging. For the sake of saving lives, we have to rise to the challenge.

As a scuba diver, I know that it is important to maintain a proficient level of swimming skills. So, I proposed a program to introduce Africatown youth to scuba diving utilizing the community's pool facilities. First, the youth will learn or improve upon their swimming skill. Then they will be introduced to the science/physiology of scuba diving using actual diving equipment.

Africatown Youth and Discovering Scuba Diving: A Pathway to Engaging the Marine Environment (cont'd)

It is hoped that a broader water/marine based program can be launched with this introduction to expose Africatown youth to the science and wonder of the marine environment. This would include learning about the flora and fauna of the Mobile River and bay, and also underwater archaeology and the importance of the Clotilda shipwreck in remembering Africatown's maritime cultural heritage. The summer of 2019 is targeted for the introduction to scuba diving program.

Scuba diving is a learned skill that can lead to rewarding careers and adventure. But first, our youth must learn how to swim. Literally, their lives are depending on it!

By: Kamau Sadiki

Kamau Sadiki is the President of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers and a Lead Instructor with the Diving With a Purpose underwater archaeology program. In 2018, he participated in the search for the slave ship Clotilda in the Mobile River.



College Student Community Engagement

Since 2014, students, faculty, and staff from Oberlin College have traveled regularly to Africatown to work with community members and local organizations. During the past five years, we have collaborated on a range of projects — from conducting community health surveys with Africatown residents to launching a digital archive of oral history interviews with older members of the community, with the goal of preserving their stories for future generations.



Recently, we have had the wonderful opportunity to collaborate more deeply with the Mobile County Training School Alumni Association. Our work — which is supported in large part by the tireless commitment of Mr. Anderson Flen and Major Joe Womack — has focused on documenting the school's incredible history.

This past November, three of us had the opportunity to attend the 50th reunion for the Class of 1968, which gathered at their high school prom location, the Battle House Hotel in downtown Mobile. We were privileged to help record the events of the weekend, including the many speakers who shared their wisdom, knowledge, and stories about the MCTS community. We also interviewed seven alum about their experiences at MCTS, and heard some incredible stories about love, challenge, and perseverance.

In January, all five of us returned to Mobile to continue our work. Over the course of 10 days, we interviewed 20 people connected to Africatown and/or MCTS in some way — many of them alum of the school. Again, we were so fortunate to be entrusted with the incredibly rich and powerful stories of the MCTS community. The bond that alumni feel to the school, with their teachers, and between each other was palpable in every conversation. Nearly everyone we interviewed shared stories about mentors who taught them lifelong lessons, mentioned how the culture of the school was foundational to their success later in life, and spoke with reverence about the day when they finally were allowed to wear a red tie as part of the senior class. It is clear how special being a Whippet was and continues to be.

Currently, we are working on the back-end of the interview process — editing videos, creating transcripts, and ultimately publishing to the online archive, which will be publicly accessible at africatown.oberlincollegelibrary.org. We will be in touch with the Alumni Association when we are able to take the videos live.

We also had the opportunity in January to meet with MCTS Principal Rashad Stallworth and discuss potential future collaborations between Oberlin and MCTS students. As we record parts of school's history, we are also interested in supporting its present initiatives and working more closely with the current student body. As college students, it's exciting to interact with people who aren't too much younger than us. This March, we will return to Mobile to explore those potential collaborations, and think in greater depth about how Oberlin can help support the growth of MCTS students.

The opportunity to work with the MCTS community — from students to current and former teachers, from administrators to alumni — continues to be one of the great privileges of our college careers. Every time we visit, we hear more incredibly rich stories about the school and its history, and every time we leave we can't wait to come back. We look forward to maintaining the relationships we have built with the MCTS community these past few years, and on behalf of all the students from Oberlin who have and will come to know the school, we look forward to helping share your unique history and stories for years to come.

With great love and admiration for Whippets far and wide.

Nathan Carpenter, Kaylee Elliott, Ify Ezimora, Eli Presberg, Santiago Roman - Students from Oberlin College

Kite Day By: Ijendu Obasi



Driving through the community approaching the Robert Hope Community Center, I felt the warmth of last year's memories accompany my anticipated arrival. Once inside the center, I witnessed the familiar emotion of hope I experienced last year. Participants of all ages contributing to a recreational tradition long neglected but not forgotten. As I observed the young working with the old, I perceived how powerful the union of elderly wisdom and youthful creativity can be. Each kite was well constructed in the "tried and true" traditional fashion with colorful designs and decorations reflective of the vivid imagery of today's pop culture.

While the kites were being made, foods of all varieties were being prepared. The chatter of friendly conversations and the embraces of friends reunited made the kite event feel more like a family reunion. At the end of an action packed day, one thing that dawned on all present was the power and importance of community and the need to keep the bonds strong for our collective health and well-being.

Witnessing the event gain momentum from the previous year, I anxiously wait to see the progression of how things will materialize for the next kite event. With that in mind, I've already marked my calendar for participation in next year's event and will work to spread the word among friends and peers in hopes that they can witness the feel of rekindling traditions of times past in hopes of reclaiming what we once had; that is a united community that we loved and loved us back.



***Robert L. Hope Community Center
Annual Homemade Kite Making Event***

Theme: "Up, Up and Away to Get to the Unlimited!!!"
Place: 850 Edward Street Plateau, Alabama 36610
Date: March 16, 2019
Time: 8:30 AM – 2:30 PM
Contact: James Hope Phone - 205-991-0196

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT
Learn more?

MCTS Membership - Contact Ruth Ballard 251-452-2536
Brick Program - Contact Ike Jones 251-623-5393
Million Dollar Campaign - Anderson Flen 404-219-7890
MCTS College Scholarships - Wash Taylor 251-490-7569
Visit www.mctswhippets.org for more information

Community Partner: CHESS on the Move

By Joe Womack (President of CHESS)

The CHESS (Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe & Sustainable) Community Organization launched in the Fall of 2017 after establishing a partnership with the HBCU-CBO Gulf Coast Equity Consortium. The mission of CHESS is to strive for a community that is environmentally clean which involves beautifying streetscapes, ensuring that residents live in a healthy environment through innovative community restoration and preserving historic homes and schools to ensure children are well educated, safe with a zero tolerance for crime, and experience a sustained great quality of life.

To accomplish our mission, we have implemented projects and trainings to insure we are always working to make things better for the Africatown Community:

CHESS has organized quarterly trainings with the HBCU-CBO Gulf Equity Consortium to ensure the CHESS team leaders are equipped with the tools and resources needed to serve the community and that CHESS stays on track towards the accomplishment of its mission. In addition, CHESS meets monthly to discuss its community plan and create new projects when appropriate.

The following is a list of activities and events organized by CHESS in 2018:

- Held quarterly Africatown Community Meetings that have served to educate, inform and bring together the Africatown Community as never before.
- Sponsored a session where officers from The Mobile Police Department spoke with players from the Africatown Youth Football Program.
- Created a monthly Africatown News Blog that informs Africatown residents and others about things going on in Africatown.
- Purchased and installed Tarps to place on homes in Africatown that have leaking roofs.
- Created tours of Africatown for individuals and organizations that are interested in learning more about the Historic Africatown Community.



- Started a project together with MEJAC that describes all lots located in Africatown.
- Started a process that will begin a school /parent/teacher organization, something the Africatown school has not had in several years.
- Working to implement the Africatown Plan that sets out a unified vision for the long-term revitalization of Africatown, a plan paid for by The City Council and approved by The Mobile Planning Commission.

