

Stories We Know

Recording the Black History
of Bartram's Garden and
Southwest Philadelphia

STORIES WE KNOW

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Recording the Black History
of Bartram’s Garden and
Southwest Philadelphia

Research by Sharece Blakney

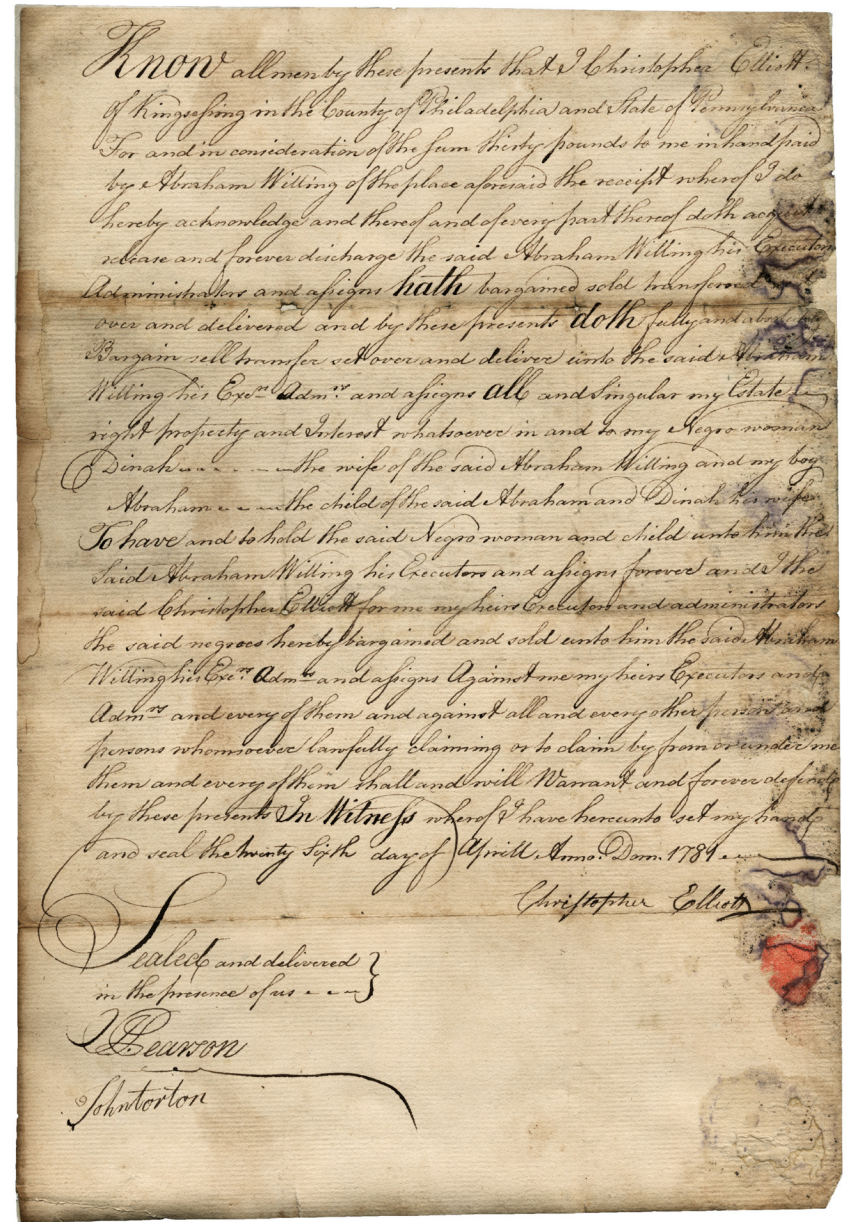
Edited by Aislinn Pentecost-Farren

Cover image: Outline of Sambo Ganges’s indenture, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (490),
Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See page 79.

Know all men by these presents that I Christopher Elliott of Kingsessing in the County of Philadelphia and State of Pennsylvania For and in consideration of the sum thirty pounds to me in hand paid by Abraham Willing of the place aforesaid the receipt whereof I do hereby acknowledge and thereof and of every part thereof doth acquit release and forever discharge the said Abraham Willing his Executor Administrators and assigns hath bargained sold transferred [...] over and delivered and by these presents doth fully and absolutely Bargain sell transfer set over and deliver unto the said Abraham Willing, his Exe - Admin - and assigns all and singular my Estate right property and interest whatsoever in and to my Negro woman Dinah... the wife of the said Abraham Willing and my boy Abraham...the child of the said Abraham and Dinah his wife to have and to hold the said Negro woman and child unto him the said Abraham Willing his Executors and assigns forever and I the said Christopher Elliott for me my heirs, Executors and Administrators the said negros hereby bargained and sold unto him the said Abraham Willing, his Exe - Adm and assigns against me my heirs Executors and Adm and every of them and against all and every other person and persons whomever lawfully claiming as to claim by from or under me them and every of them shall and will warrant and forever defend by these presents In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the Twenty Sixth day of April Anno. Dom. 1784...

Christopher Elliott Sealed and delivered
in the presence of us...
C Pearson
John Horton

Dinah Willing and Abraham Willing Jr.'s manumission document.
Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (490), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



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WHITE LADY, BLACK HISTORY

Aislinn Pentecost-Farren

You cannot tell a story you don't know. Through decades of programs and interpretation, Bartram's Garden has been telling the rich and varied story of the Bartram family, which owned land in the Kingsessing area of Philadelphia from 1728 to 1850. But the Bartrams aren't the only story. Who were the Black individuals living at and around the Bartram property during this time, and what were the circumstances of their lives?

I worked with Bartram's Garden for two years as a project manager, curator, and then artist for *Southwest Roots*, a partnership between the Garden and Mural Arts Philadelphia funded by ArtPlace America. The grant's purpose was to strengthen the Garden's relationship with its neighbors through arts and culture. The nearby neighborhood is majority Black—both African American and African immigrant. Bartram's Garden, the only formal historical institution nearby, largely told only the story of its White founders.

I looked to the Garden's archive, deep storage and highest authority on the truth of the site, as a partner for questioning, challenging and expanding the meaning of Bartram's Garden for all its audiences. To paraphrase recent authors, decisions about what is stored in archives affect what we believe about people in the past, and therefore about what led to the present.¹

Joel T. Fry, curator and historian of Bartram's Garden, and Aseel Rasheed, Manager of Visitor Services, became my collaborators. We hired

¹ Jordan Martin, "Why a Socio-Political Lens is Crucial for Archive Users," *Dirt Magazine*. October, 2017.

a Rutgers-Camden graduate student, Sharece Blakney, whose specialty is Black American history before 1850. She became the second historian, and the first Black member, to join our team.

The Bartram's Garden archive had copies of census records and secondhand accounts recording a Black family at the Garden, but no other information had been found. Over the summer and fall of 2017, Blakney performed research far beyond what anyone had before, to uncover the Black history of the Garden and its neighborhood. We wanted to fill this gap with a detailed story that could be shared.

Early African American history is an especially tricky topic to research. Generally low literacy rates and the high cost of writing materials in the post-revolutionary period were exacerbated by education and income inequalities for Black Americans. If they did not have the resources to record their own history, Blakney confirmed that the privileged rarely preserved it for them. It was easier to find information on the White people connected to Bartram's Garden and their relationship to slavery and abolition. It took constant course-correction and painstaking effort to center this research project on Black lives: Blakney sifted through boxes of uncatalogued documents by hand, reading each one for particular neighborhoods, addresses, and names. When archives did preserve Black history, it was sales receipts, manumission documents, and indenture contracts--the records of people as commodity. It is upsetting to do this work lacking letter, poem, or diary page written by any of the people themselves. The experience of these people's lives from their perspective may never be known.

While Blakney did not find information about the Black individuals at the Garden, she started to piece together a picture of Black life in nearby neighborhoods during the Bartram era, shedding light on what life may have been like for Black families at Bartram's and in Philadelphia as a whole. She also uncovered new connections between the Bartrams and the Black history of Philadelphia. She will continue this work in 2018, as part of her Master's degree requirements at Rutgers University-Camden. Printing her research to date is the purpose of this book, and it speaks for itself.

I am one of many well-meaning White ladies found in community arts non-profits. Some of us are talented, some of us are critical, some of us are even radical, and we all benefit from White privilege as we work, very often, in communities of color. That said, I feel it matters that a Black

historian followed these people through time, chose which threads of clues to follow, and did her best to reconstruct their lives, because racism still exists and a researcher's personal experiences with it affect how they make connections and what they find meaningful. It also matters that a Black historian is the one paid to do this research and to gain the professional experience from it.

I too was paid for this work, found joy and satisfaction in it, have been congratulated in professional circles, and may gain opportunities and money in the future from it. I have asked myself many times during the project if I am repeating the cycle of White profit off Black lives. With this in mind, I commissioned Bartram's staff who can speak from a range of professional perspectives, racial identities, and life experiences to contribute essays on the meaning of this work so that authority is shared. The burden of repairing centuries of neglect of Black history should fall at least partially to those with privilege, who can move resources to support an inclusive and hence more complete picture of history and an equitable process for getting there. Does this justify my initiating this project? I do not know what is ultimately true, but I hope by making this public attempt to figure out my professional role in racial justice, I help others think through their own.

