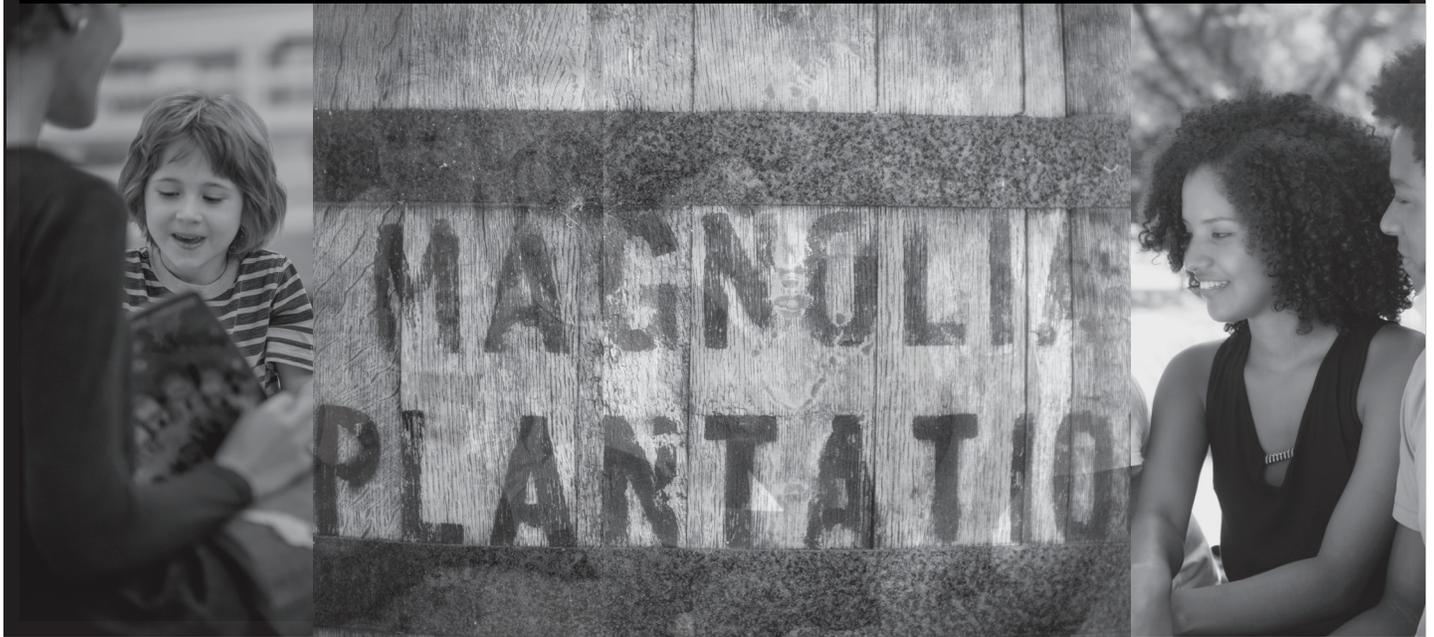


The Possibilities of Plantation Field Trips as Sites of Racial Literacy

Kristen E. Duncan



Introduction

On a fall Thursday afternoon, I sat with my students, who were preservice social studies teachers, as we discussed approaches to teaching slavery to high school students. As our discussion continued, I began to ask about their experiences learning about the institution of chattel slavery in the United States South. It seemed that with each passing day, my social media newsfeeds were barraged by outrageous headlines regarding egregious instructional activities, including “Black

Students Were Cast as Slaves in New York Teacher’s Mock ‘Auctions,’ State Finds” (Griffith, 2019) and “Monopoly-like Slavery Game Played by NC Class Outrages Grandmother” (WECT, 2019), and I began to wonder if my students had been exposed to any of these trauma-simulating (and likely trauma-inducing) activities. Thankfully, they responded that their teachers had not exposed them to such instructional horrors.

As this all-White group of preservice teachers engaged with me, a Black woman instructor, on a campus whose land had once served as the plantation of a former U.S. vice president, a litany of questions entered my mind. Finally, I asked them, “How many of you have ever been on a field trip to a plantation?” As I looked around the room, every student had a hand in the air. Although I was initially stunned that plantation field trips were so commonplace that

each of my students had attended one, I was also aware of the transformative possibilities of sites of racialized trauma (Dillard, Duncan, & Johnson, 2017) and the ways they can help visitors understand the historical realities and lingering effects of centuries-old events. I had experienced such understandings, having visited the dungeons of the castles in Cape Coast, Ghana, where enslaved Africans were last held on the continent before boarding ships that took them to the Americas as part of the transatlantic slave trade.