- Monitoring Industry in Africatown to ensure that they are held accountable for toxic emissions spewed into nearby communities.
- A major sponsor of the annual Africatown “Kids Kite Day”.
- A major sponsor of the annual “Africatown Community Day Celebration”.
- A major sponsor for the first “Africatown Connections Blueway Celebration”.



Although CHESS has only been in existence for 14 months, it has established a voice throughout the Africatown Community and the City of Mobile. CHESS together with continued capacity building through the HBCU-CBO Gulf Equity Consortium, expects to be a beacon of hope for the Africatown Community and an example for other underserved communities looking to improve their quality of life today and in the future.

MCTSAA Officers

President: Anderson Flen
 Vice-President - Charles Holloway
 Recording Secretary - Minnie Dewberry
 Asst. Recording Secretary - Carlee Russell
 Financial Secretary - Joe Womack
 Treasurer - Bettye Greene
 Parliamentarian - Emory Johnson
 Chaplain - Brandon Spradley



MCTSAA Board Members

James Hope
 Beatrice Morse
 Isaiah Pinkney
 Helen Porter
 Leslie Walker



Two years ago, I took a special interest in doing some health and wellness projects with the special needs classroom at the school. Living in New York, I had purchased some



property in Africatown the year previous eager to move ahead with some investment plans I had drawn up. After a couple closed doors, I realized I would have to put things on hold and regroup. Having previous experience working with urban youth, I saw the school as a perfect outlet to contribute to my new community. Speaking with the principal Mr. Stallworth, I was inspired by his mantra to, above all, produce students that make good citizens and contribute to their community.



The experience has been nothing short of amazing. I have run across so many students with amazing talents they never knew they had. So far we have established a school garden which has an ongoing focus on Afro-diasporic crops, pollinator plants, crops for health and nutrition, and tropical looking plants that are both decorative and edible. Another focus has been looking at community examples of the influence people of African descent have had on the built environment, especially involving the traditional architecture characteristic of the South. The goal is to preserve the narrative through hands-on revitalization projects.

This year the 2018 eighth grade class voluntarily painted a house; a project they had been eagerly anticipating for over a year. This year’s eighth graders have repeatedly approached me asking when they can paint a house to continue the service legacy of the class that preceded them.

My experience working with MCTS youth has provided me proof that we can’t forget about our youth. Our youth are a mere reflection of our own collective success or failure to envision a brighter future.

Ready and Able!

(MCTS Students Commitment to Service and Enlightenment)

By: Ijendu Obasi

I was delighted the first time I set foot in The Den and saw how significant MCTS was as a central pillar in the establishment and progress of Africatown and the surrounding area. The historical relics gave testimony to the beacons of light the alumni became once they left the hallowed Halls of MCTS. When asking various alumni what the keys to success were; the most common replies I heard centered around the support each student was given and expectations the community had of nothing short of success.

Move forward 50 years and we see a slightly different paradigm. The school being more under the auspices of county administration is seen less a direct imprint of the surrounding community.



Oral History Project

Oberlin in Africa Town, 2014-2019

By: Janet Fiskio (Associate Professor, Environmental Studies and Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College)

In July 2014, I volunteered at the Tar Sands Healing Walk, a ceremony and prayer for the healing of the earth led by First Nations in Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada. I had travelled to the Healing Walk to learn more about the environmental justice impacts of tar sands production on communities of color. Tar sands are a form of fossil fuel that are more polluting than conventional oil. When on a tour of Detroit with my students led by local activists, I learned that there were tar sands refineries throughout the Rust Belt where I live; in Detroit, we saw a processing plant located in an African American neighborhood. My job at the Healing Walk was to coordinate the registration table, which gave me the opportunity to meet and welcome allies from across North America. This is how I met Mrs. Mae Jones, Mrs. Louise Moorer, and Ramsey Sprague, who had travelled to the Healing Walk representing the Mobile Environmental Justice Action Coalition (MEJAC). The organizers invited the Africatown elders to share their story, and this is how I learned about Africatown.

I was so moved by the story of Africatown's unique history and current struggle against environmental racism, including a tar sands pipeline and tank farm, that I invited Major Joe Womack and Donna Mitchell to Oberlin in Fall 2014 to tell us more about Africatown's history, present, and hopes for the future. When I asked what Oberlin could do to support Africatown's work for justice, Major Joe invited me to bring students for our spring break 2015 to learn and volunteer. Since then, I have returned to Africatown with students seven times, and students have returned independently for Winter Term projects and attended the MCTS 50th reunion this past Thanksgiving. We've gone door to door conducting surveys, recorded oral history interviews, scanned archival documents, presented research projects, attended community meetings and church services--and learned more than I ever could have imagined.

In October 2017, with the support of a grant from the National Science Foundation Arctic Social Sciences Program, the MCTS AA, and MEJAC, we held a community history workshop at Union Baptist Church, led by the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida. The goal was to train community members and Oberlin faculty and students in best practices for oral history research, and to develop relationships with Iñupiat elders from Alaska who are also impacted by climate change and environmental injustice. With this grant, we purchased recording equipment and an archival-quality portable digital scanner, now the property of the MCTS AA. My students, Oberlin librarians, and I are building a website, the Africatown Digital Archive, where we will upload the video interviews, audio recordings, and scanned photographs and documents so that they are publicly accessible to everyone in the Africatown community and beyond.

Looking to the future, we hope to continue collaborating with the MCTS AA on the oral history project, and to recruit local youth to interview elders and become stewards of their proud history. We are also working to develop new grant proposals to continue our oral history work and engagement with the community. What is most essential is that the Africatown community direct and guide our work. Africatown's willingness to welcome us and the hospitality we've been shown have been transformative for me as a teacher, researcher, and citizen, and has had a deep impact on Oberlin students. I am profoundly grateful to all of you who have so generously shared your time and insights, and I look forward to many more years of friendship between our communities.



From The Africa Town Religious Community

By: Rev. Christopher Williams, Sr.

First, thanks you to the MCTS Alumni Association for your tireless work and leadership in the Plateau Community. The love that you have shown for the school and community should be commended.

When I was asked to write an article for the Alumni Newsletter, I thought that the best thing to relay to the readers would be a brief history of Yorktown and the connection between the church and Mobile County Training School.

The following is a brief synopsis of that relationship; The spirit of God conceived the church in the hearts, soul, and minds of Christian men and women who prayed from house to house.

Over the years, written records have been lost and destroyed by fire. The history of the church was recorded orally from generation to generation.

March 21, 1883, a group of Christian leaders from the Plateau community organized a Baptist Church known at that time as Three Mile Creek Baptist Church, under the leadership of Reverend Frank Peterson. Years later, the church name was changed to New Hope Baptist Church, then later to Yorktown Baptist Church.

The church is blessed with four Usher Boards: Senior Board, Usher Board #2, Usher Board #3, and the Junior Usher Board.

The Missionary Department and the Nurse's Aide have served faithfully for many years.

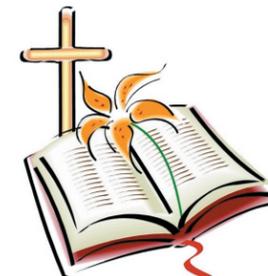
The Mass Sunday school was organized under the leadership of Reverend J. S. Hannon. Brother W. T. Thomas from Yorktown, Brother Thomas Wiggerfall from Union Baptist, Brother Limmie Kennedy from Hopewell, and Brother McGadney from Hall Chapel, now known as First Baptist. These three superintendents and pastors came together and the Mass Sunday school was organized. Reverend Matthews, along with other pastors of the community, came together and organized the combined fifth Sunday night service. Brother W. T. Thomas from Yorktown, Brother Thomas Wiggerfall from Union Baptist, Brother Limmie Kennedy from Hopewell, and Brother McGadney from Hall Chapel, now known as First Baptist. These three superintendents and pastors came together and the Mass Sunday school was organized. Reverend Matthews, along with other pastors of the community, came together and organized the combined fifth Sunday night service.

Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church has had the ties that bind with Mobile County Training School. The church and school did so much for this the Plateau community. In 1915, fire destroyed the school building. Yorktown Baptist Church came to the rescue of the Mobile County Training School and provided a place for students to continue their education.

Due to another fire in 1939, Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church offered Mobile County Training School the opportunity to use the facilities for grades five, six, and seven.

The students of Mobile County Training School were required to attend Sunday school each Sunday. On Monday, the punch card verified their presence in Sunday school.

The sanctuary was used for academic studies, declamatory contests, oratorical contests, and Baccalaureate services.



Pastors of Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church

Minister Frank Peterson, Minister L. W. Norris, Minister L. F. Jackson, Minister H. D. Parker, Minister H. P. Williams, Minister Joe S. Hannon, Minister Milton Smith, Minister A. C. L. Arbouin, Minister Douglas L. Motley, Minister John Eugene Matthews, Minister C. L. Daniel and Reverend Christopher L. Williams, Sr.

May God continue to bless Yorktown Missionary Baptist Church, Mobile County Training School, MCTS Alumni Association, and the entire Africatown Community.

1526-1860 Remembering Ancestors

By: Ann Chinn, Executive Director of MPCPMP

In 2017, the **Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project (MPCPMP)** visited Africatown, Alabama, for the first time. We are a national non-profit that identifies Middle Passage arrival sites in the United States and encourages local residents to conduct remembrance ceremonies honoring African ancestors who survived the Middle Passage and those who perished and to install historic markers that acknowledge and commemorate this history. There are 52 documented arrival locations along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts where approximately 500,000 captive children, women and men disembarked directly from Africa after surviving the transatlantic human trade. Africatown has the unique status of being founded by the very last captive people to be delivered into slavery through the transatlantic trade in the United States.

After extensive conversation, visits and a city tour, community representatives agreed to plan for the installation of a Middle Passage marker that would present a more complete historical narrative of the place and the people. During this same period, MPCPMP was working to submit a request for U.S. documented arrival locations to be designated by the UNESCO Slave Route Project (SRP) as a Site of Memory: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage. Africatown joined in the formal submission in August 2018 and received notification of acceptance in December 2018. This particular designation broadens



and strengthens Africatown's national and international significance to world history. It also permits Africatown to incorporate the logo and text

Crafting Compensation for Deep Injustice (cont'd)

But even if we were to take the Holocaust payments as the basis for the magnitude of black reparations in the United States, \$89 billion in 1952 is not equal to \$100 billion in 2019. An adjustment must be made both for inflation and foregone money interest. Using a conservative 3 percent interest rate to generate a present value calculation, \$89 billion in 1952 – when the German program of reparations was approved -- would approach \$626 billion in 2019. At a 4 percent interest rate the current value is \$1.18 trillion and at a 5 percent interest rate the current value is \$2.23 trillion – the first figure ten times as great and the second figure twenty times as great as \$100 billion.

In the final chapter of *From Here to Equality*, we supply procedures for calculating the size of the reparations bill tailored to the specific abuses inflicted on black Americans. We offer more plausible bases for determining the size of the social invoice than simply selecting an amount parallel to the magnitude of the Holocaust reparations payments.

As well as offering procedures for gauging the magnitude of the bill, the final chapter of *From Here to Equality* sketches a potential structure for a reparations program. This encompasses a discussion of multiple possible uses of a reparations fund – what we call a “portfolio of reparations” – that might include a fund to support retirement security, another to support entrepreneurial initiatives, another to support financing higher education, as well as a direct payment of a check to eligible recipients.

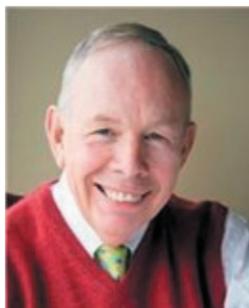
More and more Americans appreciate the moral case for black reparations. Polling estimates in 2016 indicated that 80 percent of white Americans oppose reparations for black Americans. But, correspondingly, 20 percent approve. In 2003, a study conducted by political scientists Michael Dawson and Rovana Popoff found that a miniscule 4 percent of white Americans expressed support for black reparations. So while the proportion remains low, the trend is strongly positive. We must seize upon this upward tide and move reparations from a dream to a reality. We must push the moral arc of the universe toward justice.

From the President's Desk: Leadership From the Heart

By: Anderson Flen

I want to thank the many individuals and partners for participating in this newsletter. I believe, our working together allows us to make better decisions for the benefit of those in the present and the future. I truly feel the love from the partnerships that the MCTS Alumni has established with all those included in this very special newsletter.

Growing up in Magazine Point Alabama, I had so many wonderful persons that cared about my welfare. The love that was shown to me was found everywhere. As a young boy, Rev. George Knight told me “that love always comes from the heart and the head is the devil’s workshop and must be controlled by the heart. He said make your decision from the heart, it will tell the head the right thing to do. However, if you make the decisions from the head you create chaos, confusion and troubles in life. He told me, God leads from the heart with love, and it is love that makes us special and our decisions wise.”



I have tried to live my life with that thought of leading from the heart. I had so many people in my life that have reinforced that form of leadership. There are two persons that I would like to share with you because they came in my life at different times, places and from different backgrounds. They are Mrs. Evelyn Green Milton, my school teacher, and Mr. Charles Gus Whalen a businessman. They have both passed on from this earth. However, these two persons were so similar but yet so different to the eyesight. Mrs. Milton, female, African American and former school teacher from a low- income environment and Mr. Charles “Gus” Whalen, male, a White American from a wealthy privilege family. If you goggle Mrs. Milton’s name, you will find nothing of her history or achievements. With Gus, you will find a laundry list of things that would make it clear his status was special. Yet both of these persons were more similar than different.

Let me share what I mean. They were both small framed individuals and appeared physically fragile. They always had a smile for everyone to see. When you spoke with them, they made you feel you were the most important person in the world. They always encouraged you to be positive and strive for excellence in everything you did by their words and actions. They helped to make the lives of thousands of people better. They were able to walk into a room, and even though they were small in size, their presence filled the room and everyone would go toward them. One lived in Mobile Alabama and the other in Gainesville Georgia. I first met Mrs. Milton in 1962. I met Gus in 1993. However, their leadership from the heart was the same in my life. This tells me that when the head is guided by the heart, you will always find people of high character regardless of gender, race, religion, income, background or locations. Both of these individuals I called my friend.

Once again, we thank all our partners that are helping to support the revitalization of our school and community from the heart.



1526-1860 Remembering Ancestors (cont'd)

Many of the economic and environmental issues that Africatown residents currently are addressing are directly related to racism and economic exploitation. This community, however, from its founding has a legacy of survival, resistance and cultural preservation. As the nation commemorates the 400th anniversary of the arrival of captive Africans in the Virginia English colony, we look forward to acknowledging the connection of Africatown, the last recorded place of entry, to this event. For those of African descent, there is a shared history in this nation that extends far beyond slavery. We must value our past and learn from the ancestors how to survive, challenge, protect and excel.

It is our honor and privilege to partner with Africatown in celebrating this history. Board of Directors, **Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project.**

Alabama Historical Commission

By: Lisa D. Jones, Executive Director - Alabama Historical Commission

In March 2018, the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC), in coordination with the National Park Service (NPS), the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, (NMAAHC), Slave Wrecks Project (SWP), and SEARCH, completed the investigation of the shipwreck remains discovered in January 2018 in Baldwin County, Alabama, referred to as the Twelve Mile Island Wreck. After thorough testing of the wreck’s architectural and construction features and using minimally invasive research methods, it was concluded that the vessel is not *Clotilda*, the last known ship to bring enslaved Africans to the United States. The Twelve mile Island Wreck is too long, the timbers are too large, timber known to have been used to build *Clotilda* was not seen, and there was no evidence of burning.

