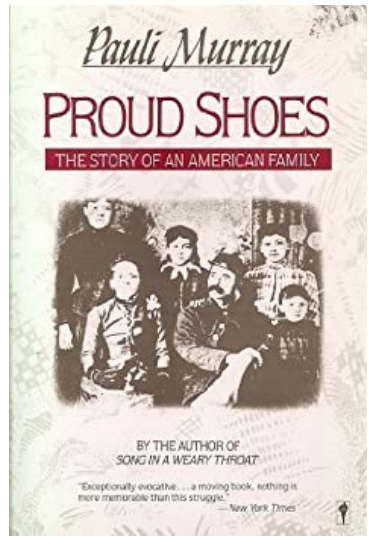
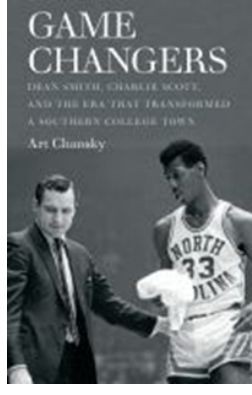
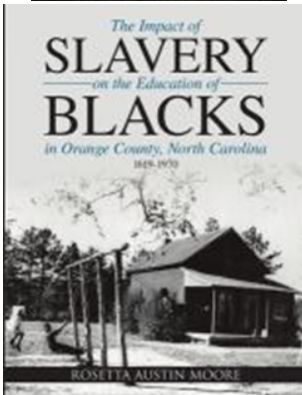
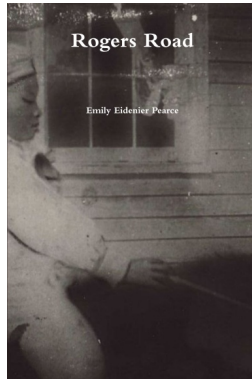


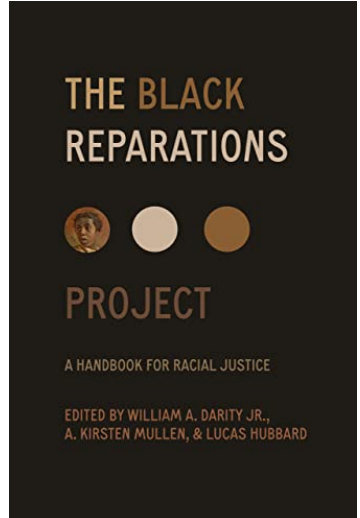
# Resources Centered on Local Black Experience

## books



**“In order to see where we are going, we not only must see where we have been, but we must also understand where we have been.”**

**— ELLA BAKER**



# Resources Centered on Local Black Experience

online

Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina, 1793-1960, by John K. (Yonni) Chapman



Stone Walls  
Chapel Hill history,  
unobstructed  
by Mike Ogle



From the Rock Wall  
Marian Cheek Jackson Center



Re/Collecting Chapel Hill  
Podcast



I Was Still Singing: stories  
from women who changed  
Chapel Hill



# Resources Centered on Local Black Experience

Walking in the shoes of tradition: the predictable erasure of Nikole Hannah-Jones

By DANITA MASON-HOGANS

## essay

YOU HAVE NO DOUBT heard by now about the emails from Walter Hussman Jr. to UNC leaders and at least one member of the Board of Trustees regarding Nikole Hannah-Jones. Yes, that Walter Hussman Jr. — the \$25 million donor and namesake of the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media — trying to convince the university not to hire Nikole Hannah-Jones. Many were shocked, but I was not surprised at all that powerful white men with money use their power to influence and dictate student learning. Sadly, it is tradition at UNC. I come from another tradition though. I come from a movement tradition to challenge that power at every turn.

When I found out about the decision by the Board of Trustees to not consider tenure for Hannah-Jones, I hit the streets with my ancestors for a protest at the Carolina Inn during a BOT meeting. I went to work with my preparation. I had to borrow my 19-year-old daughter's sneakers because it can get dicey in these protest streets, and my sneakers are a funky blue. I needed movement black, and her sneakers answered the call. Being the crafter that I am, I ran to the store for some white vinyl to make a t-shirt reflecting my revolutionary mood.

My daughter did what daughters do and looked me up and down, inspecting me from head to toe. She said everything looked good on my shirt except for the “escheat” part. She said not many people know what escheat means, so my shirt might not make sense to everyone. I smiled and said I knew that, but in the name of Nikole Hannah-Jones, they were going to learn that day.