As questions continued to flood my mind, I asked my students if any of them could recall what happened on these plantation field trips. While one student recalled having to pick the seeds out of cotton on a trip in elementary school, most of them remembered very little beyond the name of the plantation they had visited. As I continued this conversation with my students, in a

Kristen E. Duncan is an assistant professor of secondary social studies education in the Department of Teaching & Learning of the College of Education at Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina.

© 2021 by Caddo Gap Press

classroom that was fewer than 200 feet from where the main house of the former plantation still stands, questions continued to arise in my mind: What do students experience on plantation field trips? Did students leave these field trips with a greater understanding of how the institution of slavery laid the foundation for contemporary racial disparities and hierarchies? How did Black students experience these field trips?

As a descendant of enslaved Africans who grew up in a large metropolitan area in the South, I had never visited a plantation, and I had never been interested in doing so. I immediately began to think about Black students who attended these field trips with their White classmates.

More than a century and a half after the end of the Civil War, dozens of plantations in South Carolina are still available for tourists to visit. While I knew that the best way to answer my flood of questions would involve taking students with me to visit a plantation, I also understood there to be a great possibility that such sites could cause harm to students.

For this reason, I decided to visit Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, which claims to be the most visited plantation in South Carolina, alone. Using racial literacy as a conceptual framework for this autoethnographic study, I embarked on this plantation visit wondering about the possibilities for visitors gaining a sense of racial literacy upon their visits to this former rice plantation.

Literature Review

Field trips provide students with authentic, experiential learning opportunities that are generally not available within the bounds of the school building. While taking students on field trips involves copious amounts of planning and managing logistics, such opportunities afford multiple benefits to students, including gains in student achievement and motivation (Ernst & Monroe, 2004) in addition to engaging in new experiences. Field trips provide students with the opportunity to delve deeply into a topic that they have studied in their classrooms. While field trips can benefit students in all content areas, startlingly little research has focused exclusively on students taking field trips in the social studies.

From our museum education colleagues, however, we know that museums and similar sites can serve

as sites for students to learn historical counterstories (Keenan, 2019). Also, just as Epstein (2000) found differences between the ways Black students and their White peers perceived U.S. history, researchers have found differences in what visitors of different races take away from historic sites.

Lin, Morgan, and Coble (2013) discovered differences in what White and Latinx visitors took from visiting the Alamo, particularly regarding heritage and identity. Burgard and Boucher (2016) found differences in the ways Black and White students experienced and understood history at sites of racialized trauma. These authors noted that while Black students experienced a range of emotions, including pride, anger, and confusion at the institution of slavery and the lack of knowledge they acquired in their history classrooms, White students “disconnected any culpability of their ancestors and focused on African Americans as figures to be admired for bravery” (p. 705).

These scholars also found that while Black students were able to make connections between historical events affecting Black Americans and the contemporary status of Black Americans, White students focused on individual narratives and avoided issues like structural and institutional racism.

The body of research focusing on social studies experiences beyond the school building is scant, and the corpus of research literature focusing on the teaching of slavery in the U.S. is also small but growing. King and Woodson (2017) analyzed a number of headline-rendering events that involved the teaching of slavery, explaining that teaching slavery using superficial or reductive methods inflicts educative-psychic violence on students.

Klein (2017) studied the teaching of the transatlantic slave trade in the Netherlands, finding that it could be difficult to predict the ways that history educators go about teaching slavery. In studying the events around a school play in which a predominately White school had students reenact slavery while Black parents and students boycotted the play, Bery (2014) found that the play, in which White students took on the roles of enslaved Africans and Underground Railroad abolitionists, while Asian and Latinx students acted out the roles of slave masters and overseers, reinforced White supremacy. This play, which was staged as a celebration of Black History Month, upheld White supremacy by

allowing White students to believe they had experienced the horrors of slavery while not having to take accountability for enslavement or the privileges it has afforded them in centuries since.

