

DISSERTATION

COMMUNICATING RESISTANCE IN U.S. MEMORYSCAPES: BLACK MEMORY,
TEMPORALITY, HAUNTINGS, AND TOURISM AT THE WHITNEY PLANTATION AND
THE MYRTLES

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNICATING RESISTANCE IN U.S. MEMORYSCAPES: BLACK MEMORY, TEMPORALITY, HAUNTINGS, AND TOURISM AT THE WHITNEY PLANTATION AND THE MYRTLES

Louisiana remains a popular destination for vacation and sightseeing, leveraging its cultivated narrative of hospitality, timeless landscapes, and preserved antebellum architecture. However, this allure fails to reckon with the deeply rooted history of U.S. enslavement and anti-Black violence. Consequently, the Deep South, and Louisiana specifically, has rearticulated its history of racialized violence through a whitewashed lens, attracting visitors to modern plantation tourism where African and Black memories and experiences of racist brutality are systematically ignored. Therefore, this dissertation analyzes two contemporary plantations in Louisiana: the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, arguing that they communicate diverging narratives of resistive rhetoric and Black memory. The Whitney Plantation stands as a powerful rejection of typical plantation narratives, centering African and Black voices and showcasing their resilience. In contrast, The Myrtles erases its history as a plantation, making it more palatable for white audiences and maximizing its profitability. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that rhetorics of racial resistance serve as a crucial strategy employed by both minoritized and hegemonic groups to either foster moments of solidarity in the pursuit of social change or to perpetuate white supremacy by advocating for a return to a (white) American society.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In his January 7, 2024, inauguration speech, former state attorney general and current Republican Governor of Louisiana Jeff Landry proclaimed: “For ours [the South and Louisiana] is a culture of joy, of love, of kindness, of resilience, of diversity, and of unbridled hospitality. Hospitality may have been invented in the South, but it was perfected in Louisiana.”¹ With his remarks, Governor Landry highlights what he sees as the grandiose appeal of Southern states, specifically Louisiana, by showcasing their “perfected” hospitality for welcoming visitors, close-knit community, and pride in conventional values. But notably, Landry simultaneously ignores the fact that the allure of Louisiana’s Southern “charm” also belies a deeply rooted history of enslavement and racial violence.² Unfortunately, much of this history has been reframed through a white-dominated perspective that romanticizes the supposed serene antebellum era. Memory scholar Jessica Rapson explains that the revision of racial history in Louisiana “takes place against a backdrop of slow violence which has been traced here to the larger industrial context of production on the River Road, replacing the direct physical violence of former antebellum slavery.”³ Consequently, Louisiana has become a popular destination for its hospitality and modern plantation tourism.

Tourism on former plantations like those that populated Louisiana have been investigated by scholars generally. This plantation tourism scholarship broadly illustrates how these sites are often whitewashed, presenting them as beautiful commodities while obscuring the harsh realities and anti-Black violence faced by enslaved individuals.⁴ Often times, plantation tourism focuses on the histories of the enslavers’ families and fixates on the architectural details of the “Big House,” neglecting the fact that it was

enslaved people who often constructed these homes.⁵ Melanie Harnay describes this tendency as:

The result of such a focus on the wealth and lavish lifestyle of the plantation owners, including beautifully set tables as well as luxurious decorations and clothing, is powerful as it produces an impression of a glorified bygone era. It also diverts the visitors' attention by lingering on objects and artifacts owned by the master's family rather than evoking the fact these objects were handled most of the time by the enslaved.⁶

By focusing on the families of enslavers and the Big House, visitors can overlook the racial violence that occurred at the plantations, ultimately supporting dominant efforts of Black erasure.

Additionally, plantation tourism has recently become important zones of research by Communication Studies scholars in particular.⁷ Communication Studies scholars like Ariel Seay-Howard have demonstrated that although limited, there have been some plantation efforts to transform plantations in a way that does not center on promoting whiteness or alleviating white guilt.⁸ One approach to achieving this absence is by omitting the history of the enslavers from tour scripts, even if the Big House remains intact on the plantation. Removing the narratives of the enslavers and reintroducing the perspectives of the enslaved allows African and Black voices to be heard, even if their stories are not told by those who lived them. Seay-Howard argues that the Whitney Plantation aids in “Black resistance by radically challenging the sanitized memory that often forgets or purposely leaves out much of the slavery experience in America.”⁹ Patricia Davis further argues that sites integrating Black histories and memories, even in places where a history of racial violence has been subdued, can be pivotal for “racial reconciliation.”¹⁰ This possibility is because, as Davis contends, landscapes are “contestable” and can transform as “people assign new meanings to them.”¹¹ In essence, counter-hegemonic plantation shifts enables Black enslaved experiences to take focus—a perspective that was historically ignored and denied. Furthermore, this project aims to broaden scholarship on modern plantation tourism, addressing a noticeable gap, particularly within the Communication Studies discipline.

This dissertation project examines the rhetorical and cultural power of two United States (U.S.) memoryscapes located in Louisiana, the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, and how these sites utilize a rhetoric of racial resistance to either challenge or reinforce white narratives of U.S. enslavement and systemic racism. The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles are two former plantations that once relied on the forced labor of African captives and their descendants. Today, both have become popular tourist attractions.¹² For example, the Whitney Plantation collaborated with the 1619 Project and is featured in New York's #1 Best Seller, *How the Word is Passed*, by writer, poet, and scholar Clint Smith.¹³ The Myrtles has been highlighted by various outlets, including *National Geographic*, *Netflix*, *The New York Times*, and the *Discovery Channel*. The Whitney Plantation is a non-profit museum that focuses on educating the public about the experiences of enslaved people who once worked the land and highlights the lasting impact on African and Black communities through its two-part tour. In contrast, The Myrtles is owned by a white family and attracts visitors with its emphasis on the antebellum era and the stories of its former enslavers, including the legend of the haunting of Chloe—a child who was an enslaved Black nanny for the Woodruffs, who owned The Myrtles in the nineteenth-century. Both plantations are located near each other, approximately seventy-nine miles apart and about a one-hour and twenty-minute drive west of New Orleans. Despite their shared history and geographic proximity, the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles convey contrasting narratives about Black history, U.S. enslavement, and systemic racism. In essence, the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles represent two very different approaches to discussing the violent histories targeting African and Black people in the U.S.

Although the overall narratives of these two sites are quite different, I argue that both share a rhetoric of racial resistance. I define “resistance” within the context of rhetorical and

critical/cultural studies. By resistance, I mean a multifaceted and dynamic concept that encompasses a range of strategic micro, meso, and macro communicative, visual, material, and embodied performances.¹⁴ These performances, especially in this context, are enacted to disrupt or reinforce oppressive forces.¹⁵ More specifically, racial resistance, in this dissertation, is twofold. First, resistance can emerge as a rhetorical and cultural response enacted by individuals, communities, and institutions to challenge injustice and advocate for social change. Drawing on Black feminist Audre Lorde, she proclaims: “As in the struggle against racism and sexism, courage, commitment and integrity are required.”¹⁶ Here, Lorde speaks to how resistance is an evolving response to new political terrains and yet, to achieve a more just society will require a zealous dedication of coalition-making and sustained solidarity to each other and future generations—all of which are chief components of intersectional feminist scholars.¹⁷

Second, while resistance is often conceptualized as a tactic that disrupts oppressive structures, in this dissertation, I illustrate how “resistance” can also be deployed as an erasure strategy to forward exclusionary ideologies that sustain white logics, heteronormativity, and colonialism.¹⁸ Candace Epps-Robertson traces how “resistance” has been rearticulated as a hegemonic movement centered on perceived threats, particularly in ways that ultimately uphold racist and post-racial discourse. For example, in 1956, the Virginia General Assembly passed a package of legislation known as the “Massive Resistance” plan to halt the desegregation of public schools mandated by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas.¹⁹ The “Massive Resistance” plan, supported by U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd Sr., argued that separate but equal schools were ultimately better for Black children and that integration would result in irreparable damages for all if “races were to mix,” ultimately packaging his racist discourse as supposedly protecting public education and race

relations.²⁰ This legislation showcases how dominant groups have adopted “resistance” as topoi to sustain racist logics.

For this dissertation, I showcase how hegemonic scripts of resistance draw heavily on selective (white) versions of racial history. These versions reframe the past as “not that bad” or claim that society has moved on, thus rendering the fight for racial justice obsolete or insignificant.²¹ As resistance continues to take up new forms, it is crucial to understand its dynamic relationship with sites like the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, and how these places either sustain or undermine the work of racial justice. The individuals who visit these sites are also complicit in their outcomes, as we all have the capacity to participate in both oppression and opposition.

In exploring the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, two overarching claims drive this dissertation. First, racial resistance is a dynamic communication strategy that can both be an act of rebellion against and reification of hegemonic logic and ideologies. By examining the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles through a multi-methodological approach, I argue that these two sites of public memory enact racial resistance in distinct and different ways. The Whitney Plantation resists whiteness by seeking to educate visitors about the realities of U.S. enslavement and racial violence. At the same time, The Myrtles resist Black memories and often present a sanitized version of history that omits uncomfortable truths, particularly for white audiences. Second, Black memory offers a critical lens for white scholars (re)examining historical sites that have been rearticulated for tourism. Therefore, this dissertation project is noteworthy for understanding how modern plantations influence and shape public perceptions of U.S. enslavement and systemic racism.

The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles not only serve as compelling cases for examining how neighboring historical sites challenge or forward white supremacist logic through tourism but also contribute significantly to our understanding of current political and social terrains. With the resurgence of a Trump era and the rise of extreme right-wing politics, institutions that do not align with the President's agendas are particularly vulnerable. Sites like the Whitney Plantation and numerous other historical and cultural museums dedicated to highlighting marginalized voices and stories face a precarious future due to their reliance on grants, donations, and community support. This precarity was demonstrated on March 14, 2025, when President Trump issued an Executive Order (EO) proposing cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).²² In response, Ashley Rogers, Executive Director of the Whitney Plantation, told *Nonprofit Quarterly* that the plantation focuses on telling "inclusive narratives" and that under Trump, "people are being forced not to talk about them [African and Black stories]." ²³ Rogers urged communities to "not give in" and to collectively resist political efforts aimed at closing such museums by contacting local government officials and federal representatives in Congress.²⁴ Rogers further emphasized the importance of remaining steadfast and resisting racist discourses and actions designed to cover up and silence Black history. While modern plantations often highlight the history of enslavers and their generational wealth, the Whitney Plantation presents a contrasting narrative that represents real people who were enslaved and erased by those who lived in the same community. The Whitney Plantation showcases their roles not only as enslaved individuals but also as businesspeople, blacksmiths, farmers, and caretakers. It serves as a place of education, fostering empathetic moments that create connections between visitors and the experiences of enslaved people. Despite this, the Whitney Plantation remains at risk and may become a fleeting site obscured by racist ideologies

and forces. The Whitney Plantation's analytical chapter underscores the importance of its rhetoric of resistance to white memories and highlights Black life and resilience. Further, places like the Whitney Plantation illuminate the necessity of archiving Black and African oral histories and memories not only in a reinstated Trumpian era but as a longstanding commitment to racial justice and reeducation.

Beyond the fact that the site is crucial for exploring how the history of U.S. enslavement and anti-Blackness is sidestepped through a glamorized white version of history, The Myrtles becomes particularly interesting in the context of President Trump's first election and the resurgence of Trump's political ideologies. This resurgence has signaled increased support for The Myrtles to avoid confronting or addressing its history of anti-Blackness, leading to the possibility of such history becoming obsolete and difficult to remember. This shift can be traced to January 18, 2021, with the release of the "1776 Report" by the White House, aiming to restore the Founding Fathers' principles in America. The report initially praised the Civil Rights Movement. However, it then asserted that the Civil Rights Movement "almost immediately turned to programs that ran counter to the lofty ideals of the founders [of the United States]."²⁵ The "1776 Report" accused the Civil Rights Movement of "abandonment of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity in favor of 'group rights' not unlike those advanced by Calhoun and his followers," implying that the movement had deviated from American values and become "too extreme."²⁶ This "too extreme" argument was echoed in the 2024 Trump campaign, which claimed that there is a "definite anti-white feeling" in America and pledged to address this if re-elected.²⁷ Consequently, the re-election of Trump has continued to assert that we are in a anti-white era, which has materialized in the recent rollback of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education. Trump legitimizes these rollbacks claiming

that they have “gone too far,” resulting in reverse racism and demonizing discussions of U.S. racist history and its legacies.²⁸ My analytical chapter on The Myrtles demonstrates how modern plantations often offer a sanitized, whitewashed history that ignores racial truths. With new extreme right-wing politics, it is becoming increasingly difficult for such sites to be held accountable for their refusal to acknowledge the plantation’s history. This erasure allows The Myrtles to cater to the white gaze, rewriting history and profiting from a space built and sustained by forced African and Black labor through weddings and events.

Furthermore, the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles are both sites with a history of enslavement, memories, experiences, and struggles of Black and African individuals. However, their approaches to sharing this history diverge significantly. The Whitney Plantation actively works to preserve and commemorate Black memories, asserting their contemporary relevance, while The Myrtles actively participates in Black erasure. Despite dominant discourse and post-racial frameworks that attempt to confine U.S. enslavement and racism to the past, the experiences of individuals like Chae, a historical interpreter at the Whitney Plantation, demonstrate the ongoing impact of this history. In an interview, Chae shared that her mother was born on a plantation, and her grandfather grew up on the Whitney Plantation. This highlights the fact that not only were African and Black enslaved people often murdered, preventing the transmission of their generational stories, but also that for those whose stories survived, these narratives are not relics of a distant past. These were real people; their family memories—filled with stories of grief, joy, and resilience—deserve to be told. To advance racial equity, we must not only acknowledge but also remember this history and actively challenge conversations that attempt to frame enslavement as a historical phenomenon with no contemporary impact on African and Black communities.

Given the complexity of the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, I employ a diverse methodology grounded in rhetorical and critical/cultural frameworks and qualitative research endeavors. I aim to explore these historically significant sites that attract global attention comprehensively. To achieve this, I will now turn to this project's important contributions, highlight the foundational frameworks and values guiding the exploration of the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, detail the mixed-methodological approaches I utilized, and offer an overview of the following chapters.

In undertaking this project, I aim to contribute to literature and enhance our broader cultural understandings of race, tourism, memory, and the importance of engaging in diverse methodological approaches as white scholars engaged in race-related work. Given the recency of tourism scholarship in Communication Studies, there remains to be a noticeable gap of examinations that look at how Black memories are remembered or, more frequently, overlooked by modern plantations. While this study is not exhaustive, it specifically focuses on how sites of Black memory—or the absence thereof—reflect the historically lived experiences of African and Black people. Additionally, tourism scholar, Matthew Cook offers a call for more scholarship that identifies what modern plantations are informing about U.S. enslavement along with how enslavement continues to impact current African and Black communities.²⁹ The Whitney Plantation exemplifies this call for research, demonstrating how such discussions about U.S. enslavement and the legacies of slavery can be framed. In contrast, The Myrtles plantation communicates an erasure of history, working to forget, conceal, and silence Black histories and memories. For example, The Myrtles has systematically removed references to its plantation history, now referring to itself simply as “The Myrtles,” rather than “The Myrtles Plantation.”³⁰ This process, as described by Jake Terrell Dionne et al., represents “a form of community

engagement that involves value judgments about what, and who, is worth remembering.”³¹

Therefore, this study serves as a timely intervention in scholarship and the field of Communication Studies.

This project further contributes to scholarly conversations by highlighting the critical role of scholars engaging in multi-methodological approaches, which can be vital for decentering whiteness and advancing decolonial efforts in academia. Utilizing a diverse range of methodologies serves as a powerful tool for white scholars to become more aware of their own involvement in colonial practices, thus actively challenging the continuation of racial violence.³² As Matthew Houdek explains, decolonial practices within rhetorical scholarship necessitate that scholars confront their inherent racism and acknowledge the systemic structures that privilege white individuals.³³ Further, utilizing multiple methodologies minimizes white scholars from selectively extracting elements of Black memories and histories to fit predetermined assumptions of Black life. By engaging in diverse methodologies, this project offers alternative perspectives that challenge and dismantle white-essentialized assumptions about Black communities, moving beyond the singular narrative of forced enslavement. Therefore, a multi-method approach allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding Black experiences and Black memory. I now turn to explaining my grounding frameworks and multi-methodological approach.

Grounding Frameworks and Methodology

My exploration of the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles is grounded in various frameworks, utilizing diverse methodologies in examining sites of Black memory and racial resistance. One of these is rhetorical criticism. There have been various understandings of rhetorical criticism. The understanding most relevant to this project draws on early rhetorical

scholar Edwin Black, who argues that rhetorical criticism has “no formulae, no prescriptions, for criticism. The only instrument of good criticism is the critic. It is not any external perspective or procedure or ideology, but only the convictions, values, and learning of the critic, only the observational and interpretive powers of the critic.”³⁴ Notwithstanding Black’s pervasive view of criticism, I engage two general rhetorical frameworks that guide my exploration: fragmentation and racial rhetorical criticism. First, I employ Michael Calvin McGee’s notion of fragmentation wherein the critic constructs a text “suitable for criticism” to “produce a finished discourse.”³⁵ Given that a text “is never quite finished” and yet is “constantly in front of us,” it is important to investigate the many possibilities and pull together a series of “textual fragments that are diverse in type and tone, form and function.”³⁶ By using a framework of textual synthesis, this project hopes to offer a compelling investigation of the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles.

Second, I use racial rhetorical criticism as a lens for which I examine the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles and the values I embody when doing this kind of work. Racial rhetorical criticism “is reflective about and engages the persistence of racial oppression, logics, voices, and bodies and that theorizes the very production of race as rhetorical.”³⁷ As Lisa Flores explains, she could “easily trace the absences (they are many), attending to the ways that our rhetorical past is located with particular histories, bodies, theories, and ways of thinking that ‘foreclose the possibility’ of some of our scholarly lives.”³⁸ While Alexis McGee and David Cisnero rightly warn us about the consequences of rhetoric being further canonized, using a racial rhetorical framework recognizes the attempted containment of race outside a white essentialized lens.³⁹ Utilizing a racial rhetorical lens provides a framework for racial resistance, demonstrating how race operates in rhetorical contexts to challenge racial hierarchies, as well as illustrating the social, political, and cultural implications of dominant racial perceptions.

Alongside these critical tools, I employ a multi-methodological approach to examine how racial resistance is communicated differently at the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. The methodological choices aim to provide a rhetorically and culturally rich foundation for investigating contemporary plantations beyond the sites themselves. For the Whitney Plantation, I draw on the offered tours, my personal experiences and observations, the symbolic and material artifacts present at the site, semi-structured interviews, scholarly works discussing the Whitney Plantation, and personal testimonies of historical interpreters. In doing so, I utilize rhetorical fieldwork, which supports the multifaceted nature of this dissertation. Rhetorical fieldwork is a form of critical rhetoric that acknowledges the cultural influences on discourse, text, and space, providing critics the capacity to “analyze how discourses of resistance develop and how audiences [visitors] respond to them in the moment.”⁴⁰ I also draw on rhetorical fieldwork’s inclusion of qualitative methods for investigating the Whitney Plantation. I adopted a structured qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with probing questions to investigate how historical interpreters confront white narratives of racism by prioritizing African and Black experiences in the tours they offer.⁴¹ A key question guiding this research is, “How do historical interpreters communicate resistance to inaccurate portrayals of African and Black histories?”⁴² This focus stems from scholarship on contemporary plantations, which highlights that critics—especially white scholars—must more effectively center the voices of those who were enslaved, their descendants, and the African and Black individuals who work at these historical sites. This practice includes establishing interview spaces and providing direct quotes from the relevant voices to further advance claims made.⁴³

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (protocol #5714) at Colorado State University, purposeful sampling was utilized to gather participants who met the

predetermined eligibility criteria. With the consent of the IRB and the executive director, a recruitment flyer was distributed to the historical interpreters by the executive director of the Whitney Plantation, though once sent any interested parties were asked to only contact me. This flyer, sent via email and available at the Whitney Plantation site, provided information about the research project, eligibility criteria, and contact details for the researcher. Eligible participants, consisting of historical interpreters, had to be currently employed at the Whitney Plantation in Edgard, Louisiana (as stipulated by the executive director) (N=5). Additional eligibility requirements, as approved by the IRB protocol, included that participants must be at least 18 years old. Individuals under 18 were excluded from the study because the research questions address complex topics that necessitate the ability to communicate and reflect on Black histories and their connection to the present day. Therefore, an adult audience was deemed appropriate and approved for this study. Lastly, given my own limitations of language and the focus of the study, participants were asked to be fluent in English to enhance communication between myself and the participants.

Per the approved IRB protocol, participants contacted me only if interested and then scheduled an in-person or virtual volunteer interview. I conducted interviews with five of nine historical interpreters available from July 2024 to September 2024 who could participate in a one-on-one virtual or an in-person interview for a maximum of one hour. I traveled to Louisiana in September 2024 to conduct the in-person interviews, whereas the virtual interviews took place on both Zoom and Microsoft Teams once the protocol was approved. After obtaining verbal consent, I ensured the participants met the minimum eligible requirements (e.g., age and current historical interpreters' employment at the Whitney Plantation) and re-informed participants that the study is entirely voluntary and that they may discontinue their participation at any time.

Examples of questions asked to the volunteer participants from the approved interview script include: “Can you tell me about a memorable positive interaction that you have had while being a historical interpreter?,” “Can you tell me about a challenging interaction that you have had while being a historical interpreter?,” and “Do you see your job as a historical interpreter as a form of activism or racial justice?”