On July 13, 2018, the Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) and SEARCH concluded a week-long survey of submerged portions of the Mobile River in Mobile County, Alabama, to begin a comprehensive shipwreck inventory and to possibly discover *Clotilda*, the last known ship to bring enslaved Africans to the United States. The mapping of the river was assisted by an earlier survey conducted by Southern Mississippi University. Their collegial sharing of data allowed SEARCH to augment their survey to include resources not seen in the USM survey that lay buried in the muddy bottom beneath the murky waters of the river.

The survey and resulting underwater dives to examine potential cultural resources were conducted by SEARCH under contract with the Alabama Historical Commission. Funding and support for the project was provided by the National Geographic Society, whose field team was led by archaeologist Dr. Fredrik Hiebert. Also participating in the survey was the Alabama Historical Commission’s State Archaeologist Stacye Hathorn, who also co-directed the March 2018 project.

Also rejoining the effort was Kamau Sadiki of the Slave Wrecks Project: “I’m honored as a representative of the Slave Wrecks Project to participate in this important work that has great potential for healing from Alabama to Africa.”

This section of the river, known historically as a “ship graveyard”, holds the remains of several vessels. Some are century-old iron barges, while others, like the wreck examined in March, are wooden-hulled schooners.

SEARCH Senior Vice President Dr. James Delgado, who led the SEARCH effort, cautions: “Making a positive identification of a wreck is a difficult if not tricky process, not unlike solving a CSI case. Finding an identity involves detailed study, collecting forensic evidence, and then systematically and aggressively questioning not why a wreck might be a certain ship, but why it cannot be. Finding *Clotilda* is one goal of this survey, which is focused on documenting everything we can find that has come to rest in this graveyard of ships, but it will take time to sift through the data, conduct laboratory study and do additional research before we can offer a scientific opinion on a possible *Clotilda* site. Further study, such as a detailed excavation, might be required. We know that some of the wreck sites found are not *Clotilda*, but even with that, we have yet to put a name to any of them.”

“This project will ultimately result in a National Register Maritime Historic District,” said Lisa D. Jones, AHC’s Executive Director. “This district will capture the span of the river’s use over the past two hundred years and the numerous ways human history has intertwined with the Mobile River.”

In December 2018, SEARCH, with the permission of and in partnership with both the Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and under permit of the Mobile Corps of Engineers, investigated a visible “small” wreck in a graveyard of larger vessels. Funding was provided by the Alabama Historical Commission, the National Geographic Society, and SEARCH. This is one of two visible vessels which merits further investigation. We have approached this work with a view to document all aspects and features



Alabama Historical Commission (cont'd)

of the wreck, determine its National Register eligibility, and to compare the wreck's features with what is known about *Clotilda*. Although we find several features that are consistent with the *Clotilda*, we cannot at this time offer an unequivocal identification. Additional analysis is needed, and further excavation may be recommended. The absolute identification of unmarked shipwrecks with a specific name is a complex and often difficult, if not impossible, process. Research also continues on a number of buried anomalies seen only in the magnetometer data from the July survey.

“The discovery and first examination of the wreck by Ben Raines and our colleagues at the University of West Florida and the media stories that followed powerfully reconnected the story of Africatown to a national and international audience,” said Lisa D. Jones. “*Clotilda* is a story with profound meaning in Alabama, and especially to the descendant community of Africatown. While previous investigations of wrecks have proven not to be *Clotilda*, our state has taken a significant step in restoring historical memory and reconnecting the descendant communities of Africatown and Benin.”

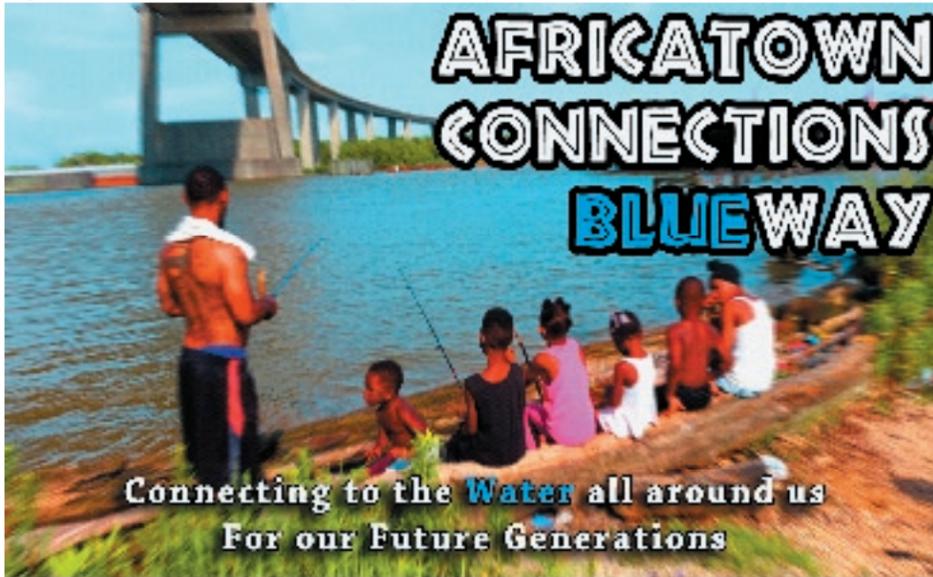
Restoration & Preservation of Natural Resources

A Healing Landscape

By: Robert Brzuszek, Professor at Mississippi State University

“This nation needs to heal itself, we need to heal ourselves. And the process of that healing is going back to nature—from the water, to the land, to the plants.” --Anderson Flen

My colleague Chuo Li and I first heard these words when our urban design studio class from Mississippi State University visited Africatown last March. The class was invited by Anderson, Joe Womack, Mississippi NPS Field Office Director Liz Smith-Incer, and others, to come visit the town and to hear its story. We met in the Whippet's Den of the Training School, with its walls surrounded by the artifacts and memories of those who lived there, went to school there, and played there. We heard their stories of what was; and the dreams and hopes of what the community could be once again. Our hosts went all out to show us the sights and historical areas of the community—from the Bridge, to the Place of Baptisms, Lewis Landing, and Hog Bayou. They had asked our class for ideas that would enhance the community for residents and visitors, and to include the significant places within Africatown.



Kent Ryden once wrote in *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* that a place is a “feeling measured in one's muscles and bones.” Barely 24 hours after touring the Training School, the Place of Baptisms, Lewis Landing, Hog Bayou, the Bridge and the Mobile River, and the Cemetery -- we felt this place within our bones. We felt it at the edge of Three Mile Creek, at the wild marshes of Hog Bayou, at the jarring contrasts of residential houses against major industries, and in the voices of those we heard. Though we didn't live there, we just had a brief visit, but we felt that this was an important place, a significant place, one with a compelling story to share, and not just for us, but for all people to hear. Students were pretty quiet on the van rides coming back to Starkville, maybe tired from our visits, or maybe just realizing the daunting task ahead for the community.

But the students quickly dove into the project and organized themselves into teams. Each team took a different area of the community and looked for the connections to the important places there. They imagined themselves as visitors to the town and how they could visit the significant points. Students searched for available open space where needs for the community could be addressed.

