



SLAVE WRECKS PROJECT

OUR MISSION

The Slave Wrecks Project (SWP) uses maritime archaeology, historical research and the study of sunken slave ships and their connected land sites to take a distinct approach to the study of the transatlantic slave trade.

WHO WE ARE

SWP is an international network of researchers and institutions hosted by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture that are engaged in collaborative work across regions that span the Atlantic world. These global partners include Iziko Museums of South Africa, U.S. National Park Service, Diving With a Purpose and The George Washington University. The SWP network also spans a growing list of national, regional, and at-large partnerships with institutions, researchers, and community groups in South Africa, Mozambique, Senegal, Cuba, Brazil, Saint Croix (U.S. Virgin Islands) and other sites in the United States.

WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT?

SWP catalyzes a new field of research - maritime archaeology - in the scholarship of slavery and the slave trade. The project establishes a new model for international collaboration among museums and research institutions, and it links research to professional training, institutional capacity building, heritage protection, and heritage tourism.

WHAT WE DO

- Conduct groundbreaking research rooted in specific regions, but with a global reach that incorporates the disciplines of maritime and historical archaeology, history, museology, and anthropology.
- Build a community of global scholars conducting local and regional research that spans the African slave trade.
- Create interpretive programming that manifests dialogues about the complex, enduring legacies of the slave trade.
- Foster an educational agenda that cultivates opportunities from the classroom to heritage tourism to empower local communities while developing international exchange and collaboration.
- Advance education and professional training in partner communities to encourage diversity within the fields of history, archaeology, and anthropology, with a focus on the lasting legacies of the African slave trade.
- Work with descendant communities to connect local histories to the global slave trade and include local communities in research.
- Promote knowledge, foster reconciliation, and advance social justice.



WHERE WE WORK

Mozambique

Since 2013, SWP has developed a strong collaboration with the faculty, researchers, and students of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology at Eduardo Mondlane University. This partnership has created new opportunities for international exchange and pioneered new approaches to community engagement, heritage protection, public education, and transformative museum work - which offer novel solutions within Mozambique and beyond.

Senegal

Since 2014, SWP has fostered a network of researchers based in the Laboratoire d'Archéologie Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop, and is working with its national partners to build West Africa's first maritime archaeological team comprised and led by Africans. In 2022, the Slave Wrecks Project-Academy (SWP-A) launched in Senegal. SWP-A aims to cultivate and diversify a new generation of scholars through innovative curriculum and training programs that are responsive to the needs of historically underserved communities in/from Africa and from across the African diaspora.

South Africa

SWP global partners Iziko Museums of South Africa, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, The George Washington University, and the National Park Service have partnered with national South African organizations and local descendant communities, community organizations and leaders, and scholars to generate dynamic, multi-faceted research about the legacies of global slavery and the slave trade through the work recovering the slave ship *São José Paquete d'Africa*, which sunk in 1794.

Brazil

SWP is working in Brazil on a Pilot Archeological Field Investigation for the Prospective Site of the Shipwrecked

Slave Ship Camargo; and Longer-Term Collaborative Project Proposal Development. The project consists of a pilot program of archeological fieldwork and related archival, ethno-historical, and community engagement work.

Florida

In Florida, SWP supports a summer internship in collaboration with the National Park Service and Diving with a Purpose for early career professionals in maritime archeology and heritage management. The internship includes submerged resource management and documentation training.

Africatown

SWP participated in support of the Alabama Historical Commission in archaeological work and in designing a way to involve the community of Africatown in the process of preserving the memory of the slave ship *Clotilda*—the last known slave ship to land in the United States in 1862—and the legacy of slavery and freedom in Alabama. Many Africatown residents are descendants of the Africans who were trafficked to Alabama on the *Clotilda* and have preserved the memory of its history. SWP continues to work directly with the descendant community in Africatown and develops educational, preservation, and outreach opportunities with the community.

St. Croix

Since 2015, SWP has developed a network of collaborators in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, devoted to exploring the history and legacies of slavery and freedom there. SWP partners advance terrestrial and maritime archaeological investigations, dive training, and underwater-heritage monitoring and analysis. SWP also conducts exhibition development, interpretation, and community outreach in St. Croix, telling fuller stories about our shared history.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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