Due to the rural location of the Whitney Plantation and lack of nearby stores, all participants were compensated with a \$10 e-gift card to Amazon as a thank-you for their participation. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews ranged from 23 to 60 minutes long with a mean of 38.4 minutes. In total, approximately 81 single-spaced pages were coded following Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke’s thematic analysis formula with the phronetic iterative approach outlined by Sarah Tracy to analyze the data collected.⁴⁴ I used emergent data to derive meaning from the participants to build a theoretical understanding of how resistance is communicated during the tours. To ensure that my notes and recordings were accurately describing the participants’ information, I completed member validation during the interviews.⁴⁵ During the interviews and as part of the probing, I rephrased participant responses to check for alignment and asked participants to expand on their answers so that my interpretation more accurately depicted their communication. Both the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles serve as rhetorical and cultural sites, demonstrating that these spaces are anything but static; they have the capacity to shift, change, and transform.

As for The Myrtles, in addition to rhetorical criticism, I also use rhetorical fieldwork to examine the tours offered and the symbolic and material artifacts present at the site. Additionally, I draw on my personal experiences and observations, websites that discuss The Myrtles, utilize

their social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, and I review visitor feedback found on Google and tourism sites like TripAdvisor, as well as The Myrtles' official websites and other websites discussing The Myrtles, such as "Explore Louisiana."⁴⁶ This multi-methodological approach advanced my argument that the Myrtles resist Black memory and silence U.S. enslavement and the history of racial violence, removing possible discussions of how racism continues to impact Black and African communities.

McGee usefully notes "no single finished text could possibly comprehend all perspectives on even a single human problem. The only way to 'say it all' in our fragmented culture is to provide readers/audiences with dense, truncated fragments."⁴⁷ In addition, I draw on Louisiana State University's archives to support the site as historically a plantation. Archives are "understood both traditionally and more broadly to include, for instance, anthologies and Web holdings, as a spatial and temporal rhetorical embodiment, crucible of cultural debate, and source and arbiter of historical production and public memory."⁴⁸ In other words, archives are an exploratory study site containing historical documents. As such, it is significant to draw on the available archives, as the lived Black experience and memories are fleeting from The Myrtles, especially as their tours sidestep and even ignore the site as a formal plantation with enslaved people. Further, Lisa Flores argues, a focused and transformative approach to racial rhetorical criticism is essential for addressing the silences around race that elevate whiteness both within and beyond academia.⁴⁹ This effort to silence is evident in The Myrtles' resistive rhetoric. While my analysis of The Myrtles does not aim to present a fully formed picture, I intended to gather various texts through a deep dive into the subject to offer a more complex and complete narrative of The Myrtles' racial rhetorical resistance and its consequences, particularly concerning African and Black histories and communities.

As a white queer woman who is researching issues of white generational violence against Black bodies, it is necessary to collaborate with affected communities when producing knowledge of this type, which requires critical self-scrutiny where there is a “need to separate power and authority—whether sociopolitical, epistemological, or narrative—from myths of dominant versus nondominant corporealities and perspectivities.”⁵⁰ Feminist philosopher Helen Longino notes that such emphasis needs to be on “putting individuals in interaction with one another in ways that modify their observations, theories and hypotheses, and patterns of reasoning.”⁵¹ One way I enhance Longino’s advice is by engaging in semi-structured interviews and conducting member validation with the historical interpreters at the Whitney Plantation. Some of these interpreters have ancestral connections to the histories of enslavement, genocide, and displacement in Louisiana. Regarding *The Myrtles*, I highlight the rhetorical erasure of Black presence both in the past and present. I emphasize the potential dangers of continued Black silencing in the future if we do not address these rhetorical silences now.

Given my position, this dissertation aims to produce a well-researched study grounded in multiple methodological endeavors to help account for and recognize gaps. My dissertation aims to honor African American scholar Carla Peterson, who productively declined to contribute to the book edited by white English, Gender, and Feminist Scholar Lisa Long “*White Scholars: African American Texts*,” asserting that white scholars also have an important role in addressing issues of race.⁵² She emphasizes the need for white scholars to engage in this work to alleviate the burden on African and Black individuals by teaching white people how to discuss matters of racial violence and history. Therefore, this study serves as a call to white scholars to learn and continuously relearn the history of U.S. enslavement, challenge systemic racism, and commit to

collective action and solidarity. Ultimately, this project aims to advocate against and resist the spread of anti-Black rhetoric.

Preview of Chapters

This chapter rhetorically and culturally highlights the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, revealing the impact of sites that either preserve or erase Black memories across time zones. The introduction also offers an extensive overview of the multi-methodologies employed to study the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. By focusing on the multifaceted nature of racial resistance as communication, this dissertation fills a gap in Communication Studies understanding of plantation tourism. Ultimately this dissertation explores how sites centered on Black memories, or the lack thereof, contribute to the contemporary understanding of race and racism.

Chapter Two is divided into two parts: the history of U.S. enslavement and relevant literature for this project. Emphasizing the history of U.S. enslavement is vital for a global commitment to education and reeducation, showcasing what is often neglected or silenced in educational institutions. In an interview with a Whitney Plantation historical interpreter, Oliver for example, remarked that U.S. enslavement is a “history that has been either hidden or pushed aside for a long time.” In addition to Oliver, multiple historical interpreters at the Whitney Plantation shared with me that tourists and visitors, both nationally and internationally, are rarely taught the “truth” about U.S. enslavement, and they stressed that a collective effort is necessary to tell this truth. In this spirit, I aim to honor their voices by delving into the topic of U.S. enslavement, as I believe scholars play a crucial role in this commitment. The latter half of Chapter Two will highlight relevant literature to understand the complexities of racial resistance, Black memory, temporality, and tourism. This connection to racial resistance will examine how

Black memory is expressed through both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic frameworks, as each can influence the subversion or reinforcement of social hierarchies.

In Chapter Three, I explore the powerful mode of racial resistance engineered by the Whitney Plantation. The Whitney Plantation is located in Edgard, Louisiana, and is the Parish seat of St. John the Baptist. The Whitney Plantation is a non-profit museum dedicated to teaching and remembering the history of the plantation forcibly labored by avowed African captives and their descendants. Notably, even after the Thirteenth Amendment, the plantation continued to operate until 1975 as an indigo, sugar, and rice plantation with white overseers. Also, the Whitney Plantation's mission is to educate people about systemic racism, which rejects post-racial frameworks. For example, one historical interpreter at the Whitney Plantation I interviewed stated:

It's [U.S. enslavement] got to connect to the present because it is connected. And so, the challenge is then to communicate this fact and show people some of these thread ties and how they are connected to today. I don't want them to come here and think [that] this is all like over.

Therefore, the Whitney Plantation's racial resistance testifies to ongoing Black resilience and resistance within a white habitus. In short, a white habitus is the socialization of white communities that disregards and erases race as a critical point of understanding the social world.⁵³ The analysis in this chapter showcases how the Whitney Plantation and the historical interpreters resist this process, inviting visitors into a quiet space of reflection and acknowledgment of the lived Black experience and demonstrating Black time as a parallel counterpart to white time. I conclude by offering a theoretical contribution to the discussion on white habitus and speak to the rhetorical value of plantation scholarship, specifically highlighting Black presence in the space of white racial violence towards African and Black people.

Chapter Four examines The Myrtles' portrayal of racial resistance and how it perpetuates a white-centric version of the antebellum era, overlooking the realities of enslavement, racial oppression, and violence in the U.S. The Myrtles is located in St. Francisville, Louisiana, serving as West Feliciana's Parish seat. Like the Whitney Plantation, The Myrtles was once an operational plantation that enslaved African peoples and their descendants. Currently, The Myrtles is owned by a white family named Morgan and his wife, Lizzie Moss, whose mission is to be a "leader in historical preservation" by appealing to contemporary visitors.⁵⁴ This analysis in this chapter highlights how The Myrtles sanitizes the brutal realities of African and Black experiences during enslavement by presenting a romanticized version of the antebellum era. I conclude by offering scholarly and practical contributions for further commitments to plantation scholarship.

Chapter Five reviews and reflects on how this project contributes to plantation tourism scholarship through the communicative strategy of racial resistance. I discuss how white scholars engaging in contemporary plantations and tourism can benefit from combining both mixed-methodological and rhetorical approaches. This project encourages further rhetorical work at plantation sites and calls on white scholars to make commitments towards unveiling racial and social justice. I also discuss how there needs to be more examinations of hegemonic resistance, especially in a new Trumpian era.

CHAPTER TWO: U.S. ENSLAVEMENT AND BLACK PUBLIC MEMORY, TEMPORALITY, HAUNTINGS, AND TOURISM

U.S. enslavement was a brutal process that inflicted terror and racialized violence upon Black and African communities. Unfortunately, this history is often overlooked or sanitized in many predominantly white education systems. Therefore, I provide a brief overview of U.S. enslavement, specifically highlighting Louisiana, as this dissertation project focuses on two plantations in that state. This review is critical not only because this history is frequently conveyed through a dominant white perspective but also because of current attempts to erase these facts from U.S. memory.

A Brief History of U.S. Enslavement

In the late summer of 1619, the privateering ship, *White Lion*, brought twenty to thirty seized African people to Point Comfort in the English colony of Virginia. English pirates abducted the captured Africans from the sanctity of their homes in the nation now known as Angola.¹ The pirates ultimately traded the African abductees to Virginia colonists in exchange for supplies, making them the first enslaved Africans in the English colonies that would become the United States.”² Historical and archival documents highlight two of the first African individuals who were known to be enslaved on the ship that survived, which was a young couple named Isabella and Anthony.³ Isabella eventually gave birth to their first child, naming him William who took his first breath as a captured African American in Virginia.⁴ This violent process is known as a stage of the Transatlantic Slave Trade—a triangular oceanic “Middle Passage” voyage with millions of African men, women, and children captives to the Americas.⁵

The Middle Passage was exceptionally dangerous for African people because not only were they in hand and feet shackles, called “bilboes” while being transported, but they were also

laid on top of each other in the ship hull, often dying of unsanitary conditions, suffocation, lack of nutrition, and from the extreme weather temperatures.⁶ Olaudah Equiano wrote in his autobiography about his capture on a slave ship, noting, “The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. [T]he air soon became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves.”⁷ Also, African women were especially vulnerable, as they were often victims of sexual assault by white sailors.⁸ Consequently, many African captives did not survive this barbaric and grueling endeavor.

Despite the ongoing deaths of African people, the Middle Passage continued to take trafficked African people to ports in North America. Enslaved Africans and their descendants were forced to labor the lands day and night where cotton and tobacco were the cash crop, educated colonists on growing rice, and shared their cultural African knowledge of smallpox inoculations.⁹ Scholar of history and race, Khalil Gibran Muhammad explains, “even though cotton and tobacco dominated the colonial America economy, it was sugar that anchored the economy of the larger Atlantic world from the sixteenth century onward.”¹⁰ Sugar, also known as “white gold” increased trade and “for the British in particular, shored up the financing of the North American colonies.”¹¹

Britain often did not interfere with American colonies. However, Britain’s victory in the Seven Year’s War was financially expensive. Therefore, Britain implemented new policies as “attempts to raise money by reforming colonial administration, enforcing tax laws, and placing troops in America led directly to conflict with colonists.”¹² This contributed to political unrest between the Americas and Britain. The growing tensions between American colonies and Great Britain led to seeking independence, resulting in the American Revolution rebellion. Co-Editor

of the *1619 Project*, Nikole Hannah-Jones explains that after the American Revolution: “They [African captives] helped build the forced labor camps otherwise known as plantations, of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, sprawling properties that today attract tens of thousands of visitors from across the globe.”¹³ African and Black communities were not only building wealth for white people but built the structure of the White House and the Capitol, and even “cast with their unfree hands the *Statue of Freedom* atop of the Capitol dome.”¹⁴ Such coerced contributions built the infrastructure of the U.S. as a “founded” nation that could profit off forced labor, ultimately setting the precedence of chattel slavery. Chattel slavery is a racialized system where people are bought and owned as property by an enslaver. In other words, chattel slavery is a form of legal bondage. Hannah-Jones writes about chattel slavery, stating: “It was heritable and permanent, not temporary, meaning generations of Black people were born into it and passed their enslaved status onto their children.”¹⁵ Because enslaved people were seen as subhuman, they were exploited for economic means, and became victims of regular brutal abuse and even murder at the hands of their white enslavers and overseers.

Support of chattel slavery meant the implementation of “slave codes,” which were restrictive laws to remove enslaved peoples’ economic, social, and political rights. Even slave codes implemented before the American Revolution continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were routinely added to. Slave codes remained intact even after the U.S. declared independence, although each differed depending on the state. However, each was barbaric. For example, Virginia Colonial Assembly passed a law in 1669 referred to as “A Casual Killing Act,” which states, “If any slave resist his master (or other by his master’s order correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be accompted felony.”¹⁶ Essentially, this (white) code permits enslavers to “correct an enslaved person’s

transgressive behavior,” and if killed, the enslaver is not held liable. Other examples of slave codes prohibited enslaved people from reading or writing, testifying in court against a white person, and were separated from their families by trade or sale.¹⁷ African and Black women were often sexually assaulted and raped by their enslavers without consequences since they were deemed property. Children birthed out of rape were also enslaved even if their fathers were white, which is part of the 1662 General Assembly act stating: “Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free . . . all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.”¹⁸ This further motivated white enslavers to rape enslaved African and Black women because they could now expand their enslaved population for profit. As such, U.S. wealth was derived from its control over forced bondage of enslaved people but also by the “control of Black women’s reproduction.”¹⁹

While the Transatlantic Slave Trade was banned in 1808, the U.S. Domestic Slave Trade became a horrific second Middle Passage, where thousands of enslaved people were sold from the Upper South to the Lower South. As a result, enslaved couples were separated from each other, and their children were removed from their parents and exploited for wealth.²⁰ One of these states was Louisiana, which is located between the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. While Louisiana had been practicing slavery long before it became part of the U.S., in 1803, Louisiana was transferred to be part of the U.S. after the Louisiana Purchase, which also meant stealing the lands and enacting violence against indigenous peoples residing in the southeast part of Louisiana.²¹ Louisiana became one of the largest slave markets, given that the climate was especially fruitful for cotton, tobacco, but especially sugarcane.²² Enslaved people

were working long hours, subjected to emotional, physical, and sexual violence and even murder by white enslavers and overseers; this reality was the everyday life of an enslaved person.

Notably, enslaved people did try and resist. The largest slave rebellion, the “German Coast Uprising,” was named after German immigrants. The “German Coast Uprising,” is the largest rebellion in U.S. history, which occurred on a rainy day in January of 1811. Charles Deslondes, a mixed-race person who was of a higher rank and was allowed to be a driver at the Woodland Plantation, led and marched with hundreds of enslaved people down Louisiana River Road to New Orleans.²³ Marchers were organized in a military fashion marching to the sound of a consistent drum. Ultimately, the protesters were caught and murdered. Other rebels were held at a trial where they were found guilty. The tribunal decapitated many of them and hung their heads on stakes along the river as a warning sign to other enslaved peoples who would think about future revolts.²⁴ Samuel Hambleton, who was a U.S. naval officer, wrote: “They were brung [sic] here for the sake of their Head, which decorate our Levee, all the way up the coast. They look like crows sitting on long poles.”²⁵ As for Deslondes, he was brutally dismembered and was put on a public display.²⁶ As a result, there was a massive increase in surveillance, limiting the ability to gather in groups.²⁷

At the same time that there was an increase in slave patrols and organizing surveillance, the federal government was dedicated to further solidifying slavery. Louisiana was granted statehood in 1812. George Williamson, Louisiana commissioner at the time clearly supported the institution of slavery in a speech. He said: “Louisiana looks to the formation of Southern confederacy to preserve the blessings of African slavery.”²⁸ Louisiana Black codes were further added to ultimately restrict African and Black enslaved people even after the ratification of the Thirtieth Amendment where slavery and involuntary servitude was abolished nationwide.²⁹

These were laws to that allowed for the continuation of slavery under a different name and existed as “vagrancy laws which allowed for the newly freed Black population to be arrested and sentenced to hard labor.”³⁰

The U.S. eventually entered its Reconstruction Era—a formal attempt to reintegrate newly enslaved people into the law as equal citizens. However, even after the abolishment of slavery, racial segregation, otherwise known as “Jim Crow laws,” was instituted. It was often framed as “separate but equal” after the *Plessy vs Ferguson* case ruled that segregation did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment. However, Jim Crow laws were an attempt to maintain the Southern Confederacy and were especially dangerous as it was an institution of white supremacy and police brutality in news forms.³¹ Rhetorical scholar Wanda Little Fenimore described Jim Crow as a “crusade [that] included threats of physical violence, economic retaliation, and social ostracism that silenced the voices of those who questioned segregation.”³² Still, “blacks in the USA were enduring lynching and racial discrimination as a result of the Jim Crow laws.”³³

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* passed, arguing that “separate but equal” was, in fact, a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. This case served as momentum for Rosa Parks and became an inspiration to further join the Civil Rights Movement by leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. Other movements transpired like the Black Panther Party, Birmingham Campaign, and the March on Washington. Each of these movements and a collective fight by African and Black people evoked the Civil Rights Act of 1964—which “prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin” and immediately urged the “integration of schools and other public facilities, and made employment discrimination illegal.”³⁴ While such collective fight culminated in a series of undoing racist

laws, including the Voting Rights Act and integration, the legacies of slavery and racist logics are deeply embedded in systems and ideologies in the U.S.

While this overview is not an exhaustive history of U.S. enslavement, I attempt here to situate this dissertation in a historical context that speaks to how enslavement and racism have insidiously functioned and continue to permeate the everyday present moment. In particular, the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles are two contrasting, resistive sites that showcase how white educational systems often teach about enslavement and systemic racism. The Whitney Plantation is a site of reeducation for visitors, whereas The Myrtles denies the horror of U.S. enslavement and promotes a sanitized version of the antebellum South.

Reviewing Black Memory, Temporality, Hauntings, and Tourism

This dissertation project explores the rhetoric of racial resistance at the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. As I mentioned in Chapter One, I situate racial resistance as a rhetorical and cultural communicative apparatus to disrupt or reinforce oppressive forces.³⁵ I now turn to highlighting relevant literature to establish the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles as Black memoryscapes that are influenced by temporal, haunting, and tourism frameworks.

Black public memory

Black and African communities have long been compelled to understand their self-perception and relationship to one another through the perspective of a white colonizer.³⁶ In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois describes how Black people have been forced to internalize their identity through a white oppressor, stating “it is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”³⁷ Du Bois introduces the concept of “double-consciousness” here, which is a dualistic state where “one ever

feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro . . . two unreconciled strivings.”³⁸ In short, Black people and continue to be forced to navigate a white society that devalues Black life and lived experiences, leaving it up to them to affirm their identities and place in the U.S. Nevertheless, Frantz Fanon extends the notion of a double-consciousness, arguing that through a rearticulated version of Black collective memory colonized people can reclaim their identity. Fanon describes this collective memory as a decolonial process that requires returning to the past for reestablishing one’s true identity wherein has been suppressed, resulting in confronting colonialism.³⁹ As Matt Richardson further explains: “Given centuries of grotesque distortion of Blackness in every form of representation (history, law, literature, philosophy, film, public media), for Black people, one of the only available resources of historical documentation is memory.”⁴⁰ Therefore, Black memory is crucial for liberation from the colonizer. Before situating Black memory within the “public,” I offer a review of public memory within rhetorical and critical/cultural frameworks.

Public memory is shared and “is often the most salient to collectives, in constituted audiences” and ultimately, “refers to the circulation of recollections among members of a given community.”⁴¹ Foundational memory scholar and French historian, Pierre Nora meticulously conceptualizes memory as dissimilar than history.⁴² Nora explains this difference as:

Memory and history, far from being synonymous, are thus in many respects opposed. Memory is life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution, subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of the distortions to which it is subject, vulnerable in various ways to appropriation and manipulation, and capable of lying dormant for long periods only to be suddenly awakened. History on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer.⁴³

In other words, dominant histories often focus on recording specific events of the past and are often told by people in power. In thinking about memory subverting dominant histories, Thomas

Dunn's essay speaks to how Andrew Wood was once a man fleeing for his life due to life-altering rumors.⁴⁴ In efforts to remember queer life, there is now a monument referring to Andrew Wood as Toronto, Canada's "gay pioneer." Thus, the relationship between "public" and "memory" often can create loopholes in dominated histories when stated as facts.

Rhetorical scholars, Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott offer a thorough investigation of public memory scholarship, wherein they highlight its six main characteristics.⁴⁵ First, public memory primarily concerns the present by calling on past events and histories "as ways of understanding, valorizing, justifying, excusing, or subverting conditions or beliefs of their current moment."⁴⁶ The second and third features of public memory centralizes as having a cultural relationship to a broader group, which are tied to "events, people, objects, and places that it [public memory] deems worthy of preservation."⁴⁷ Fourth, public memory studies argue that memories are not whole, grounded in forgetting and remembering, and "frequently contested."⁴⁸ Houdek and Kendall Phillips note how memories are "far from being perfect records of the past; rather, they entail what we remember, the ways we frame it, and what aspects we forget."⁴⁹ The fifth and sixth attributes posit that public memory is connected to symbolic and material rhetorics and is "historically situated, that both is a cultural practice and intellectual status that have changed over time and in different societies."⁵⁰ Essentially, as Barbie Zelizer notes, memories are partial and incomplete.⁵¹

In essence, public memory is a necessary framework of study for examining whose identities are remembered and constituted in mainstream discourse, such as the Black and African lived experience.⁵² While traditional public memory scholarship in Communication Studies and rhetoric focused on public address, further scholarship needs to continue to consider whose identities are remembered and constituted in mainstream discourse. In efforts to situate

Black memory within the public, I draw from not only Communication Studies but also other disciplines, like Geography and Black and African Studies.

