

REPARATIVE DESCRIPTION OF SLAVERY ERA FINDING AIDS AND CATALOG RECORDS: CENTERING GENEALOGISTS WHO RESEARCH AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY HISTORY

Nancy Kaiser, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Nicka Sewell-Smith, Genealogist, creator of Who Is Nicka Smith



THE PROBLEM:

DESCRIPTION FOR SLAVERY ERA COLLECTIONS

- Written with an academic/scholarly audience in mind
- Center and venerate white families as the principle narrative of the collection
- Recognize the institution of slavery as a topic of study
- Obscure lived experience of enslaved people
- Rarely recognize the humanity of individual enslaved people



WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO REMEDIATE AND REPAIR ARCHIVAL DESCRIPTION TO MAKE IT MORE HELPFUL FOR OTHER AUDIENCES, ESPECIALLY RESEARCHERS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY HISTORY?



RESEARCH METHOD

- Received a grant from the IDEA Council at UNC Libraries to interview researchers of African American family history
- First 3 people we interviewed had a connection to UNC; 1 of the 3 interviewees connected us with the online community fostered by BlackProGen LIVE, of which Nicka is host, and we interviewed 7 more people from that group
- 6 questions for everyone, open-ended conversation.



6 QUESTIONS

- What led you to start doing genealogical research?
- Can you tell us about your research process?
- Can you share a highlight of your genealogical research experience?
- Can you share a low point in your genealogical research experience?
- Do you have any suggestions for how Wilson Library can facilitate YOUR research?
- Anything else you would like to share with us about African American genealogical and family research?



RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Finding aids / Catalog records
- Language remediation
- Outreach
- Researcher experience
- Digitization priorities
- Database construction
- Connection building across collections
- Catalog navigation
- Content warnings



IDEA GRANT FINAL REPORT ON AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCHERS



Thank you!

Nancy Kaiser (nkaiser@email.unc.edu)

Nicka Sewell-Smith (whoisnickasmith@gmail.com)