## essay, cont.

WHEN THE UNIVERSITY was chartered in 1789, my ancestors were there. So were the ancestors of many others. So were the Native people from this area.

The idea for UNC came about in 1776 when the wealthy gentry no longer wanted to send their children to England to be educated. The concept for a public university in North Carolina was met with resistance from working class white people who didn't want their tax dollars funding a school for the sons of the elite. Most of the white working class, particularly in the western part of the state, did not own enslaved people (many rented them though) and were not wealthy. They feared the university would become a factory for narratives and policy that would further entrench the agenda of the state legislature, which was already dominated by wealthy enslavers. At that time, 85% of the General Assembly owned enslaved peoples, which was the highest percentage in the country.

The pushback was pronounced and the state budget provided little funding for the university. In 1789, the General Assembly granted the university the right to recover escheated property from the state of North Carolina, eventually making UNC one of the most well-endowed public universities in the nation.

So what is an escheat? An escheated property is when a person dies without heirs and so the state inherits the property. By this process with UNC as the benefactor, over the years the wealth acquired was colossal. UNC had lawyers in every county of the state looking for and cashing in on escheats.

The tragedy for us Black, generational folk locally — as well as all across the state — is that our enslaved ancestors were property. Therefore our people were escheated properties acquired by UNC and then sold to fund the university. This went on for years, and of course UNC depended on enslaved labor for more than 72 years after its cornerstone was laid in 1793. Not only was UNC built with Black blood, sweat, and tears — with bricks constructed from stolen Native lands — Black bodies provided the economic foundation of the university. For a brilliant read on the impact on local people connected to UNC, please read “From Slavery to College Loans” by kynita stringer-stanback.

# essay, cont.

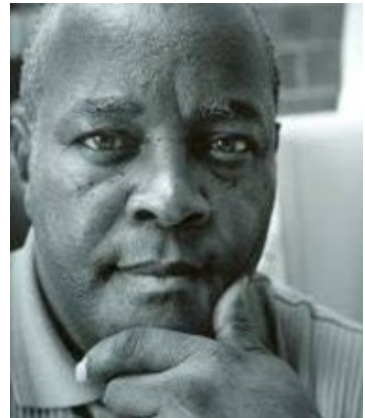
So why is this part of UNC's history not better known? Why in 2021 does the official history page of UNC's website still say that in 1793 William Richardson Davie "and fellow trustees laid the cornerstone of the first building"? Where is the mention of the people from whose lands that cornerstone was taken? Where is the mention of the enslaved laborers who really laid the foundation? Who would believe that these elitists got their hands dirty enough to lay a cornerstone? How did this version of UNC history come to be? Who started this revisionist, false narrative? I found the answer quite by accident two years ago, and it still takes my breath away.

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IN 2019, I was invited to give the Kemp Plummer Battle lecture for the Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies, whose existence dates back to when UNC opened the doors to that first building in 1795. At the time, I didn't know who Kemp Plummer Battle was, but I was thrilled to be invited to speak by these young people, and I thought I should respectfully research and mention their history as a part of my opening. As I dug into the archive dedicated to Battle, who was UNC's president from 1876 to 1891, the room in the library went dark. It was as if my ancestors had set me up to point me in the right direction — and have a good laugh at my shocked face.

I found out that the family of one of the main architects of that mythical construct about UNC's founding was likely kin to one of Chapel Hill's greatest social justice giants, my late beloved mentor, Fred Battle.

Fred Battle attended segregated Lincoln High School in Chapel Hill and graduated with the class of 1962. After football practice, he would join his schoolmates in the civil rights protests downtown and when he graduated he played football at The North Carolina Agricultural and State University in Greensboro, where he participated in the sit-in movement as well. When Mr. Battle moved back to Chapel Hill, he helped establish recreation, education, and employment programs to lift up local Black people. I was honored to have been asked to read his favorite poem at his funeral services in 2019.



Mr. Battle and his family in Chapel Hill are known for having light brown eyes. They are likely an inheritance from one of UNC's most historically prominent families.

UNC alumnus, historian, professor, businessman, and influencer Kemp Plummer Battle once wrote about a joke his uncle told that touched on the family relationship to Black people. The joke was that the skin of Kemp's uncle was so dark that a little "mulatto boy" thought he was the boy's father. Battle wrote that the uncle was "fond of telling on himself" with this joke. The truth is that white male Battles likely did produce Black children, as many enslavers did. The Black Battle family has traced their origins back to the white Battles and both families left legacies with widely divergent meanings for different people.