Based on these ideas and on many conversations with the team, I propose these values to guide this research going forward:

Representative Authority

The project will be guided by a committee that represents both personal and professional expertise in Black history and the history of Kingsessing. Towards this goal, decisions about interpreting this history will be done by a group that has a majority of Black members.

Equity

Participants in the project who are not present as part of their job, or are otherwise unpaid for their time, will be compensated.

Non-Exploitation

In consideration of who benefits from the value of these stories, any funds received through this research, its distribution, and its interpretation, will be used to materially and culturally benefit Black people, according to standards developed by the above committee.

Respecting History

Understanding that the incompleteness of the historical record is itself a statement of how history is recorded and by whom, this project will hold space for not knowing. We will not add to or subtract from the verifiable historical facts, and any creative interpretations or retellings will be explicitly framed as such.

Holding Space for Feeling

Uncovering, archiving, and sharing Black history can trigger a range of emotions, both positive and negative, in participants and audiences depending on their life experience, past traumas, and viewpoints. This project will be conducted in a way that is sensitive to this range and holds space for personal stories and emotions, from meetings to interpretive outcomes.

It has been my privilege to work on this book—metaphorically and literally. I hope it does some small honor to the lives in its pages. Thank you everyone who has challenged and supported this project so far. See you in the next edition.

November 2017

PART 1

**EQUALLY
FREE WITH
MYSELF**

EQUALLY FREE WITH MYSELF: Slavery, Manumission, and Indentured Servitude in Kingsessing Township, 1780–1850

Sharece Blakney

The history of the Black community in Philadelphia has been documented; however, in-depth studies of individual neighborhoods are largely missing from historical scholarship: particularly the history of areas that are predominantly Black and filled with rich stories and long histories.¹ Historical research of the Black community surrounding Bartram’s Garden reveals one community’s interracial collaborative efforts to improve the lives of people of color. Between 1780 and 1850, the Black community of the Kingsessing neighborhood outside the Garden experienced wealth, poverty, freedom, and enslavement. Three major concepts frequently appear in documents about the area: slavery, manumission, and indentured servitude. Manumission was a byproduct of slavery, and indentured servitude was an unfree status in a different form. The narrative researchers are able to build on the Kingsessing community is owed to documents that survived the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. An abundance of manumission documents and indentured servant contracts provides more than details of agreements between owners, servants, and slaves. These documents provide insight into the circumstances faced by the unfree. The Black community of Kingsessing showed just how inextricably linked race, class, and gender were to the institution of slavery.

¹ In the research paper and directory, I chose to use the term Black when referring to people with African heritage since the term describes all people of the African diaspora. While some individuals referenced in the research paper and directory are African Americans, we do not have concrete evidence that each of them was born in America or considered themselves American. It is capitalized to denote the fact that it refers to a culture, ethnicity, and diaspora rather than a color. In the following essays, individual authors chose the terms they preferred.

In 1780, Pennsylvania passed legislation to enact gradual abolition, ensuring that the children of enslaved women would be born as indentured servants rather than as slaves. In doing so, the state became the first to pass a gradual emancipation law and became a model for freedom in many northern states. By 1787, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, properly known as the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage and for Improving the Condition of the African Race, proved an invaluable ally. Despite the gradual emancipation law in place, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, or PAS, was inundated with requests from Blacks seeking help to gain freedom. Property rights being a focal point of the American revolution, gradual emancipation compensated slaveholders by allowing them to maintain the children of enslaved women as indentured servants until the age of 28. Since the most productive years of a slave's life were spent laboring, this minimized financial losses for their masters. Between 1790 and 1800, the free Black community in Philadelphia County rapidly increased from 2,489 to 6,880. By 1820, the enslaved population dropped to 211.² Despite having the earliest and largest free black population in America, slavery was as deeply impactful in Philadelphia as it was in other parts of the state and country.

The prevalence of slavery made an impact on the Bartram family, as did manumission. Ann Bartram (1741–1824), the youngest daughter of Bartram's Garden founder John Bartram (1699–1777), signed manumission papers for a slave named Mary Clark (1755–?).³ In the documents, drafted November 26, 1792, we learn that Clark was 37 and paid Bartram 54 pounds for her release. Clark's manumission document is unique in that the reverse side contains another written agreement. Ann Bartram released a slave named Grace Clark the same day; however, she only received twelve pounds, thirteen shillings, and five pence of the thirty-pound asking price. According to the document, she released Grace with the understanding that the remaining balance would be paid within one month. Further research is needed to determine Mary's relationship to Grace, or how Grace came by the additional funds (the

remaining seventeen pounds, six shillings, and seven pence was possibly worked off). Although Ann Bartram lived in what is currently referred to as Old City—she lived on Second Street between Walnut and Chestnut Streets—and did not reside at Bartram's Garden, Clark's manumission document is an example of the institution of slavery's long reach, even in a family that was largely anti-slavery.

Members of the PAS, such as Thomas Shipley (1784–1836) and Isaac T. Hopper (1771–1852), both of whom have strong ties to the Kingsessing area, left lasting impressions on the antislavery movement in Philadelphia. Thomas Shipley was six years old when he was orphaned. In 1791, Shipley's older sister, Sarah, married Isaac Bartram, Jr., and the pair took on the responsibility of raising Thomas. Shipley and Hopper, a Quaker activist, dedicated their lives to helping Black Philadelphians fight cases of kidnapping and wrongful enslavement. In some instances, the duo found kidnapping victims, purchased them, and then had them manumitted once the victim made restitution. In other cases, they acted as legal counsel for individuals accused of being fugitive slaves. The PAS proved an invaluable ally to many in the community, such as the women bequeathed to Christopher Elliott of Kingsessing. Elliott was instructed to manumit his female slaves once the women reached the of age thirty; however, seeking instead to profit from these women, he planned to sell them into slavery in a southern state just before the birthday deadlines. Further, during their time in Elliott's possession, the women birthed a total of thirteen children. PAS members helped the women avoid being sold by threatening Elliott with legal action—contemporary state legislation outlawed intentionally selling slaves across state lines to avoid freeing them—only to find that he had sold four children to Chester County farmers and registered five other youth as slaves. Ultimately, the PAS was able to have three children released and the other six signed into indentured contracts. All nine of these children were under the age of eight.

In the Kingsessing neighborhood, there were also cases of Blacks manumitting other Blacks, generally along family lines. After purchasing a relative's freedom, the new owner would then sign manumission documents to free their family member legally. Abraham Willing was able to purchase his wife, Dinah, and son, Abraham, from Elliott, making

² W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 17. DuBois adds a comparison of population growth for context. The county's Black community grew by 176%, the white community by 43%.

³ Mary Clark and Grace Clark's manumission from Ann Bartram, 26 November 1792, Collection 0490, Box 39, Folder 11, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Clark's year of birth is an estimate based on the age referenced in the manumission papers and the date of the document.

him the legal owner of his family.⁴ However, not all manumissions made by Blacks in the township released relatives. Caesar Hodge (?–1765), a gardener who lived on Chattens Lane in Passyunk Township, amassed an estate that included four slaves, including his son-in-law, Thomas Hodge. In his will, Hodge freed Thomas and a female slave named Quashaba. He then bequeathed a slave boy named Pompey to Thomas and ordered that Quashaba's son, Friday, be bound in an apprenticeship until the age of 21.^{5,6}

A discussion on slavery and the Kingsessing area lends itself to exploring the economic impression left on the people who were the products of slavery—not just those providing the labor used but also those who built their own wealth from that labor. The community is a glaring example of the indelible fact that poverty and wealth were inextricably linked to slavery. Caesar Hodge is indicative of more than one trend in the community surrounding Bartram's Garden. While Hodge stands apart from his peers as a Black person who purchased other Black people to use their labor, he was also a part of a small group of Blacks in the community that accumulated wealth. In addition to his estate's four slaves, all of whom had a monetary value, at the time of his death Hodge also owned land and had a substantial amount of cash. As a Black slave owner, Hodge complicates our idea of who owned slaves.

Efforts to improve the economic conditions of the Kingsessing community proved extremely difficult given the racial climate of the city and ensuing discriminatory practices. Most Black women worked as seamstresses, domestics, and took in laundry, while most Black men in the area worked as laborers and farm hands. Despite the limited options available to them, Black men still fared better than Black women, earning an average of \$5 per week to women's \$3. Organizations such as the PAS and local religious groups tried offering education to combat poverty among the Black community. The Banneker School, built in 1789 on

4 Abraham Willing and Christopher Elliott contract for sale of Dinah and Abraham Willing, 29 July 1793, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 8, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

5 Will of Caesar Hodge, 18 December 1786, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 8, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Hodge actually died in 1765; however, his will was contested after his death to determine legal ownership of real estate mentioned in the document.

6 Manumission documents for the Kingsessing area are extremely limited, possibly because of inefficient recordkeeping or because they are just lost to time. However, the Pennsylvania Abolition Society has several books documenting manumissions across all of Philadelphia, although it is important to note these books are not nearly as detailed as actual manumission papers.