Considering literature on Black memory and its relationship to place is crucial for examining the two historical sites: Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. While not exhaustive but specific to this dissertation project, scholarship on Black memory and place could include studying contemporary plantations, museums, neighborhoods, and protests, which may point to the history of U.S. enslavement, past and current racialized violence, or Black rhetorics of resistance and resilience. As Derrick Brooms contends, there are “[a]ttempts to erase, trivialize, and/or deflect slavery and the enslaved found in mainstream museums portray distorted and incomplete images of America’s past.”⁵³ Moreover, examinations often consider how the contemporary moment has chosen to remember, silence, forget, or represent such stories.⁵⁴

Reasons for public forgetting, covering up, or silencing African and Black voices can be a way to absolve public guilt, forwarding white supremacist ideologies. In 1955, Emmett Till, who was a fourteen-years-old African American boy from Chicago, was lynched by the brother, husband, and friends of Carolyn Bryant for allegedly whistling at her when he was at the local grocery store in Mississippi.⁵⁵ Dave Tell examines the public response to Till, positing Sunflower County proved Till to be at fault under an “unwritten law,” controlling the narrative that Till was not murdered but rather this was an act of rightful justice to protect women.⁵⁶ In thinking about the role of race and public memory, Tell explains that in this case, “presents the murder from perspectives of those who live in its shadow and, all too often, survive economically through the desperate repackaging of Till’s story.”⁵⁷ Another example of Black public memory looks at how the Crispus Attucks Memorial argues that the 1770 Boston Massacre victim, Crispus Attucks, is remembered for serving a particular nation or dominant ideology. Browne notes that who is

remembered and for what reasons is in of itself a political move.⁵⁸ Therefore, memory has the power to reveal historical and cultural moments that have been silenced by dominant forces and can uplift those whose stories have yet to be told.

In addition, looking at the rhetorical and cultural responses that disrupt white national stories told is an essential part of extending Black public memory scholarship. Jake Dionne et al. analyzed how the Black-led protest, “#BlackatUAR,” critiqued the statue commemorating William J. Fulbright, who represented Arkansas from 1945 to 1974. #BlackatUAR highlighted Fullbright’s participation in voting against civil rights legislation and forwarding and implementing racist voting laws. As a result, BlackatUAR exposed white memories praising Fulbright as merely a historical figure committed to the people of Arkansas. Instead, #BlackatUAR highlighted Black memories and the lived experiences of people of color in the mid-twentieth century.⁵⁹ Dionne et al. posit that BlackatUAR challenged dominant attempts of forgetting, explicitly noting that “[f]orgetting is about leaving behind representations of the past that glorify a specific person or dominant storyline and thus fail to fully encapsulate the complex reality of history.”⁶⁰ For this dissertation project, I aim to look at how contemporary plantation rhetoric aims to remember (e.g., offering educational tours) or does not remember (e.g., centering enslavers’ histories) the atrocities committed against Black people, which, in turn, informs the contemporary Black experience. In the next section, I conceptualize “temporality” and “hauntings” as relevant to the strategies enacted to grapple with Black memories—even though differently—by both the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles.

Temporality and hauntings

The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles utilize racialized temporalities to communicate their resistance. The Whitney Plantation resistive rhetoric powerfully flips the script of a

plantation labored by forced enslaved people by employing Black temporalities. In contrast, The Myrtles uses white temporalities to communicate an unraced lens for white visitors to experience a white version of history, which is grounded in the reproduction of whiteness that sustains racist ideologies. Before I move to parsing out white temporalities and Black temporalities as a subversive response, I highlight the origins of time and the study of temporality.

Time, originating from the Greek term “Chronos” (χρόνος) has been tied to Isaac Newton’s theorization of the three laws of motion that there is such thing as “absolute time, absolute space, and absolute motion.”⁶¹ Drawing on his book *Principia*, Nicole Allen posits that for Newton “a universal time existed outside reference to any other object or material. Such a sense of time precludes natural occurrences, including lunar or solar considerations. Newton postulated time as a physical entity composed of an invisible ether.”⁶² Another Greek understanding of time is “Kairos” (καιρός), which speaks to the subjective nature and importance of time within a context.⁶³ Time, then, “provides a timeline of historical sense making” that can be quantitatively and qualitatively measured, such as through clocks and calendars, and are often chronological, where events come after one another.⁶⁴ Time as sequential and linear has been taken up in early Communication Studies scholarship, mainly examining the five canons (e.g., delivery, arrangement) within presidential speeches. Michael Leff examined Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural, arguing that Lincoln had a sequential speech organization for moving between the past, present, and future.⁶⁵ However, rhetorical and critical scholars have moved toward considering “temporality” rather than these traditional notions of time, which essentially describes how people perceive, contest, understand, and experience time and its relation to the past, present, and future.⁶⁶

Rhetorical and critical scholars, in particular, have paid close attention to how temporalities drive oppression and are rooted in whiteness, Western thought, and settler violence. Notably, the U.S. “produces its own temporal formation, with its own particular ways of apprehending time, and the state’s policies, mappings, and imperatives generate the frame of reference” which then is “cast as the only temporal formation—as the baseline for the unfolding of time itself.”⁶⁷ As Houdek and Phillips write then any “[c]ompeting constructions of time, such as Indigenous temporalities, are hastily denounced as irrational or incompatible with state interests and those who are seen as part of ‘the people.’”⁶⁸ Therefore, dominant temporalities can be used “as a site of power” and forward racist logics—often described as white temporalities.⁶⁹ White temporalities “assumes linearity, closure, and a denial of responsibilities.”⁷⁰ In their essay, Ersula Ore and Houdek highlight how “end-of-lynching sentiments” are a type of hegemonic discourse grounded in white temporalities that have more significant social, cultural, and political implications beyond the time of day.⁷¹ Further, the rhetoric of white temporalities aims to “produce, sustain, and legitimize the hegemonic temporal formation—defined by linearity, ‘the futural orientation of whiteness’.”⁷² Moreover, white temporalities are a form of silencing, suffocation, and manipulation so that Black communities feel inadequate to talk about their communal experiences with contemporary anti-Black violence.⁷³ The goal of white temporalities is to ultimately “contain racialized experiences” to the linear temporal phenomenon, which is a “mode of control—discursive, spatial, embodied—that disciplines and influences rhetorical imaginings that function as modes of domestication.”⁷⁴

The containment of racialized experiences that sustain white national temporalities can be seen in two primary examples. On March 13, 2020, Breonna Taylor was fatally shot by police officers who wrongly forced entry into her Louisville, Kentucky apartment as part of an

investigation of a drug deal operation. Dominant discourse often highlights the murder of Black people as events of “singularity” rather than part of a larger ideological and societal phenomenon of how the U.S. routinely downplays Black and African stories and experiences of maltreatment, violence, and even murder as faults of their own.⁷⁵ As Logan Gomez describes, “[s]ingular moments are cultural snapshots that disconnect moments of anti-Black police violence.”⁷⁶ Thus, white national time goes beyond “moments tethered to a specific time, but moments that are always present, always unfolding, and always connected to a climate of anti-Blackness.”⁷⁷

Another example, specifically in the context of investigating plantations in the South, scholars have showed how these sites are a “mythical representation” born from white Southerner temporalities.⁷⁸ Harnay’s article brings up the Greenwood Plantation website, which is a contemporary plantation by St. Francisville, Louisiana, that operates as a wedding and event venue and is “considered the South’s finest example of classic colonial” and “A Truly Magical and Majestic Place.”⁷⁹ The white temporal stories told strategically show “masters lived in harmony with their happy, loyal slaves on a peaceable plantation” and ultimately allow for contemporary white audiences to witness and gawk at the antebellum era as a romanticized and serene time that was not all bad for African and Black people.⁸⁰ White temporalities make it challenging to find spaces for Black voices to respond, confront, and grapple with memories, histories, and violence against Black and African communities, which is always under the surveillance of white time and “is manipulatable and structures social differences and human value.”⁸¹ Ultimately, the birth of white temporalities literally deemed people of African descent and Black communities as subhuman and has been extended and adapted into a contemporary form.

Scholars have also examined how temporality has been reclaimed to rewrite and subvert white, western temporal scripts.⁸² To do so, “[t]his requires the slow but steady work of resisting dominant temporalities and imagining alternate presents and futures.”⁸³ Ultimately, such disruption aims to function as opportunities for “worldmaking, affirmation and survival, radical and intersectional political formations, liberatory and future—all of which push against the hegemony of universal time.”⁸⁴ While there are various ways that temporalities have been used to resist dominant white temporalities, this dissertation specifically focuses on Black temporalities as a counter to these white temporalities.

Black temporalities resist white temporal frames and assumes “time is not linear, that it can be sped up but that it can also be slowed down and played with.”⁸⁵ An example of resisting white temporalities is in DeWitt King’s analysis of how Black spaces, specifically soundscapes, are examples of Black temporalities (e.g., church, hip hop music). Soundscapes can be rhetorically advantageous in speaking back to white temporalities and white violence, thus creating moments for community and solidarity. Churches, for example, can be a way to connect to ancestors and slow down time and it “crafts a shared and scared knowledge that binds, weaves, and constitutes a home, imperfect yes but a home, nonetheless.”⁸⁶ Another example is in an essay that interviewed graduates from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).⁸⁷ One graduate student, Joy, said “[s]o this is kind of a tangent, but a lot of things enslaved people did was resisting the time structure of white people. So when they wasn’t working fast, they wasn’t being lazy; they were undercutting the system.”⁸⁸ Here, we see graduate students acknowledging the enactment of temporal resistance by subverting white structures of time that are classed and racialized. Ultimately, Black temporalities aim to be a “mode of reimagination, a reimagining of Black subjectivities, a mode of recovery, an iterative

process of recovery from anti-blackness, and a mode of resisting, a continual resistance of normative logics and western ideologies.”⁸⁹

Even more so, Black temporalities can also be especially powerful for disrupting white temporalities and regimes situated in post-racialism, which argues that racism no longer lives in the present. This contemporary argument views racialized violence and murder as accidental and merely just isolated events that have zero ties to race. For example, Ore and Houdek explain that Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin were not “a singular or isolated event.”⁹⁰ Black temporalities as resistance comes into play “when articulated together, threatens to rupture the hegemony of white national time and create openings for new understandings of what justice looks like and what such a nonlinear temporality might enable.”⁹¹ Therefore, counter-white temporalities strive to be a mode for opening spaces “to breathe—and to breathe in, take refuge from the storm,” wherein white temporalities contest this notion through a framework of moving on.⁹²

Temporalities can reify dominant ideologies or act as rhetorical and cultural ruses for resistance employed by minoritized rhetors, it also has been linked to understand the concept of “haunting.”⁹³ Regarding this dissertation project, the Whitney Plantation’s rhetoric communicates hauntings enacted by the enslavers for education, while *The Myrtles* integrates hauntings as a means for sustaining white narratives of slavery through the display of a luxurious bed and breakfast and ghostly haunts as a means for capital gain. In both of these texts, we see a collapsing of temporal dimensions through the use of hauntings to situate how the past infiltrates the present. Temporality and haunting are a “fascination with, and often mourning for, a past, or multiple pasts, whose absences haunt” and “the presence of the material now.”⁹⁴ This is further explained by Peter Buse and Scott Andrew:

Ghosts arrive from the past and appear in the present. However, the ghost cannot be properly said to belong to the past.... Does then the ‘historical’ person who is identified

with the ghost properly belong to the present? Surely not, as the idea of a return from death fractures all traditional conceptions of temporality. The temporality to which the ghost is subject is therefore paradoxical, at once they ‘return’ and make their apparitional debut ... any attempt to isolate the origin of language will find its inaugural moment already dependent upon a system of linguistic differences that have been installed prior to the ‘originary’ moment.⁹⁵

In other words, what is often ghostly communicated as “concealed is very much alive and present.”⁹⁶ Therefore, hauntings are never just part of the past but are embedded in the social, cultural, and political now and future.⁹⁷

Like hegemonic temporalities, there are hegemonic hauntings. For example, the Cody Firearms Museum displayed at the Buffalo Bill Center is known for its infamous collection of firearms. Brian Ott, Eric Aoki, and Greg Dickinson argue that this museum creatively “employs an aesthetic of domestication and sterility to frame firearms for museumgoers.”⁹⁸ As a result, the Cody Firearms Museum rhetorically covers up the discursive and symbolic assumptions of firearms, such as settler colonialism. The role of hauntings in this case study is the absence of Indigenous people “whose near extermination was carried out by means of the very ‘technology’ the museum celebrates: the firearm.”⁹⁹ Thus, dominant haunting frameworks can participate in the erasure of past, present, and future marginalized voices.

Retelling history through a dominant lens can result in ignoring the racialized violence and killings of marginalized bodies, which essentially automatically “haunts the plantation space through its infrastructure and the slave system that informed it.”¹⁰⁰ For example, Lisa Calvente and Guadalupe García examine Louisiana spaces that highlight Black absence. For example, the authors explain how the French Quarter tour guides focus on the history and tales of white elite people, “draw the listener’s attention away from the history of slavery and refocus it instead on white residents.”¹⁰¹ These “New Orleans tales achieve the same effects with sensationalized tales of black violence.”¹⁰² These white temporal narratives can become a cultural axiom and, in turn,

become the new history of the state that suppresses any involvement in slavery or anti-Black violence.

At the same time, marginalized and solidaric groups continue to challenge and resist dominant forces. The linkage between temporality and hauntings can work in tandem to create moments of disruption where social change and voices of the margins can infiltrate dominant paces. This idea transcends settler colonial history, which is “a highly functional fantasy of the West, originating at precisely the time when it alone ‘made’ the history of the world.”¹⁰³ A white-essentialized racial lenses can sustain Black absence in memory, temporality, and history. Nevertheless, even with Black absence, there will always be the inescapable haunting of Black presence that undermines the heteronormative ideals. This is evident at modern plantations. Calvente and García explain how Oak Valley plantation tour guides will ask visitors to gather around the once-enslavers dining room table “detailing particular objects and indicating how these objects represented the Romans’ wealth.”¹⁰⁴ While doing so, tour guides will often direct tourists to the shoefly fan that is connected to the ceiling. This fan was installed to give the family and their guests a breeze during Louisiana’s scorching summer. Here, we see Black absence and yet still Black presence. Tour guides routinely fail to mention who would be pulling the rope during this time, which was undoubtedly an enslaved Black man. Calvente and García further note that “[t]he techniques of living, like the shoe fly, necessarily depended on the exploited enslaved bodies and its tourist narrative continues this dependence even in the absence of slave life.”¹⁰⁵

The link between temporality and hauntings can also be an invitation to the present to witness those who used to inhabit the space. In examining Bodie, a “ghost town” in California, Wood posits that through a haunting lens, Bodie enacts a rhetoric of authenticity by inviting

personal encounters with the mortality of the town's missing inhabitants" and "transform the town's ontological instability into a performance of recursive gaze" through "overlapping temporalities, particularly as visitors imagine themselves among the ghosts of Bodie."¹⁰⁶ Wood explains this as a recursive gaze, which is "simply a method of super-imposing more than one frame of interpretation upon a seemingly flat plane, producing a personal axis of movement forward and backward, and often around, through an otherwise static point of view."¹⁰⁷ One way this gaze is accomplished is that visitors, unless they participate in guided tours, are free to roam the ghostly town wherein "visitors are invited to piece together, and it is that very process that creates genuineness in what the viewer sees."¹⁰⁸ Through a recursive gaze, visitors can "beckon overlapping temporalities, reveal ironic contrasts, or hasten the appearance of other hidden meanings. This perspective can be transformative; it may even be transgressive. Yet its practice is not strictly a reproach of any dominant narrative."¹⁰⁹ By allowing visitors to make meaning through their own exploration, they are able to disorient themselves from a script told through a dominant perspective, allowing them to see things that otherwise might be ignored or silenced. Given that temporalities and hauntings are a throughline of the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, I now turn to literature on tourism—a key part of exploring both memoryscapes.

Tourism

Examining tourism is critical for understanding how spaces characterize themselves and how tourists engage with such sites, especially when they contain historically rich memories. Broadly, tourism is essentially "the self-conscious experience of place."¹¹⁰ In other words, tourism is a heightened awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a space. As Historian Karen Cox posits, "[t]ourism deserves serious attention by historians because so much of what the general public learns about the history of the American South is a result of a tour to a historic

site.”¹¹¹ While informing about the place is crucial, studying them from a rhetorical-critical perspective is especially important, especially when the goal is to attract visitors.¹¹² For example, Gray Lines’ is a long-standing tour company that offers “Katrina tours” in New Orleans, which aims inform visitors about the destruction of the city due to Hurricane Katrina. Gray Line tour guides deconstruct the narrative that New Orleans is primarily a lower socioeconomic status party zone that does not contribute to the larger economics and national identity of the “American Dream.” For example, to resist this characterization, tour guides often ask: ““Did you know that thirty percent of the seafood harvested in the lower forty-eight states come from wetlands in south Louisiana?””¹¹³ Overall, the tour guides highlight the importance of rebuilding New Orleans, as it is an essential city for America’s economy and food revenue.

Rhetorical scholars Kristan Poirot and Shevaun Watson showcase how tourism can forward white versions of U.S. enslavement and the antebellum South. In examining Charleston, South Carolina’s urban memories of slavery and how this history has been (re)communicated to the public during their available tours.¹¹⁴ Tours regularly show sanitized “narratives of slavery, gaze at immaculately preserved antebellum homes that celebrate southern white aristocracy, and commemorate the loss of the Confederacy’s freedom fighters on the numerous Civil War battlefields-turned-sacred-ground that dot rural landscapes.”¹¹⁵ It is evident that South Carolina’s tourism industry is more concerned with highlighting South Carolina’s serene and inviting image and the white Charleston residents rather than stories of U.S. enslavement and Black freedom and resistance that occurred in Charleston. Tourism, like this, often may be sought out to “define the vexed relationships among city, region, and slavery.”¹¹⁶ As a result, these explorations when not taken seriously are ultimately an unethical practice and “complicit with colonialist practices of appropriation and control.”¹¹⁷

In addition to historical bodies of explicit racial violence, high fashion industries can function as a type of white tourism grounded in post-racialism and neo-liberalism. Anjali Vats argues that Black bodies are reduced to a post-racial accessory be capitalized on by often white, affluent, high fashion agencies, like *V Magazine*.¹¹⁸ This form of post-racialism is a practice of “racechange.”¹¹⁹ First, racechange in high fashion is to believe that “race is no longer thought to be a socially, politically, or economically meaningful category.”¹²⁰ To support this argument of racechange, high fashion industries show glimpses of different racial and ethical identities. Here, tourism “permits interaction with difference without social, political, or economic obligation while, consistent with postracial ideologies, recognizing difference for its exoticness and novelty instead of its continuing material significance.”¹²¹ This framing removes agency and challenges experiences faced by Black and African people to enter high fashion jobs and participates in the “creating an illusion of equality” between Black and white.¹²² Similarly, tourism is becoming popularized in redevelopment projects that aim to gentrify urban neighborhoods where whiteness can be re-possessed, dislocating primarily Black locals. This type of capitalist communicates a “comeback story” grounded in how white people are better equipped to take care of the city.¹²³ Moreover, such white tourism forwards the idea that race is never part of the discussion, and thus, racism is essentially obsolete.

While tourism has the momentum to forward a white narrative of history, further sensationalizing and minimizing histories and the lived experiences of minoritized bodies, counter-tourism can be especially powerful for reeducating and reflection. There have been moves in plantation tours, museums, and historical sites to retell the histories of enslaved peoples from a nonwhite lens. Sometimes these moves are in response to there being negative reviews and pushback from tourists. When analyzing Southern plantations, Bright et al. highlight one

specific example that speaks to this feedback: “One owner notes that although ‘most of the tour guides didn’t even want to speak of slavery...and still don’t,’ ‘the inclusion of slavery has grown over time, due in large part to visitors calling for this history.’”¹²⁴ Counter-tourism can also create “opportunities for education, civic identification, and cultural change.”¹²⁵ Speaking of tourism as a mode of cultural change, Pezzullo explains how tour guides refrain from discussing “racism” and environmental injustice, given that it is often a politicized issue. Instead, they frame inequities as a moral issue. For example, in moving through the Ninth Ward, tour guides discuss the Murphy Oil refinery spill, which demolished homes and neighborhoods. Given that these neighborhoods are primarily owned and housed by people of color, few resources were provided to secure and rebuild these homes. This paucity was morally appealing to all people, considering that these locations are not viable options for families. This strategic rhetoric framed the issues of inequity by placing blame on Hurricane Katrina and saying that resources are needed to rebuild the future of New Orleans and places destroyed by the hurricane. In doing so, this type of tourism can create “new alliances” and solidarity and community building to restore New Orleans.

While some plantations have moved towards recentering Black narratives, much work remains to be done, including educating on the legacies of slavery. For example, Cook examined a total of three sites, all located in Mississippi and Louisiana, arguing that empathizing with people who were enslaved, and the horror of racialized violence is not enough.¹²⁶ Instead, these sites need to clearly communicate “counter narratives” that promote coalition building and racial justice that extends into the present and future of African and Black generations. Such calls advocate for these to be “places where critical dialogues about history might be staged,” thus “creating a new culture of accountability and responsibility for all heritage tourism sites but

especially those associated with race, racism, and slavery.”¹²⁷ In other words, attempts to remove U.S. enslavement from the tour guides’ script can never truly happen because the script is inherently dependent upon the enslaved body.