Fred Battle was a freedom fighter until the day he died. Meanwhile much of this oppressive Southern historical mess seemingly had been perpetuated by one of his ancestors, Kemp Plummer Battle.

Kemp Battle inherited wealth and privilege from his father, William Horn Battle, a judge and law professor at the university. The elder Battle moved his family to Chapel Hill so that his six sons could be educated at UNC. Kemp was smart and his father's money gave him access to private tutoring. He entered college at UNC at 14 and became valedictorian of his class.

Kemp Battle was also a staunch advocate for the confederacy, although he turned down the opportunity to actually serve in the Civil War when he was not granted the title of officer. He joined his father's law practice, crafting white supremacist policies for the state. He was so well thought of by conservatives he was invited to be a Wake County delegate to the Secession Convention and he signed the Ordinance of Secession to remove North Carolina and other confederate states from the union in 1861. The next year, he was named to the UNC Board of Trustees, a position he held, off and on, until his death in 1919.

Kemp Battle believed Black people were created to serve the white race and the university. In his book *The History of the University of North Carolina Volume I*, Battle spoke of an enslaved woman whose father, a free man, had purchased her. Even though she was still technically enslaved, by him, she could live as a free person. Battle's characterization of what happened later underscores his and the university's views on enslaved people as escheated property:

# essay, cont.

*"A free negro had a daughter, the slave of another. He bought her and then she became mother of a boy. The woman's father died without kin and intestate. His child and grandchild being his personal property became the property of the university. They were ordered to be sold. This sounds hard, but it was proved to the Board that they were in the lowest stage of poverty and degradation and that it would redound to their happiness to have a master. It must be remembered that slaves were considered to be as a rule in a better condition than free negroes."*

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ALTHOUGH KEMP PLUMMER BATTLE was an attorney by profession and not degreed in the field of history, his colleagues on the Board of Trustees allowed him to craft UNC's history program. He exerted great influence on the UNC history department and regularly assigned his students readings on racist literature to suit his ideology. He also diligently preserved southern narratives by using his resources to maintain boxes of letters and documents of fellow confederates to be archived for the future. He served as State Superintendent in 1873 and had help from his partners at the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) to spread white supremacist fairytales into the North Carolina public school system. One book they pushed, *The Ku-Klux Klans* by Mrs. T.J. Jarvis, extolled the virtues of the noble Klansman who valiantly stepped in to protect white southern women. UDC president Mrs. James A. Rounsaville best summed up these objectives:

*"It has ever been the cherished purpose of the Daughters of the Confederacy to secure greater educational opportunities for Confederate children, and by thorough training of their powers of mind, heart and hand, render it possible for these representatives of our Southern race to retain for that race its supremacy in its own land."*

Critical to this plan was the depiction of enslaved Black people as content and grateful for the honor of serving white people. Kemp Battle campaigned with the UDC to pay homage to faithful enslaved "mammies" and servants through writings and statues. This campaign was so successful that in 1923 the U.S. Senate voted to install a statue dedicated to the "Mammy" in our nation's capital "in memory of the faithful slave mammies of the South." UNC alum Charles Stedman of Pittsboro introduced the bill, which passed in the Senate but died in the U.S. House. According to writer James Huffman, the UDC donated 183 portraits of confederate figures and 206 confederate flags in 1932 alone. The following year, the organization added 865 more confederate flags for display in the public schools. Mind you, this was 67 years after the end of the civil war.

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# essay, cont.

These false southern narratives permeated. Here's what I found on the grave of my ancestor, Sallie Mason:

Sallie Mason,  
Died 1873  
Aged 66 Years.  
Our Black Mammy.

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AFTER DISCOVERING this research about the namesake of the lecture I was to give to UNC's Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies, I had to change my talk and share what I'd learned with those students. They were wonderfully receptive and engaged. We learned from each other how to share this information with others.

As I was leaving, a young woman told me it was customary for the annual speaker to be voted on as an honorary senator for the society and that someone would contact me soon about that. I received lovely thank you notes for my time with them, but nobody ever reached out about being voted on as a senator. I don't know what happened, but I do know that I was thrilled to join them that evening and enjoyed our time together very much. Young people are always at the center of change but not at the center of the power and of the civil war.