Darby Road (now Woodland Avenue) in Kingsessing, began educating students of color in the 1840s. The attendance was remarkably low given the number of eligible children living in the area. Isolating just one road in the town paints a startling picture. For example, there were 13 Black households on Darby Road in 1847, containing 69 residents. Of the 69 Black residents, 38 were children. The average attendance at Banneker School was only 21 students, though the school had a total of 32 enrolled students; 14 boys and 18 girls.⁷ The information available to historians on school attendance in the area must be considered in conjunction with the economic circumstances of the community. Many parents could not afford to send able-bodied children capable of earning a wage to school. Despite the availability of education, as well as the necessity—very few households show someone in the home being able to read or write, and even fewer show someone with the ability to do both—the economic condition of the community meant prioritizing work over school for many families.

Some families circumvented poverty by indenturing themselves and, in some cases, their children. As gradual emancipation laws began increasing the free Black community, the number of white servants indenturing themselves declined substantially. However, the demand for labor remained, and newly manumitted Blacks replaced white indentured servants. In the Kingsessing area, parents like Agnes Hill used indentured servitude to manage their economic struggles. Hill earned \$8 per month. She took in laundry at \$2 per week while raising five children. (Her husband remained enslaved in Virginia, and further research is needed to determine if he ever gained his freedom.) However, Hill could afford to send three of her children to school because she indentured the other two. When a parent indentured a child, the contract they signed had room for specific provisions. Parents in the community surrounding Bartram's Garden insisted that masters teach the child how to read and write or that they provide partial schooling for the child. The standard indenture contract required masters to provide food, shelter, adequate clothing, and supply the child with a skillset. In the Kingsessing area, indentured servant contracts were extremely gendered. Women and girls signed into longer contracts than men and boys. And the skillsets taught to women and girls were limited only to “housewifery.” Once the contract of a female

7 Annual Report of the Controllers of the Public Schools of the City of Philadelphia, vols. 26–30 (1843/1844–1847/1848), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076014004>. This is a slight increase from an average of 15 students in 1841. See DuBois's *Philadelphia Negro*.

servant ended, she was primarily qualified to be a domestic. Men and boys received skills that allowed them to go into more lucrative jobs and even open businesses.

While parents indentured their children as a means to provide for them, adults indentured themselves as well to avoid destitution. In the case of the Ganges Africans, in particular, the indenture contracts were negotiated for them. In August of 1800, the U.S.S. *Ganges* captured two illegal slave ships heading from Africa to Cuba. The schooners *Phoebe* and *Prudent* contained 135 Africans, and due to Philadelphia's reputation as an antislavery haven, U.S.S. *Ganges* Captain Mahoney brought the kidnapped Africans to the Port of Philadelphia. A court case ensued to determine the legal status of the Africans. All were given the surname Ganges after the name of the ship that intercepted the schooners, the courts found that the Africans should be released, and the Pennsylvania Abolition Society volunteered to act as guardians. The organization found indenture locations for each Ganges, with a number of them placed with farmers in the neighborhood surrounding Bartram's Garden. According to documents, the PAS negotiated four-year indenture terms, much shorter than commonly seen, and required that the Africans be taught to read and write during their service. Although indentured servitude is a form of unfree legal status, the efforts of the PAS were restricted to the options available to them.

In 1897, W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963) began a sociological study that examined the condition of the Black community of Philadelphia and chose the residents of the seventh ward as his subjects. However, the Black Kingsessing community shares a history that rivals the seventh ward in all aspects. The community surrounding Bartram's Garden became saddled with the same plight as many growing free Black communities around the country. The role of slavery, manumission, and indentured servitude in the history of this area runs a clear thread through the documents available to scholars. Kingsessing and Bartram's Garden stand as an excellent example of how complicated the discussion of slavery needs to be in the way we view the institution as well as how we teach slavery in the present. The Garden and the community show us the long-reaching effects of human bondage.⁸

⁸ The amount of material left to examine leaves room for more research to be done about the community and the Garden. Some questions remain about the Ganges Africans and which farmers they were placed with after receiving their freedom from the courts. Did Ann Bartram secure the remaining 17 pounds owed to her for Grace Clark's manumission? How did Maria Gibbs build her estate? Were the enrollment figures from the Banneker School comprised of indentured children? Many of the documents that can answer these questions are located at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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Philadelphia African-American Census 1847, “A statistical inquiry into the condition of the people of color of the city and districts of Philadelphia,” Swarthmore College.

Hand to Hand

Sade Black

I have been through many homes
felt the flesh above the bones
Of the slave owners,
who have thrown
me from person to person,
Never in a million years did I think
to be owned by the Negro man,
I lay in a bag inside his hand
waiting for my next owners

We are here in front of the white man
I feel the hands of my abandoner tremble
Trading me for a woman, a child, how wild
I prayed that he said no
they will work, even in snow
now git, my answer is no

PART 2

DIRECTORY

ABRAHAM WILLING

In 1781, Abraham Willing purchased his wife, Dinah Willing, and son, Abraham Willing, Jr., in Kingsessing. The sale was unusual because they belonged to Christopher Elliott. Elliott had a reputation for shady deals after he failed to honor the terms of a will that bequeathed servants to him. According to the wills of his uncle and father, Elliott was to free several slave women upon their thirtieth birthdays. However, two of the women birthed nine children before their release, and Elliott believed the children to be his slaves. He sold four of them to farmers in Chester County and registered five of them as slaves. Through the efforts of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS), Elliott was forced to free the women and three of the children. Six of the remaining nine children were signed into indentured servant contracts. Due to the timeframe of Willing's manumission documents and the work of the PAS, there is a possibility that Dinah Willing was one of the several women bequeathed to Elliott. Abraham Willing secured his wife and son for 30 pounds.

Sources: Abraham Willing and Christopher Elliott contract for sale of Dinah and Abraham Willing, 29 July 1793, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 8, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Gary B. Nash, Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

AGNES HILL

Hill was a mother of five living on Darby Road (now Woodland Avenue) in 1847. She worked as a washerwoman, earning \$2 per week.* Agnes Hill was a single parent (her husband remained enslaved in Virginia) with three children attending the Oak Street School and two children serving as indentured servants. By indenturing two of her children outside the home, Hill was able to ensure that they were provided for. As a way of circumventing poverty, some parents chose to sign children into indentured servitude contracts. While the documents do not explain how Hill chose which of her five children to send to work outside the home, it is possible that she chose the children old enough to work. Hill's family shared a home with another family resulting in 8 people sharing 2 rooms.

**\$2 per week equates to \$217.95 per month based on inflation figures as of 2014.*

Source: Philadelphia African-American Census 1847, "A statistical inquiry into the condition of the people of color of the city and districts of Philadelphia," Swarthmore College.

Black was a resident of Darby Road in 1847. Employed as a domestic worker, Black earned \$8 per month to support her family of five. As the sole source of income in her home, Ann Black received public aid, receiving one half of a cord* of firewood during the winter months to help heat her home.

ANN BLACK

**A half a cord of firewood is measured at 4 ft. x 4 ft. x 4 ft. and would fit in the bed of a regular sized pick-up truck.*

Source: Philadelphia African-American Census 1847, "A statistical inquiry into the condition of the people of color of the city and districts of Philadelphia," Swarthmore College.

BANNEKER SCHOOL

(PASCHALVILLE SCHOOL)

The schoolhouse, originally constructed in 1789 near Mud Lane and Paschall Avenue (in the vicinity of modern Woodland and 70th Street), was initially used to educate white boys. While there is not clear evidence of when the school began to allow students of color, surviving material on the school suggests that Black students started attending the school by the 1840s but had low attendance rates compared to schools for white students. For example, average attendance among students of color was 20 in 1844. The neighboring school for white students averaged 54 students. Also, the teacher of the Black students received an annual salary of \$120, while the teacher of white students at neighboring schools received \$250. The Banneker School was torn down in the 1930s.

Sources: W. E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 61; Annual Report of the Controllers of the Public Schools of the City of Philadelphia, vols. 26–30 (1843/1844–1847/1848), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076014004>.

*Banneker School, 1908.
Photo courtesy of PhillyHistory.org*



Founded in 1826 by six Black women and men, the Blockley African Baptist Church was one of two Baptist churches established in Philadelphia, a city where Blacks were predominantly Methodist. Blockley African Baptist Church was organized in the home of Abel and Ebba Ward. Sarah Black, Jacob Gardner, Nancy Francis, and George H. Black were also present for the inaugural meeting. George H. Black would go on to serve as the church's first pastor. Blockley African Baptist Church was the closest Black church available to the Black community of Kingsessing.

BLOCKLEY AFRICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Sources: Monumental Baptist Church History, <https://www.thembc.org/history>; Gary B. Nash, Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

A Black gardener from Passyunk Township, Caesar Hodge (?–1765) amassed an estate that included land and four slaves. Hodge's last will freed his son-in-law, Thomas, and his slave woman, Quashaba. He bound Quashaba's son into an apprenticeship until the age of 21 and gave his slave boy, Pompey, to Thomas as an inheritance. In 1786, Hodge's will was contested to determine the legal ownership of the property he owned on Chattens Lane.