The teaching methods involved in these studies could be related to curriculum, as Anderson and Metzger (2011) found that although state standards devoted a significant amount of curricular space to Black people during the formation and development of the U.S., the standards “depersonalize the institution of slavery and frame its consequences as a lamentable but temporary roadblock” (pp. 401–402) in the progress of the U.S.

Research about the teaching of slavery also extends into children’s literature: Thomas, Reese, and Horning (2016) analyzed a controversial children’s book, *A Fine Dessert: Four Centuries, Four Families, One Delicious Treat*, in which an enslaved Black mother and child are pictured making a dessert on a South Carolina plantation. These scholars noted that children’s books that focus on slavery often provide additional information in the afterword, which is problematic largely because it gets overlooked. They are also careful to note that many children’s books omit pertinent information about slavery altogether.

Conceptual Framework

Racial literacy served as the conceptual framework for this study. Introduced by critical race theorist Lani Guinier (2004), racial literacy entails an understanding of the ways that race impacts the social, economic, and political realities of individuals and groups. Racial literacy understands that race has psychological, interpersonal, and structural dimensions and “acknowledges the importance of individual agency but refuses to lose sight of institutional and environmental forces that both shape and reflect that agency” (Guinier, 2004, p. 115).

Racially literate persons understand both race and racism to be complex, historically situated, and materially relevant (Brown, 2017). Unlike racial liberalism, which holds an individualized view of racism, racial literacy reads race to be epiphenomenal, turning its focus to the relationship between race and power. Whereas racial liberalism seeks to treat the symptoms of racism, racial literacy seeks to treat the disease in which racism is not merely the racially prejudiced actions of individuals but

“the maintenance of, and acquiescence in, racialized hierarchies governing resource distribution” (Brown, 2017, p. 98). At the foundation of a racial literacy analysis is the understanding that the racial hierarchy in the U.S. is maintained by structures of the nation’s political and economic systems that are designed to maintain this hierarchy. As Guinier (2004) succinctly explains, “race is, and was, about the distribution of power” (p. 99).

In recent years, scholars have begun to use racial literacy as a framework for educational research. Within this growing body of research, racial literacy has been used to study teachers’ practices and knowledge about and teaching about race and racism (Allen, 2019; Skerrett, 2011), the ways teachers use Black history to talk about race with students (King, 2016), and the ways teachers complicate students’ understandings of race and racism (Epstein & Gist, 2015).

While Skerrett (2011) noted that racial literacy instruction in English language arts involves using instructional texts that explicitly discuss race, the social studies curriculum includes multiple opportunities for students to become racially literate.

King (2016) explained that social studies classrooms could potentially be the most appropriate place for students to learn about racial literacy due to social studies’ humanistic mission, which grants students the opportunity to ponder who is allowed to be fully human and who is granted full citizenship. King also noted that “racially literate people can discern how racism, both subtle and overt, influences the way we read the world and identify racist structures, examine and critique racial hierarchies, and give voice to the experiences of people of color” (p. 2).

It seems then, that historic plantation sites would provide ample opportunity for students to become racially literate, as these historic sites lie at the very foundation of the racial hierarchy that has been in place in the U.S. for centuries. In helping visitors make explicit connections between slavery, politics, and economics, historic plantations sites have the potential to help all who visit become racially literate.

Methods

When I first began to ponder what students took away from plantation field trips, I knew that the best methods for answering that research question would involve taking students to visit a historic

plantation site. I was simultaneously aware, however, that engaging this research question in this way could be harmful to students, particularly Black students.

As a Black feminist scholar, I subscribe to the metaphor of research as responsibility (Dillard, 2006), which means I hold myself to be “answerable and obligated” (p. 5) to the community around whom my research questions focus. Subjecting Black students to possible harm by having them visit a plantation site runs counter to that notion.

Because I understood the potential harm that visiting a plantation site could bring to Black children, I decided to visit a plantation by myself. While visiting this site by myself would not let me know exactly what K–12 students take away from such field trips, it would let me know what students see, hear, touch, and experience when their teachers take them on field trips to plantations. While this qualitative inquiry began with questions regarding students’ experiences on plantation field trips, it evolved into an autoethnographic study of my experience at this historic plantation site.

Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that combines tenets of autobiography and ethnography, serving as “both process and product” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 273). Providing the reader with an analysis of the researcher’s personal experiences, autoethnographers challenge traditional ways of doing research and frequently use research as a means toward social justice (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008).

This qualitative research method “attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 283), understanding that research can be simultaneously rigorous, analytical, emotional, and therapeutic. A relatively new methodology, scholars began to move toward autoethnography, as they wanted to engage in evocative, meaningful research that acknowledged and accounted for their subjectivity and influence on research, allowing them to articulate their identities, experiences, and relationships (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015; Ellis et al., 2011).

Whereas traditional ethnography calls on the researcher to interpret the actions, decisions, and dispositions of others, autoethnography allows the researchers to thoroughly reflect on and analyze their own lived experiences (Wall, 2006). While sometimes critiqued

as self-indulgent (Grant & Zeeman, 2012), autoethnographers frequently write about epiphanies they have had while simultaneously bringing outsiders into their cultural experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). This form of research is particularly useful for scholars of color, as it offers researchers “a method for articulating their personal connections to—and their investment in—identities, experiences, relationships, and/or cultures” (pp. 16–17).

For this study, I decided to travel to the most visited plantation site in the state of South Carolina: the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens.¹ Upon my arrival on an early spring morning, I spoke with several of this historic site’s employees about the most popular tours as well as the tours most frequently taken by school groups.

Employees at this site repeatedly told me that the two most popular tours were the “Plantation House” tour, which offered visitors an opportunity to visit the home of the Drayton family, who owned the plantation, and the “Nature Tram” tour, which allowed visitors to learn about the flora and fauna on the grounds of the property. Because the “Nature Tram” tour focused on the landscape and ecology of the plantation grounds instead of the people who lived on them, I decided not to take this tour.

Based on the tour descriptions available on-site, only two tours held the possibility of helping visitors gain an understanding of racial literacy. I decided to take these tours: “From Slavery to Freedom” and the “Plantation House” tour. During the first tour, “From Slavery to Freedom,” I was able to take copious field notes and photographs. I also wrote my initial thoughts immediately after the tour was over. During the “Plantation House” tour, however, my note taking was interrupted, so I wrote down what I learned on the tour and my initial reactions immediately after the tour was complete.

Findings

From Slavery to Freedom

I arrived at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens on a chilly March morning. After parking my car, I purchased a ticket for my first tour. The women at the ticket booth assured me that I was in for a treat, as the tour guide operating that day was well respected and generally well received. After purchasing my ticket, I was told to go to my right and board the tram for the tour “From

Slavery to Freedom.” As I approached the vehicle, I noticed that nearly all of the seats were taken, as White passengers occupied all seats except two, which remained empty. One empty seat was at the very front of the tram, and one was at the very back.

As the only Black visitor on this tour, I opted to take the first seat, and shortly thereafter, the tour guide appeared. This short, friendly Black man introduced himself to the people who would be taking the tour, shaking hands with each of us before he sat in the driver’s seat and drove us toward the cabins in which enslaved Africans lived on this former rice plantation.

We rode for about a quarter of a mile before we stopped underneath a massive magnolia tree and deboarded the tram. Our tour guide led us to a small shelter where historical documents like slave auction and runaway slave notices hung from makeshift walls. Underneath the cover of the shelter, we sat at picnic tables that were situated just a few feet from the quarters where those who were enslaved on this land once lived.

While the visitors sat on the benches, the tour guide began to talk about the institution of chattel slavery. He spoke about the differences between chattel slavery in the U.S. and slavery in other parts of the world, and he paid special attention to the ways that an enslaved person could become free. According to the tour guide, these ways included death, running away, and purchasing one’s own freedom.

The tour guide also noted that enslaved persons could be granted freedom from their enslaver, explaining that this typically happened in a will that was executed upon the enslaver’s death. The tour guide did not discuss how frequently or infrequently enslaved Africans were emancipated from the institution of chattel slavery, so these opportunities to escape the institution of slavery were presented as if they were true possibilities for each person suffering under this institution.

The tour guide then took a turn of direction and began to discuss the Drayton family, which is the family that has owned the Magnolia Plantation for centuries. Explaining that the Drayton family is of British origin and had participated in colonizing Barbados before moving to South Carolina, he carefully noted that they had exhausted the resources of Barbados before deciding that “it was time to move on.” After arriving in South Carolina in

1670, they eventually found themselves on 2,000 acres of land near what is now Charleston. After noting that enslaved people cleared the land for the Drayton family, our tour guide began to list the crops that the Draytons unsuccessfully attempted to grow on the land on which they had settled, including sugarcane, olives, and citrus fruit.