The concepts Black memory, temporality, hauntings, and tourism are all evident at the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. Each of these terms employed contribute to the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles resistive rhetoric and their success—whether that be to reeducate and reflect or take an unraced lens to forward a romanticized antebellum era. In examining The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles, I investigate how resistance is enacted differently to sustain or resist white memories of U.S. enslavement. Studying the functions of resistance helps us understand how “resistance” can be strategically utilized to shake or reify racist structures. I now turn to my analysis of the Whitney Plantation, wherein I will provide historical context of the site, define white habitus, showing its connection to the above literature, and then turn to my three-themed analysis: showing Black life and memories in a white habitus, creating a quiet space for reflection, and demonstrating Black time as a counterpart to white time—each of which showcases how the Whitney Plantation challenges a white habitus and speaks to Black resistance through temporality and tourism.

CHAPTER THREE: NAVIGATING A WHITE HABITUS: BLACK RESISTANCE AT THE WHITNEY PLANTATION

The rural town of Edgard, Louisiana, is nestled on the west bank of the Mississippi River in the Parish of St. John the Baptist. Edgard was a product of early Louisiana colonial settlement and was historically known for its expansive landscapes and sugar plantations labored by formally enslaved people. Today, Edgard still has a small population of approximately 2,000 to 3,000 people, mainly attracting tourists to its heritage and the French-Creole-styled historic plantations.¹ According to “Louisiana: Feed Your Soul,” a popular tourist website, Edgard is a place to “[h]ear how enslaved blacks fled the plantations to fight for the Union army.”² The Whitney Plantation is an example of these plantations that once operated through the enslavement of stolen African peoples and their descendants and have since been reimagined into an educational site of memory for contemporary visitors.

The origin and naming of the Whitney Plantation began in 1752, when German immigrant Ambroise Heidel bought the Whitney Plantation, once referred to as the “Habitation Heidel” or the “Heidel Plantation” for indigo production.³ One of Ambroise Haydel’s sons, Jean Jacques Haydel, took over the plantation in the late eighteenth century and soon transitioned its primary crop to sugar in the early 1800s.⁴ Enslaved people working on the plantation were expected to work long hours in the Louisiana heat with the hazardous tools needed to make sugar. Thousands of these enslaved people died due to the exhaustive nature of the work. Keeping the plantation in the Haydel family, Jean Jacques Haydel Jr. and his brother Marcelin Haydel eventually took over. Together, they expanded the enslaved population to produce more significant amounts of sugar. Haydel’s generational ownership of the plantation ended in 1867.

Eventually, the once eminent plantation owner and businessman Bradish Johnson bought the Whitney Plantation. Johnson eventually changed the name to “Whitney” after his daughter married into a family with the last name “Whitney.”⁵ The Whitney Plantation had many more owners throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the St. Martin, Perret, Tassin, and Barnes families. The Whitney Plantation remained operational until 1975, with overseers and workers who lived in two of the original slave quarters. Ultimately, Alfred Barnes sold the Whitney Plantation to Formosa Chemicals and Fibre Corporation, which John Cummings purchased a piece of in 1999.

While the Whitney Plantation was supposed to turn into an industrial site with a manufacturing plant, the community seized the opportunity, with a dedicated fight that lasted ten years, to instead sanctify this place as a memorable site of enslaved history. Cummings agreed with the community and went on an arduous journey to restore the Whitney Plantation, “working with artists, historians, preservationists, conservators, curators, and researchers” to build “what would become Louisiana’s first plantation museum dedicated exclusively to the history of slavery.”⁶ Additionally, Ibrahima Seck, a Fulbright scholar and researcher of culture between Louisiana and Senegambia, began researching the history of the Whitney Plantation. Seck ultimately transitioned to full-time in 2013 as the Director of Research. In 2014, the Whitney Plantation opened as a museum to the public. After investing over 15 million dollars, Cummings donated the property to function as a nonprofit institution in 2019. Since then, the Whitney Plantation has, in total, “welcomed over 500,000 people from around the world.”⁷

The success of the Whitney Plantation is evident in its twofold mission. First, the Whitney Plantation emphasizes the history and memories of U.S. enslavement and speaks to anti-Black violence by preserving “over a dozen historical structures.”⁸ By doing so, the Whitney

Plantation educates the public about the lived experiences of enslaved people who once labored the grounds and how enslavement has lasting impacts on African and Black communities.

Second, the Whitney Plantation teaches about the legacies of slavery, including structural racism, which arguably highlights the plantation's contemporary significance. This success is showcased through the artifacts in the two-part public tours offered. Unlike the Whitney Plantation, modern plantation museums in the Deep South often sanitize African and Black communities' forced heritage and rarely speak to contemporary modes of slavery (e.g., prison system) and systemic racism.⁹ Modern plantations also tend to spend time at the "Big House," educating tourists on the enslavers' family histories, which is not the case at the Whitney Plantation.¹⁰ Therefore, the Whitney Plantation is especially worthy of examination because it reimagines plantations as spaces that prioritize African and Black voices, ultimately aiming to help combat institutional racism and demonstrate a commitment to social and racial justice.

It is important to note that while the Whitney Plantation actively challenges dominant forms of modern plantation tourism and centers Black memories, these sites are complex. In particular, they raise the question of whether sites associated with atrocities, especially racial violence, should even participate in tourism. After all, plantation sites still foreground white supremacy and anti-Black violence, and their continued operation often relies on tourism profit.¹¹ On May 15, 2025, the Nottoway Plantation—the largest remaining antebellum Big House located near White Castle, Louisiana—caught fire. As a result, many Black Americans celebrated this destruction.¹² According to an *Axios* report, activist Brad Gordon stated, "If you don't understand why Black Americans are celebrating the symbolic dismantling of this monument to bondage and generational oppression—well, today, we simply don't care."¹³ Here, we see a counter-narrative that celebrates the destruction of a prominent plantation tourist site,

even if it could potentially be reimagined into a site that centers the lives of those enslaved at the plantation and the lasting impacts on Black individuals today.

Alternative Black voices express conflicting emotions regarding Nottoway Plantation, a site emblematic of Black erasure and racial violence. Yet, as scholarship tell us, plantations could provide an opportunity to educate U.S. enslavement and about the enduring legacies of racism.¹⁴ African American Studies and Heritage Conservation scholar Eliza Jane Franklin describes the burning of Nottoway Plantation as a difficult issue, especially “in an era where our highest offices seek to erase or minimize the histories of people of color.”¹⁵ Franklin emphasizes the importance of preserving such plantation sites, particularly through practices that aim to reveal how Black histories have been silenced in these spaces. She poses a thought-provoking question that the Whitney Plantation’s approach also seeks to address: “What does it mean to preserve these architectural spaces while honestly confronting their brutal foundations?”¹⁶ Katherine McKittrick highlights how Black geographies, such as plantations, can be transformed into places of Black freedom. McKittrick notes that plantations can be reimagined as “spaces of encounter that hold in them useful anti-colonial practices and narratives,” ultimately advocating for Black liberation.¹⁷ In essence, it is essential to be mindful of these tensions before proceeding to my analytical chapter on the Whitney Plantation.

In this chapter, I illustrate how the Whitney Plantation resists dominant memories of U.S. enslavement that are grounded in whiteness and colonialism. More specifically, I posit that the Whitney Plantation’s rhetoric of resistance centers Black life and memories and testifies to ongoing Black resistance and resilience, exposing deeply rooted assumptions of race traceable in a white habitus. As a result, the Whitney Plantation calls attention to unconscious racist regimes that are less apparent in a supposedly post-racial society. This chapter thus subverts two post-

racial assumptions—each of which are characteristics of a white habitus and white temporalities. Post-racial views suggest that U.S. enslavement was abolished in 1865 and has no direct effect on Black and African individuals now. Post-racial ideologies also take up the position that racism may have continued after the Emancipation Proclamation but was “effectively eradicated” after the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁸ This chapter uses Pierre Bourdieu’s concept, “habitus,” which is “simply understood as the dispositions that internalize our social location and which orient our actions.”¹⁹ I draw heavily on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s extension of the concept, through his term “white habitus,” which considers the role of race in white socialized processes and spaces.²⁰ This chapter looks at the rhetorical and multiplicitous functions of resistance within the memoryscape of the Whitney Plantation to show how Black life and memory presences can be employed to speak back to racist, implicit regimes that are grounded in white habitus frameworks.

This chapter unfolds in three parts. First, I define Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and Bonilla-Silva’s extension, highlighting how white habitus reifies both white memories and white supremacy. I then turn to my three themed analysis sections: showing Black life and memories in a white habitus, creating a quiet space for reflection, and demonstrating Black temporalities as a counterpart to white temporalities. I conclude by showcasing how the rhetoric of white habitus can be especially harmful because it demonstrates how racism continues to function in the most implicit ways. Yet, I note that the Whitney Plantation is a testament for undermining a white habitus and creating a space where African and Black voices take center. I also highlight the importance of white scholars engaging with diverse methodologies for doing race-related work.

The socialization of a white habitus and white temporalities

In 1977, French cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of the concept "habitus" (hæbitəs) was translated into English. Habitus refers to a "matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions," which "does not point to individual character or morality" but essentially an embodied response of "cultural conditioning that reproduces and legitimates social formations."²¹ Bourdieu notes that "social agents construct social reality, both individually and collectively. The subjective structures of the unconscious that carries out [sic] the acts of construction . . . are the product of a long, slow, unconscious process of the incorporation of objective structures."²² In other words, the way people process and interpret stimuli about the social world they occupy is in large part connected to their cultural groups, ideologies, and contexts of influences (e.g., how to behave in a classroom). Although people have personal agency, individualized thoughts, and experiences, the theory of habitus suggests that humans' behaviors and actions are predictable "because they reside in the same social niche with others who are affected by similar rituals, belief systems, and interests."²³

Scholars quickly began extending the concept of habitus, arguing that Bourdieu often bypassed the influences of colonialism and racial dimensions on habitus formations.²⁴ For instance, postcolonial scholar Edward Said states that Bourdieu's theorization of habitus failed to consider Eurocentric ideologies, particularly on how colonialism impedes our ability to understand other racial and ethnic groups who are not white, removing other cultural frameworks that are not grounded in uplifting the Western world.²⁵ As Sara Ahmed explains, "colonialism makes the world 'white,' which is of course a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach."²⁶ Habitus can also be seen in the works of rhetoricians and critical/cultural scholars, like Casey Kelly, Elinor Light, Shari

Stenberg, and Janet Will.²⁷ For example, Kelly examines how cooking discourse is an established form of habitus “that incline[s] social agents to perform gender through domestic labor.”²⁸ In order to understand the Whitney Plantation’s resistive rhetoric, I specifically draw on Bonilla-Silva’s addition, which investigates the role of race in habitus, what he terms “white habitus.”²⁹ White habitus is described as a “racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites’ racial tastes, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters.”³⁰ The relationship between habitus and whiteness is that it is “a social identity” that in itself influences the perceptions and expected constructions of how reality should or does operate.³¹ Consequently, the pervasiveness of whiteness is normalized and “becomes second nature or habitual.”³²

White habitus possesses two primary characteristics. First, white habitus is a type of colorblind ideology. Colorblind ideologies minimize the idea that racial hierarchies and racism exist, arguing that they will no longer exist if people are simply treated equally. Consequently, the link between white habitus and the colorblind worldview is “comprehensive and begins early in life” and “helps normalize and legitimate social closure . . . justifying inequality and maintaining the existing racial hierarchy.”³³ For example, Watoii Rabii conducted qualitative interviews of avowed white individuals residing in both rural and urban areas, contending that one of the themes gleaned from the interviewees’ responses was differentiation.³⁴ Interviewees often described themselves as “not racist” because they were educated on the civil rights movement and have had civil experiences with Black individuals. This framework is one that “normalize[s] beliefs in White progressiveness and denies [w]hite racism.”³⁵

Second, white habitus furthers segregation because it normalizes the belief that whites and Blacks live separately out of mere happenstance. Bonilla-Silva argues that this segregation is

a form of “naturalization” that “normalizes oppressive policies and practices by arguing that occurrences such as racial segregation are based on individual or group choices, and are, thus, detached from social structures and policies.”³⁶ As a result, whites generally view racial segregation “as normal and unproblematic” and also “creates a situation that severely limits close personal relationships between blacks and whites.”³⁷ Ultimately, “whites’ collective experiences with blacks are extremely limited and based on racial stereotypes and generalizations perpetuated by the media or through other second-hand sources.”³⁸ This outcome contributes to the sustainment of racial orders and miseducation about Black and Brown communities.³⁹

The Whitney Plantation is especially noteworthy as it testifies to Black resistance and resilience and recenters Black memories and voices, ultimately dissolving implicit racism. I now turn to three-themed analysis: showing Black life and memories in a white habitus, creating a quiet space for reflection, and demonstrating Black time as a counterpart to white time—each of which showcases how the Whitney Plantation challenges a white habitus and speaks to Black resistance through temporality and tourism.

Showing Black life and memories in a white habitus

One immediate strategy of the Whitney Plantation’s resistive rhetoric is a gentle and subtle introduction for white tourists, showcasing Black life in a predominantly white habitus. In other words, white habitus is a form of socialization that normalizes segregation and post-racial frameworks. By offering a gentle introduction to Black life, a reframing rhetoric that reveals the realities of Black life in contrast to white socialization, white visitors are better able to change their habits and thoughts by reducing potential defensiveness. John Hartigan Jr. asserts that “whiteness does have content in as much as it generates norms, ways of understanding history, ways of thinking about self and other, and even ways of thinking about the notion of culture

itself.”⁴⁰ The second part of the tour serves as a personal invitation for reflection, explicitly addressing the horrors and legacies of U.S. enslavement while also showcasing Black resistance and resilience. In contrast, the initial portion of the tour seeks to depersonalize racism by framing it as a global, institutional, and systemic issue that has persisted over time. For example, when I entered the directory building for my tours at the Whitney Plantation, tourists were asked to check in and then were immediately directed to the first part of the tour, which also takes place in the building. Here, tourists can educate themselves on the history of the Transatlantic and Trans-Saharan Slave Trade through various symbolic and material displays.

The first portion aims to teach about the violent and dehumanizing system used to capture and sell African people into slavery. Immediately thereafter, visitors enter the exhibit on extractivism. For example, one display titled “The Cost of Wealth” notes: “An extractive economy depletes resources without replacement. It’s an extreme form of capitalism that values the bottom line above all else. While slavery ended with emancipation, Louisiana’s extractive economy persisted.” Extractivism disproportionately impacts Black lives and neighborhoods in Louisiana, particularly at the Whitney Plantation, contributing to what locals’ call “Cancer Alley,” an 85-mile stretch of industrial pollution along the Mississippi River. Additionally, there are signs that speak to the damage of large storms, like hurricanes, which cause severe damage and have often destroyed such historical sites in Louisiana. Charles Mills notably explains the relationship between white time and extractivism, describing it as a regime of “temporal exploitation and accumulation” to ultimately protect white generations while erasing Black communities, “which, by nature, diminish the life expectancy of racialized others.”⁴¹ By framing racism as a systemic issue rather than a personal one, white visitors can approach their experience with an open mind. This perspective is particularly effective because it addresses any

defensive feelings white visitors may initially have. Furthermore, the Whitney Plantation confronts familiar narratives about reverse racism by emphasizing the ongoing issue of enslavement as a systemic problem, countering the notion that discussions about racism are merely attacks on white individuals.⁴²

The Whitney Plantation also appeals to visitors through material artifacts of children that follow the tourist path up to the last landmark. Not only does this challenge post-racial ideals, but given the ongoing prevalence of Christianity in the U.S. and the circulating biblical reference of “Children are a gift from the Lord,” the Whitney Plantation presents a moral obligation that is rhetorically advantageous for white visitors.⁴³ Artist Woodrow Nash’s sculptures represent enslaved children who labored on the plantation and who gave first-person testimonies about what it was like to be enslaved on a plantation (as Figure 1 shows).



Figure 1. “Enslaved Children Statues.” Whitney Plantation. Photograph by Elsa Hahne.⁴⁴

The children are spread out throughout the tour and are along the tour path road, sitting on the slave quarter cabins, strategically placing them as necessary figures to view. While the children’s statues represent enslaved children of the Whitney Plantation, it is not immediately apparent that they are historical figures. These figures are small in size but also include clothing items of

various shades and styles. For example, I recall one child statue wearing a light blue pair of overalls, whereas another child was wearing a scarf. Dressing the child statues in various clothing gives them a lively contemporary essence that situates them in multiple temporal periods. The statues appear to represent some weathered aging, yet their prominent and diffused presence suggests that they are roaming around, playing with their friends like a modern child would; all this contextualizing is to say, these artifacts could resemble the children of the future. Ultimately, these statues have the effect of demonstrating a lifetime of enslavement, which undermines post-racial discourse.

The Whitney Plantation also (re)presents Black life by rhetorically placing the dates out of the immediate periphery, speaking to how anti-Black murder cannot be situated in a specific time zone. Although the placards contained dates of the sites and were legible to the tourists, they were substantially smaller than the artifacts. For example, Landmark Twelve, “The Field of Angels,” is a memorial site to remember the 2,200 enslaved children who died in St John the Baptist Parish between 1823 and 1863 due to unethical labor conditions. The landmark sign detailing the dates was displayed horizontally outside a brick wall surrounding the all-encompassing “The Field of Angels” memorial. Tourists can even enter the site from other pathways to witness the monument, forgoing seeing the “end” dates altogether.

Even more so, “The Field of Angels” memorial contains two focal points. First is the large charcoal woman statue with angels, whose naked chest is entangled with a small infant, as if she is in the process of holding and breastfeeding. Second, archived quotes by the children are emphasized. One quote pointed to a common Christian bedtime prayer, saying “Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord, my soul to keep. If I should die, before I wake. I pray the Lord, my soul to take. And this I ask for Jesus’ sake. Amen.” The Whitney Plantation’s choice to

center the woman and baby monument and children's voices, instead of the dates, sends a powerful message. Centering the material woman and child bodies along with quotes from enslaved children allows the focus to be on the artifacts rather than the underlying white habitus and temporal belief that this representation is simply a historical example of Black life.

By shifting the focus away from specific dates, tourists are more likely to immerse themselves in each landmark. This approach encourages deep engagement with each site, allowing visitors to witness and reflect on how systematized structures have led to the atrocities committed against enslaved Black individuals. It also connects these historical narratives to contemporary issues, such as the #SayHerName movement and the lives of victims like Sonya Massey, who were killed by police. Oliver, a historical interpreter at the Whitney Plantation, discusses how the plantation reduces temporal separation by emphasizing that convict leasing is a form of re-enslavement. These strategic acts of racial rhetoric challenge the idea that racial violence are singular moments—a theme often associated with white temporalities. Additionally, the Whitney Plantation's emphasis on Black life demonstrates that racism cannot be confined to a specific moment of history despite the prevalent post-racial assumptions within white temporalities.

Creating a quiet space for reflection

Second, the Whitney Plantation resists dominant memories by constructing a rhetorically *quiet* and integrated space for visitors to actively listen to Black voices and narratives. A rhetorical invitation of quietness is “an attempt to share that which is deeply felt” and “assumes the presence of publics whose members need to acknowledge those feelings.”⁴⁵ The Whitney Plantation communicates a rhetoric of quietness by relying on traditional U.S. customs of attending cemeteries and memorials.⁴⁶ In particular, the Whitney Plantation's curatorial practices

honor the memory of the deceased enslaved individuals by providing a striking contrast to the mossy green landscape and the black slabs that resemble headstones. These elements not only capture visitors' attention but also foster a moment of respect for enslaved people who died at the Whitney Plantation. Godfried Asante powerfully writes about the importance of minoritized groups having a voice and their ability to craft divergent narratives outside of a white-colonial framework.⁴⁷ He states: "Voice represents a sense of communal embodied knowledge," which is "particularly important in the acknowledgment of the historical and systemic constraints of institutional power on voice and how those from the margins craft their discursive spaces under the weight of immense institutional constraints."⁴⁸ Therefore, by creating a "rhetorical quiet" space, voices that have routinely been muffled in a white habitus can be heard.

The Whitney Plantation's call for quietness functions as a temporal thread that shifts white expectations for (white) speech and provides African and Black people an opportunity to be heard.⁴⁹ In doing so, The Whitney Plantation addresses the issue of racial segregation by challenging the prevailing white habitus that normalizes the division between Black and white communities. Such normalization often permits white communities to feel "without blame" for not listening to Black voices. A clear example of this perspective can be found in Landmark Thirteen, "Allées Gwendolyn Modlo Hall," which was named after Historian Hall, who dedicated her profession to gathering archival documents on the history of slavery in the Americas (as Figure 2 shows).



Figure 2. “Allées Gwendolyn Modlo Hall.” Whitney Plantation. Photograph by Elsa Hahne.