I believe that past is prologue and like many powerful people today, Kemp Battle was not prepared to accept defeat. Also like today, he had the power to partner with other elites — and policymakers — to craft a narrative downplaying the impact of supremacy on the lives of people who were subjugated. Sound familiar?

Kemp Battle understood that the early white working class members were right. That the institution of the Academy was where future policymakers and educators would develop ideology and connections. The people in power established narratives to present themselves as oppressed and beleaguered, having had their noble efforts to save this country subverted by liberals. The liberal goal was to take away white people's freedom and way of life, they claimed, and used the threat of angry Black people as a rationale for under-educating, under-employing, and murdering Black men openly in the streets, or as in the case of James Cates, on UNC's campus for everyone to see.



# essay, cont.

I've been researching history and implementing educational programs in Chapel Hill for 35 years. I've done a TED talk, written articles, lectured, and led community discussions; I've unearthed primary source documents and materials, and gathered data and statistics to tell the story that is not being told. What I know is this: Our history has been ignored, subverted, and replaced with a narrative that works for everyone but us.

We are not happy with our sugar-coated oppression and we never were. Our children have been neglected and their history dismissed and erased right in the shadow of one of our nation's greatest educational institutions. We are still not free to enjoy life without poverty and servitude, and hot diggity damn if I will EVER stop telling the truth.

There are many dynamic, dedicated people at the university who are also committed to examining what were once thought to be old truths, and are giving them a proper exposure to the light. They are not the problem. Two centuries later, the state legislature again consists of mostly white conservative men. They appoint the Board of Governors for the state's UNC system, as well as four members of UNC-Chapel Hill's Board of Trustees. And let's be clear, their work is not finished with Nikole Hannah-Jones's tenure. On May 12, the N.C. House passed Bill 324, which says K-12 students can't be taught anything about race history that could cause "discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress." They have had a steady grip on power for 10 years. We must change that.

So when it became news that the Board of Trustees had decided history truth-teller Nikole Hannah-Jones was unworthy of consideration for tenure, I borrowed my daughter's black sneakers and put on my revolutionary t-shirt. Me and my people are descendants of the escheated and have been here for at least seven generations, and history happened to us too. We can all learn from it and have the right to tell it.

Local Black people have been here through all of this hard history. Local Black people have had to bear the generational scars of subjugation and neglect for more than 200 years. We have been in either enslavement or Jim Crow for 77% of our existence in this town. It is no coincidence that Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools has the second largest achievement gap in the nation. It is no coincidence that Orange County has the largest wealth gap in North Carolina. UNC leaders like Kemp Battle have been central to the notion of where our proper place should be, and have matched policy to fit the narrative.

# essay, cont.

For years we have been led to believe that we weren't smart enough, haven't worked hard enough, saved enough money, been good enough parents, or had the appropriate family structure. None of these accusations are true. In spite of having fewer resources, we have always been dedicated to education. We have always worked harder than anyone. Our family structures are what have maintained us and kept us together.

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THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH is that systemic oppression for local Black people was crafted right here in Chapel Hill, at this very university, to the extent that we've never stood much of a chance and never had a platform to tell our story and share our history. We as local Black folks have to reckon with the fact that we have been living in a state of unrequited love for this university and town. I am part of a community who loves where I am from. I love Chapel Hill, the city where people have nurtured me and loved on me and have developed who I am. But when we local Black generational folks proudly tell people that we are from Chapel Hill and root for UNC sports teams and wear those UNC shirts, we also have to be able to affirm and study our history here and the oppression that has come with it.

These are not easy conversations. However, hard conversation is one thing, denial and repression of the truth is another. I wonder what might happen if we listened for understanding and not for contradiction, and then committed to collective action. I meet each week with two friends, Missy and Sandra, both white women from Chapel Hill for about seven generations like me. However, unlike me, they come from wealth and privilege. We meet to giggle and reminisce on our collective Chapel Hill experiences and work on strategies to make it a fair place to grow up for all of our children. We develop action plans to combat disparity.

Walter Hussman Jr. uses his wealth and influence to continue the tradition of Kemp Plummer Battle. Money begets power. And power begets resources to influence, inform, and intimidate if necessary. But I believe in people power too, and the people were not having it on that day of the Board of Trustees protest. There were local Black and white people, Native people, Latin people, and university folks to name a few. I'd like to extend a special shoutout to the Asian American Pacific Islanders crew who were ready to throw down when a man in a white truck drove by chanting "white power." The people get it. I want to be with the people today who are ready to counter and add to the narrative of the progressive university in the benevolent south.