CAESAR HODGE

Source: Will of Caesar Hodge, 18 December 1786, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 8, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Williams was a laborer living on Darby Road in 1847. Daniel Williams earned \$12 monthly, supporting a family of three. Williams, his wife, and their child occupied a two-room home with four other people. Williams was born enslaved and was owned and then manumitted by Major Philip Reybold of Delaware. Born in Philadelphia, Major Reybold owned and operated peach farms in Delaware and Maryland.

DANIEL WILLIAMS

Sources: Philadelphia African-American Census 1847, "A statistical inquiry into the condition of the people of color of the city and districts of Philadelphia," Swarthmore College; Delaware Federal Writers' Project, Delaware: A Guide to the First State (US History Publishers, 1955), 468.

DARBY ROAD

Originally named King's Highway, Darby Road was home to twelve Black households in 1847. The Black households on Darby Road contained 69 people; 38 of them were children. The average household income was \$18.50 per month, the average household size was six people, and five of the twelve homes ran on less than \$10 per month. The occupations of the residents varied: most men worked as laborers while most women took in laundry and did domestic work. Men made an average of \$5 each week while women earned \$3 per week. Darby Road was later renamed Woodland Avenue.

Heads of Households on Darby Road:

Ann Black
 Frances Boggs
 Jacob Fetterman
 Mary Fransis
 John Henry
 Agnes Hill
 William Jackson
 Lewis B. Martin
 Nathan Selsby
 Martha Shephard
 Daniel Williams

Source: Philadelphia African-American Census 1847, "A statistical inquiry into the condition of the people of color of the city and districts of Philadelphia," Swarthmore College.

FREE BLACKS LIVING AT BARTRAM'S GARDEN

Free Blacks are known to be living at Bartram's Garden as early as 1790, where census records show one "free persons all other." Despite the record not recording the sex of the individual, it is widely believed that the free Black person referenced is, as previously mentioned, Harvey. Later documents, up to 1850, show a growing number of free Blacks on the property, implying that a free Black family possibly lived at Bartram's Garden, in the Bartram house, during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Source: Year: 1790; Census Place: Kingsessing Town, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Series: M637; Roll: 9; Page: 277; Image: 557; Family History Library Film: 0568149.

GEORGE HILTON

Hilton, once an indentured servant to William Hamilton, became an integral part of running the farm and estate garden The Woodlands, now located at Woodlands Cemetery on Woodland Avenue. Hilton is referenced many times in the letters of William Hamilton. He discussed George Hilton staying in his employ after his indentured servitude contract expired as well as Hilton's traveling with Hamilton to London in 1784. Upon their return to Philadelphia, Hamilton frequently entrusted George with the task of shopping for certain goods and tools for the farm; he was also responsible for the planting and maintenance in the extensive gardens and farm at The Woodlands. There are even suggestions that Hamilton sent George Hilton on botanic expeditions to southern New Jersey and western Pennsylvania to collect rare plants. According to sources, Hilton remained with the Hamilton family until (at least) William's death in 1813. In his will, Hamilton left cash to Hilton and his family.

Source: James A. Jacobs, "William Hamilton and The Woodlands: A Construction of Refinement in Philadelphia," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, vol. 130, no. 2 (April 2006), p. 181-209.

“HARVEY”

Harvey has been described as a trusted and loyal slave manumitted by John Bartram (1699–1777). Although there is as yet no direct historical record of Harvey, early biographical accounts of John Bartram from the 1780s onward mention that Bartram freed “a most valuable male slave, then in the prime of his life, who had been bred up in the family almost from his infancy.” The first name “Harvey” only appears in a short printed account of Bartram’s Garden in 1860, and from then on frequent references to Harvey appeared in advertisements and illustrations depicting John Bartram and the Garden in the early twentieth century. Laden with racist undertones, the images of Harvey conveyed the stereotypes of blacks in their era. Harvey, whose last name is unknown, is said to have remained at the Garden and acted as steward on the farm after receiving his freedom. Harvey is believed to be buried on the southeast corner of the Garden near the Schuylkill River. The grave site was marked into the early twentieth century.

Sources: William Bartram, “Some Account of the Late Mr. John Bartram, of Pennsylvania,” Philadelphia Medical and Physical Journal, vol.1, part 1 (1804), p. 115–124; Thomas H. Keels, Philadelphia Graveyards and Cemeteries (Philadelphia: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 80; Bartram’s Garden, Philadelphia, Pa...: John Bartram, Born Near Darby, Pa., 23rd March, 1699, Died at Bartram’s Garden, 22nd September, 1777 (John Bartram Association, Philadelphia: J.J. McVey, 1907).

*"Grave of an Old Slave," 1890s, Wallace Photos, Phila.
Photo courtesy of the John Bartram Association, Townsend Collection.*



On November 26, 1792, Mary and Grace Clark were manumitted by Ann Bartram (1741–1824), the youngest daughter of Bartram’s Garden founder, John Bartram (1699–1777). Mary Clark (1755–?) purchased her freedom from Bartram for 54 pounds and arranged for the freedom of Grace Clark. Grace was freed for 30 pounds. However, only 12 pounds, 13 shillings, and 5 pence towards Grace’s account were paid to Ann Bartram that day, and the pair agreed that the balance was due within one month.

MARY AND GRACE CLARK

Source: Mary Clark and Grace Clark’s manumission from Ann Bartram, 26 November 1792, Collection 0490, Box 39, Folder 11, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

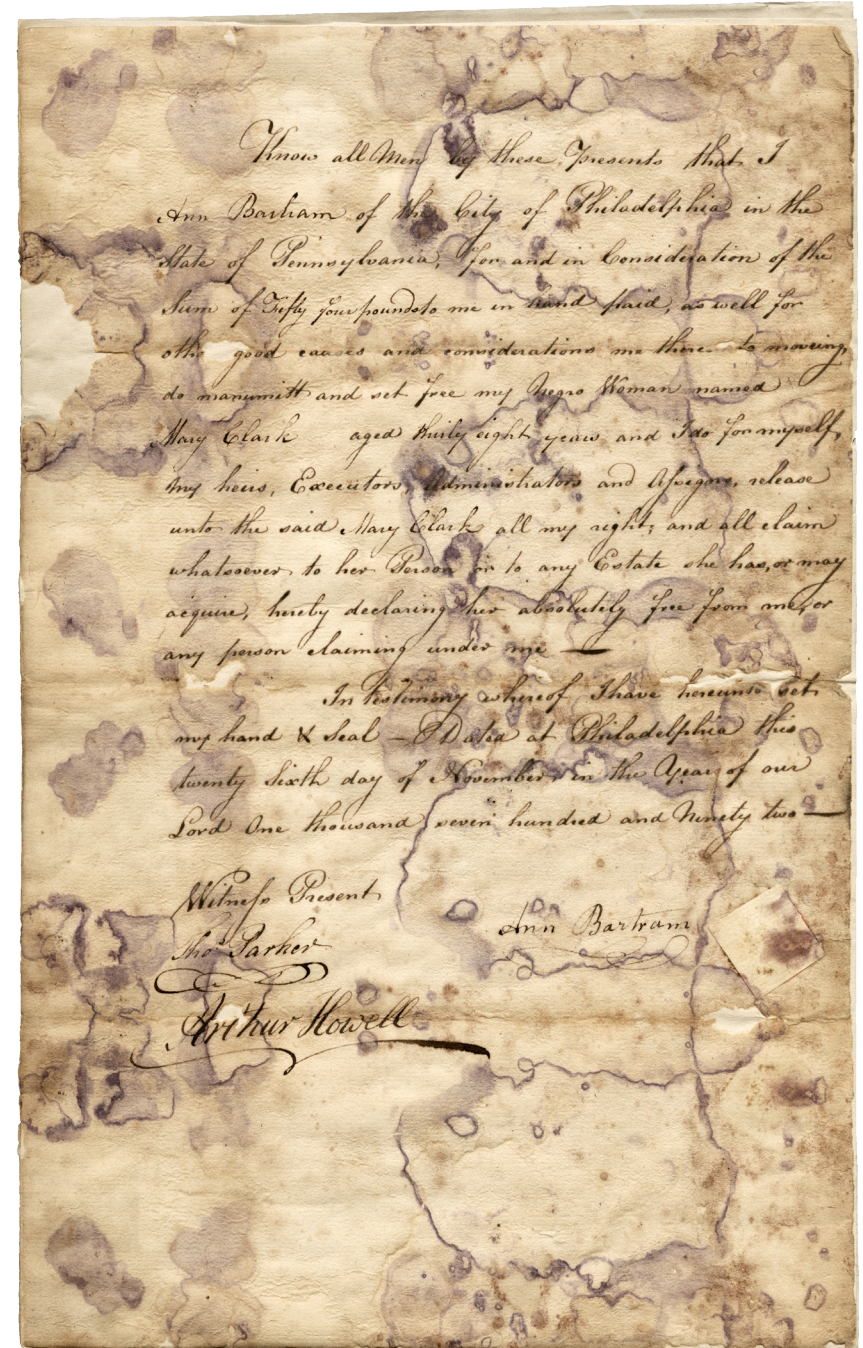
Know all men by these presents that I Ann Bartram of the City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania, for and in consideration of the sum of fifty four pounds to me in hand paid, as well for other good causes and considerations are there so moving, do manumit and set free my negro woman named Mary Clark aged thirty eight years and I do for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, release unto the said Mary Clark all my right; and all claim whatsoever to her person or to any estate she has, or may acquire, hereby declaring her absolutely free from me, or any person claiming under me —