This memorial records the names of over 107,000 enslaved people held captive in Louisiana from 1719 to 1820. Each name was engraved on reflective 216 granite black slabs, which were mounted on 18 cement walls. Many of these slabs contained quotes from people who were enslaved. For example, as I walked through the Landmark Thirteen, I noticed a quote by Happy Day Green, an enslaved person at the Whitney Plantation who spoke to their experience of racial violence, saying, “I did get some whoopings. They used a cow hide strap on me. They blistered a right smart.” During my tours, I observed a notable difference in how Black and white visitors interacted with the quotes and names displayed. Many Black visitors engaged physically with the hall—touching the names and quote slabs—creating a sense of connection, while many white visitors kept a distance, standing close enough to read but not touching. As visitors moved on from Landmark Thirteen, I heard Black tourists’ openly express their grief and heartache, as the quotes and documented enslaved experiences that felt all too familiar. As for many white visitors, Happy Day Green’s account of anti-Black violence during U.S. enslavement functioned as a story not generally told in a white habitus. In contrast, Black visitors on the tour shared how generational traumas were openly discussed in their homes, forming a continuous theme in the

Black experience, even if they were not intimately familiar with the specific individuals who endured enslavement. Historical Interpreter Chae describes generational trauma as:

It's really scary, because I don't know if there's ever going to be a way to control it [trauma and the frustration that comes with it]. You don't know how you control it...and its being passed to all of your children, so what do you do? Those are some of the challenges that we [Black and African communities] have as a people.

Such tours often foster moments of reflection and create a shift in understanding, highlighting how past, present, and future generations connect—each of which expose white assumptions of temporality.

The Whitney Plantation resists a white habitus, specifically the white educational canon, by creating a space for reflection through moments of reeducation. Landmark Ten, the “German Coast Uprising Memorial” is dedicated to remembering the 1811 Slave Revolt, wherein “the goals of the insurgents were to capture New Orleans to free all the people enslaved there, and to find their way to a free country. They knew that if they were not successful, only death would be at the end of their journey.” I noticed, when I entered the space, a sign read, “silence is requested.” A set of statues of heads are lined up similarly to expected military formations. Each statue is wearing a bandana. This landmark is titled, “Their heroic resistance ended with a bloodbath,” followed by signs that speak about the trial. This memorial contained many plaques with lengthy texts, asking tourists to read about the 1811 Slave Revolt—ultimately slowing down time even within a timed tour. This form of quiet space enables visitors to engage with these texts as an opportunity for reeducation or simply education of one of the largest slave rebellions.

As a white visitor who grew up in a predominantly white Southern institution of authoritative education, I recall that the only enslaved Black voices presented in our school curriculum were framed as a product of historical events, often accompanied by an expression of gratitude for the Emancipation Proclamation, which “eradicated” racism. This perspective is

echoed by historical interpreter Bodie, who recounts his experience learning about U.S. slavery in public schools, where it was suggested that “enslaved people did not resist and that their condition was seen as natural.” On one tour I can recall, both Black and white visitors who discussed the need for reeducation; we all noted that representations of Black communities outside of a submissive lens were frequently omitted from education in the U.S.

The Whitney Plantation also centers the morbid realities of anti-Blackness through explicit illustrations of racial beatings, mobilizing a quiet space for witnessing Black suffering. Davis reminds us that in memorials, quietness is often a quest for a sense of white acknowledgment of “Black pain.”⁵⁰ Further, Bradford Vivian explains that “bearing witness is imperative. We must never forget. We must always remember. We must bear witness.”⁵¹ Thus, “rhetorical mediums of witnessing in our time are equally adaptable, encompassing literature, public speech, political ceremony, atrocity memorials or museums.”⁵² One reflective illustration of a man who became known as “Whipped Peter” shows his keloid whipped back, visually proving the true barbaric nature of slavery. As I looked at this image, I found my eyes following the visible scars, and my pale skin tone reflected back at me. It reminded me that this is not a time for action or for me to participate in the conversation. Instead, it is a moment to sit with the discomfort of white violence and the generational trauma that cannot be linked to a specific time. As Seay-Howard proclaims, “witnessing the legacy of violence at material sites, individuals can be challenged to confront the amnesia that seems to affect American citizens when remembering who has been impacted by racial violence.”⁵³ Furthermore, the Whitney Plantation actively resists whitewashed histories, providing white visitors with a potent and transformative experience of counter-memories.

Beyond bearing witness, the Whitney Plantation offers intimate moments for tourists to actively witness the process of Black pain and even death through materially preserved objects from enslavement, speaking back to colorblind frameworks. Landmark Nine, “Sugar Kettles and Sugar Production,” are preserved kettles operated by formally enslaved people. Historical interpreters regularly remind tourists that the sugar fields and sugar mills were the most dangerous areas on the plantation. With molasses being immensely profitable, enslaved people labored day and night, routinely cutting themselves on the large kettles or losing body parts from their hands going into the engranaje, which could result in their whole body being engulfed in the grinder. Beyond the exploited labor within the sugar fields and sugar mills, enslaved people were often victims of venomous snakes and large alligators that roamed the areas. With each tour I attended, I found myself vividly imagining the horrific environments, each unfolding in my mind and creating a deep silence that echoed among other visitors. The Whitney Plantation not only provided tangible moments of witnessing but also emphasized safety; we were repeatedly advised to be cautious when touching the kettles, as they remain extremely jagged. We were also warned to watch for reptiles with every step and reminded to stay hydrated. Throughout this experience, I reflected on how the Whitney Plantation tours engage with white temporalities, allowing visitors to imagine themselves in the historical context and visualize the forced experience of enslaved labor. However, there is a stark contrast in the contemporary protections provided by the tour’s historical interpreters—a white habitus privilege that enslaved people were never afforded. This contrast affords white visitors to actively witness the brutal horror of being treated as subhuman.

The Whitney Plantation encourages white tourists to engage in reflection, which is especially important for white progressives who may overlook the ongoing internal and external

efforts needed to remain active antiracist allies. Matthew Houdek introspectively notes that “[w]hite supremacy less often operates as a vicious thrust than as an attritional violence upheld by a taken-for-granted system that protects its own interests and beneficiaries through everyday habits and routines, most of which seem benign and unintentional to those who carry them out.”⁵⁴ Thus, this call “to be quiet” is a powerful form of rhetoric to hail an array of white visitors to listen on a tour where they may feel free to speak freely.⁵⁵ Chae often reminds her tourists on the relationship between what it meant to be visibly marked as Black and white. Chae said: “You’re [enslaved people] in bondage. You [white overseer/enslaver] choose when to feed them, or if to feed them. You [white overseer/enslaver] choose if to house them, or where and all those things, it’s your choice.” By providing quiet spaces, the Whitney Plantation encourages white visitors to take time to reflect, fostering continued moments of pause where they can emotionally process, remember, and integrate important historical knowledge of the Black lived experience in the pursuit of racial justice.

Demonstrating Black temporalities as a counterpart to white temporalities

The Whitney Plantation resistive rhetoric also situates Black temporalities as a subversion of white habitus and white temporal scripts that aim to legitimize whiteness as superior and innately pure. The Whitney Plantation accomplishes this task of centering Black temporalities by dismantling stereotypes of Black and African communities—from what appears to be the beginning of time—through enslaved corporeal performances of disidentification. Vats argues that corporeal rhetoric is resistive, especially through “disidentification, which can deny racist representations of blackness, thereby creating possibilities for reworking collective understandings of familiar stereotypes.”⁵⁶ Black women are “stereotyped as ‘Jezebels’ who cannot be raped due to their sexual promiscuity and accessibility.”⁵⁷ In an interview, Chae

explained how Black women are also labeled as inherently “more angry” than white women. Black women who are not believed to be victims of rape are often not paid any attention or their victim narratives are not believed, ultimately resulting in a failure to take the allegations seriously.

The Whitney Plantation resistive rhetoric calls out the hypocrisy of stereotypical discourse about Black women at Landmark One, “The Wall of Honor,” which is dedicated to over 350 people who were enslaved at the Whitney Plantation. Domestic worker Anna nannied and cooked for the third-generation Haydel family and was repeatedly sexually assaulted by members of the Haydel family. One example of this irrefutable evidence as noted in Landmark One is the detailing of when Marcelin’s brother-in-law who raped and impregnated Anna during one of these horrid accounts. Anna delivered this child, naming him Victor. Because Victor was considered a “mixed child,” he continued to work on the plantation as an enslaved person. To showcase this narrative, Landmark One depicts a genealogy chart proving the birth of Victor. Here, the Whitney Plantation highlights a white male as a rapist and a Black woman as a victim—a necessary strategy for challenging assumptions about whiteness and white temporal frameworks. This disidentification bolsters the argument that white men can be perpetrators of sexual violence that is often depicted as being an act performed by Black men.

The Whitney Plantation showcasing Black temporalities is a strategic example of playing with the faulty origins of white temporalities. Another racist stereotype that persists within hegemonic discourse is the belief that Black and African communities are inherently not as intelligent, lack language competence, and are ultimately just lazy compared to white, European people.⁵⁸ Most plantation tours “will be an entertaining experience for the visitor—never mind that the enslaved who actually built the Big House” and histories of violence against enslaved

people will never be discussed.⁵⁹ At the Whitney Plantation, however, Landmark Six is designed specifically to honor enslaved blacksmiths. While the original blacksmith shop is no longer there, in 2002, a building was built to display some of the original pieces that enslaved blacksmiths made, which were taken to be used in the Big House. When I took the self-audio tour, I recall narrator Seck speaking about a man named Robin, who was an enslaved blacksmith on the plantation. Seck further informs that blacksmiths were seen as having unique skills; although not often, they would receive cash tips and often saved the money to buy their, and their family's, freedom. Here, we see that blacksmiths not only exerted the effort demanded by their enslavers but also performed craftsmanship and math, both of which strategically excluded educational teaching from Black and African people. Simon Weaver explains, "these extant stereotypes appear in jokes that explicitly or implicitly connect intelligence to genetics, biology or race," further communicating that Black people lack the commitment to hard work and determination.⁶⁰ Such stereotypes are refuted through the Whitney Plantation's resistive rhetoric that points to historical proof where Black and African people actively bettered themselves despite their external environment. Exposing the racism of stereotypes through counter-white temporalities displayed through corporeal disidentification artifacts demonstrates that these pejoratively contrasted identities are, in essence, white fables that have been passed down to justify racist acts and behaviors.

A key demonstration of Black temporalities lies in acknowledging how white habitus and white temporalities deny the lingering effects of slavery. Post-racial frameworks are integral aspects of both white habitus and white temporalities. The Whitney Plantation explicitly highlights the contention that the legacies of racism are far from over by showing time as circular rather than isolated. In the self-audio tour, I recall Seck and Rogers, the executive director of the

Whitney Plantation, immediately deny that racism is over. Rogers passionately states on the audio, “I don’t want us to ever forget, as we talk about slavery, which is such an important history, these problems and these inequities did not stop in 1865 when the 13th amendment ended legal slavery in this country. That there are many, many legacies we have inherited from the system of slavery that are ongoing.” A similar view is echoed by historical interpreter Bodie. When interviewing Bodie, he shared with me how he was taught about slavery in schools and has a passion for ensuring that his tours strongly connect to the present. He said: “The way that I was taught was this [slavery] was terrible, and it was over in 1865. So, I don’t want anybody to ever come away from my tour thinking that “Oh, that was terrible, but thank goodness it’s over.”” He further pulls specific examples of how the legacies of slavery continue to infiltrate everyday systems by saying:

This [slavery] ties to the modern. I talk about how the modern prison system connects to slavery and the convict lease system, how the health care outcomes for people of color in the state of Louisiana are very similar to what they were when we think about child mortality rates... You know, all these, all these issues go right back to slavery and the legacies of slavery.

White contemporary spaces are often taught that “the past is the past and there is no need to rehash history, especially histories rife with oppression, exploitation, and silenced lives and voices – that was then, this is now.”⁶¹ For example, historical interpreter Susan noted in an interview that teachings of enslavement “were portrayed as organic. It was just something that happened in the past.” Each of these sentiments show how such spaces clearly ignore the enduring legacies of historical injustice. Therefore, this (re)messaging is particularly important for white visitors, as it encourages them to confront common misunderstandings that contribute to ongoing implicit racial biases and their contemporary impacts.

The Whitney Plantation, which focuses on Black temporalities, powerfully underscores the resilience of African and Black communities. During one tour, one historical interpreter urged white visitors to reflect on the modern healthcare system and the alarming fact that Black women and children are dying at disproportionately higher rates than white women. By sharing specific data and addressing unconscious biases within the contemporary healthcare system, white visitors are prompted to imagine entering a hospital without knowing if they or their child will survive. As Angela Wilson writes: “It is only when injustices are recognized that a momentum for dramatic change can be achieved.”⁶² In this context, the Whitney Plantation not only testifies to Black resilience but also illustrates the potential for solidarity between Black and white communities in ways that do not rely on white saviorism or blame. Historical interpreters Ashton and Susan both described in their interviews that to foster social change requires a dedicated commitment to mutual learning between historical interpreters and visitors about African and Black lived experiences in a society whose foundation is undoubtedly built on racism. This is further illustrated in the bookstore in the directory building, which contains a variety of educational readings, most of which are authored by African, Afro-Creole, and African American people, thus offering a shared understanding of history from Black perspectives. Each section of the bookstore portion is labeled (e.g., “site specific reading” or “Louisiana interest”) to help guide visitors in their learning experience. For example, the extraordinary book “Bouki Fait Gombo” written by Seck covers the history of those enslaved at the Whitney Plantation between 1750-1860 and their repeated resilience and generational innovations.⁶³

From the start, African and Black people have not used the master’s tools, as Audre Lorde famously expressed: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”⁶⁴ Meaning, people who suffer from oppressive forces find new pathways for achieving liberation.

Furthermore, as white scholars, activists, and neighbors, we must finally listen to the voices that have sought to be heard for hundreds of years by reinvesting in equitable relationships within our communities, whether that be through diversified methodologies, joining in collective protests, or practicing ethical stewardship where the preservation of minoritized memories takes center stage. By doing so, I believe we can collectively build generational coalitions, foster solidarity, and transform society in a way that is rooted in anti-racism

Conclusion: Towards A Future of Ethical Plantation Tourism

This chapter showcased how the Whitney Plantation's rhetoric of resistance to white habitus creates a space that emphasizes Black life and memories within a predominantly white habitus. The Whitney Plantation not only offers a quiet space for reflection but also illustrates Black temporalities as a counterpoint to white temporalities. While many visitors to the Whitney Plantation are aware of its educational goals, even those who identify as antiracist often do not fully grasp the extent of white habitus influences, particularly when these influences are deeply embedded in societal discourses, structures, and customs. Some scholars argue that white habitus is resistant to change.⁶⁵ However, other literature suggests that "in educational settings, habitus can be transformed, leading an individual to experience a split or fragmentation of their habitus."⁶⁶ By challenging white habitus and white temporalities, I argue that the rhetoric of the Whitney Plantation is grounded in the belief that white habitus can indeed be transformed, even though undoing implicit racism remains a difficult task.

This chapter extends scholarly conversations in two primary ways. First, I contribute to discussions on white habitus. While much sociology and cultural studies scholarship has rightly examined its functions, revealing how a white habitus prolongs living in a racist society where Black people continue to face the same violence and oppression from centuries ago, this chapter

specifically examines how plantation rhetoric can resist the insidious functions of white habitus that sustain white supremacy. This resistance creates space for Black generational stories of resistance and resilience to be centered, facilitating the bearing of witness to uncomfortable truths about white generational violence and white culpability.

Second, there are few examinations by rhetorical scholars that look at the functions of white habitus. To undo white habitus is to examine its rhetorical pervasiveness. As the Whitney Plantations shows, white habitus can be rejected to transform thought. Additionally, I highlight the significance of examining resistance, particularly the role of “reeducation” or “re-socialization” that opposes white socialization, functioning strategically as a rhetorical act of resistance. For example, out of over one thousand Google reviews of the plantation, they maintain over a 4.5 rating for their education. One recent review in Viator, a popular TripAdvisor company, from August 2024, said, “The exhibit was curated very well. It took you on a journey that filled in a lot of gaps for me. My daughters read everything, and left there learning more than they would have in a classroom.”⁶⁷ As we can see here, the Whitney Plantation is a testament for showing how re-socialization can be a resistive tool for undoing a white habitus.

Beyond education, the Whitney Plantation is a sanctified site of Black remembrance, contrasting with how modern plantation tourism typically functions. The Whitney Plantation shows how a white habitus and white temporalities can be undermined in a curated place that offers a counter-narrative to the surrounding state and federal beliefs that attempt to erase and sanitize U.S. history and its involvement in sustaining anti-Blackness. The Whitney Plantation's resistive rhetoric opens possibilities for white visitors to bear witness to the brutality of the system of U.S. enslavement and how legacies of racism impact day-to-day life. In doing so, the

Whitney Plantation communicates a contrasting story, asking whites to confront their own complicity and how white generational anti-Black violence continues, even if white visitors themselves were not a direct part of U.S. enslavement. Beyond this, the Whitney Plantation tactfully does not place blame on white visitors but instead advocates for relationships between Black and white communities, fostering a space for empathy and understanding.

Scholarship must take new forms to understand how implicit racial biases and racism continue to permeate in and outside of the academy, ultimately obscuring Black memories and histories, and how they inform the present-day lived Black experience. This chapter highlights the significance of white scholars engaging in race-related work. As white scholars participating in race scholarship, it is crucial to recognize our own identities and understand that we are products of a society that is rooted in and values whiteness. By sharing my own experiences during the tours, I aimed to acknowledge and make visible the power dynamics inherent in research and education, recognizing that I, like many, am part of a system that has historically oppressed Black communities. Historical interpreter at the Whitney Plantation, Janet, emphasizes this point in her interview: “I have read and read and read, and I am continuing to read. But, you know, by educating myself and others, I feel like I am part of the solution.” Therefore, the Whitney Plantation, along with mutual support and care, allows for a renewed telling of Black history that centers on Black voices and experiences, ultimately disrupting systemic racism.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESISTING BLACK MEMORY AND CELEBRATING AN UNBOTHERED ANTEBELLUM AT THE MYRTLES

The historic and quaint town of St. Francisville, Louisiana, is located in the rolling hills of West Feliciana Parish northwest of Baton Rouge. Like Edgard, St. Francisville was also a product of early Louisiana colonial settlement and had several historical plantations wherein formally enslaved people were forced to work. Although St. Francisville still has a small population of about 2,000 people, it continues to be known for its “natural beauty,” “southern charm,” and rich history of plantations, ultimately attracting many tourists.¹ The Myrtles plantation is a prime example of St. Francisville’s communicated identity as a town representative of historical preservation, southern charm, and the seemingly reminisced antebellum era.²

The Myrtles is a former Creole-style cottage and indigo plantation that once operated through the enslavement of captured African peoples and their descendants. However, The Myrtles’ history of enslavement has since been overshadowed. As mentioned before, The Myrtles has removed the term “plantation” from their marketing and promotion efforts at both the site and on their new website.³ The Myrtles’ website consistently uses “The Myrtles.” For example, in a recent post, the website states, “The Myrtles will be closed to host the St Francisville Food and Wine Festival.”⁴ These events and promotional efforts overlook The Myrtles participation in the historical racialized violence and murder. Moreover, The Myrtles plantation is a place with a history of U.S. enslavement and Black torture that is almost undecipherable in its contemporary form. Consequently, The Myrtles functions as a space where white visitors can sidestep the history of racial violence and complicity in forwarding white supremacy.

The Myrtles, named initially “Laurel Grove,” dates back to 1796 when the wealthy lawyer and infamous leader of the Whiskey Rebellion, General David Bradford, also known as “Whiskey Dave,” bought the land and built the plantation on a Spanish Land Grant.⁵ Upon entering The Myrtles, the off-to-the-side small historical marker sign describes the architecture of The Myrtles as “elaborate plasterwork and lacy ironwork [that] make this twenty-room mansion one of Louisiana’s most unusual plantation homes.”⁶ Bradford lived alone at The Myrtles for a few years until President George Washington put an immediate order out for his execution for involvement in the rebellion. Eventually, President John Adams pardoned Bradford and other members for their involvement in the rebellion.⁷ As a result, Bradford moved his wife, Elizabeth Porter, and five children to live permanently at The Myrtles. When Bradford died, The Myrtles’ ownership was transferred to his son-in-law, Judge Clark Woodruff. Woodruff and his children continued to buy enslaved African and Black people, coercing them to labor the lands for cotton and indigo production.⁸

Bradford and Woodruff’s generational ownership of the plantation ended in 1834 when the latter sold the plantation to Ruffin Gray Stirling and his wife, Mary Catherine Cobb.⁹ The Stirlings continued to purchase enslaved people where they worked in harsh conditions and also forcibly serviced the Stirling’s new renovations and expansion of The Myrtles by planting myrtle trees around the property and decorating the Big House with their European décor.¹⁰ One example of this décor is the European chandelier in the women’s parlor, which contained white molding in the shapes of chrysanthemums curved inward on the outer sides to create the ecological illusion that a breeze was moving through the house. The Myrtles had many more owners through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as William Winter, Mary Cobb’s daughter’s husband, and James and Frances Kermeen Myers. The current owners of The Myrtles

are Morgan and Lizzie Moss, whose mission is to be a “leader in historical preservation” by appealing to contemporary visitors.¹¹ In contrast, as American Historian and Afro-American and African Studies scholar Tiya Miles tells us, “While the literature and lore on The Myrtles is rich with history about the property’s several white owners, it conveys virtually nothing about enslaved African Americans residents.”¹² However, The Myrtles is an immensely popular site for especially white tourists and events, as well as has been featured for its hauntings in the 2024 *Netflix* docuseries “Files of the Unexplained.”¹³

The popularity of The Myrtles can be attributed to two main reasons. First, The Myrtles is representative of withstanding historical generations, upholding southern charm and attracting visitors to imagine the “beauty” of the antebellum South where the realities of U.S. enslavement, racial oppression, and violence are ignored. The Myrtles is a modern, popular hotel bed and breakfast with twenty-one guestrooms. The Myrtles also has an on-site combined coffee and gift shop and restaurant. Given the attraction, The Myrtles is also a staple in the community for events, such as “Al Fresco Steak Night,” where The Myrtles hosts a fire and bottomless wine, or the “Movie at The Myrtles” where spooky movies are communally watched on an outdoor movie screen. In an Instagram post, The Myrtles invites visitors to gather and watch *Hocus Pocus*, saying, “Grab your friends and a blanket and celebrate the spooky season with us! This is a FREE event.”¹⁴ Ultimately, The Myrtles operates as a historical spectacle in modern society for its Southern appeal that refuses to center the history of the place as once an operating plantation with forcibly enslaved people and fails to grapple with the legacies of slavery.