# essay, cont.

Nikole Hannah-Jones continues another tradition, of Black women who interrogate the narrative of people in power and we need her at UNC. We now know the importance of sharing history thanks to the dedication and brilliance of people like her. Anna Julia Cooper, Pauli Murray, and Sonya Haynes Stone are more Black women whom UNC should have listened to and treated better. Now we have an opportunity to demand better treatment for Hannah-Jones. Dean Susan King of the UNC Hussman School of Journalism stood up to power when she told NC Policy Watch: “Our job is to expose our students to the great issues of our time. This is a fraught time and a time of racial reckoning.” Dean King stood with Nikole Hannah-Jones and I do not think it is a coincidence that she is a woman.

This movement for justice is a marathon, not a sprint. But it is a marathon that transpires across generations, like a perpetual relay race with many legs yet to run. We can activate our people power now that we know how the race is run. Let’s put on our collective sneakers and show up wherever we are — at Board of Trustees meetings, General Assembly meetings, and at the ballot box. I am happy to borrow my daughter’s shoes, understanding full well that one day she may have to stand in mine.

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“Slaves as Escheats: Slavery and the Making of the University”: UNC Libraries



**CJ Suitt**  
(he,him/they,them)  
is a performance  
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# Resources Centered on Local Black Experience

# nonprofits



Our mission is to cultivate our capacities & brighten our communities through educational opportunities for the descendants of the enslaved in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.



The Hannah Ruth Foundation is a community-based non-profit enhancing the quality of life for inter-generational populations in our community through service and advocacy. We are located in Chapel Hill and serve communities in Orange county.



E3 Camp (Empowering Excellence thru Exploration) mission is to provide African-American middle/high school students with hands-on activities, educational field trips and on site presenters in Art and STEM fields, necessary to become productive citizens in the 21st century workforce.



EMPOWERment, Inc. is a Community Development Corporation with the mission of empowering individuals and communities to achieve their destiny through community organizing, affordable housing, and grassroots economic development.



**The Chapel Hill Black Film Festival**

**February 10-11, 2023**

**Varsity Theatre**

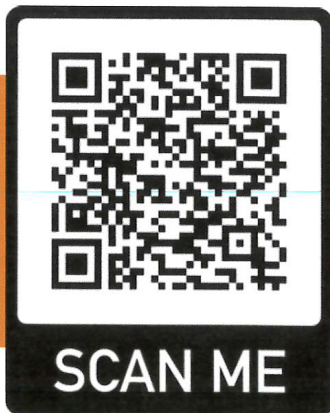
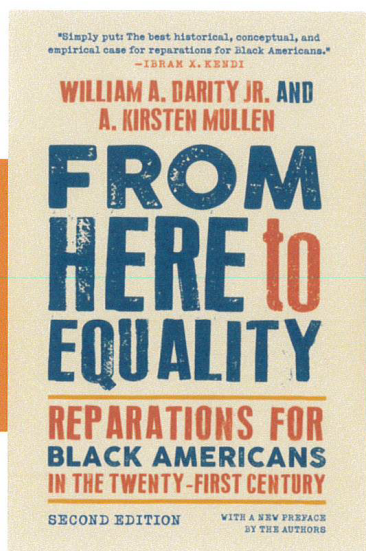
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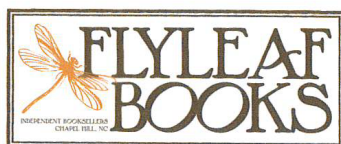
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# FROM HERE TO EQUALITY

## COMMUNITY READ & CONVERSATIONS

Join us for a community read and conversation series centered on the book, From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the 21st Century. Together, we will read, discuss, and debate the idea of reparations and repair for our community. All sessions begin at 7 pm at Chapel Hill Public Library.

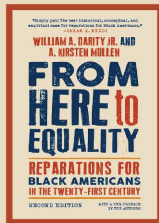
FEATURING



**William  
Darity Jr.**



**Kirsten  
Mullen**



ORGANIZED BY



**Danita  
Mason-Hogans**



**Simona  
Goldin**

Authors of "From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty First Century"

Co-Chairs, Equity in Schools Taskforce, UNC Commission on History, Race & A Way Forward

**Thursday, February 9**  
**Thursday, March 30**

**Thursday, April 6**  
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