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal —
Dated at Philadelphia this twenty sixth day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety two —

Witness Present,

Tho[mas] Parker
Arthur Howell

Ann Bartram



Mary and Grace Clark manumission document (front).
Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (490), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Receiv'd November 26^t 1792 of Grace Clark twelve pounds thirteen shillings & five pence in part of Thirty pounds which I am to receive as a compensation for her Liberty —

Ann Bartram

£12—13—5 the Balance to be paid in one month from this Date

Manumission B
Ann Bartram to
Negro Mary Clarke
Recorded in the Pennsylvania
abolition society book A page 146
Benj. Johnson



Mary and Grace Clark manumission document (back).
Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (490), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

MILNOR GANGES

Milnor Ganges was signed into indentured servitude by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society after being seized by the U.S.S. *Ganges*. Similar to the others found on board the illegal slave ship schooner *Phoebe*, Milnor's contract stipulated that his master provide him with sufficient lodging, clothing, and food. But the differences between Milnor's contract and some of the others indicates that he was much younger. Milnor Ganges was indentured to the same farmer as Sambo Ganges, Joseph Rhoades of Blockley Township. Milnor's contract bound him to Rhoades for ten years and required that he receive "three quarters day schooling" implying that Milnor was a child. Longer terms were standard practice for indentured contracts involving children, allowing them to reach adulthood before beginning to create a life for themselves.

Source: Milnor Ganges's indenture contract with Joseph Rhoades, 17 December 1800, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 22, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Born enslaved, Nathan Selsby was manumitted by William Selsby of Virginia before moving to Philadelphia. By 1847 Selsby lived on Darby Road with his family of nine. Working as a laborer, Selsby made \$350 annually. His wife brought in \$96 per year, and two of his children earned a combined \$180 each year. Selsby owned real estate valued at \$300 with an eighteen-year mortgage and \$2 tax. While three people in the household were able to read, only two attended the local Oak Street School.

NATHAN SELSBY

Source: Philadelphia African-American Census 1847, "A statistical inquiry into the condition of the people of color of the city and districts of Philadelphia," Swarthmore College.

OAK STREET SCHOOL

While the Oak Street School does not appear in Philadelphia's earliest annual report of the Controller of Public Schools, the Philadelphia African-American Census of 1847 (conducted by the Society of Friends) showed a significant number of Black children attending the Oak Street School. Seven of the households on Darby Road had children attending school; five of those households had children attending Oak Street School. In 1847, the Oak Street School had twelve enrolled students. By 1858 the school's enrollment jumped to 66 students, with an average attendance of 36 students, and the salary for the school's teacher was \$300 per year. In comparison, the nearby school for white students, Greenway Unclassified School, had an average attendance of 85 students with a principal and teacher. Greenway's principal earned \$300 a year, and their teacher received \$200.

Sources: Annual Report of the Controllers of the Public Schools of the City of Philadelphia, vols. 26–30 (1843/1844–1847/1848), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433076014004>; Ibid., 1858; W. E. B. DuBois, The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 85.

PENNSYLVANIA ABOLITION SOCIETY

The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery and for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage initially began in 1775 and reorganized in 1784. Despite the organization's work for bettering the day-to-day lives of Black people, many members were best known for assisting Blacks with the results of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. Congress passed the legislation to discourage Blacks from escaping slavery and fleeing to free states. The new law allowed slaveholders to cross state lines to pursue runaway slaves. Many slaveholders sent hired agents on their behalf to places like Philadelphia to recover their slaves. However, the law made no provisions for the protection of free Blacks, who found themselves at the mercy of slave catchers. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society took on court cases to defend free Blacks accused of being runaway slaves while also working to help actual fugitive slaves avoid being returned to slavery. The organization monitored some indentured contracts to ensure the release of Black servants once their contracts expired and frequently petitioned Congress to abolish slavery. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society is still an active group combating racism and working to improve the lives of Black people living in Pennsylvania.

Sources: Pennsylvania Abolition Society, <http://www.paabolition.org>; Richard S. Newman, The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

As one of the Africans found onboard the U.S.S. *Ganges*, Sambo was signed into an indentured servant contract by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. Sambo Ganges was indentured to Joseph Rhoades of Blockley Township for four years. During that time, Rhoades was required to feed, clothe, and shelter Sambo. Rhoades was also to teach Sambo Ganges farming skills and how to read and write.

SAMBO GANGES

Source: Sambo Ganges's indenture contract with Joseph Rhoades, 17 December 1800, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 22, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

THOMAS SHIPLEY

Orphaned at the age of 6, Thomas Shipley (1784–1836) was raised by his older sister, Sarah, and her husband, Isaac Bartram, Jr. (grandson of John Bartram, founder of Bartram’s Garden). Shipley joined the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS) in 1817, eventually becoming president of the organization. Shipley dedicated his life to working for the betterment of the Black community in Philadelphia. After joining the PAS, Shipley took an interest in the laws that affected the Black community and made significant efforts to use the law to his advantage. Shipley, along with Isaac T. Hopper, a fellow member of the PAS, frequently received requests to assist Blacks that were being held on suspicion of being fugitive slaves as well as those that were unjustly sold into slavery.

Source: Brief memoirs of Thomas Shipley and Edwin P. Atlee: read before the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c., October 1837.

U.S.S. GANGES

In August of 1800, two illegal slave ships were confiscated by a U.S. naval warship named the *Ganges*. Aboard the ships, schooners *Phoebe* and *Prudent*, a total of 135 naked Africans were found en route from West Africa to Havana, Cuba. After being brought to Philadelphia, they were sent to the old Lazaretto quarantine hospital on Province Island at the mouth of the Schuylkill, while a court case determining their legal status was under way. The courts found that the Africans were legally free and placed into the guardianship of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS). The PAS secured indentured servant contracts for the new Philadelphians, each given the surname Ganges. The indentured Africans from the *Phoebe* entered into contracts that varied in length depending on age and were assigned trades based on gender. Women were to be trained in the skill of “housewifery” and most men learned farming-related skills. The contracts differed from typical indentured contracts of the time because they required that the Ganges Africans be taught to read. At least seven individuals were placed on farms in and surrounding the Kingsessing community. The surname “Ganges” has survived among African-Americans due to the assimilation of the Africans from the *Phoebe* into Philadelphia’s free Black community.

Source: Materials on the U.S.S. Ganges, Collection 0490, Box 2, Folder 22, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Agnes Hill

Tykia Jerry

I'm struggling.
How could I not be?
It's the story of my momma and papa. My old grandmother and
grandfather.

I sometimes think that I was born to struggle. Born in struggle. Born
because of struggle.

But that changed when I was freed
from the manacles that shackled my tribe, my family.
I only left one behind. But soon he will join me too.
Join my tribe and my family once more.

But only if I can get out of this struggle.
Money too little struggle.
My tribe too big struggle.
Two will have to go. Or maybe three. No, no, just two. The two will
have to go struggle.
But who will it be? Who will struggle? Who will know of struggle
before they know what struggle is?
Oh, how can I do this? Why must I do this? No, no, I won't do this!
They can not know of struggle.
I promised this to him when I left him behind. I promised they would
know nothing of struggle.

But I am struggling.
Feeding five mouths on a few dollars
ain't working no more.

I guess that's why I am here.
In front of a white door. Standing on a black mat.
With two broken promises behind me.

PART 3

CONTEXT

BLACK HISTORY, KINGSESSING, AND SANKOFA

Chris Bolden-Newsome

Give thanks to the Power, Who woke us up this morning and put us in our right mind—so far. And to our ancestors, on whose shoulders we stand.

Since I was a little boy I have always been interested in the Story. Where a thing comes from, what (and who) went into its making—these notions have always drawn my interest. My hunger for narrative did not include my own embarrassingly “ordinary” African American culture. The cultures of the African Diaspora in British North America—one of which I was born into in the Mississippi Delta—are collectively a jewel whose value has been unrecognized or sold cheaply. Black people have often not recognized the worth of what we carry, the story of our survival and thriving. The implications of this neglect are far-reaching. Like so many of the African Diaspora, I took my culture, with its banjo blues and bubbling pots of crowder peas, as little more than steam and twanging strings.

There was no moment that this changed for me. My need to know my people simply grew the way a leaf sprouts and then seems to have always been there. I now understand that the narrative of a person and a people’s history is most of what makes them and so it becomes our duty to document our existence as a light for our progeny.