The second reason for The Myrtles’ success is known for its haunting tales. The Myrtles refers to themselves as being known as “one of Americas most haunted homes,” which has been similarly echoed in several different mediums.¹⁵ While The Myrtles markets stories of various

ghosts, there is a significant focus on Chloe as the primary haunting figure. However, the only verifiable historical fact about The Myrtles is its past as a plantation where enslaved African and Black people, including girls who served as nannies for the enslavers' children, lived and died. Notably, historical records from the Census contain no account of an enslaved girl named Chloe.¹⁶ Whether it be the appeal to Southern charm, communal events, or spooky accounts, The Myrtles is a well-attracted site amongst the locals and tourists. Therefore, The Myrtles is worthy of examination, as it functions as a memoryscape that profits off the communicated absences of Black presence and bodies.

In this chapter, I illustrate how The Myrtles rhetoric is twofold—each of which resists Black memory, silences Black voices, and celebrates the return to an antebellum era through dominant hauntings and tourism. As noted in Chapter One, this chapter looks at hegemonic forms of racial resistance that forward white supremacy and racist ideologies. Hauntings “is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known.”¹⁷ The relationship between hegemonic hauntings and tourism can work to ignore the racialized violence and killings of Black bodies. First, I argue that The Myrtles' most sought-after tours appear to take an unraced, white-essentialized lens to undermine African and Black violent enslavement experiences. Second, I posit that this strategic framing of “extracting race” absolves white guilt and ultimately invites visitors to go “back in time” to enjoy a white pre-selected version of history where the antebellum era is reminisced and celebrated. The Myrtles ultimately fosters a space where white audiences can reimagine the possibilities of a renewed antebellum era. By removing the plantation's history of U.S. enslavement and racial brutality, The Myrtles can better appeal to (white) visitors for profit.¹⁸ As Bryan McCann, Ashley Mack, and Rico Self note, “whiteness functions as a strategic rhetoric here that both conceals itself and perpetually works to center

itself.”¹⁹ I advance this chapter’s arguments by using The Myrtles’ marketing websites, social media platforms, and visits to the site itself.

The Myrtles is critical in investigating contemporary plantation logics that aim to mask its history through hauntings and reminiscence for capitalist gain. I showcase how this chapter’s arguments are accomplished in three resistance-themed analysis sections: removing white culpability and reinforcing stereotypes, privileging enslavers’ voices, and celebrating an unbothered antebellum. I conclude by discussing the importance of examining plantation tourism and highlighting a practical call to white audiences to collectivize through personal agency during tours. I now turn to my analysis.

Removing white culpability and reinforcing stereotypes

The Myrtles rhetoric of resistance appears to take an unraced lens by relying on the Founding Fathers’ frameworks of a “good/bad” binary to justify the savage treatment of enslaved people.²⁰ The “good/bad” binary is tied to the Founding Fathers’ ideologies of inherent American values.²¹ However, “good” unequivocally does not include African and Black communities, as they are positioned as “bad” unless they assimilate into white culture. Rachel Griffin notably points out that the good/bad binary “hierarchically situates whiteness as good and blackness as bad in accordance with white supremacy.”²² We experience this outcome with the description of Chloe during the mystery tour, as it highlights a formulaic approach often used by tour guides. Based on the five tours I have attended, it seems that each story is told in a similar manner. Also, while there are photographs of the master enslavers hung up on the wooden walls, there is nothing of Chloe, making tourists rely solely on the tour guide’s description.

Using a predetermined script does not center the voice of the tour guides. As rhetorical scholars assert, plantation tour guide scripts are not a “neutral act,” often aiming to communicate

a specific narrative²³ The script is neatly packaged to follow similar (white) racial ideologies, making the mystery tour even more palatable for white visitors to focus on hauntings and a child's "misbehavior." Chloe is described as a mischievous girl who consistently defied Clark Woodruff's expectations. Tour guides routinely draw on a popular example to showcase Chloe's disobedience. One evening, as the story goes, Chloe neglected her duties to Woodruff's children and listened in on an important conversation occurring between Clark Woodruff and other political leaders and government officials. This meeting was supposedly classified and should only be heard by those (whites) in positions of power. However, at some point during the meeting, Clark Woodruff heard a noise outside the closed doors. Woodruff quickly checked out the noise only to see the alleged Chloe listening to the conversation through the keyholes. As a result, Clark Woodruff severed Chloe's ear. After that, Chloe then walked around with a turban around her head, shielding the wound from others.²⁴ *The Myrtles'* does, in fact, blame Chloe for her severed ear—a common outcome during U.S. enslavement that continues to impact Black communities today. However, *The Myrtles* does not mention enslaved people's experiences of racial violence but rather highlights Chloe as ill-mannered and disrespectful. This strategic framing fails to consider the realities of Black people, who were a regular victim at the hands of their white enslavers and not because of their "bad behavior" but because of the color of their skin. While there is no verifiable historical evidence of Chloe's existence, her "haunting" spirit represents a larger discourse of how anti-Black treatment is justified throughout white temporalities, actively obscuring white culpability.

The prevalence of Christian doctrine in the U.S., particularly in the South, informs *The Myrtles* plantation mystery tour's sidestepping race rhetoric; such rhetoric justifies Chloe's punishment for her described actions as non-racist. The tour's reliance on white Christianity

serves as a masking strategy, supporting white colonial efforts and perpetuating white supremacy.²⁵ As Traci West asserts, “the ease with which white-supremacist ideas fuse with Christological belief in contemporary Christianity is rooted in the history of Christian theology.”²⁶ Notably, Gloria Pindi and Antonio Tomas De La Garza speak to the colonial outcomes of Christianity saying, “Christianity did not start out as European; ironically, at the time of inception, Christians were a marginalized group. However, through its expansion in Europe, and more specifically around the fourth century, western civilization co-opted Christianity.”²⁷ Consequently, Europeans “translated the foundation of Christianity to the European body [civilization] which, became the white body [civilization]—the discourse of race.”²⁸

The Myrtles tour employs these white, civilized Christian beliefs to frame racist punishment as a corrective measure. For instance, during a tour I attended, the guide legitimized Woodruff’s action by citing the biblical verse “an eye for an eye.” An “eye for an eye” is a biblical commandment found in the Old Testament: Book of Exodus 21:23–27, granting reciprocal and equal punishment for the crime committed.²⁹ Thus, Chloe’s “equal punishment” for “breaking the rules” by eavesdropping was the removal of a bodily limb. By invoking Christian references and presenting them within a hierarchical power structure, The Myrtles presents this act as something that could happen to anyone, irrespective of race—like a parent correcting a child’s misbehavior. This misrepresentation obscures the reality of racial violence and conceals the lived experiences of enslaved people, both within and outside the main house.

Another example of The Myrtles’ rhetoric of resistance towards the racialized suppression and violent acts experienced by the enslaved people at the plantation is the minimizing of the brutality of U.S. enslavement. However, when enslavement is portrayed as

violent, the blame is placed on everyone but the enslavers and their overseers.³⁰ While Chloe is consistently referred to as a nanny and mistress throughout the mystery tour, in one part, the tour guides label her as a “slave” to substantiate this claim that any racial violence experienced was not enacted by the “master.” According to the tale, enslaved people seized Chloe for her continued disobedience, ultimately lynching her by hanging her from a myrtle tree and then attaching rocks to her lifeless body and dumping her at the bottom of the Mississippi River. This misdirected characterization downplays the significance of her enslavement, suggesting that her murder is the result of actions by the enslaved community rather than acknowledging the systemic violence of the slave system.³¹ Notably, the tour guides frame her death as being carried out by “Chloe’s community” rather than by other enslaved people on the plantation. This phrasing strategically obscures the shared experience of enslavement and deflects responsibility away from the system of slavery and the enslavers.

Faulting Chloe’s “community” ultimately undermines the memories of U.S. enslavement as it reconstructs an image of enslaved people as the ultimate lynchers and not the enslavers or white overseers. Diana Leonard, Jovo Janjetovic, and Maximilian Usman contend that there is a tourism framework of “the intentional seeking out of a site or place with strong associations to violence and death” which are “either by dint of their history or their present commodification.”³² Also, this line of rhetoric substantiates that enslaved people found kinship or “happily” served their enslavers’, directly underscoring a familiar (white) memory of U.S. enslavement.³³ Pro-slavery rhetoric took a form of Southern paternalism. This pervasive messaging “emphasized the obligation that the master felt for his ‘family.’”³⁴ Gregory Smithers’ describes this “family” as:

The master’s white wife and children, in addition to his slaves, were part of a plantation ‘family’ that the master felt obligated to protect and nurture. But

southern paternalism involved reciprocal responsibilities. Slaves reportedly felt a deep attachment to their white master and mistress, and a determination to fulfil their duties as labourers. In return for faithful service, plantation owners encouraged their slaves to marry and form families.³⁵

This misframing not only makes the Black ancestral and contemporary Black lived experience more digestible for white audiences, but it also rids whites of guilt and culpability, thinking that enslavers' and the enslaved were equally likely to commit murder in ways that were not because of the color of one's skin. However, there is a lack of evidence to support the claim that enslaved people lynched their own to simply prove their allegiance to their enslaver.³⁶

Black communities being able to have agency in the construction of their own memories and histories are crucial for decolonizing and decentering white voices.³⁷ However, The Myrtles' mystery tour denies such agency by relying on white stereotypes of Black people—a common practice in tourism today.³⁸ The Myrtles plantation masks these stereotypes by offering white tourists a divergent pathway to place blame (e.g., Chloe as a mistress rather than a victim of rape). The tour guides not only describe Chloe as a mistress and a nanny but also a manipulative person obsessed with Clark Woodruff, ultimately wanting him to herself. There are two major parts of divergence in the stories. The first and most believed tale, according to the tour guides, is that Chloe became violently jealous of Sarah's life. The second legend is Chloe was angry that after all she had done for Clark and proved herself, he would sever her ear and wanted to seek a small ounce of revenge, proving that he needed her and should feel guilt. Either way, both stories posit a similar outcome: Chloe made a cake or some form of dessert for the family containing a poisonous extract of boiled and reduced oleander leaves. While Clark apparently did not consume the dessert, Sarah and their children did, ultimately leading to their shared demise at the plantation. Lisa Bowleg et al. remind us that “the ‘owners’ of enslaved Black people, White slaveholders raped Black women with impunity—often justifying rapes with explanations of

Black women's lasciviousness.”³⁹ I heard on one tour that Chloe was noted to be a young teenager and did not return to this important detail. I posit that swiftly noting Chloe's age implicitly recognizes that Clark Woodruff not only raped Chloe but was a child predator. The Myrtles actively erases how enslaved girls and women were routinely victims of rape, removing enslaved African and Black girls and women's experiences during enslavement, which continues to be perpetuated today.⁴⁰ Here, we see the script assume Clark's innocence and position him as a victim of Chloe's malice, undeserving of the death of his wife.

While The Myrtles Plantation purports to present an unracialized perspective, it in fact, employs a racially charged lens by relying on specific stereotypes. This strategy not only positions white enslavers as victims but also indirectly reinforces harmful stereotypes about Black people, specifically Black criminality and the hypersexualization of Black women and girls. On one hand, Black people are portrayed as “‘naturally’ prone to criminal activities.”⁴¹ This rhetoric continues to be emphasized through Chloe's “haunting” presence. She is depicted as capable of moving dolls within the main house and tugging on guests' dresses. One visitor, in a 2023 Google review of The Myrtles, reported: “I felt a gentle tug on my pants twice while in the locked bedroom that they say Chloe has taken a liking to.”⁴² Chloe is also known for stealing jewelry from women staying on the property. Another guest described their vacation experience at The Myrtles in 2022 as: “Didn't experience any ghosties but did lose an earring to Chloe.”⁴³ To visually prove this narrative, a locked, wooden jewelry box with a glass lid containing jewelry allegedly stolen by Chloe is displayed in the main house (as Figure 1 shows).



Figure 1. “Jewelry Box.” The Myrtles. Photograph taken by author.

On the other hand, Black women and girls are subjected to the hypersexual white framings, casting them as jezebels for enslavers and their friends.⁴⁴ Davis explains “Jezebel as the symbol of the black woman whose aggressive sexuality and licentiousness brought about the sexual attention of white men.”⁴⁵ As bell hooks notes, stereotypes are white fanatical constructions of blackness to further legitimize white supremacy.⁴⁶ Chloe is a tale crafted from white imagination and yet, still crafts her image in support of white stereotypes of Black people. Vats explains the removal of agency from “the racial minority is [then] subordinated to imperial fantasy, which in turn operates as a means of limiting the retelling of narratives of racial oppression.”⁴⁷ As a result, Black agency to narrate their own stories is silenced, forcing their experiences to be filtered through a white lens.

Privileging enslavers’ voices

The Myrtles’ resistive rhetoric of de-centering Black memories and lives manifests in the literal removal of Black lived experiences from the plantation narrative. This omission makes it difficult for tourists to understand that the site was once a working plantation built on the forced

labor of African captives. As discussed in previous chapters, many plantations omit enslaved people's stories to present the site and tours in a gimmicky and playful manner, avoiding discomfort and potential revenue loss by visitors. The Myrtles achieves this outcome by focusing its day tours on the main house and teaching about those who lived there, effectively silencing the enslaved experiences. This narrative framing is legitimized by portraying the people who lived in the main house as resilient figures who endured a difficult historical period.

This supposed difficult historical period is specifically framed around the challenges faced by white women, such as gendered norms and patriarchal barriers. For example, during the day tour, the guide recounts the story of Mary Stirling and her husband, Ruffin Stirling. Ruffin's unexpected death left Mary a widow. Despite the expected grief and difficulty in coping with such a loss, Mary is portrayed as overcoming her hardship by becoming a successful businesswoman who dedicated herself to ensuring the continued success of The Myrtles. Recognizing the need for male support due to her husband's death, she hired attorney William Winter. The story emphasizes Mary's role in keeping the plantation afloat through her astute business skills, maintaining sole control until her death in 1880. However, this portrayal of Mary fails to acknowledge her ideological and identity position as a wealthy white woman, which afforded her advantages not included in the tour guide's script. Moreover, The Myrtles disregards the reality that enslaved people worked long hours under harsh conditions, their labor being the true foundation of the plantation's prosperity. E Cram notes that colonizer spaces will reduce minoritized groups to their labor production.⁴⁸ This reduction supports racial capitalism, which materialized in enslavement and essentially is defined as the "development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursue[s] essentially racial directions."⁴⁹ Not only were the

enslaved people at The Myrtles reduced to their labor for the benefit of profit, but there were laws that supported it at the time.

The resilience of the owners continued to be emphasized on the tour, honoring the Bradfords' hard work in creating a space for their families to gather and build memories. In doing so, the tour guides describe how even the horrific death of a child did not diminish the generational owners' tenacity and respectability. For example, attorney William Winter ended up marrying Mary and Ruffin Stirling's daughter, who together had six children, one of whom was Kate.⁵⁰ As noted in the tour, Kate passed away when she was three years old to either yellow or typhoid fever. Such tenacity was not only for the benefit of future families who inherited or purchased The Myrtles but also for the surrounding community for generations to come.

Not only does Kate's story mark a significant part of the tour, but there is also a real painting of her displayed in one of the rooms of the main house, rhetorically framing her as an ideal candidate for being photographed, which, in turn, supports the white narratives of the antebellum era (as Figure 2 shows).



Figure 2. "Kate." The Myrtles. Photograph taken by author.

As a result, this type of racial resistance is often why African and Black people are unable to trace their ancestral history because they were not seen as important generational touchstones. While I am not suggesting that Kate should not be memorialized, The Myrtles fails to reckon with those who were not only more likely to be victims of yellow or typhoid fever but who were viewed as undeserving of medical attention: African and Black enslaved people. Yellow and typhoid fever thrived in unsanitary, extreme, and humid temperatures where enslaved people were forced to inhabit and labor.⁵¹ As Richard Mizelle explains, “Black enslaved people had no choice but to risk contracting yellow [or typhoid] fever.”⁵² Even more so, (white) versions of history advance the framework that “[B]lacks were naturally immune or resistant to the disease,” which ultimately just further dehumanized Black enslaved people and their death to yellow fever.⁵³ This version “help[s] justify the entrenched system of racial slavery found in Louisiana and eventually throughout the American South.”⁵⁴ By not considering an explicit race-conscious lens of yellow fever, African and Black people are once again viewed perpetrators in their own death, ultimately absolving white tourists’ guilt.

The notion of the plantation’s unraced resilience extends beyond the tours offered. The Myrtles rearticulates its origins by jointly honoring the year “1796”—when David Bradford purchased the land—through its contemporary restaurant. The architecture of “1796” is that of a modern cabin with exposed wooden beams, dimmed lighting, and a glowing fireplace. Christine Buzinde and Carla Almeida Santos explain that modern plantations will focus on the “importance of remembering the white elite planters who brought prosperity to the area.”⁵⁵ Essentially, “1796” functions as a reminder of The Myrtles’ “accomplishments” for the city: revenue generation. Additionally, Restaurant “1796” prides itself on fresh Southern ingredients and recipes passed down through white generations for public enjoyment. The Myrtles’ website

states that Restaurant 1796 is “a reverent nod to the history of the property,” where “most of our dishes have either passed through or somehow been touched by the hearth.”⁵⁶ This discourse not only ignores the fact that it was a working plantation by labeling it as “property” but also undermines the culinary expertise and creativity of enslaved women, whose dishes are now presented for contemporary visitors. Olga Davis tells us that “African dishes placed on the master’s table proved that in the kitchen it was the African cook, not the mistress who was the teacher.”⁵⁷ By seemingly adopting an unraced lens, The Myrtles capitalizes on the Southern-style foods pioneered by African and Black enslaved people, framing them through a white perspective.

The kitchen is another element of The Myrtles’ rhetoric of resistance against Black enslaved memories and voices. During the day and mystery tours, tourists view the dining room in the main house and learn about the exquisite porcelain sets that have survived. Tour guides invite tourists to imagine sitting at the large wooden dining table, served a three-course meal. However, the tours avoid discussing the enslaved women who prepared these meals for the enslavers and their guests and where they did so: outside the main house. The kitchen was often separate from the main house during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and “was due to practical considerations such as heat, noise, odors, and general commotion associated with the preparation of meals.”⁵⁸ Davis notes that the kitchen separation “signified their outsider status and reflected the rigid form of chattel slavery that persisted through the mid-nineteenth century.”⁵⁹ Enslaved people, considered subhuman, were afforded few safety measures, making the kitchen a hazardous place where African and Black enslaved women faced burns and even death. Thus, the kitchen’s separate location allowed whites to indulge in the forced labor of enslaved people while securing their own safety from fires. Notably, while the kitchen lacked

safety protocols, it also served as a rhetorical space for freedom and resistance. The kitchen functioned as an “arena where women have exercised power and creativity” which was and continues to be rhetorically powerful “for negotiating the outrage of discrimination, inferiority, and most importantly, white superiority.”⁶⁰ The Myrtles not only refuses to acknowledge the horrors of enslavement through its focus on the enslavers’ experiences but also omits any mention of the enslaved people’s resilience and resistance—further evidence of a strategic “unraced lens.”

The Myrtles Plantation’s emphasis on enslavers’ voices and memories violently suppresses African and Black narratives through erasure, even though it relies on enslaved labor to advance its claims of resilience. The Myrtles website describes the place as having “a rich and complex past” that “stands as a testament to resilience and adaptation. This historic site has survived the Civil War and numerous other significant events throughout history.”⁶¹ The terms “resilience” and “adaptation” are rhetorically mobilized to portray The Myrtles as a victim of historical conflicts (e.g., the Civil War). Therefore, The Myrtles frames itself as a surviving testament to historical strife, masking its history as a site of racial violence and anti-Black murder.

Celebrating an unbothered antebellum

The Myrtles also appears to adopt an unraced lens, strategically removing African and Black experiences from the site to celebrate a desired return to the antebellum era. The Myrtles’ rhetoric evokes a sense of homesickness and a nostalgic yearning for a return to a more “simpler life,” free from the “rapidly modernizing, urban-industrial world.”⁶² White southerners, in particular, often view the antebellum era as a time of cultural stillness, characterized by a lack of

technological domination, the upholding of traditional values, and the absence of progressive ideologies that might negatively impact children outside a Christian context.⁶³

One way The Myrtles articulates the antebellum era as a prime historical period is through its emphasis on historical furniture and layouts. The Myrtles presents itself as a bed and breakfast for vacation, inviting visitors to experience the preserved historical site elevated to a vintage country chic aesthetic. The most sought-after accommodation is the main house, where guests can stay in the original rooms once occupied by enslavers Judge Clark Woodruff, General David Bradford, and Ruffin Stirling. The descriptions of each room highlight “elegant suites to be experienced by those who visit.”⁶⁴ Although these rooms have been renovated, they serve as models of their expected appearance, featuring antique bedposts made from mahogany and maple wood, historical armoires and wardrobes, and fireplaces marked by the remnants of coal. Each room retains the original dark wooden flooring, allowing guests to imagine walking and sleeping in the same space as those who lived in the same place before.