One team took on the space underneath the Africatown-Cochran Bridge. They saw this as a place that links the community's Past, Present and Future. They recognized the site's current use for fishing and occasional festivals, but added in needed elements such as parking, a pier that goes out into the water with a kayak launch, festival space, a playground, and importantly--bathrooms. Their concept includes beach zones, gardens, and an area where small shops and businesses could sell things. Art sculptures that symbolize a significant part of the past, the *Clotilde*, would be abstracted into a large lawn feature. Murals painted on the large bridge supports would tell a larger story. A green buffer zone at the shoreline addresses the issues of erosion, water quality and flooding.

Another group addressed the connections between Hog Bayou, the Mobile County Training School, the Community Center, and south to Kidd Park and the Cemetery. While much of the connecting links are currently open with lawn, students propose creating a safe pedestrian “greenway”, which is a walkway with trees and gardens, to connect these places. At Hog Bayou they envisioned a way to connect back into the nature there,

Crafting Compensation for Deep Injustice

By: William Darity Jr. (Professor at Duke University) and Kirsten Mullen

About seven years ago, Sian Hunter, at the time an editor at the University of North Carolina Press and now the Senior Acquisitions Editor at the University Press of Florida, heard a presentation that one of us gave on black reparations and urged us to write a book on the topic. In 2008, we jointly had written an op-ed for *The Root* called “The Big Payback,” which helped give us the confidence we needed to pursue and successfully bring such a project to completion. In December immediately past, we finally delivered the full manuscript to the Press. We anticipate that the book, titled *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the 21st Century*, will appear February 2020.

We hope that our book will introduce several new and important dimensions to the reparations conversation. We advance a case for reparations predicated not only upon the deep injustices of American slavery. In fact, we flinch when we hear references made, narrowly, to “slavery reparations.”

Compensation due to black Americans also must address the harms of the near century-long-epoch of legal apartheid in the United States, the Jim Crow period, and ongoing discrimination, economic inequality, extra-judicial police killings, and mass incarceration. A suitable program of black reparations must be directed at restitution for the grievous wrongs visited upon blacks in America both during the slavery years and after slavery ended.

A program of reparations should achieve three objectives: acknowledgement, redress, and closure. In a prelude to the extended discussion in our book, our article in *The Root* introduced each of these goals with the following description:

- **Acknowledgement** involves an apology for slavery, legal segregation (Jim Crow) and ongoing discrimination in housing, access to credit, employment and the criminal justice system. Essentially, Congress would be admitting that while these institutions were legal, they were immoral and caused extensive damage that continues today. Acknowledgement would lead to a rethinking of our history, a critical step in the healing process.
- **[Redress]** involves [restitution] -- compensation to eliminate racial inequality. This includes options such as direct payments, vouchers for schooling or business start-ups and the formation of trust funds to purchase stock shares for African Americans. It also could include the development and implementation of school curricula examining America's racial history and the creation of community level institutions to promote sustained racial equality.
- **Closure** involves mutual reconciliation between the beneficiaries of white supremacy and those harmed by it. Whites and blacks would come to terms over the past, confront the present, and unite to create a new future. Once the reparations program is executed and racial inequality is eliminated, African Americans would make no further claims for more race-specific policies on American government.

These three objectives are summarized by the acronym ARC, suggestive of the famous phrase that Martin Luther King Jr. borrowed from the 19th century transcendentalist, Theodore Parker, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” We believe that the moral universe *must be propelled toward justice*. Black reparations can drive the nation, forcefully, in the ethical direction.



In addition, we are specific about the criteria for eligibility for reparations. To receive the benefits of the compensatory policy, an individual must demonstrate that they had an ancestor who was enslaved in the United States and, for at least ten years before the adoption of the reparations program that they self-identified as black, African American, Afro-American, colored, or Negro. In the current parlance, black reparations in the United States must be targeted to benefit “ADOS”, American Descendants of Slavery, who have a profound and long-standing claim for justice from the federal government.

We reject the judicial route to establishing a reparations program and insist upon Congressional approval. This, of course, will require our national political leaders to take up the cause of black reparations. It is noteworthy that one of the current Presidential candidates, Marianne Williamson, has, in fact, endorsed black reparations. We believe the first and only presidential candidate to support black reparations, until Williamson, was Cynthia McKinney in 2008.

The difficulty with Williamson's initial declaration of support for reparations is her recommendation for a program amounting to \$100 billion. Apparently, Williamson arrived at this sum by seeking an amount similar to the \$89 billion commitment made by the German government to victims of the Holocaust. But \$100 billion is far too low. Indeed, it is not clear why the sum of money assigned to compensate victims of a genocidal horror that largely took place over the course of five years is relevant to the determination of the sum that should be assigned to compensate victims of 242 years of the damages of white supremacy—242 years since the founding of the American republic.





Tank Brown

A Legacy Worth Remembering (cont'd)

In 2014, a group of former players, led by Anderson Flen, put into motion a plan to honor James and his family for their unselfish and lasting contributions to baseball in the Plateau community and the nation. On June 27, 2014, a banquet to celebrate the life of James “Fat” Robertson was held at the Ashbury Hotel, Mobile, Alabama. The event was well attended with representation from local government, institutions of higher education, community leaders, former players, and friends. The largest representation and, no doubt proudest, were members of the Robertson family. They got a chance to give reflections about their father, see the outpouring of love and hear proclamations, funny stories and words of endearment about a man who was loved by many.

The goal for this celebration was for it to be more than a one-night event; it was to become a lasting tribute. What needed to happen to truly honor James and ensure his sacrifices and those of his family were not in vain was to re-establish baseball in Plateau and surrounding communities. There is much to be done to make this goal a reality. Measures have already been taken by Mobile County Training School Alumni Association (MCTSAA) in partnership with other organizations to put in place a foundation for planning and implementation of community baseball. What better way to remember the legacy of James than to have the fields of MCTS and Whitley School, now idle, overrun with kids engaged in organized summer baseball.

Ideas, involvement and contributions are needed now to bring this goal to fruition. Interested persons can contact James Hope, MCTSAA. Donations can be sent to Community Foundation of South Alabama in behalf of the James “FAT” Robertson Donor Advised Fund. Visit <https://www.communityfoundationsa.org/> or call (251) 438-5591 for more information.

A FRIEND’S PROMISE

By
Hattie Clark

So many nights, the family waited for our head of the house to come home for supper, only to learn upon his arrival that he was in a meeting with one of his friends.

Upon William “Bill” Clark demise, I learned he had so many loyal and supportive friends. At this writing, I will mention just one of his friends that has been so constant in keeping his “promise” to Bill Clark. This friend drove over 323.5 miles to bring together other friends to establish The William “Bill” Clark Legacy Group Fund in order to honor and support Bill’s legacy.

The William “Bill” Clark Legacy Group Fund was established in 2015 at the - Community Foundation of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama in honor of William Bill Clark Legacy.

The Legacy Group has sponsored a Luncheon, A Wellness Walk, Health Fair and its signature event each year is the Birthday Celebration Fundraiser held in the month of May to support some of the organizations/programs that Bill was so passionate about. They are the following:

- Junior Golfers Program In conjunction with the City of Prichard and the Gulf City Golfer’s Association.
- Carmel Health Networks’ Tutoring Program
- Mobile County Training School Mentoring/Scholarship Program
- Boys and Girls Club Mentoring Program
- Africatown Community Garden Program
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Rho Alpha Chapter Scholarship Program
- The United States Sports Academy Program

Grants have been made to Carmel Health Networks’ Tutoring Program and the Junior Golfers Program. Grants are being considered are as following:

- 2019 - Junior Golfers Program
- 2020 - Mobile County Training School Alumni Scholarship
- 2021 – The Boys and Girls Club Mentoring Program

Volunteers are welcomed each year to assist with the projects. Volunteers may contact Bill’s friend that has kept his promise – Anderson Flen at 404-219-7890 or the William “Bill” Clark website -www.williambillclarklegacygroup.org.