This practice of gathering and engaging the story of the African Diaspora in order to understand who we are and where we might be going is wisely articulated in our original West African cultures through the concept “Sankofa.” In the Twi language of Ghana—the place through

which many of our ancestors passed to come to America—it is said, “Se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenkyi!” Or, “Ain’t nothing wrong with going back to get what you left!” At the Farm we take this wise word seriously and work daily to apply the concept of Sankofa in the field, in the classroom, and in the kitchen with as many of our neighbors as we can. This means, for example, that we focus on growing out foods and products traditional to African American culture alongside crops grown by other people’s ancestors, and we handle these crops with constant reflection and devotion from seed to plate. We remind and teach our community members to use these crops as a way of moving our community toward a greater sense of wholeness, of health. The idea of ritual, always a crucial tool for Black people’s psychic survival, takes a more central place in our work than at many other urban farms. At Sankofa, the act of farming itself is a ritualized form of practical living; we observe the field, in prayerful intention, we do what she needs, always looking back to our ancestors’ practices as we work. We honor evolution because we are affirming that history is being made with every breath and every movement.

This work of engaging our story seems to me more important every day in the historically complicated and increasingly egocentric and technology dependent American identity which most Black folks in North America also wear. When I was growing up in the Southern U.S., I was taught the cosmic rightness of U.S. exceptionalism. This mighty nation, folks said, is exceptional mostly because it is the only country on earth where people are “free.” This “freedom” I learned, birthed the forward march of progress and bound Americans to never look back. Such an identity by design kills any self-reflection on the ubiquitous second-class citizenship that Black people experience so often that it becomes invisible even to Black people. To take on and promote such an anti-historical identity works well for colonizing and capitalizing the Earth, while controlling distinct cultures like that of my people.

In this context, lifting up African American Diaspora culture is a transgressive act. Living the story of our people by naming and growing out, cooking, selling, and exchanging the foods and crops that our ancestors bred and depended upon is a way of reminding ourselves and the world that we are here, we made it, and we plan on continuing to live in the abundance of the Earth.

In our community of Southwest Philadelphia, we need this news. When I was called to help start the work of cultural recovery at Sankofa Farm six

years ago, I was shocked and saddened by how little of our story had been recorded in the first person. Our neighborhood, known formerly as the Kingsessing Township, has a crushingly beautiful and complex story that is only recently being lifted up in a meaningful way by historian Sharece Blakney.

The Black experience in this neighborhood is long and tenacious. As an African American southerner, the realities of Black northern life were for years mysterious to me. Sharece’s research taught me that Black life in nineteenth-century Kingsessing was just as vibrant and maybe more dangerous than the enslaved south which was my reference. I can’t imagine, nor could my elders in Mississippi, what it might have been like to come north from slavery and the south, live in the cold climate, under constant threat of losing freedom that one had often purchased after years. The neighborhood around Bartram’s Garden holds tales of families forced to indenture (and thus endanger) their children as a means of staying “free” in a nominally free state. Many Whites, even those from “liberal” families, were deaf to the struggles of Black people, and though Pennsylvania was a legally free state, few White people would risk social disgrace by helping end slavery, though it was against the beliefs of many White Pennsylvanians. I can’t conceive of holding a definition of freedom that even permitted Black folks to enslave other Black folks in this neighborhood, or trying to develop and pass on any culture at all. And yet, Blacks in Kingsessing did preserve and develop culture.

It is a part of the work of the Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram’s Garden to identify and name the legacy of Black Southwest/Kingsessing, document it, and apply what is good in it to our own survival and sovereignty. The field teaches a thousand lessons a day and we pray to be able to internalize as much as we can from sun to sun. The promise that survival in North America and in Philadelphia especially holds out is that everything we ever needed is still here! As a people bought here for our knowledge and agricultural prowess, Black people have a particular access to the healing that the Earth in balance offers. I am eager through this work to re-member all that was useful for our continued existence and to return it all for our time and in our context.

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM AT BARTRAM'S GARDEN

Joel T. Fry

African Americans have been part of the community in Kingsessing Township (modern Southwest Philadelphia) from the earliest period of European colonization. African slaves were present in small numbers in the early Swedish and Dutch colonial settlements of the Lower Schuylkill and Delaware by the middle of the seventeenth century. English colonists who followed under the Duke of York after 1664 and then under William Penn in the 1680s also imported African slaves, brought from the established plantation colonies in the Caribbean and also transported directly from Africa. Quakers and non-Quakers alike in Pennsylvania owned slaves.

There is little evidence that the Bartram family in Pennsylvania owned slaves in this early period, from the first immigration by early Quakers John and Elizabeth Bartram in the 1680s from Ashbourne in Derbyshire, England. Slaves do not appear in wills or inventories of the early generations of Bartrams in Darby, Pennsylvania. Less is known about the maternal grandparents of John Bartram the botanist—James Hunt and Elizah Chambers. These families were Quakers from wealthy merchant families in Kent, England, and both these families were close to the Penn family and to the political and economic organizers of the Pennsylvania colony. From their class and status in the early colony, the Hunt or Chambers families could have owned slaves.

There is limited historic evidence that John Bartram (1699–1777), the botanist and founder of Bartram's Garden, acquired a single slave. Early biographical accounts of Bartram beginning in 1782 mention a slave, "an excellent young African whom he had brought up," that John Bartram

freed. Later generations of the Bartram family elaborate and repeat the history of this individual, and as late as 1860 he was first given a name: “Harvey,” based on family history or legend. So far it has been impossible to prove if that name is historically accurate, and only a few ambiguous eighteenth-century documents provide support for a Black servant in the Bartram household during the life of John Bartram. But there is physical evidence of a grave at Bartram’s Garden, attributed to this free Black individual, or “Harvey.” That grave site was marked with a marble head and footstone in the nineteenth century and remained marked in the early history of the city park at Bartram’s Garden, perhaps with some marker into the mid-twentieth century.

The earliest biographical account of the botanist John Bartram was published in 1782 by the French author Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, usually named J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in English. Crèvecoeur’s long, somewhat dramatized account of a visit to Bartram’s Garden was based on an actual visit of several days, around 1766 to 1770. Crèvecoeur’s account of Bartram was published as “Letter XI, From Mr. Iw—n Al—z, a Russian Gentleman; Describing the Visit He Paid at My Request to Mr. John Bertram, The Celebrated Pennsylvanian Botanist,” in *Letters from an American Farmer...* first published in English in London in 1782, and then enlarged and reprinted in French in Paris in 1784. Crèvecoeur described a large family meal at the Bartram house:

We entered into a large hall, where there was a long table full of victuals; at the lowest part sat his Negroes, his hired men were next, then the family and myself; and at the head, the venerable father and his wife presided....

There is good reason to suspect Crèvecoeur combined visits with several Philadelphia-area Quakers into his portrait of John Bartram, and from the setting of his tale, he confused the labor force he saw, which was a large community-wide gathering building dikes and drainage works for the meadows in Kingsessing. Crèvecoeur’s book was in part a literary and political argument against slavery in America, and he arranged facts and accounts to suit his argument. Still, a speech he places in John Bartram’s mouth may be a good presentation of white Quaker attitudes to slavery in the 1760s in the neighborhood of Philadelphia:

We gave them freedom, and yet few have quitted their ancient masters. The women breed in our families, and we become attached to

one another. I taught mine to read and to write; they love God and fear His judgements. The oldest person among them transacts my business in Philadelphia, with a punctuality, from which he has never deviated. They constantly attend our meetings; they participate in health and sickness, infancy and old age, in the advantages our society affords. Such are the means we have made use of to relieve them from that bondage and ignorance in which they were kept before. Thee perhaps hast been surprised to see them at my table, but by elevating them to the rank of freemen, they necessarily acquire that emulation without which we ourselves should fall into debasement and profligate ways.

It cannot be said the Bartram family were free of any complicity in the economic system of African slavery, which was a major economic pillar of colonial North America. John Bartram’s father, William Bartram (1674–1711), planned to move his family to North Carolina in the early 1710s and was killed there in 1711 in violence with the Tuscarora nation, who opposed further English settlement. A younger half-brother of John Bartram, William Bartram (1711–1770), returned to the Cape Fear River district of North Carolina and established a very large rice plantation with a large slave labor force by the middle of the eighteenth century. John Bartram visited that plantation, Ashwood, several times in the 1760s, and eventually sent his son, also named William Bartram (1739–1823), to live at Ashwood from 1761 until 1765. The youngest William Bartram was the most famous Bartram offspring: he followed his father as a botanist and traveler, eventually publishing a scientific and literary account of own Southern explorations as *Travels...* in 1791.

The time he spent at Ashwood on the Cape Fear River had a significant effect on young William Bartram of Bartram’s Garden. He left North Carolina in mid-1765 to travel south with his father, newly appointed as King’s Botanist, on a long trip through the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. In 1766, at the end of the trip, William convinced his father to allow him to settle on the St. Johns River in Florida, where British imperial law required the importation of slaves into Florida to patent and settle land in the new colony. Son William persuaded his father, much against the latter’s will, to purchase six slaves in Charleston, South Carolina, to be transported to Florida. Letters from John Bartram record much detail on this purchase, along with his strong belief that it was a mistake. The father was correct, as William’s plantation effort failed within a single summer, by fall of 1766. There is no historic record of what happened to

the Africans brought to Florida by the Bartrams—possibly they fled to freedom.