The tour guide then told us that it was actually the enslaved Africans who realized rice could grow on this land. Once the Drayton family decided to grow rice, they realized that the conditions necessary for rice production would bring discomfort and pests, but the Drayton family took no issue with that because they could retreat to their home in North Carolina. He was careful to point out, however, that enslaved Africans were left to work in horrible conditions. Knots began to form in my stomach as I pictured enslaved Africans going to great lengths to avoid mosquitos, snakes, and alligators as they toiled in horrid, humid conditions while the Drayton family retreated to their large, comfortable home.

Next, our tour guide discussed the process of harvesting rice, noting that rice production made planters wealthy and granted them great influence in state and national politics. He also explained to visitors that the Drayton family was not concerned about the harsh conditions in which enslaved Africans worked, as “up until 1808, we as a nation could import as many people as we desired to enslave, and it was legal to do so,” reminding visitors that delegates of the Constitutional Convention decided to end the slave trade in 1808.

Our tour guide alerted us to the fact that until 1808, the life-span of enslaved people was relatively short, and after the slave trade ended, enslavers began to house the enslaved, explaining that the best way to “increase your inventory is to encourage them to have children.” After noting that historical records show the Drayton family paying taxes on 148 enslaved people, the tour guide briefly mentioned the economy’s dependence on slavery, discussed the cabins we were able to visit, and asked visitors if we had any questions.

Following this 15-minute lecture and a brief question-and-answer period, we visited the slave cabins, which had been restored to look as they had in 1850 (the year they were built), 1930, and 1969, as the cabins were occupied until the 1990s. Before entering the cabins, our tour guide told us that the Drayton family

had almost lost the cabins to “demolition by neglect,” but the younger Draytons decided to preserve them because they realized they had an “opportunity” to teach visitors about the enslavement that had occurred on this property.

The tour guide was critical of other plantations in the area that were silent on the topic of slavery, noting that this particular tour did not exist at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens until 2009. He also mentioned that after the Civil War, many newly freed people left the plantation, but some decided to stay and became paid employees.

The group then wandered unguided through the three small dwellings, looking at the furnishings and other items that were in the cabins. Each cabin had a bed, a fireplace, and tools that the cabin’s residents would have used during the time period featured. There was also a poster in each cabin that described the time period; the posters for the cabins that had been restored to look as they did in 1930 and 1969 had photos and a small amount of information about the residents of those cabins during that time period, but the cabin restored to look as it did during enslavement did not have any information about the enslaved Africans who had lived in it.

I felt a grave sense of sadness come over me as I realized that just as is the case in so many places where U.S. history is taught, enslaved Africans were relegated to being nameless and faceless, even in the homes in which they lived and on the land they worked. Most visitors went in and out of the small, white cabins very quickly. I was the last to leave the cabins, as I attempted to read every word describing the items and the time period in the cabins. After everyone in the group had visited all three cabins, we boarded the tram and returned to the ticket booth area where we had been picked up.

Plantation House Tour

After “From Slavery to Freedom” ended and the tram returned us to the ticket booth, I purchased a ticket for the next “Plantation House” tour and walked over to the plantation house, which had a green roof and a seemingly endless porch. The crowd awaiting the next “Plantation House” tour was three to four times larger than the group that had just taken the “From Slavery to Freedom” tour.

As site employees had told me earlier in the day, the “Plantation House”

tour was the most popular tour offered. “What do these people hope to learn here?” I wondered as the large crowd gathered near the front door of the plantation house.

Whereas the visitors on the first tour, with the exception of myself, were entirely White, there were two non-Black people of color waiting to take this tour. After the tour guides split the crowd into two groups, they announced that we could not take photos inside the house, and we filed into the home. As we all gathered in the dining area, our tour guide, a middle-aged White man, told us about the construction of the home, exclusively using passive voice. He told us when the home “was constructed” and how “it was rebuilt” after a fire demolished it during the Civil War. As the tour guide spoke about this construction and reconstruction, I looked around at the tour group and wondered if other visitors would realize that enslaved Africans originally built the home.