Southern tourism often communicates a “mythical representation” of the past.⁶⁵ Additionally, people are often attracted to the historical and vintage décor and fashion of the past because it tends to evoke positive emotions and creates an idealized view that the past was better than the present.⁶⁶ This nostalgia can serve as a way to attribute current feelings of negativity, such as loneliness and moral panics, to the present, and in turn, reflects a selective memory of what the “home” used to be, framing an argument of “what could have been” and positioning the present as inferior to the past.⁶⁷ This return to an idealized past is not only evident at The Myrtles but also in contemporary right-wing political discussions.⁶⁸ It is important to acknowledge that while many romanticize the past, it was not a better time for everyone; in fact, it may have only been better for white individuals.

The Myrtles' focus on the Big House also evokes a "simple life" framing, where white visitors get to sidestep reckoning with who was granted comfort, warmth, and quality sleep when the plantation was operable. In addition to the main house being a central point, The Myrtles annihilates African and Black realities of living in slave quarters. Enslaved carpenters usually built the slave dwellings with limited time, scarce resources, and often remaining lumber and were forced to be located by the fields "as a means to extract the most labor."⁶⁹ Most slave cabins had one large room to optimize the space, given the amount of enslaved people forced to reside in each cabin. Mary Reynolds, who was a formally enslaved woman in Louisiana, described the beds "as made out of puncheons fitted on holes bored in the wall, and planks laid cross them poles. We had tickin' mattresses filled with corn shucks."⁷⁰

The Myrtles could make the argument that, unlike the main house, the slave quarters did not survive the years due to the harsh Louisiana weather and natural disasters, making it difficult to remember. However, there are newly built "caretaker's cottages" that are positioned on the property for guests to stay, which strikingly resemble manufactured versions of slave dwellings but with better building materials. The Myrtles website describes the caretaker quarters as: "Made entirely of cypress and antique heart pine, each cottage features a large sitting area furnished with a sofa, two upholstered chairs and a farm table with bench seating. Each cottage has one large bedroom with two queen beds."⁷¹ The Myrtles' appearance of extracting race through glamourized cabins is eerily disturbing. Not only are the caretakers a selected version, but they also have vintage rocking chairs—communicating the joy of the peaceful life and relaxation. As Buzinde and Almeida Santos write that in tourism "the plantation is not a neutral locale, but rather a political space."⁷² Even when appearing absent, enslaved memories and contributions are tied to the house and property. Therefore, while the cottages appear to be

additional vacation rentals, they are utterly similar to where enslaved peoples were coerced to call home, advancing a reminisced antebellum era that should be reinstated (as Figures 3 and 4 show).



Figure 3. “Former [Louisiana] Slave Cabin Moved to Whitney Plantation.” Photograph by Elsa Hahne.⁷³



Figure 4. “Caretaker Cottages.” The Myrtles. Photograph taken by author.

The Myrtles' rhetoric also explicitly attempts to draw on the importance of Christianity, noting that it is a religion welcoming to all people, further showcasing an extractive race rhetoric. In particular, The Myrtles frames the antebellum South as a prime era where Christianity flourished and people were following the "right Godly path," ultimately respecting the Founding Fathers' goals for the country. For example, during both the daily and mystery tours, guides invite each tourist to individually examine an authentic, antique Christian bible displayed in a glass box on a wooden table. The Myrtles' tour script emphasizes the rarity of such a sighting, suggesting that most people today neither own bibles nor believe in the Christian God. In addition, the Myrtles continue this display of bibles in their hotel bed and breakfast rooms, cottages, and combined coffee-gift shop where the tours begin. Yet, this Christian framing at The Myrtles undoubtedly is grounded in white Christian nationalism, which emphasizes Christian doctrine through the lens of a "pristine nuclear family" that is "heterosexual, middle class, and white."⁷⁴ Using Christianity in support of the antebellum era strategically ignores how African and Black enslaved people were forced to suppress their own African spiritual traditions and cultural practices in favor of Christian vernacular and ideologies.⁷⁵ The Myrtles not only neglects to inform tourists about the potential brutality African and Black enslaved people faced if they resisted Christian assimilation but also omits how white Christianity was historically used to justify the system of slavery. Steven Mailloux explains this support, noting:

Markings of soul and body signaled the natural inferiority of black slaves in both classical and Christian traditions, according to slavery's Southern defenders. Writing out of the Old Testament, they cited not only the ownership of slaves by the patriarchs but also the dark color of Ham as an early racial marking prefiguring the bodily appearance of their own black slaves: through Noah's curse God decreed that Ham's son Canaan and his descendants would be slaves to his brothers and their progeny.⁷⁶

The Myrtles also heavily draws on the works of Edna Hibel throughout the property—an American artist known for her paintings of mothers and their children and families, vividly supporting a heteronormative family structure that is evidently grounded in Christian doctrine.⁷⁷ While Hibel is a recognized artist, the overemphasis of her works neglects to accurately picture families of color—especially in a space with a history of racialized violence where enslaved children were so often separated from their mothers. This framework reinforces the white Christian nationalism promoted by the tours, which exclusively depict white nuclear families, ultimately creating an idealized return to the antebellum era.⁷⁸

The Myrtles also illustrates an unbothered celebrated antebellum era, depicting it as a time with better economic opportunities.⁷⁹ The narrative emphasizes that during the antebellum period, individuals had a greater chance to elevate their social status and become part of affluent, influential circles. For instance, tour guides point out that gaining access to the Stirling's social circles was easier during this time, given the available economic and social opportunities. Those who were invited to the Stirling's events could attend balls, formal gatherings, and dinner parties where they would be treated like royalty. The Myrtles suggests that such opportunities are far-fetched in today's world by inviting tourists to envision themselves spending their Saturday nights waltzing.

Marking the antebellum era as a purported time with easier accessibility to experience luxury and social circle building relies on the forced labor of enslaved people. During the tours, I recall being told that, given the better accessibility to experience a rich lifestyle, I could have experienced a life of being served by those in lower social positions. For example, The Myrtles tour guides would describe how the Louisiana heat and winters were especially brutal, but if you were invited to the Stirling's presumptuous main house, the Stirling's ensured their events would

continue through the humid, hot summers and cold winters because of their diligent preparation. The heat would be mitigated by a weight-driven wooden pendulum that swung back and forth, creating a breeze that also deterred flies from the food. As for the winter, fireplaces throughout the main house would be attended to, ensuring heat flow. Yet, this nostalgia for an antebellum South rejects teaching tourists about the enslaved people who were forced to secure the comfort of the enslavers and their guests. Most of the time, enslaved people were the ones attending to the fire's day and night. As for the fan, it was often tied to a string, and an enslaved person would be forced to work long hours maintaining the breeze. Such antebellum living "depended on the exploited enslaved bodies and its tourist narrative continues this dependence even in the absence of slave life."⁸⁰

Additionally, *The Myrtles* frames the cooks and maids as employed servants. During one tour, a guide invited tourists to consider what it would mean to sit at a large wooden table with real sterling silver dishes and extravagant plates, being served a three-course meal without having to lift a finger. Yet, the reality was that enslaved people were not paid and had to abandon their own lives and their families' livelihoods, and many died because of it—which *The Myrtles* fails to articulate. Enslaved people during the winter endured "inadequate clothing, insufficient food, poorly insulated quarters, and, perhaps most importantly, the increased likelihood of being in tight quarters with a sickly person for sustained periods" ultimately "contributed to the comparatively high rates at which slaves contracted and died from respiratory sicknesses in colder months."⁸¹ Here, visitors are able to indirectly imagine themselves as reaping the benefits of what it meant to be a white person during the antebellum era and what it also meant to hold the position of an enslaver. Moreover, *The Myrtles*' resistive rhetoric takes a seemingly unraced

lens but indirectly relies on enslaved peoples' brutal experiences and forced imprisonment to articulate a celebrated (unbothered) antebellum era.

Conclusion: Sustaining Unethical Plantation Tourism

This chapter demonstrated how The Myrtles plantation advances a rhetorical strategy of racial resistance towards centering African and Black memories at the mere site wherein U.S. enslavement and racialized atrocities were committed. The Myrtles simultaneously erases race and indirectly relies on the commodity of race and racism, specifically enslavement and forced African and Black labor, to sanctify continued profit.⁸² This notion of the exclusion of the history of U.S. enslavement from contemporary tourism is not a new phenomenon and yet, continues to persist in contemporary cultural and southern landscapes.⁸³ Shevaun Watson and Cathy Rex note that even contemporary tourism of plantations that implement “some positive changes, the overarching narrative still falls short of presenting a well-rounded understanding of enslavement.”⁸⁴ This examination of The Myrtle’s resistance towards grappling with U.S. involvement and continued complicity in the repression of racial violence speaks to both the historical failing noted by prior scholars as well as the deeply embedded nature of systemic racism in this the U.S.

This chapter offers scholarly and practical contributions. First, I broadly add to analyses of plantation tourism in rhetorical and critical/cultural scholarship. While there is extensive research on tourism, plantations, and whiteness in geography, tourism, and African and Black studies, there is a lack in rhetorical and critical/cultural studies. The absence of analyses, particularly within rhetorical studies, explains further commitments needed to address colonialism and whiteness within the work of scholars in the field. Therefore, continuing to

examine the hegemonic (white) forces of sites like The Myrtles, that cover up the founding of the U.S. is necessary for exploration and racial justice.

Second, plantation and even tourism generally regularly silence people of color, wherein whiteness and racism continue to subdue the everyday site and tour guides' scripts.⁸⁵ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell explains that rhetorical agency is "communal and participatory, hence, both constituted and constrained by externals that are material and symbolic."⁸⁶ However, Black agency is routinely stripped away due to the impending racist, hegemonic forces. Therefore, in the case of The Myrtles and other similar sites, I offer a call to (white) tourists and audiences to participate in opportunities of necessary agency in tourism. While complicity in the tour's knowledge is prevalent, there have been Google reviews that communicate resistance towards The Myrtles' silencing of Black memories. For example, one Google review explained the tour as such: "I went in expecting to learn something, but as soon as they called a slave a 'mistress' then I already knew. The idea that a slave had an affair with her master and was jealous of his wife is implausible and laughable. Even if she did exist, we all know she wouldn't have had a choice, as she was a slave."⁸⁷ Another review described the place as a "whitewashed experience" where they "propagated the stereotype of a 'happy slave' who loved caring for the owner's children."⁸⁸ This guest proceeds to explain that The Myrtles could "do justice to the reality of the people who were imprisoned on this property, but they've clearly chosen to whitewash history to cater to their white guests."⁸⁹ Moreover, there are ways a tourist can use their own agency to collectively advocate for the return to teaching about U.S. enslavement and centering African and Black voices.

The Myrtles is another contemporary site that fails to take anything but a white-essentialized lens, reifying a country grounded in white supremacy. However, I believe that

through collective action by white tourists and audiences, the narrative at The Myrtles may be changed. A collective rhetoric is “often transformative; the experience is validating and empowering for participants and orients speakers and listeners toward new ways of knowing.”⁹⁰ Simply put, in Lorde’s words: “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression.”⁹¹ Through collective organizing and tourists’ agency, The Myrtles could be reimagined into a site of educational possibilities where U.S. enslavement and memories and the African and Black experience are taught, listened to, and renewed.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The South, and particularly Louisiana, has drawn visitors from across the nation and the world thanks to its unforgettable hospitality, antebellum architecture, majestic cypresses, and live oak trees. Much of this appeal lies in spaces and places that once stood as working plantations, key cogs in America's machinery of agricultural production and dehumanizing racial hierarchies. At these sites today, visitors are often welcomed by modern plantation tours that emphasize beautiful architecture and its ability to create (white) fairy-tale moments perfect for photographic moments and social media attention (e.g., The Myrtles).¹ For example, in Charleston, South Carolina, Magnolia Plantation markets itself as "a picturesque destination perfect for intimate family gatherings, grand wedding receptions, professional photo and video shoots, corporate strategy sessions, and lively social celebrations."² This type of framing as I have argued in this dissertation, reveals an effort to mitigate white guilt by transforming the plantation into a serene (and expensive) setting for celebrations and social events. Yet, these same spaces rarely, if at all, include acknowledgment of the very brutal history of Southern enslavement and anti-Blackness.

In recent decades, this representational pattern has begun to change. Former plantations like the Whitney and its small group of peer institutions and voices exemplify how modern plantations can become sites that center Black memories and voices, places that tell the story of Louisiana's past in different ways and for different audiences. For example, the "Color Of Change" is the largest online racial justice organization and aims to help respond effectively to injustice in the world around us. In 2019, Color Of Change put out a petition against romanticized modern plantation tourism, arguing, "Plantations are forced labor camps that brutalized and murdered millions of Black people in this country—They are not party spaces."³

There has also been a rise in personal and educational blogs by Black individuals that share experiences related to unethical plantation tourism. A notable example is by an avowed Black student who wrote about her tourism experience in Louisiana in 2020. She observed that many plantations, like The Myrtles, had erased the history of enslavement. She described this gut-wrenching experience as such:

I could feel the agony and despair of my ancestors. I could see my family and friends, their backs blistered. I could hear their moans and cries, and I could feel my heart breaking. I looked on at the low-hanging limbs of the old oaks with tear-filled eyes as the lyrics of Billie Holiday's 'Strange Fruit' echoed through my mind and wondered how anyone could visit these grounds and not feel the same way.⁴

This narration speaks to the collective effort of minoritized groups and individuals as they respond to systems of oppression, advocating for alternative pathways that prioritize the voices of those affected by such oppression. The tensions between the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles are unlikely to resolve anytime soon. At this moment, the debate over how we use historical sites to convey narratives of American heroism versus actual historical facts is expected to be a central topic of discussion for years to come.

As I have argued throughout this project, the Whitney Plantation racial resistance testifies to ongoing Black resilience and resistance within a white habitus. In contrast, The Myrtles enacts a dominant form of racial resistance by assuming an "un-raced" lens that invites visitors to go "back in time" and enjoy a (white) pre-selected version of history where the antebellum era is romanticized. The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles underscore this project's significance, contributing to plantation tourism scholarship and offering crucial insights into our current political, social, and cultural landscape. In a new Trump presidency marked by DEI rollbacks and museum funding reductions, the Whitney Plantation faces challenges in sustaining its

mission. Simultaneously, it raises critical concerns about plantations like The Myrtles, which neglects to accurately educate visitors on the sites' Black history and memories.

With this contextualization in mind, this conclusion offers a review of arguments made about racial resistance in this dissertation. Second, I consider the methodological implications of this work, showcasing the possibilities for white scholars to engage in diverse methodologies when examining Black memories that have been rearticulated through tourism. Third, I analyze the circulating hegemonic resistive scripts, stressing continued research on dominant forms of resistance. I also highlight future extensions of this dissertation project. Finally, I highlight the significance of fostering ethical stewardship with minoritized memories.

Reviewing the Project: A Critical Call for Plantation Tourism Scholarship

Before considering the implications of engaging in diverse methodological approaches, I review what I have argued about two modern plantations, specifically showcasing how racial resistance is a dynamic communication strategy that can both be an act of rebellion against unjust systems and reification of hegemonic logic and ideologies. The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles are two sites that speak to the duality of racial tensions in the U.S., where racial resistance can be grounded in producing change and reeducation, leading to sustained commitments to racial justice. In addition, racial resistance can also be used to reject progression grounded in whiteness and colonialism, providing a resistive frame that centers Black voices and their lived experiences. These divergent narratives concretize scholarships that examine the duality of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic temporal responses for studying tourist sites containing Black memories. By critically engaging with scholarly understandings related to tourism, this project provided a more nuanced understanding of the contrasting narratives between the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. In short, this project explored how racial

resistance in the context of plantation tourism can be uniquely displayed in various ways to articulate particular narratives.

Few modern plantations project an inclusive history highlighting voices of the enslaved and the legacies of slavery. The Whitney Plantation is an exception to this claim, as the site dedicates their mission to racial justice work, confronting forces of white supremacy. The Whitney Plantation affords opportunities for all groups of people to learn about U.S. enslavement and structural racism through a race-conscious lens. These opportunities can be seen in its many educational tours offered. In particular, the education tour is for serving public schoolers, homeschool pods, scout groups, clubs, and youth groups. The Whitney Plantation even provides educational booklets with assistive links, highlighting key concepts discussed on the educational tour, vocabulary and discussions about the history of U.S. enslavement, and how students can get involved in racial justice work. In a review, one teacher talked about a fifth-grade field trip taken to the Whitney Plantation, noting that it was “very informative” and centered the voices of those who were enslaved.⁵ Additionally, several reviews spoke to how the Whitney Plantation corrected versions of history that were not told in their educational upbringing.⁶ This project showed the possibilities of modern plantations. By actively engaging in African and Black literature, interviews, and continued research to represent a more accurate version of the Black lived experience, the Whitney Plantation subverts dominant expectations of modern plantation tourism.

Attempting to erase African and Black memories and decenter narratives of racial violence supports post-racial frameworks—a pervasive (white) conservative ideology that argues that society has reached a time where racial prejudice no longer exists and advocates for “moving on.”⁷ Post-racial ideologies are not only prevalent in dominant discourse and

institutions but are also present in places that suggests that modern plantations are no longer sites of racial violence. The Myrtles, among many other plantations, participate in this post-racial masking by rearticulating the site as a destination for romantic getaways and events, thus capitalizing on the history of forced enslaved labor.

Not only does this masking reminisce the antebellum era through a white-centric lens, but it also removes possibilities of educational inquiry about race and racism. For example, in 2023, seventh-grade classes from Denham Springs, Louisiana, took an American history field trip to The Myrtles to explore the grounds and the Big House.⁸ Because The Myrtles prides itself in being a “leader in historical preservation,” their updated website provides a “factual” historical timeline spanning from 1796 to the 2020s of The Myrtles. Yet, in their historical timeline, there is no mention of the enslaved people who were forced to maintain The Myrtles grounds and who regularly endured violence, rape, and murder. Instead, this timeline focuses on the enslaver’s life and each new owner thereafter. For example, in 1834, the timeline highlights, “The estate changed hands when Clark Woodruff entrusted it to Ruffin Stirling, who, captivated by the property’s charm, renamed it ‘The Myrtles,’ inspired by the flourishing crape myrtles surrounding the manor.” Not only is the exploitative labor of enslaved people, who tended to the land that is now referred to as “charming,” blatantly ignored, but the fact that it was an “estate” rather than an operational plantation is also overlooked. Consequently, many contemporary plantations delegitimize the Black experience and by attempting to remove these narratives altogether, suggesting that such history and memory are merely fabrications of the mind. This project highlights the insidious nature of post-racial ideas at contemporary plantations that can effectively sustain and legitimize whiteness, ultimately removing any responsibility to consider U.S. participation in enslavement and racial oppression.

In short, this dissertation highlighted a common throughline of contemporary plantations, arguing that most omit or limit racial narratives to create a more palatable and sanitized version for white comfort. Nevertheless, I also highlight the possibilities of modern plantations practicing ethical stewardship where the preservation of Black memories and education on the legacies of slavery are centered. I believe this detailed exploration of Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles has been enhanced by utilizing diverse methodologies, especially as a white scholar dedicated to anti-racist work who aims to actively acknowledge my own biases. Therefore, I call on white scholars to consider the importance of engaging with multiple methodologies to account for possible gaps in race-related scholarship.

(Re)Assessing Methodological Commitments: white Scholars Doing Race Work

As mentioned in the introduction, this dissertation project emphasizes the importance of white scholars utilizing diverse methodologies when examining historical sites rearticulated for tourism, further offering a pathway for future white scholars. Whiteness is deeply embedded in America's foundation, and even those who identify as antiracists and actively work to unlearn racial biases still benefit from privileges and protections based on the color of our skin. In other words, white antiracist scholars are still beneficiaries of existing racial hierarchies and discrimination.⁹ Houdek introspectively notes that "[w]hite supremacy less often operates as a vicious thrust than as an attritional violence upheld by a taken-for-granted system that protects its own interests and beneficiaries through everyday habits and routines, most of which seem benign and unintentional to those who carry them out."¹⁰ Considering this, employing diverse methodologies can help white scholars confront their own preconceptions and better center marginalized voices in race scholarship.

This project also seeks to add to scholarship on race, memory, and tourism, which remains to be an understudied phenomenon in Communication Studies.¹¹ Notably, as mentioned in Chapter One, African American scholar Carla Peterson declared that it is time for white scholars to alleviate the burden for African and Black communities and commit to telling accurate Black histories and literature.¹² Further, As Henry Gates Jr. said: “The thing about black history is that the truth is so much more complex than anything you could make up.”¹³ In solidarity with this statement, I argue that by employing diverse methods, like semi-structured interviews and archival methods mixed with rhetorical and critical/cultural frameworks, white scholars become better equipped to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences and memories of Black individuals.

To effectively expand scholarship on race, memory, and tourism within Communication Studies, white scholars should embrace a range of methodological approaches. Black communities have long been forced to preserve their own histories, stories, and lived experiences, primarily through oral traditions passed down from generation to generation. Consequently, when attempts are made to oppress or erase Black experiences through the removal of books, literary works, and other documentation, scholars utilizing diverse methodologies can turn to original storytellers and generational narratives to ensure these memories stay alive. An instance of this shared preservation was performed in an interview with Chae, a historical interpreter at Whitney Plantation, where she discussed her ancestral connections to the plantations in Louisiana. However, her perspective offered much more than the typical white preservation of Black history. Chae also shared insights about her community that extended beyond U.S. enslavement and racial violence, although these subjects are significant as well. She emphasized the unity within her community during difficult times and

highlighted the resilience of viewing the community as family. For example, she recalled how the store at Whitney Plantation used to sell cookies. She recalled:

I could still smell that store, you know, used to buy these big old cookies for one penny, and big old cookies had a hole in the middle. I've never tasted a cookie like that ever again in my life, really. So it's just so much. I mean, being that this is a black community, and people are very, very close, I think it comes from living in the slave forest where you might have had red beans, I might have had rice, so we just put them, put it together, and everybody gets to eat, so nobody goes hungry.

