

Dinah Project Scholar Summit
Working Group Notes
January 29-30, 2020

Debrief Themes:

- Interpretive research & more research
- Context
- Education
- Community and descendants
- Material culture & role of objects
- Management and process (African American representation)
- Balance in presentation
- Interpretive goals and messages
- Emotion – presentation
- Dinah – Agency and historical context
- Community and physical interaction
- Contradiction and contrast
- Community and family.
- Geographic and spatial considerations
- Power, ideology, and contradictions
- Language
- Emotional responses
- Commemoration, interpretation, research

Framing Questions:

- Ideology of enslavement
- Household, family, etc.
- Language
- Micro stories vs. macro stories (texture of lives)

Staff & Stakeholders:

- Relationship to the site
- Organizational culture
- Staff and community relationships (bonding)

Interpretive Plan

- Research priorities
- Material culture
- Balance of content
- Nothing is static
- Being comfortable with contradictions

Commemoration

Audience: Current – North/Northwest Philadelphia, Students, people who come to programs

Why do they come?

- White – for the house; Black/Brown – slavery
- Increased interest in hearing the “other” story

Goal:

- Willingness to change/resist inertia of memory
 - Public History – difference between documentation and things happening – we are interpreting, just like everyone else
 - Commemoration
 - Arguments that we pretend aren’t arguments
 - Contemporary relevance
- Create a safe/brave space – people are having modern reactions
- Recognize tensions:
 - Logan/Slavery/Indigenous (rum trade)
 - Dinah’s decisions (fullness of experience)
 - Quakers
 - Agency & contradiction
- Why does X matter (& if you aren’t X)?
 - Institutional Racism
 - The Legend of Dinah/doing another treatment of Dinah
 - Memory – 20th century lens – period of significance
- Desired outcomes/Desired emotions
 - Assumed emotions
 - Informed conjecture
- How does place matter?
 - Contextual information is important – physical space/what do you think?
 - “Three worlds meet moment”
- Forging Freedom, National Archives Project, My family, my country, court disputes/probate records, Hudson River Valley sites, Tenement Museum, Lonnie’s book re: NMAAHC, what constitutes sources?

The Power of Stories:

- Balance of Content
 - Past to Present – inside to out...and beyond
 - Stenton as THE crossroads/ a crossroads/ removing stereotypical or traditional boundaries.
- Research Priorities
 - Quaker Route to abolition was because of complicity – all religious groups
 - Historical and contemporary values
 - What people regard as peaceful or violent
 - Dehumanization
 - Capitalism and economics
 - Race and genealogy
 - Dinah’s community not just her direct family
 - Dinah’s mobility (and others’)

- Exhibit – Stenton and it's neighborhood – a 300 year history
- Court records, etc.
- Clarity or difference between lines of indentured and enslaved and roles and numbers and economics) graph?
- Intercolonial mercantilism
- Memory
- Contradictions
 - Asking open ended questions
 - Discussion of values
 - Two things can be true
 - Tell your truth – acknowledge it's your truth
 - Acknowledge we don't have all answers
 - Opportunities – dialog not debate
 - Physical space provides/embodies contradictions
 - VTS art technique
 - Historicize contradiction
- Micro/Macro Stories
 - Maybe smaller stars – maybe bigger stars – constellation
 - Constellations also move in the sky depending on seasons
 - Sometimes stars are more visible than other times
 - Black community over time (idea)
 - Don't just frame as black and white (inclusion but also equity)
 - Industry and Impact

Commitment Statement:

We are committed to creating meaningful and relevant experiences by maintaining safe and brave spaces where we will remain open to correcting the traditional narrative through recognizing complexity and nuance, and connecting the past to the present by inviting our communities to take part.

How do we define community?

Zip codes, connection to place, stakeholders (investment), stewards, inherently unstable as a concept, the people who choose to connect to you, Stenton as a crossroads of community convergence, shared identity, equity, inclusion & exclusion element.

Themes:

- The power of PLACE: Specificity of historical place, geography, landscape, luminosity, architecture, threshold, boundaries, traffic patterns
- The power of MEMORY: How history changes and evolved, collective memory
- The power of PEOPLE: agents/agency, people who come today, humanity, complexity
- The power of CHANGE: organizational change, change minds, change over time
- The power of HISTORY: The past and present, knowing where you've been, identity based on the past.
- The power of OBJECTS: Connectivity, tactile learning, experiential learning, historical and contemporary empathy, physical rooting to history, emotions and people.
- The power of NARRATIVE: The stories we tell, different perspectives, inclusion or exclusion depending on how you do it, traditional narrative & people, shared authority, through narrative we gain empathy, powerful when they connect

OBJECTS can be collapsed into/included in PLACE. There is a unique connection between place and objects to be recognized.

MEMORY, HISTORY, & NARRATIVES can form one category called STORIES

Why does this matter?

Why should we care?

Hopes & Aspirations – Humanity and Power