Our tour guide then told us that he would be telling us the story of John Drayton, Julia Drayton, and their descendants who still own the home. Our tour began with the newest parts of the home, as our guide told us about the lives of the Draytons and how they lived in this particular house part-time because their full-time residence was in North Carolina. Midway through one of his sentences, the tour guide raised his voice to yell at me, “Young lady, you were told no phones!” as I feverishly typed notes about the tour into my notes app. I responded, explaining that we were told we could not take pictures, not that we couldn’t have our cell phones out during the tour. I placed my phone in my pocket and continued to follow the group along the tour.

As we were ushered from room to room, our tour guide told us when each part of the home “was constructed,” continuing to refer to the home’s construction in passive voice and failing to acknowledge those who built the home. Our tour guide told us stories of the children who lived in the home, parties that the Drayton family threw, and the construction plans that never came to fruition. As we moved around the house, we saw antique fixtures, maps, and other trinkets. Our tour guide also told us of the Drayton family activity during the Civil War, failing to make a connection to the enslavement that took place on this property and the cause of the Civil War. We also learned that the owner of the home opened up his property for garden tours in 1870 because he was on the brink of financial ruin.

At the end of the tour, our tour guide asked the group if we had any questions. Because the tour was complete and he had mentioned nothing about the enslaved people who had worked on the property and, undoubtedly, within the walls of the house, I asked, “What about the enslaved Africans who lived here?” The tour guide made a brief facial expression of shock and quickly retorted, “They didn’t,” going on to explain that enslaved Africans lived in the slave cabins about a quarter-mile from the house.

“I know, I just came from that tour,” I explained. Sensing that his response was insufficient, the tour guide’s face turned beet red, and after a few moments of awkward silence, he asked me if I was familiar with the Grimke sisters, two White abolitionists. I nodded my head to signify yes, and he went on to tell me that they were a part of the Drayton family and that the events depicted in the novel *The Invention of Wings* were inspired by life at the Magnolia Plantation.

Without actually providing any information about the enslaved Africans who had worked in the house or on the property, the tour guide hurriedly looked for another question to answer. As there were no more questions, he took our group outside and dismissed us. I left the house tour feeling that the enslaved Africans who had built and worked in the house had been erased from its history, leaving me feeling simultaneously dejected and rejected.

Discussion

Looking at my visit to the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens through the lens of racial literacy, it is clear that racial literacy is not a focus or even a peripheral matter for this site. While the connection between enslavement, the economy, and politics was tangentially referenced on the “From Slavery to Freedom” tour, enslavement was not mentioned at all in the main house, where enslaved Africans had worked, and when I asked a question about the enslaved people who had been assigned to work in the house, the tour guide responded by providing the names of two White abolitionists.

The erasure of the enslaved from the narratives that are told on the house tour is beyond troubling. As Bery (2014) noted, “by claiming that whiteness is the normal and normative mode of humanness, white supremacy negates the existence of Black humanness” (p. 336). Such tours could

allow visitors, who are overwhelmingly White, to come front and center with the institution of enslavement upon which our current economic system is built, but instead of being confronted with the horrors of slavery or the ways enslavement laid the foundation for contemporary racial disparities, visitors are told comfortable stories that make them laugh and allow them to picture themselves being entertained in the home of wealthy planters.

While Burgard and Boucher (2016) found that White students on their tour were able to disconnect themselves from any responsibility of their ancestors for racism, the “Plantation House” tour at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens allows visitors to go even further than avoiding culpability, as visitors are told to imagine the jovial interactions of the Drayton family while the existence of enslaved Africans is completely ignored.

Essentially, this tour centers the joy of White slave owners while forcing the Black labor who afforded the Drayton family its lifestyle to remain invisible. It prioritizes White joy at the expense of Black humanity, pushing it to the metaphorical margins. Visitors who attend such tours could in fact become less racially literate than they may have been before taking such tours, as they may be left to assume that slavery “wasn’t that bad,” having learned very little about it on the slavery tour and nothing about it on the house tour.

This, in turn, leaves visitors who trust the facility’s staff to teach them with very little opportunity to understand the historical relationship between race and power, let alone the contemporary relationship between the two.