Without engaging in diverse methodologies, I likely would not have discovered the story of Chae's childhood. Her experiences of picking up cookies reveal alternative perspectives that highlight moments of joy within Black communities, adding to the stories of the Whitney Plantation after the Thirteenth Amendment.

Multiple methodological endeavors can aid in diverse memory collection of the Black experience. A common thread in documenting Black histories and memories is the tendency to emphasize "sameness." However, Black people possess diverse ethnic and cultural understandings that are often overlooked. Therefore, it is essential to examine both the intentional and unintentional efforts to categorize the Black lived experience as uniform, ultimately essentializing the Other.¹⁴ Interviewing can play a critical role in this by highlighting the unique experiences and memories of Black individuals, showcasing their differences. The Myrtles attempts to adopt an unraced lens, yet the singular narrative of Chloe, who is labeled a "mistress," perpetuates a misleading storyline. This positioning contributes to the master narrative that oversexualizes Black women. In contrast, the Whitney Plantation focuses on various quotes that emphasize the individuality of enslaved people, even within the shared experiences of racism and enslavement. This idea is further illustrated by historical interpreter Chae, who notes that Black individuals are still compartmentalized and treated in this manner. She emphasizes:

[U.S. and white people] They get opinions about people like black people. They put them all in the same basket, which is totally unfair. That is the one thing I pray the Whitney does to make people understand a little bit better. Okay, in my tour, especially at the Wall of Honor, I show people how all the Africans come from different areas of Africa. Because people normally think Africa, oh, Africa is a country, but it's a continent with 54 different countries. You're talking about different types of people.

A similar viewpoint is echoed by historical interpreter Bodie, who spoke about how the “slave ships captured diverse African people.” Bodie talks about the importance of stressing the diversity of African communities in the tours. Ronisha Browdy and Esther Milu rightfully explain that as scholars, we “need to assess our current practices of communicating as a Black collective, prioritizing how we can effectively, ethically, and equally listen to diverse Black voices singly and simultaneously.”¹⁵ Employing diverse methodologies allows scholars to humanize and individualize marginalized experiences, contributing to more ethical research and a broader understanding of how these histories and memories are archived.

By centering marginalized voices and collecting diverse memories, white scholars can contribute to renewed archival practices. While archives are essential for documenting and preserving marginalized memories, they are not neutral spaces. In Charles Morris III’s essay on the politics of archives, he highlights several authors who have worked in the archives, concluding with “the archive, therefore, should rightly be understood not as a passive receptacle for historical documents and their ‘truths,’ or a benign research space, but rather as a dynamic site of rhetorical power.”¹⁶ Therefore, rhetorical scholars must engage in fieldwork, such as interviews, to challenge master narratives within archival work. This approach empowers Black communities to define themselves beyond white stereotypes and assumptions. Historical interpreter at the Whitney Plantation, Oliver notes in an interview why it is vital to distinguish history from memory: “We talk about, you know, that the difference between history and memory, like, that’s a huge that, I mean, this huge thing that we are slowly trying to break apart,

you know, stop confusing memory with history, you know. And that's, that's a huge thing that people all over, all over the United States and all the world are really having to do." While not every person lives to tell their own collective memories, we do know that they are passed down. Therefore, we need to reassess our methods—a call for reexamining how Black history is taught.

Finally, reassessing our methods also involves redefining our relationship with the communities in which we engage. We must recognize that these communities deserve to be treated as our own neighbors—worthy of equity, self-governance, and liberation. Thus, rhetorical and critical/cultural scholars need to reconsider their approaches by actively participating in these communities. This participation should be viewed as a global effort rooted in coalition and solidarity. As Lorde stated, undoing oppression requires a commitment to each other, where the struggle for justice emphasizes unity rather than power indifference.¹⁷ Sustained coalition-building between scholars and the communities we study can empower broad efforts to dismantle oppressive structures worldwide. In an interview with Bodie, a researcher and Whitney Plantation historical interpreter, he emphasized the importance of “giving back to undervalued communities.” This can involve educating ourselves and others and contributing to further research. Ultimately, this is a shared commitment. Through coalition, storytelling, and investment in communities, we can create “generation transnational networks of solidarity, relationality, and worldmaking.”¹⁸ Therefore, I believe that rhetorical and critical/cultural scholars should continue to engage in this endeavor.

Studying Hegemonic Resistance in Another Trumpian Era: Beyond Plantation Tourism

This dissertation reiterated how resistance is a dynamic communicative strategy. In one part, this dissertation reveals how resistance can be used to erase Black memories and voices, furthering a white society that neglects to reckon with the legacies of racism. This project

brought to the surface strategic forms of hegemonic resistance that operate in plantation tourism. The Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles face contrasting futures because of this type of resistance. The Whitney Plantation must navigate a new political terrain that could impose restrictions on what can be taught about America's racial history and structural racism in order to secure donations. Conversely, The Myrtles could completely transform into a bed and breakfast, event space, and hauntings, stripping away its history of racial violence and silencing those who were forced to call it home and endured racial torment. Furthermore, both sites are undeniably shaped by current hegemonic rhetorics of resistance.

This dissertation has broader political and social implications, extending beyond plantation tourism. Dominant forms of resistance are particularly harmful because they rewrite history from a white perspective and reverse progress on equitable policies, typically by claiming to offer something better—which, in reality, sustains white supremacist logics. Yet, hegemonic resistive rhetorics are circulating our political spheres and are often framed as restoring American values. However, hegemonic resistance has alarming implications for the future of marginalized communities in the U.S. Therefore, I highlight three areas of scholarly inquiry to build off this dissertation's analysis of hegemonic resistance. First, the “protect the child script” seeks to legitimize removing CRT teachings. Second, “safeguarding” free speech is an illusory appeal to protect the First Amendment. Third, “reinstating a collective belief in American exceptionalism and patriotism” aims to recreate a (white) collective identity. Further explorations could examine these three scripts, which could aid in expanding Communication Studies and rhetorical scholarship on hegemonic resistance.¹⁹

First, “protect the child” is used as a resistive script to prevent CRT from being taught in the classrooms. For instance, President Trump has consistently voiced his opposition to CRT. In

his 2020 speech at the National Archives, he stated, “Critical race theory is being forced into our children’s schools, it’s being imposed into workplace trainings, and it’s being deployed to rip apart friends, neighbors, and families.”²⁰ More recently, during his campaign for reelection in 2025, Trump declared that he would immediately sign an order to cut federal funding to educational systems that include CRT in their curricula. Even after his reelection, he has continued to denounce CRT with executive orders, referring to it as a “woke agenda” and “radical indoctrination.”²¹ Beyond Trump and his administration, republican states have stood in broad consensus as seen by Louisiana Governor and Republican, Jeff Landry. On August 12, 2024, Landry signed Executive Order JML 24-132, which prohibits the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) in kindergarten through twelfth grade public schools.²² Landry argues that CRT encourages “students to view the world through the lens of race and presume some students are consciously or unconsciously racist, sexist, or oppressive and that some students are victims.”²³ This executive order characterizes CRT as an antagonistic concept, declaring it “destructive” and asserting that it has “no place in the public educational system of the State of Louisiana.”²⁴

Scholarly efforts have been made to call out how CRT is being misused by the Republican Party and in American politics.²⁵ As Allison Palmadessa notes: “CRT is being wrongly positioned as a means to indoctrinate the nation’s youth and divide a nation; what has occurred is a misunderstanding of a theoretical paradigm employed by scholars to confront the deeply embedded racist ideology that permeates American practices, systems, and institutions.”²⁶ Despite the commitment to addressing the misconceptions surrounding CRT, there has been little impact on the widespread right-wing misrepresentations of it. Such control of information, especially, for minors, has legitimate concerns for educational freedom. Ishena Robinson, Deputy Editorial Director of Legal Defense Fund, tells us that “The classroom itself, currently

the focal point of the ongoing fight to suppress uncomfortable truths about America, has traditionally been the site of some of this nation's most egregious acts of state-sponsored racism."²⁷ This form of dominant enactment of resistance, framed as "protecting the child," needs more examination as it perpetuates systemic racism broadly, preventing recognition of how race has historically been and continues to be a factor in targeted oppression and racial violence.

Second, "safeguarding" the First Amendment has become increasingly popular in Trump's rhetorical appeals. In 2022, at a conservative rally in Miami, Florida, Trump declared: "Another one of our highest priorities under a Republican Congress will be to stop left-wing censorship and to restore free speech."²⁸ Trump's use of resistance is strategically framed as a way to uphold freedom of speech; however, it can be argued that Trump and right-wing agendas are actually engaging in censorship regardless of age. For example, in August of 2024, New College of Florida discarded hundreds of books in a dumpster in the college's parking lot at Jane Bancroft Cook Library. In an interview with New College spokesperson Nathan March, he described it as a typical process where the library "review[s] and renew[s] its collection to ensure its materials are meeting the current needs of students and faculty."²⁹ However, many of these books discussed topics of race, the history of U.S. enslavement, queer history, and women's rights. Many students expressed their frustration with the disposal, noting that it felt like a secret, as there was no warning that this would happen, resulting in students being unable to take or donate to their community. This is a clear act of disposal and erasure of minoritized histories—whether that be the burning of the Institute of Sexology, an academic institution dedicated to researching queer rights, or the literal erasure of Black memories so that their communities would not be able to document their histories. This form of resistance appears to the public as an

act of ensuring freedom of speech, yet behind the scenes, eliminating parts of U.S. history, minoritized memories, and stories is a troubling act that is being masked by conservative rhetoric.

Finally, the rhetorical script of right-wing politics is to reinstate a collective belief in American exceptionalism and patriotism. This framework is a creative form of resistance to people who question the ethics of the U.S. and the American Dream. On January 29, 2025, Trump's executive order demands to reinstate "a patriotic admiration for our incredible Nation and the values for which we stand." Further, the executive order claims that federal institutions and agencies will effectively immediately present America only in "[a]ccurate, honest, unifying, inspiring, and ennobling" ways grounded in America's "founding and foundational principles and should provide a clear examination of how the United States has admirably grown closer to its noble principles throughout its history."³⁰ They should also note the "concept that commitment to America's aspirations is beneficial and justified and show the celebration of America's greatness and history is proper."³¹ For example, Trump consistently refers to liberals and progressive agendas as "un-American" and "treasonous."³² Therefore, this strategic form of hegemonic resistance actively silences minoritized voices and their experiences of subjugation and violence in the U.S.

There is a growing need for further examination of hegemonic resistance, specifically strategic hegemonic resistance. The Myrtles engage in this form of resistance by adopting an "un-raced" perspective, similar to broader ongoing efforts to eliminate CRT, gender identities, and women's voting rights in educational settings. These actions have significant cultural implications for minoritized groups, who may experience violence in ways that are difficult to recognize and, in some cases, are legally permitted due to their ambiguous nature. Historically, it

has been challenging to identify discrimination and oppression, as resistance can function as an exclusionary strategy. Additionally, numerous policies and customs have been implemented to address these issues. However, in the new Trump era, many of these policies and frameworks for social and racial justice are being targeted and dismantled, stripping away crucial protections for minoritized individuals. Moreover, continued investigation and commitment to unveiling hegemonic forms of resistance is especially important for new zones of research.

(Re)Examining Historical Sites: Future Endeavors

As I complete this dissertation project, there are numerous extensions of this work that I can see as critical to pursue in the years ahead, either in my own work or in the work of others. One future endeavor for expanding this project involves examining plantation tourism beyond Louisiana. While exploring modern plantation sites in the Deep South, I noticed that many of them convey a similar narrative of Black erasure by adopting an un-raced perspective to appease dominant groups, ultimately ignoring the realities of racialized violence that has and continues to happen. Engaging in rhetorical and critical/cultural endeavors at these sites is essential to determine if they produce themes similar to those found in this project, which looked specifically at the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. Moreover, by extending this project to include additional plantations, I aim to identify common trends regarding the omission of U.S. slavery history and the legacies of racism.

Investigating how these omissions interact with the local environment, especially in comparison to their city landscapes, presents another important avenue for further inquiry. The Deep South exhibits comparable hospitality and tourism trends; however, examining the differences in visitor engagement with modern plantations is crucial. For instance, The Myrtles is located in a small rural town with less than 2,000 people, attracting numerous tourists and locals

to its upscale restaurant for romantic outings.³³ In contrast, Magnolia Plantation in South Carolina is situated in a much larger town with approximately 156,000 residents, offering many dining and entertainment options outside the plantation itself.³⁴ This raises the question of whether plantations in more urban areas are as attractive to visit, considering the abundance of alternative daily activities available.

A third future endeavor is to interview visitors who attend these plantations. While I included online reviews from visitors, this method has limitations; reviews are often written by individuals with strong opinions and those with the time to share their experiences.³⁵ Extending this dissertation to incorporate interviews would further highlight visitors' agency and commitment (if at all) to anti-racism work. This approach could potentially reveal whether and how visitors extend these conversations beyond the site. Additionally, while both the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles have a dedicated mission and overarching narrative, exploring moments of tension, discomfort, and disagreement can provide valuable insights into how tourists perceive and interpret attending a plantation.

A fourth endeavor would be conducting interviews with community members living near the plantations. Many of the historical interpreters at the Whitney Plantation were locals or came from nearby areas and often spoke about the impact of the plantation beyond its physical site. One historical interpreter described the Whitney Plantation as "home," reflecting deep sentiments about family, neighbors, and community. Therefore, I wonder if other community members share this sentiment. Additionally, interviewing residents of St. Francisville who choose whether to visit The Myrtles would provide an intriguing line of scholarly inquiry for exploring how individuals engage with sites that have a history of violence against Black people.

A final future endeavor would be to add a rhetorical analysis of the material rhetoric employed at the sites and how materiality contributes to the overall communicated narratives and ideologies of the Whitney Plantation and The Myrtles. For example, the Whitney Plantation preserves structures like the plantation jail to serve as a stark reminder of the consequences enslaved people faced for disobeying their enslavers. In contrast, The Myrtles actively communicates the preservation of the main house, reminding tourists not to touch the furniture and China sets cherished by the plantation owner families. Moreover, by examining the material rhetoric at play, we, as critics, can discern not only what is deemed worthy of preservation, but also which histories and memories are presented as worth remembering to tourists. Ultimately, material rhetoric can help identify what is present and what is absent, revealing narratives that either challenge or reinforce the whitewashing and romanticization of the antebellum era.

Fostering Ethical Stewardship

In this conclusion, I first outlined the tensions of modern plantations shifting (or choosing not to) their narratives to communicate the site's racial history and how this contributes to the Black lived experience for generations to come. Second, I offered a review of this dissertation's arguments. Third, I illuminated the methodological possibilities for white scholars committed to ethical scholarship concerning race. Fourth, I articulated pathways for scholarly inquiry for hegemonic rhetorics of resistance and expanded on this dissertation's future endeavors. By offering future scholarly directions for this project and line of work, I hope to articulate the importance of examining sites where hegemonic forces and white supremacy logics have historically and continue to be silenced.

As scholars, we must embrace ethical stewardship of the memories and stories we encounter, recognizing our role as caretakers of our communities. This dissertation project aims

to commit to being caretakers of our world, which requires accountability, entailing a commitment to self-reflexivity and active community engagement. Self-reflexivity is crucial for challenging and dismantling dominant narratives. It encourages us, particularly white scholars and individuals who have benefited from the exploitative labor of enslaved people and racist institutions, to recognize how dominant groups perpetuate systems of oppression and to seek change without replicating those systems. Furthermore, dedicated community engagement involves listening to local voices and fostering coalitions to collectively combat systems that undermine diversity and fail to recognize its inherent value. As white scholars, we have a responsibility to engage with white communities who are resistant to racial justice, not by isolating ourselves from conservative colleagues but by leveraging our privileged position to promote re-socialization. We must remember past atrocities rather than erase them and persist in our resistance to create a more equitable society. Ultimately, achieving this outcome requires a united effort from us all.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

¹ Louisiana Illuminator, January 8, 2024, “READ: Gov. Jeff Landry’s Inauguration Speech,” accessed February 1, 2025, <https://lailuminator.com/2024/01/07/landrys-speech/>.

² Eric S. Brown, “Not Settled Law: Race, Civil Rights, and Social Policy in a ‘Color Blind’ Society,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45, no. 13 (2022): 2416–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2022.2102434>; While this dissertation looks at the prolific racial violence in the South and Louisiana specifically, the U.S.’s involvement in anti-Blackness and U.S. enslavement extends into the North and West as well.

³ Jessica K. Rapson, “Refining Memory: Sugar, Oil and Plantation Tourism on Louisiana’s River Road,” *Memory Studies* 13, no. 4 (2020): 763, <https://doi:10.1177/1750698018766384>.

⁴ Melaine Harnay, “Slavery and Plantation Tourism in Louisiana: Deconstructing the Romanticized Narrative of the Plantation Tours,” *Mondes Du Tourisme* 21, no. 21 (2022): 1-18, <https://journals.openedition.org/tourisme/4595>; Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2015), 1-176; Derek H. Alderman and E. Arnold Modlin Jr., “Southern Hospitality and the Politics of African American Belonging: An Analysis of North Carolina Tourism Brochure Photographs,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 30, no. 1 (2013): 6–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873631.2012.745978>; Candace Forbes Bright et al., “The Local Role of Southern Tourism Plantations in Defining a Larger Southern Regional Identity as

Reflected in Tourists' Surveys," *Geographical Review* 110, no. 3 (2020): 270–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gere.12362>; In this dissertation, I use the term “whitewashed” to describe how systems, narratives, and institutions represent ideas that conform to white, Western norms, sanitizing the realities of African and Black communities to make them more palatable for white audiences.

⁵ The “Big House” is another word used to describe the master’s home.

⁶ Harnay, “Slavery and Plantation Tourism,” 4.

⁷ Ariel E. Seay-Howard, “Remembering a Violent Memory: A Material Critique” (PhD diss., Wayne State University, 2023), Patricia Davis, “Memoryscapes in Transition: Black History Museums, New South Narratives, and Urban Regeneration,” *Southern Communication Journal* 78, no. 2 (2013): 107–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2012.729125>; Kristan Poirot and Shevaun E. Watson, “Memories of Freedom and White Resilience: Place, Tourism, and Urban Slavery,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2015): 91–116, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2014.991879>.

⁸ Ariel E. Seay-Howard, “Remembering a Violent Memory”; “About Us,” Whitney Plantation, 2025, <https://whitneyplantation.org/home-test/>.

⁹ Ariel E. Seay-Howard, “Remembering a Violent Memory,” 74.

¹⁰ Patricia Davis, “Memoryscapes in Transition: Black History Museums, New South Narratives, and Urban Regeneration,” *The Southern Communication Journal* 78, no. 2 (2013): 108, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2012.729125>.

¹¹ Patricia Davis, “Memoryscapes in Transition,” 111.

¹² Nicholas Radburn, “Managed at First as If They Were Beasts: The Seasoning of Enslaved Africans in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 6, no. 1 (2021): 11–30, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2405836X-00601008c>.

¹³ Clint Smith, *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2021).

¹⁴ Meaning, racial rhetorical resistance can be enacted at the smallest level, intermediate level, and the largest level.

¹⁵ Bryant Keith Alexander and Michele Hammers, “An invitation to rhetoric: A generative dialogue on performance, possibility, and feminist potentialities in invitational rhetoric,” *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 19, no. 1 (2019): 5–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708617734011>.

¹⁶ Audre Lorde, “There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions,” *Bulletin: Homophobia and Education* 14, no. 3/4 (1983): 9.

¹⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, “On Violence, Intersectionality and Transversal Politics,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 9 (2017): 1460–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1317827>; Suzana Milevska, “Solidarity and Intersectionality: What Can Transnational Feminist Theory Learn from Regional Feminist Activism,” *Feminist Review* 98, no. 1 suppl. (2011): e52–e6, <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2011.29>; Kimberlé Crenshaw, “‘Difference’ through Intersectionality 1,” in *Dalit Feminist Theory*, 139–49 (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2019); Julie A. Bokser, “Sor Juana’s Rhetoric of Silence,” *Rhetoric Review* 25, no. 1 (2006): 5–21, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327981rr2501_1; Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw,

“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” in *The Public Nature of Private Violence*, 93–118 (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁸ Stephen Monroe, “Discouragement, Delay, and Doublespeak at Southern Universities: Considerations and Context for Scholars of Cultural Studies,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2023): 39–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2023.2171078>; Robert J. Razzante and Mark P. Orbe, “Two Sides of the Same Coin: Conceptualizing Dominant Group Theory in the Context of Co-Cultural Theory,” *Communication Theory* 28, no. 3 (2018): 354–375, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtx008>.

¹⁹ James Hershman, “Massive Resistance,” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, last modified December 7, 2020, <https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/massive-resistance/>.

²⁰ James Hershman, “Massive Resistance.”

²¹ Candace Epps-Robertson, “The Race to Erase Brown v. Board of Education: The Virginia Way and the Rhetoric of Massive Resistance,” *Rhetoric Review* 35, no. 2 (2016): 108–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2016.1142812>.

²² American Alliance of Museums, “Urgent: Act Now to Save IMLS,” March 17, 2025, accessed March 19, 2025, <https://www.aam-us.org/2025/03/17/urgent-act-now-to-save-impls/>.

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CHAPTER FOUR

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