Restoration & Preservation of Natural Resources (cont'd)

with walking trails and kayak launches available to get people into the greater landscape. The community gardens along Jakes Lane would be expanded, and offer places to store tools and equipment, shaded seating areas, bathrooms, gathering spaces, and a produce market.

The Mobile County Training School already has ample open space for recreation, but the students suggested more organization to the school campus by adding baseball fields and enhanced landscapes. While the Community Center grounds is being used for its successful picnics and reunions, students recommended adding in soccer and football fields with movable benches and seating, a pavilion and stage, a children’s play area, and restrooms. Kidd Park is already a popular place for playing baseball and summer pool use, but ideas included adding in a children’s splash pad (water jets that come up from the pavement), walking track, and playground.

The third group addressed the areas to the south of the community, which includes the Lewis Landings, Three Mile Creek, Telegraph Road, and the Place of Baptisms. To promote pedestrian and bike access throughout Africatown, Lewis Landings 1 and 2, along with the Place of Baptism, would be connected by a network of trails and boardwalks. The first such site, the currently inaccessible Place of Baptism, would be connected to the nearest road, Chin Street, via boardwalk. As a result, Africatown’s residents and church-goers could walk from their respective homes and churches nearby- across Baybridge Road (using a newer, safer set of crosswalks) and onto the boardwalk before reaching the landmark. In combination with the Place of Baptism, Africatown’s Cemetery would also be accessible to the community using a series of trails that bypass the surrounding industry. Moving further west, the future redevelopment of Happy Hills would connect to the waterfront of Three-Mile Creek using a similar boardwalk and trail system that cuts through the existing woodland. It is at this point on the waterfront where the boardwalk would extend southwest along the shoreline until reaching the prime fishing destinations of Lewis Landings. Proposed use elements for Lewis Landings include Canoe and kayak launch ramp, fishing docks and boardwalks, parking lot, restrooms, picnic shelters, and benches.

The Place of Baptisms has long been a place of significance to the Africatown community. The creeks and streams, which fed Three Mile Creek near this location, were used by the local Baptist churches to perform baptisms. The group proposed from a starting point where Chin St turns north towards Bay Bridge Rd, a trail follows the abandoned railroad south towards Three Mile Creek. At the start of the path, there will be an information kiosk and gathering area for visitors and groups of school kids. The trail passes through a series of meadow woods and wetland environments as it meanders towards the creek. Baptism is renewing of faith and so along the path a series of sculptures, remind the visitor of the journey through life. As the trail approached the creek, the visitor passes through a group of statues representing the community before the vista opens out onto the river. The physical end of the path culminates in a single log sculpture and is a place of reflection and renewal. The sculpture there will symbolically face east in the local tradition of burial and looking towards the communities’ African heritage.

In a short three week project, students fleshed out their conceptual ideas to improve the connections and places of the Africatown community. They envisioned making places for the community to gather, and to pay homage to the places that made the community. The great American poet Wendell Berry once wrote that “If you don’t know where you are, you don’t know who you are.” While the residents of this community keenly know who they are, they also recognize where the seminal events and places of their and their ancestors’ lives occurred, and now seek to secure those places for future generations. By going back to nature, as Anderson Flen suggested, will the water, land, plants, and people, once again heal.

Rep. Clarke welcomes input on state legislation

By: Rep. Adline C. Clarke, Alabama House of Representatives District 97

First, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the voters of the 97th legislative district of the Alabama House of Representatives for re-electing me. I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to represent you for four more years (through 2022). I welcome your input and stand ready to assist you with legislative matters.

Many of the bills that are introduced in the Alabama Legislature are recommended by citizens. And, many bills are introduced year after year. Some are eventually approved by the Alabama Legislature, while others may never be approved. For example, during my tenure, legislators have introduced bills repeatedly that propose a state lottery, minimum wage increase, eliminating sales taxes on groceries, and “banning the box” on job applications.

I will introduce a Pay Equity Bill again this year. If approved, the bill would help to ensure that all workers receive equal pay for equal work. If you would like to recommend new laws for Alabama, or amendments to current state laws, please let me know.

The best way to contact me, (year-round) is as follows:
Office number: (251) 208-5480 or (251) 208-5481
Email address: adline.clarke@alhouse.gov
Address: P.O. Box 40758, Mobile, AL 36640.



Rep. Clarke welcomes input on state legislation (cont'd)

Before the full House and Senate vote on any bill, it must receive a favorable report from a committee of legislators. House Speaker Mac McCutcheon assigned me to the following committees for the next four years – (1) Constitution, Campaigns and Elections, (2) County and Municipal Government, and (3) Commerce and Small Business. Additionally, I serve on the Mobile County Legislation Committee, along with all of the members of the Mobile County Legislative Delegation.

Annually, state legislators have the opportunity to award Community Service Grants to schools and other organizations for educational purposes. Legislators award most of these grants to public schools in our districts. In 2018, Mobile County Training School received a \$2,000 Community Service Grant. According to Principal Rashad Stallworth, the grant is being used to provide incentives to students, faculty and staff members to motivate them to be successful. Congratulations to Mobile County Training School on improving its report card grade from 58 in 2016-2017 to 70 in 2017-2018! I applaud students and the entire staff on this accomplishment and encourage them to keep reaching for the stars.



Local Invited Guest

The University of South Alabama

Office of Community Engagement: Neighbors Serving Neighbors

By: Shannon M. Shelley-Tremblay, J.D. (Director- Office of Community Engagement)

In late 2017, the University of South Alabama opened the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) to provide a “one stop shop” to assist students, faculty, staff, alumni and the greater community to interact, collaborate, and partner. Ms. Shannon Shelley-Tremblay, was hired to launch the effort. Over the year the team has grown to include Faculty Fellow, Dr. Kern Jackson, Volunteer Coordinator, Mrs. Lee Boykin, and secretary, Mrs. Aysha Kanwal.

The OCE team supports the development of collaborations that result in meaningful engagement, learning, and service. An example of such a result is the creation of the new OCE volunteer management website [SOUTH SERVES](#) that grew out of a partnership with the United Way of Southwest Alabama. Launched in September 2018, [SOUTH SERVES](#) connects campus volunteers with volunteer opportunities and service events around the area, while simultaneously allowing organizations to find support. SOUTH SERVES is a portal of the [United Way VOLUNTEER CONNECT](#), therefore each organization that posts volunteer needs on the United Way website now has a direct link to a large volume of enthusiastic USA volunteers. Through this partnership students, faculty, and staff have expanded their awareness of community needs and organizations around the area and have developed an increased awareness of the available resource of USA volunteers. So far in five months over 2200 volunteers have actively participated in SOUTH SERVES.

To learn more about resources at USA and the work of the OCE, please visit their website at <https://www.southalabama.edu/departments/communityengagement/> call the office at 251.460.6116, or email communityengagement@southalabama.edu.



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH ALABAMA

The boat, the bell, and the bicycles: One of America's Most Important Little Known Landmarks (cont'd)

While we were being guided on our tour by MCTS Alumni Association Co-Chairs – Anderson Flen, and Joe Womack, we were struck by the mostly worn out homes, the numerous industrial plants, and yet the beauty of the river. We also were fascinated as they told us the stories of the people, and how the town had evolved as the tides of time washed in and out. At one point over 12,000 people called Africatown home, and there was a thriving network of stores, shops and theaters that exist no more. Today, fewer than 3000 people live there, and the community looks tired.