As I journeyed on both tours, Black students remained at the forefront of my mind, particularly Black students who attend schools where they are in the slim minority. As the only Black person on the “From Slavery to Freedom” tour and the “Plantation House” tour, I was generally uncomfortable, but the discomfort rang loud and clear on the house tour, as I found the presence of enslaved people, and essentially myself, erased from the narrative presented there.

I wondered how those students feel when their teachers bring their classes to these sites on field trips—how isolated they must feel on the tours and what their thoughts are as their classmates giggle at the “Plantation House” tour guide’s jokes. Embarking on these two tours was difficult for me, a Black woman in her 30s, so I cannot imagine what

these trips must be like for children who are still learning how to digest and reconcile difficult issues and topics.

I also thought of the parents who signed permission slips allowing their students to go on these field trips, because they trust educators to do what is best for their children. These plantation field trips are likely another way that schools engage in the spirit-murdering (Williams, 1987) of Black students. Introduced by critical race theorist Patricia Williams, spirit-murdering consists of “the personal, psychological, and spiritual injuries to people of color through the fixed, yet fluid and moldable, structures of racism, privilege, and power” (Love, 2014, p. 300).

On plantation sites like Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, this takes place through the erasure of the narratives and lived experiences of enslaved Africans. While the Drayton family is afforded agency through the narratives told on the “Plantation House” tour, the enslaved Africans who actually earned this family’s fortune are relegated to nameless and faceless beings, and they are only allowed that much on one particular tour.

Conclusion

In summary, not only was the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens not a site for learning racial literacy but it did not even teach the institution of slavery well. This is highly troubling, because, as I mentioned earlier, it is the most visited plantation in the state of South Carolina, and the “Plantation House” tour, from which slavery was all but erased, is the most popular tour on the grounds.

Essentially, the plantation treats slavery similarly to how many teacher education programs address issues of race and racism: There is one specific space designated for that, and it is flagrantly ignored in other contexts. My initial plan was to visit two plantations on the trip I took to visit the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, but I was so disturbed by the mistreatment and erasure of enslaved Africans in the narratives that were told during my visit that I was not willing to put myself through that again.

My experience at the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens has implications for teachers, teacher educators, and social studies education researchers. First, teachers need to be incredibly thoughtful in planning field trips.

Before planning any field trip, teachers should ask themselves what they want students to walk away knowing after the experience.

Field trips are not breaks from school; rather, they are learning experiences that happen away from school. Students are going to leave the field trip having learned something, so it is best that teachers design field trips that align with their learning goals. If a teacher had wanted students to leave a field trip with a better understanding of how plantations laid the foundation for contemporary race issues and racial disparities, the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens would not have helped the teacher achieve this.

It is possible that more trips like these would be avoided if teacher educators devoted class time to discussing field trips. While schools currently devote less time to field trips than they have in previous decades, many students, particularly elementary students, are still able to go on such trips. Teacher educators could devote some time over the course of a semester to help students decide what makes a good field trip and why they should take students to visit some places and avoid others.

It is highly possible that teachers take students on field trips to plantations because their schools have always done so. If teacher educators helped preservice and in-service teachers interrogate the decisions behind taking their students on field trips to plantations, there is a possibility that teachers would not take students on such trips.

Finally, there is a troubling absence of research on social studies field trips. My experience at the Magnolia Plantation and Gardens suggests that there are a number of questions social studies education researchers could take up: What kinds of experiences help students gain a sense of racial literacy? What are the experiences of Black students when their schools take field trips to sites of racial trauma? What are teachers’ intentions when they take students on field trips to plantations?

These questions merely scratch the surface of questions researchers could ask about the intentions behind and what actually happens on such field trips. It is hoped that autoethnographic study, along with guidance from teacher educators, will help teachers find field trips that provide students with truly authentic learning experiences that do not kill students’ spirits in the process.

