

HEALING SLAVERY'S WOUNDS

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR BEGAN, DESCENDANTS OF SLAVES AND THEIR OWNERS ARE TRACING THEIR ROOTS, FINDING EACH OTHER—AND REPLACING HATRED WITH FRIENDSHIP

by WENDY GROSSMAN & ALICIA DENNIS photographs by ALESSANDRA PETLIN

'WE HAVE FRIENDSHIP—AND TRUST'

Matthew Monk, 48 • Pamela Monk Kelley, 55

Walking into the gray-and-white house flanked by redbrick chimneys, Pamela Monk Kelley tried to imagine her great-grandfather Hinton Cole Monk, one of 19 slaves owned by North Carolina farmer Archibald Monk in the 1850s and '60s. "I felt," she says of her visit there last year, "the sweat and tears of my forefathers." Kelley, a teacher in Hamden, Conn., had no idea that while she was tracing her family's roots, Matthew Monk of Providence

wanted to do something meaningful with this."

Among the millions of Americans researching their genealogies, Pamela and Matthew are among a unique subset: descendants of slaves and owners reaching across a painful divide. "Slavery is a very charged subject," says Susan Hutchison of Coming to the Table, a nonprofit that supports such searches.

In July 2009, having come across an article mentioning Pamela as the Monk family historian, Matthew sent an e-mail: "I'd understand if you didn't want to hear from me," it began. But Pamela was intrigued and invited Matthew to her family reunion. "We hugged when we met," Pamela says. "Now we have friendship and trust. This is Martin Luther King's dream."

was doing the same—and learning that his great-great-grandfather Archibald Monk owned slaves. "I felt terrible and helpless," says Matthew, a graphic designer. "I



PAMELA HAIR & MAKEUP: MARGO WILLIAMS/ZENOBA; HIST. PHOTOGRAPHY: MATTHEW MONK



Matthew and Pamela
(at the Archibald
Monk home in
Newton Grove) share
an interest in jazz
great Thelonious
Monk, a cousin of
Pamela's. Inset:
Archibald Monk.



'IT'S AS IF WE'RE PART OF THE SAME FAMILY'

Jeffrey Fracher, 63
Bernadine Anderson, 73

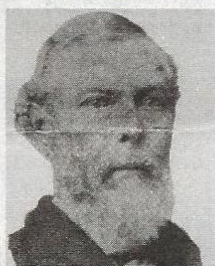
In 2009 Fracher came across a video Anderson made about Louisiana's Linwood plantation. There, he learned that Anderson's great-great-grandfather Calvin Stevenson Sr. was owned by one of Fracher's forefathers.

FRACHER: I am proud of who I am. But I am not proud of this part of my family's history. The thought that my ancestors owned other human beings is abhorrent to me. When I met Bernadine last year, we hugged each other and burst into tears. Our families traded stories. It's a profound sense of reconciliation and redemption.

ANDERSON: The night before I met him, I woke every two hours from pure anxiety. I didn't know what my feelings were going to be. Doing all this research, I'd started to feel my ancestors' pain. [When we met], he asked if I could ever forgive him. We just connected. Now I feel more comfortable with him than with some of my blood cousins. It's as if we're part of the same family.

DISCOVERING ANSWERS TOGETHER

"It was a terrible crime on humanity," says Anderson (with Fracher at Linwood). "But if each group can try to understand the other, we can bring about some healing."



'I HOPED HE'D BE SOMEBODY I DIDN'T LIKE'

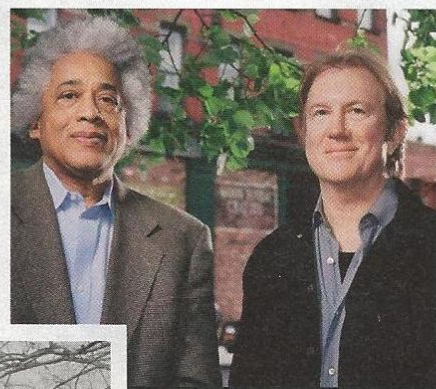
Robert Hinton, 69
Godfrey Cheshire, 60

Cheshire was making a documentary about his family's plantation in Raleigh, N.C., when he saw a letter to the editor from Robert Hinton, a college professor whose grandfather Dempsey had been a slave there.

HINTON: He left a voice mail asking me to help. I hoped he'd be somebody I didn't like. I wanted to have a negative posture. But he's an interesting guy and hard to say no to. So I worked

with him [on the film] for three years.

CHESHIRE: Robert and I grew up on different sides of the color line, but we're similar people. We both chose to move to New York; we're both intellectuals. Robert revealed to me a part of myself and my family and my history. This is one of the friendships I'll value most in my life.



A NEW BOND

Hinton and Cheshire in New York City. Inset: a woman believed to be Cheshire's great-great-grandmother Mary Boddie Carr Hinton at Midway Plantation, ca. 1900.





'WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO BE OURSELVES'

Sherrie Patterson Royster, 65
Sheila Reed Findlay, 63

Royster, a Daughter of the American Revolution from North Carolina, and Findlay, a New York City teacher, sent out DNA samples to further their research—and were shocked to learn they were related. All they know: Royster's great-great-great-grandfather David Patterson owned slaves while Findlay's great-grandfather Samuel Reed was rescued as a child by a Union soldier who brought him north.

FINDLAY: As the only black child in

school, I'd wear different-colored shoelaces to take attention off my face. I knew my great-grandfather was half white, that he was a possible slave child fathered by an owner. Sherrie didn't know a lot about slavery. [When we met], it went wonderfully. We're not afraid to be ourselves together.

ROYSTER: The news that we have a black relative was not taken kindly by everyone in my family. I hoped Sheila would understand those weren't my feelings. I've learned how slaves were mistreated, how some were raped. I can't imagine what they went through.



BUILDING BRIDGES
Top: Findlay (right) and Royster at Royster's home in Wilkesboro, N.C. Inset: Findlay's great-grandfather Samuel Reed (seated on right) and his family, taken at his Portsmouth, N.H., homestead in 1906.