There is another known transaction in the 1770s, when William Bartram was involved directly or indirectly in selling a slave. In spring 1773, as he was arranging to depart Philadelphia for his long southern botanic trip funded by the London Quaker Dr. John Fothergill, William assigned a slave deed to his brother-in-law George Bartram. (George Bartram was a Scots-born merchant, not a Quaker, and was not related to the Pennsylvania Bartrams. George Bartram [1735–1777] married a Bartram daughter, Ann Bartram [1741–1824], in 1764, and she appears in the “Directory” of historic data on African American history in Kingsessing. Widowed early, Ann inherited substantial property and a major business. She long lived in the urban part of the City of Philadelphia.)

The transaction, documented on a small scrap of paper written in several hands, transferred the property of one slave, a “certain Negro Woman Named Jenny,” in February 1772 from Thomas Robeson of North Carolina to William Bartram. On March 20, 1773, William then transferred all title to the slave to his brother-in-law George Bartram. This paper transfer probably covered the transfer of funds or a debt owed to William Bartram from North Carolina—and the human collateral, Jenny, probably remained in North Carolina. Human collateral and debt and credit based on slaves underpinned the U. S. economy until the end of slavery.

During and after the American Revolution, the Bartram family in Philadelphia, including William Bartram, gradually moved to a public antislavery position. Around 1783, several members of the family signed a petition to the Pennsylvania assembly calling for a halt to the outfitting of ships for the slave trade in the state. John Bartram’s sons—James Bartram, John Bartram, Jr., and William Bartram, all living in Kingsessing—signed this petition and potentially signed or supported other antislavery efforts. John Bartram, Jr. joined the Pennsylvania Abolition Society in July 1786, and in the same period three sons of another Bartram brother, Moses Bartram, joined, as did several Bartram in-laws like Dr. Benjamin Say, who sometimes served as an officer in the Pennsylvania Society.

William Bartram, once a slaveholder, composed a strident antislavery address in the mid-1780s that is preserved in his handwriting, written out in draft on the back of a copy of the Bartram family broadside plant catalogue of 1783. The text reads like a passionate public address, perhaps

intended for the Congress, under the Articles of Confederation. There is no confirmation if this draft antislavery address was ever submitted or read in any public way. Bartram quoted the Declaration of Independence and biblical law and predicted divine and political calamity to the young United States if slavery was not ended. “Consider God is no Respector of Persons, & that the Black White Red & Yellow People are equally dear to him & under his protection & favour.”

In 1788 William Bartram, then long-resident at the Garden in Kingsessing, wrote to his cousin Mary Bartram Robeson in North Carolina. She and her husband, Col. Thomas Robeson, had inherited the Ashwood plantation on the Cape Fear River. William ended the letter with a short recognition of or perhaps apology to the Black families at Ashwood:

please present my Regard to all the Families of the Black People; They were kind & very serviceble to me; I wish it were in my power to Reward their fidelity & benevolence to me. I often Remember them; These acknowledgment at least, are due from me to them, altho they are Negroes & Slaves.

At the end of the eighteenth century there is demographic evidence for a small number of Free Black residents at Bartram’s Garden. In the early U. S. census returns for 1790, 1800, and 1810 there is a single Free Black individual recorded with the Bartram family at Bartram’s Garden, as well as a single Free Black individual at the household of James Bartram, who owned the farm north of Bartram’s Garden extending to Gray’s Ferry. From 1820 to 1850, when John Bartram’s granddaughter Ann and her husband, Col. Robert Carr, operated Bartram’s Garden, a small family of free African Americans are recorded living at the Garden: an adult male and female and children. In early census records prior to 1850 no personal names are given except for the single male (or more rarely female) head of household. Through this period from 1790 to 1850 the Free Black individuals are recorded as part of the Bartram family household, presumably living in the Bartram house. In the 1850 census, which for the first time gives names for all individuals, the family of Andrew M. Eastwick has replaced Ann and Robert Carr, and no African Americans were recorded at Bartram’s Garden. But by 1850 there was a growing community of free African Americans living in Kingsessing along the Darby Road and at farms and households in the township.

ROOTS DEEP: A GANGES HISTORY

Qiana Ganges

Growing up, I was aware that my last name was not as common as, say, Smith or Williams. The only people I knew with the last name Ganges were my family members. That's why when I found out there was a teacher in my high school also with the last name Ganges, I knew we had to be related. I finally had a chance to go to the teacher's classroom and was slightly disappointed when I saw Mr. Gangi's name on the door.

Thinking back, I wonder where that disappointment came from—especially since I already knew relatives with whom I shared a last name. I think some of it came from wanting a family member as a teacher. Some of my classmates' moms and dads taught at my high school and they were some of the best teachers; they challenged your thinking, made you laugh and honored the contributions of each student. I didn't make the connection at that time, but looking back I also believe some of that disappointment came from wanting to know my story, who my people were and where we came from.

As I entered my early twenties, my last name never left my mind. Sometimes, it was like background music and other times it was like having the hook of a song you like stuck in your head, playing over and over again. There was once a time where it felt like the music stopped abruptly: I was spelling my first and last name as I often had to do, and I was asked if my last name was spelled like the river in India. Yes, it was. And from that moment, every time I said my last name, heard it, saw it, or wrote it, I wondered, "Am I Indian? Are my people from India?"

This was one of those times I was glad to live in the digital age. The

computer screen, glowing on my face, showed well over a million results for the search term “Ganges”. This was the closest I ever was. There had to be something amongst these pages and pages of information. I read until my eyeballs burned, begging for sleep. I learned that the Ganges River was powerful and sacred to millions of Hindus who bathed in the river to honor their ancestors and gods and wash away sins. I was able to see the beautiful images of our Hindu brothers and sisters engaging in this ritual. I didn’t find anything that explained how I got my last name, but I felt connected to the river and wondered if one day I would join them.

I have yet to make my pilgrimage to the Ganges River and to my knowledge, no family connections to India have been made. However, in the early 2000s, my dad and his twin brother were contacted by local historian David Barnes. He revealed that we are likely descendants of enslaved Africans who, in 1800, were captured off the coast of Cuba by a U.S. Navy warship, the U.S.S. *Ganges*. An estimated 135 Africans were discovered aboard two illegal U.S. slave ships, *Phoebe* and *Prudent*. All of the Africans were taken to Philadelphia where they were indentured to work for local families and given the last name Ganges.

In many ways, I was a stranger to the truth of slavery. Back in the mid-90s, when I was in high school, slavery was only discussed during Black History Month and much of what we learned did little to reveal it as “a system of violence, an assault on black bodies, black families, and black institutions” (Coates). There certainly was no mention of the duality of abolitionist sentiment in America or the legacy of slavery. There is no doubt in my mind that it would have been painful and challenging to have these conversations, but watering down the truth makes it more difficult for us to put what tiny pieces of our history we have back together. I am so grateful to have a piece of my story and it isn’t just for me and my family. It’s for all of us. We come from survivors.

This was brought into sharper relief this year when I began working as Assistant Farm Manager for Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram’s Garden. Sharece Blakney’s research of black life in Southwest Philadelphia pre-Civil War found that some of my Ganges ancestors were indentured to “farmers in the neighborhood surrounding Bartram’s Garden.” She also shared the original indentured servant contracts of two of my ancestors, Milnor and Sambo Ganges (following). Like many enslaved Africans, Sambo, unable to read and write English, signed his contract making two lines to form an X, a reminder that his name was not his own nor was

his signature. I thought about his life and Milnor’s and what it must have been like to be abruptly taken from your native land and made to live in someone else’s. Ultimately, that is what Milnor, Sambo and many other enslaved Africans from the U.S.S. *Ganges* did and why there are many Ganges descendants still living in Philadelphia today.

I don’t know if I am a direct descendant of Milnor and Sambo, but they are my ancestors, nonetheless. Their story is the story of how my people came here and made a life for those that came after them. For us.

Perhaps it is tempting to call the timing of Sharece’s research and my work at Sankofa Community Farm a remarkable coincidence, but that diminishes everything our ancestors did to survive. They are why I am here—their blood, their sweat, their tears, their hopes, their dreams. They are why I am who I am, for without them, I am nothing. They give me strength. They show me that I can only be who I am by knowing who they were.

Today, I am still uncovering more about my ancestors’ story. And as I move forward, they are with me. Strong. Resilient. Feet to the ground. Roots deep.