Note

¹ See <https://www.magnoliaplantation.com/>

References

- Adams, T., & Holman Jones, S. (2008). Autoethnography is queer. In N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln, & L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies* (pp. 373–390). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686.n18>
- Adams, T., Holman Jones, S., & Ellis, X. (2015). *Autoethnography*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Allen, K. (2019). Transformative vision: Examining the racial literacy practices of a Black male teacher with his Black male students. *Journal for Multicultural Education, 13*(1), 82–93. <http://doi.org/10.1108/JME-04-2017-0029>
- Anderson, C., & Metzger, S. (2011). Slavery, the Civil War era, and African American representation in U.S. history: An analysis of four states’ academic standards. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 39*, 393–415. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2011.10473460>
- Bery, S. (2014). Multiculturalism, teaching slavery, and White supremacy. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 47*, 334–352. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2014.933072>
- Brown, K. (2017). Why we can’t wait: Advancing racial literacy and sociocultural knowledge of race for teaching and curriculum. *Race, Gender, and Class, 24*, 81–96.
- Burgard, K., & Boucher, M. (2016). Same story; different history: Students’ racialized understanding of historic sites. *Urban Review, 48*, 696–717. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-016-0374-9>
- Dillard, C. (2006). *On spiritual strivings: Transforming an African American woman’s academic life*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Dillard, C., Duncan, K. E., & Johnson, L. (2017). Black history full circle: Lessons of (re)membering for teaching and teachers from a Ghana study abroad in education program. *Social Education, 81*(1), 50–53.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T., & Bochner, A. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung, 36*, 273–290.
- Epstein, T. (2000). Adolescents’ perspectives on racial diversity in U.S. history: Case studies from an urban classroom. *American Educational Research Journal, 37*, 185–214. <http://doi.org/10.3102/00028312037001185>
- Epstein, T., & Gist, C. (2015). Teaching racial literacy in secondary humanities classrooms: Challenging adolescents’

- of color concepts of race and racism. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 18, 40–60. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2013.792800>
- Ernst, J., & Monroe, M. (2004). The effects of environment-based education on students' critical thinking skills and disposition toward critical thinking. *Environmental Education Research*, 10, 507–522. <http://doi.org/10.1080/1350462042000291038>
- Grant, A., & Zeeman, L. (2012). Whose story is it? An autoethnography concerning narrative identity. *The Qualitative Report*, 17, Article 72.
- Griffith, J. (2019, May 29). Black students were cast as slaves in New York teacher's mock "auctions," state finds. *NBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/black-students-were-cast-slaves-new-york-teacher-s-mock-n1011361>
- Guinier, L. (2004). From racial liberalism to racial literacy: *Brown v. Board of Education* and the interest-divergence dilemma. *Journal of American History*, 91, 92–118. <http://doi.org/10.2307/3659616>
- Jordan, J. (2019, April 24). Parent successfully lobbies to remove "cotton picking" lesson at Flint Middle School. *Detroit Metro Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/archives/2019/04/24/parent-successfully-lobbies-to-remove-cotton-picking-lesson-at-flint-middle-school>
- Keenan, H. (2019). Visiting Chutchui: The making of a colonial counterstory on an elementary school field trip. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 47, 52–75. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2018.1542361>
- King, L. (2016). Teaching Black history as a racial literacy project. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 19, 1303–1318. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1150822>
- King, L., & Woodson, A. (2017). Baskets of cotton and birthday cakes: Teaching slavery in social studies classrooms. *Social Studies Education Review*, 6(1).
- Klein, S. (2017). Preparing to teach a slavery past: History teachers and educators as navigators of historical distance. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 45, 75–109. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2016.1213677>
- Lin, H.-N., Morgan, M., & Coble, T. (2013). Remember the Alamo: A cross-cultural analysis of visitor meanings. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52, 42–55. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0047287512457266>
- Love, B. (2014). "I see Trayvon Martin": What teachers can learn from the tragic death of a young Black male. *Urban Review*, 46, 292–306. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-013-0260-7>
- Skerrett, A. (2011). English teachers' racial literacy knowledge and practice. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, 14, 313–330. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2010.543391>
- Thomas, E., Reese, D., & Horning, K. (2016). Much ado about *A Fine Dessert*: The cultural politics of representing slavery in children's literature. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 42(2), 6–17.
- Wall, S. (2006). An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, 146–160. <http://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500205>
- WECT. (2019, March 8). *Monopoly-like slavery game played by fourth grade NC class outrages grandmother*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbs17.com/news/monopoly-like-slavery-game-played-by-fourth-grade-nc-class-outrages-grandmother/>
- Williams, P. (1987). Spirit-murdering the messenger: The discourse of fingerprinting as the law's response to racism. *University of Miami Law Review*, 42, 127–158.