Despite the fatigue as evident in the homes, an energy still permeates the community as the history, helps propel the school, and the next generations forward. We saw kids out playing, riding their bikes and other people walking, or tending to their community garden. The community center is a great place where kids play and learn.

There is tremendous hope and pride as we learned when we met other graduates of MCTS and as we chatted with current community members. And I know my colleagues and myself came away sad that Africatown is not better known – not only for its roots as a community of former slaves and its incredible and unique connection to Africa, but especially for its success as a community that nurtured an amazingly talented and successful group of African Americans over many years, thanks to its sense of community, and the Mobile County Training Center.

This community should be elevated as an historic landmark, equal in many ways to Plymouth Rock, Jamestown, or St. Augustine as locations of resilience and fortitude. And as important reminders both of our past, as well as how the best of humanity can emerge even from the worst of humanity.

I am excited to see what my colleagues do as they put together a plan to work with our students, supporting the marketing and outreach of the Alumni Association of the MCTS.



A Legacy Worth Remembering

By: Jimmy Hope

Over the course of our lives, we are sometimes impacted by people who have profound effect on who we are to become and what we value in life. We don't always recognize the experience as such at the time, but reflection can bring about understanding and appreciation that makes us very thankful for special people who made a difference in our lives.

For many boys growing up in Plateau and surrounding communities in the 50's, 60's and 70's, that special person was James Robertson, affectionately called "Fat". James was a kind and generous man, though of modest means, who happened to be the owner and manager of the legendary Plateau Bears Baseball Team. James was a family man who worked hard to take care of his wife and children. You would often see him riding through the neighborhood in his station wagon filled with his children, seven of them. Yet, he always made room for other people's children, teaching them the game of baseball and important lessons about life.

Many of the boys who James provided an opportunity to practice and eventually play with the Plateau Bears developed into outstanding baseball players. From the grounds of Mobile County Training School (MCTS), where the Plateau Bears practiced, came Hall of Famer Billy Williams and New York Mets 1969 World Series stars Tommie Agee and Cleon Jones. There were many other who played professionally, received college scholarships, starred on outstanding MCTS teams. For an even greater number of players, baseball was a stepping stone for achieving career and other life goals. The list of players who made significant contributions to their communities and places beyond is long.

James died in 1975, devoting most of his adult life helping others pursue their dreams at great sacrifice to himself and his family. The Plateau Bears continued to exist and played inspired baseball into the next decade but the games would not be the same. Without James, a void existed, not only because our coach and mentor had passed but also because there had not been an opportunity to collectively say "good bye" and "thank you" to this giant of a man.



Grant Writing Workshop Hosted by Penn State

By: Janet Fiskio (Associate Professor, Environmental Studies and Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College)

This past November 30-December 1, the Rock Ethics Institute at the Pennsylvania State University hosted a grant writing conference for Africatown. Members of the MCTS and Mobile County school board, the MCTSAA, and faculty and students from Penn State, Michigan State University, and Oberlin College attended. The Rock Ethics Institute supports engaged research to address society’s ethical challenges, including work on environmental and restorative justice. Ted Toadvine, the director of the institute, has visited Africatown twice as a co-leader for Oberlin College trips. We discussed the current challenges facing the MCTS and also its strengths, such as its dedicated faculty and administration, and explored opportunities for bringing useful resources to support the school’s programs. Kyle Powys Whyte, Timnick Chair in the Humanities and Associate Professor of Philosophy & Community Sustainability at Michigan State University, offered expert guidance on applying for grants from private and public institutions. Kyle is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and participates in innovative collaborations between universities and local communities, with a particular focus on climate change, environmental justice, and food sovereignty. During this workshop we identified potential grants and brainstormed possibilities for future collaborations, including partnerships between Africatown, HBCUs, and tribal colleges and communities. The grant writing team will continue to pursue the plans discussed at the workshop and is currently developing grant proposals to support the future of Africatown and the MCTS.



The boat, the bell, and the bicycles: One of America’s Most Important Little Known Landmarks

By: William S. Lightfoot, Ph. D. (Dean of the School of Business at Southern New Hampshire University)

In early January 2019, 3 of my colleagues (Professors Pat Spirou, Eklou Amendah, and Leila Samii) and I had the great opportunity to visit a little known, but historically important community in Mobile, Alabama. While the official name is Plateau, historically it is known as Africatown. It’s name points to a past established during the run up to the Civil War, when a local family hired a ship (The Clotilda) to bring slaves from Benin to Mobile. Bringing slaves over from Africa had been outlawed in the United States by the 1807 Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves. This didn’t stop the Meaher family from doing so.

As the slaves sought to survive in the belly of the two masted schooner, it made its way across the Atlantic in what is known as the ‘middle passage’. They would often hear a bell ring rapidly as a warning of a storm, or large wave that would rock the ship violently. Approximately 110 slaves survived the journey and were distributed as chattel to the investors in the venture, with the Meaher’s retaining 30 to work in their own plantations.

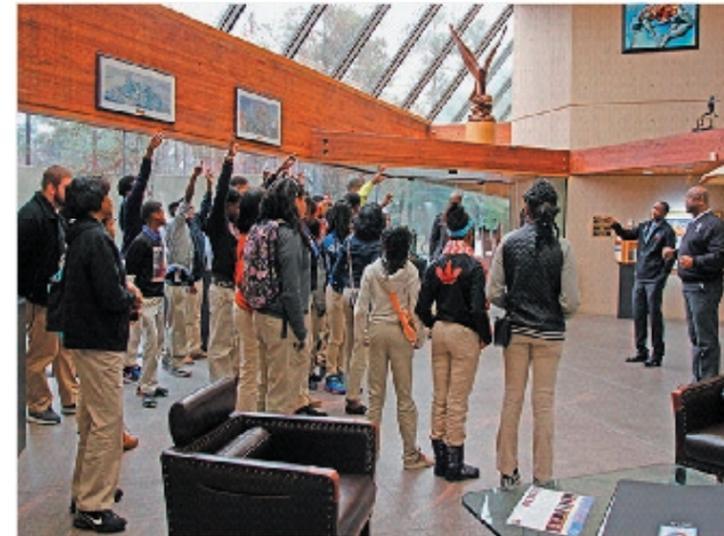
By the end of the war, the slaves were freed, with many returning to the place they first landed. There they established Africatown, adopting rules based on African Tribal law, while also retaining the language, customs and many cultural elements that were unique in their direct and immediate ties to their communities in Africa.

Flash forward, 15 years to the founding of the Mobile Country Training School (MCTS) in 1880 a black high school started in part by the former slaves of Africatown. It’s legacy is of an institution that has many successful athletes, educators, doctors, service personnel, and other professionals in many industries, and many places throughout the U.S. and beyond. A replica of the bell from the Clotilda sits in a prominent perch ready to ring rapidly anytime people are to be alerted that something important is about to happen.



The United States Sports Academy

By: Brandon Spradley, Ed.D. (Chair of Sports Management - United States Sports Academy)



The United States Sports Academy and the Mobile County Training School (MCTS) alumni association have had a rewarding partnership since 2013. The late Bill Clark, who taught chemistry and coached multiple sports at MCTS, served as a trustee at the United States Sports Academy from 2012 to 2015. Clark, along with current MCTS alumni association president Anderson Flen were among the first to see the value in partnering with an institution like the United States Sports Academy.

The United States Sports Academy is an independent, non-profit, accredited, special mission sports university created to serve the nation and the world with programs in instruction, research, and service. The Academy has worked with many organizations across the world, but one of its most rewarding partnerships in the state of Alabama is with the MCTS alumni association.