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Coates, Ta-Nehisi. “The Case for Reparations.” *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

THIS INDENTURE witnesseth

THAT *Milnor* Ganges, by and with the consent of ROBERT PATTERSON and THOMAS HARRISON, members of the Pennsylvania Incorporated Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, he being one of those persons captured on board the Phebe, by the sloop of war the Ganges, commanded by John Maloney, Esq. hath put *him* self and by these Presents, the said *Milnor* Ganges doth voluntary and of *his* own free will and accord, put *him* self Apprentice to *Joseph Rhoades, of Blackley Township, Philadelphia County, Penna*

to learn *his* Art, Trade and Mystery, and after the manner of an Apprentice to serve him the said *Joseph Rhoades* his Heirs and Assigns from the day of the date hereof, for and during, and to the full end and term of *four* years next ensuing. During all which term the said Apprentice *he is* said Master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands every where readily obey.

he shall do no damage to *his* said Master's goods, nor see it to be done by others, without letting or giving notice thereof to *his* said Master. he shall not waste *his* said Master's goods, nor lend them unlawfully to any. he shall not commit fornication, nor contract matrimony within the said term.

he shall not play at cards, dice, or any other unlawful game, whereby *he is* said Master may have damage. With *his* own goods nor the goods of others, without licence from *his* said Master, he shall neither buy nor sell.

he shall not absent *him* self day nor night from *his* said Master's service without *his* leave, nor haunt ale-houses, taverns or play-houses; but in all things behave *him* self as a faithful apprentice ought to do, during the said term. And the said Master shall us the utmost of *his* endeavours to teach, or cause to be taught or instructed, the said Apprentice in the trade or Mystery of *Shoemaking* and procure and provide for *him* sufficient Meat, Drink, Wearing apparel, Lodging and Washing, fitting for an Apprentice, during the said term of *four* years to have three quarters day schooling

and when free, to have two suits of apparel, one whereof to be new.

This Indenture not to be assigned, without the consent of the Committee of Guardians of the Pennsylvania Incorporated Society for the Abolition of Slavery.

And whereas a Bond is this day given by *Joseph Rhoades and Samuel Rhoades* to John Hall Esq. Marshal of the United States for the District of Pennsylvania, in the sum of Four Hundred Dollars, conditioned, that if the suits brought or to be brought by the claimants of the Phebe or her cargo: and the Court should determine that *Milnor* Ganges is a Slave, then, and in that case, he is (if alive) to be surrendered to the said Marshal or to his assigns on demand.

L. S.

AND for the true performance of all and singular the covenants and agreements aforesaid, the said parties bind themselves each unto the other firmly by these presents. IN WITNESS whereof, the said parties have interchangeably set their Hands and Seals hereunto. Dated the *seventeenth* day of *December* in the year of our LORD, one thousand eight hundred

Sealed and delivered in the presence of
Joseph Rhoades
Wm. Conas
Wm. Lushington
Mayor

THIS INDENTURE witnesseth

THAT *Sambo* Ganges, by and with the consent of ROBERT PATTERSON and THOMAS HARRISON, members of the Pennsylvania Incorporated Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, he being one of those persons captured on board the Phebe, by the sloop of war the Ganges, commanded by John Maloney, Esq. hath put *him* self and by these Presents, the said *Sambo* Ganges doth voluntary and of *his* own free will and accord, put *him* self Apprentice to *Joseph Rhoades, of Blackley Township, Philadelphia County, Penna*

to learn *his* Art, Trade and Mystery, and after the manner of an Apprentice to serve him the said *Joseph Rhoades* his Heirs and Assigns from the day of the date hereof, for and during, and to the full end and term of *four* years next ensuing. During all which term the said Apprentice *he is* said Master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep, his lawful commands every where readily obey.

he shall do no damage to *his* said Master's goods, nor see it to be done by others, without letting or giving notice thereof to *his* said Master. he shall not waste *his* said Master's goods, nor lend them unlawfully to any. he shall not commit fornication, nor contract matrimony within the said term.

he shall not play at cards, dice, or any other unlawful game, whereby *he is* said Master may have damage. With *his* own goods nor the goods of others, without licence from *his* said Master, he shall neither buy nor sell.

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Sealed and delivered in the presence of
Joseph Rhoades
Wm. Conas
Wm. Lushington
Mayor
Sambo Ganges
Thos. Harrison
Wm. Lushington
Mayor

Milnor Ganges's indenture, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (490), Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Sambo Ganges's indenture, Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers (490), Historical Society of Pennsylvania

TO SEE OURSELVES MORE CLEARLY

Aseel Rasheed

This park is about physical place. What we say about it must be rooted, not in the story of one family or one defined period of time, but in the land itself—land that spans through time and that has been home to many. Successful interpretation at Bartram’s Garden demands a conversation that asks: What has happened here? How has this land been used and by whom? Who has connected with this land over time?

The complete history has not been shared, in part, because of resources. It also has not been shared because it has not been an organizational priority. This is now changing. Through ArtPlace and Mural Arts Philadelphia, we have been fortunate to enter into research with Sharece Blakney to study the Black history of Bartram’s Garden. The information that Sharece has found, the people and stories she has uncovered, by delving into primary source materials about slavery, manumission, and indentured servitude as practiced in this neighborhood tells us that there is so much more work to do—both historical and interpretative. We have only scratched the surface of the truth.

The telling of this history is critical not solely because it spotlights the past but also because it illuminates our present. The historical accounts in Sharece’s reporting induce a visceral reaction. I am keenly aware that these stories have been hidden from us. Each time a single bit of this information is shared, the gross failure to tell the full truth of history—the systematic denial of that history—is acknowledged. It is both powerful and painful. The Garden seeks to share this work in ways that acknowledge both sentiments and set this history in the framework

of the present. Can this work be restorative? Can it be a catalyst for conversations among neighbors about the connections to our present? Can we hold this history deeply enough to break the cycles of oppression that it represents?

Sharece generously allowed me to go with her to view the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society files to help identify those documents relevant to Southwest Philadelphia. It was impossible to unfold these pieces of manumission papers from the eighteenth century without thinking about the people who once held them, who kept them close to their bodies in a shirt or apron pocket, who saved hard-earned money to purchase their own emancipation. For these citizens, these documents represented the only means by which to justify their humanity to those who would ask for proof of it. It is with great irony that this occurred just a few short years after the Revolutionary War announced, in this city and to the world, that liberty is a right that is unalienable. This irony, which was present at the birth of our nation and continues today in insidious ways, must always be checked. This is the core of our work.

The people of history are powerful. The stories they tell are powerful. In this particular place, at this particular park, these stories are very close to the surface—whether it is the story of the indigenous Lenape or the Black history of Kingsessing and the Old Darby Road, or whether it is the issues of industrial change, immigration, and community displacement that Southwest Philadelphia is currently facing. It is critical that we uncover these stories and share them without exploitation and with respect. It is also important that we continue to ask why they were obscured in the first place and what it means to bring them into our present. Why aren't they already part of the history? Where have they been hidden? By whom and for what purpose? Who gets to decide how they will be shared and how do the answers, and the manner in which we come to them, affect our understanding of race and power today?

Telling the history of the Garden is hard. It is hard because it is personal. Our history reflects who we are as people, both individually and collectively. All that happened before leads us to today—the triumphs of today and the failures of today. We are defined by our history even when that history is hidden from us or does not reflect us honestly. If we work to illuminate the truth of history, with the empathy it demands, we can see ourselves more clearly. The truth can hold great beauty. It can also provide relief.

The voices come from the earth here at the Garden. We are called to listen carefully. May it be so.

Indentured Slavery

Antoine Akines

Saturday was the day. Momma told me to wake up early, rise and shine. Get dressed, make sure to iron my slacks, comb my hair and wear my nicest shoes. I could smell the aroma of bacon and eggs from my bedroom. I really had no idea what was going on, but I knew it was gonna be big. We walked for two miles until I finally stumbled upon a tightly crowded area. I immediately began to have flashbacks. Sweating, heart racing, I should've known. Some big white guy made me stand on the stage. I looked around helplessly before finally being addressed. A very short pale man came up and walked me to his wagon. "You're gonna come work with me from now on," he said. I looked desperately to my mother. "It's ok," she assured. "He won't hurt you." "Right," he said. But he had a very menacing look on his face. I could hear a set of footsteps getting closer. My brother suddenly appeared by my side. I thought he had come to help me, but then it clicked in. He was a victim of the torture with me.

The Value of A Coin

Ahmed Muhaimin

Today is a good day.
Today is the day that I will be put to good use.
A family that was separated for a long time will finally come back
together.
In the past I was used to break them up
Mothers and children
Husbands and wives
But that ends today
At least for now
Maybe someday soon I will be used to purchase more people.
I hope not.
At least for today I can rest knowing that I helped people.

Poems from Sankofa Community Farm

Poet, performer, and Southwest Philadelphia native Jasmine Combs led a poetry and history workshop for the youth workers at Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram's Garden to introduce them to this research. Most of the young people at Sankofa have African heritage and many of them live in Southwest Philadelphia, making them key to the future of this project as both participants and advisors. They read from Blakney's Directory, reflected on their personal histories, and wrote poetry based on their discoveries.

Antoine Akines
Sade Black
Sybria Deveaux
Daquan Goosby
Saliymah Hubert
Tykia Jerry
Kishia Johnson
Rasheed Matthews
Ahmad Muhaimin
Aleese Pollard
Lamyia Porter
Marissa Wileszek

Four of the students submitted persona poems to this book, written from the perspectives of people or objects from the stories.

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