In 2013, the two organizations partnered together to create an oral history of athletes and coaches from MCTS. The project features interviews with great athletes such as Larry Shears, Norman Hill, A.C. Mosley, Theodore Spradley III, Rev. Julius Caesar Hope, Washington Taylor, Gabe Coleman, John Bacot, Charles Hope, and Bill Kidd. The project also features interviews from two great MCTS coaches (William Clark and Curtis Horton) who both reminisce about the greatness of longtime head football coach Charles Rhodes.

The project was officially launched at the beginning of 2014. The project was successful in capturing the unsung stories of athletes and coaches from MCTS. A reporter from al.com reached out and wrote a few articles about the project, one featuring 1967 graduate and star football player Larry Shears. In the article, Shears reminisces about his success as an MCTS athlete and how significant it was to represent the school and the community.



“In our community -- and when I say our community, I’m talking about Magazine Point, Plateau, Happy Hill, Chickasaw, all of the county communities, Saraland -- athletics was a big deal for those communities,” Shears said. We didn’t have a college team here. We didn’t have a professional team. So sports was something that all communities got into with their high school teams (al.com, Larry Shears).

The oral history project is currently housed on the United States Sports Academy’s online library website and can also be found on AlabamaMosaic, which is a repository of digital materials on Alabama’s history, culture, places, and people.

Here are the links:

<http://ussa.libguides.com/c.php?g=678865&p=4785364>

<http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/landingpage/collection/ussa>

The partnership has also been rewarding for current and recent students at the middle school. In 2015, students from Mobile County Training School visited the United States Sports Academy and had the opportunity to see the Human Performance Laboratory and the sport art museum. The students also had the opportunity to speak with some of the professors such as longtime Academy faculty member Dr. Fred Cromartie. The Academy also reached out to the middle school’s athletic department to donate materials and assessments to help identify

concussions in athletes.

The Alumni Association and the United States Sports Academy are currently planning to partner on a few other projects that will benefit both current students and graduates of MCTS.



National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program:
Inspiring Collaboration in Our Neighborhoods

By: Liz Smith-Incer, Field Office Director serving Mississippi, Alabama & Puerto Rico

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) extends and expands the benefits of the National Park Service to communities throughout the nation. Since 2016, RTCA has proudly served the community of Africatown and surrounding communities by assisting with the development of the Africatown Connections Blueway.

RTCA supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. The national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals partners with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities. This year, RTCA is helping more than 350 communities improve parks, establish trails, access rivers, and protect special places. Thanks to an application submitted to RTCA by the Mobile County Training School Alumni Association (MCTSAA), Africatown is one of those communities.

MCTSAA envisions youth and elders reconnecting with the natural world that the shipmates of the Clotilda knew when they arrived on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1860. Alumni members believe in the healing power of water and the nourishing sustenance that a healthy waterway provides both for food and emotional “re-creation” of the spirit.

MCTSAA has been highly successful at convening communities in the Africatown area in a dialogue about preserving the area’s rich history and natural resources. With the collaborative assistance of RTCA, MCTSAA is now actively working with many other organizations to develop the Africatown Connections Blueway, a 10+ mile paddling trail highlighting historical and culture points of interest that include sites along Three Mile Creek, Mobile River, and Chickasaw Creek.

Over the past few years, RTCA has supported MCTSAA and its project partners, to connect young people to the outdoors by providing hands-on experiential education opportunities on the water and has led the development of the Africatown Connections Blueway Planning Team. RTCA has played an essential role in creating a forum for natural history and cultural exchange between Africatown elders, local youth of the communities of Africatown, Prichard, and Chickasaw and experienced conservation professionals. This exchange is designed to build an understanding and appreciation of coastal ecosystems, the Africatown culture and how these things are influenced by current land use in the area.

The Africatown Connections Blueway Planning Team, which includes community members as well as active participants representing academia and local government staff from four jurisdictions (City of Mobile, City of Prichard, City of Chickasaw and Mobile County), has accomplished key objectives and will continue to move forward with this exciting project.



AFRICATOWN CONNECTIONS BLUEWAY
Present: Healing Shoreline



Aerial perspective of restorative shoreline, facing northwest into the site, with the meadow and lawn space in the background.

Africatown Connections Blueway Mapping

The effort of inventory and surveying the points of interest along the Africatown Connections Blueway is a shared effort, and a sincere expression of appreciation goes to the youth of the GulfCorps Team, Public Lab and Tuskegee University.

The GulfCorps Team visited each proposed point of interest and completed inventory sheets which helped to identify the current status of each point of interest and will help to prioritize the order of development for the points of interest.

Partnering with Public Lab, Oberlin College, and Mobile Environmental Justice Action Committee, the Africatown Connections Blueway Planning Team hosted a mapping workshop where community members learned about low cost, open source accessible mapping techniques using

National Park Service – Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (cont’d)

balloons, kites, and digital cameras and then created maps of the test site from images captured using Mapknitter. This is an excellent resource to help neighbors get a “bird’s eye view” of what is happening along the Blueway. Workshop participants visited and photographed historic Hog Bayou, traditionally known to be full of deer, wild hogs, birds, turkeys, and fish, which fed the locals for years after slavery ended until the 1940s when both International Paper and Scott Paper Companies built their facilities along the shores of Hog Bayou.

Tuskegee University is creating a digital presence for the Africatown Connections Blueway on the world wide web. This will include a storyboard with photos and descriptions of each point of interest along the Blueway.

Initial Concept Designs

RTCA initiated what will be a lifelong connection between Mississippi State University School of Landscape Architecture (MSU) and MCTSAA. Professors and students of MSU visited with members of the Africatown Community in March 2018 and provided conceptual designs for some of the proposed points of interest along the Africatown Connections Blueway. MSU provided digital copies, RTCA provided hard copies of the concept designs, and we hope to display the concept plans at the Robert L. Hope Community Center.

Africatown Connections Planning Retreat

RTCA facilitated a day-long planning retreat where folks from all walks of life including local, county and federal government staff, political leadership, local nonprofits, and community members came together to complete a SWOT Analysis for each point of interest for the Blueway. Participants also fortified their shared understanding of the collaborative effort between Cities of Mobile,



Prichard, Chickasaw and Mobile County related to Africatown Connections Blueway.



Strong Partner Support

RTCA initiated and facilitated conversations with a marine archeological investigative team made up of the Submerged Resources Center of the National Park Service, Smithsonian and The Slave Wrecks project. In Fall 2017, this small team began to explore the possibility of researching the location of the Clotilda and began to consider including the resting place of the Clotilda as one of the points of interest along the Africatown Connections Blueway. Since then, the State of Alabama has renewed the research for the Clotilda, and the Planning Team has been supported by the Alabama Historical Commission and the Black Heritage Council.

Celebrating & Healing

In June 2018, the Africatown Connections Blueway Planning Team hosted the inaugural Africatown Connections Celebration, held under Africatown Bridge with music, sacred rituals and a shared meal. Representatives of each jurisdiction shared a proclamation of their goal to work together on the Blueway project. We celebrated our shared goal of the Africatown Connections Blueway connecting the historic neighborhoods of Africatown to City of Prichard’s Africatown USA State Park. We celebrated how the Blueway seeks to connect, not separate, seeks to join not divide. We continue to honor our united interest in protecting our waters and the special natural spaces that surround us.

Looking Ahead

Of primary importance to current residents of Africatown is to preserve and make available the history and historical significance of Africatown to communities across Alabama, the United States, and the entire world. The community members of Africatown would like to re-connect the youth of Africatown to their natural surroundings and to the past and current traditions, of which the waterways play an essential part. RTCA will continue to support the Africatown Connections Blueway Planning Team while it works to develop a sustainable organizational framework to support the Blueway Project.

