Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson Museum Interpretative Plan

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October 2020
The Historic Jackson House was built by Dr. Richard B. Hudson in 1906 for his daughter Leola and her husband Dr. William Whitted. From the time of its construction until the passing of Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson in 2013, this home witnessed pivotal moments in the long fight for civil rights. For almost one hundred consecutive years, it was the residence of three African American dentists. The families that lived here hosted prominent leaders in the African American struggle for equality including Booker T. Washington, Ralph Abernathy, John Lewis, and Dr. Ralph Bunche. Most notably, the home would play a central role in the Selma campaign in 1965 as the Jacksons opened their home to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) staff throughout those turbulent months in the lead up to the Selma to Montgomery March.

The Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson Museum has welcomed visitors since 2015. Since opening as a museum, most visitors have been guided through the home while hearing the memories of Jawana Jackson, the daughter of Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, as well as the stories passed down to her from her parents and extended family. This has created a unique and moving storytelling experience that brings the history of this home to life. One of the challenges facing the Jackson Museum is how to create a consistent and sustainable visitor experience that does not center around a personal tour with Jawana Jackson. This interpretive plan for the museum will lay out recommendations to enhance the visitor experience and create a sustainable interpretative plan for the future through:

- a revised plan for how visitors move through the space,
- suggested text for new interpretive panels,
- suggestions for modifications to current placement of objects within the museum,
- recommendations for long-term projects that can further add to the visitor experience for many years to come.

Moving Visitors Through the Museum

To enhance the visitor experience and to protect the space for future generations, the way that visitors, especially larger groups, move through the home needs to be rethought. Mrs. Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson encouraged visitors to her home to enter through the back of the house. This custom should be reimplemented using the
covered back porch and den as two gathering places to orient visitors to the Jackson House. These spaces offer the largest open area to gather groups. Depending on the size of individual tour groups, museum staff or volunteers could use one or both of these spaces to divide visitors into smaller groups to move through the exhibits. Groups should be limited in size and staggered. This will allow visitors ample room to move around the different spaces in the Jackson House as well as reduce the possibility of damage to furniture and objects due to overcrowding.

After a general orientation to the Jackson House, visitors begin their tour in the family den. This space and exhibits serve to introduce the Jackson family who lived in the home the longest and whose story will be centered throughout the exhibits. The first exhibit panel placed on the wall to the right of the back door will provide an introduction to the house and explain the overall significance of the site. Moving in a counterclockwise path, visitors will next view a large display case showcasing the three family Bibles. The built-in bookcases will be used to display key items related to the post-1965 events of importance to the Jacksons such as their attendance at Dr. King’s funeral and memorial service. The Juanita Richardson Sherrod Art collection will also be displayed around the room. A small interpretative label can be used to provide details about Sherrod and her work. While in this space, visitors will be able to look into the master bedroom.
No exhibit panel is planned for the master bedroom at this point. In the far corner of the den, the writing desk and implements used by Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson as she wrote *The House By the Side of the Road* will be placed along with copies of the book that can be sold to visitors.

![Den interior](image)

From the den, visitors will move into the back hallway space where they will look into the office. A pull-up exhibit panel in this space will provide background on the life of Dr. Sullivan Jackson including his military background, education, profession, and interest in music. Due to the square footage of the office, visitors will be not allowed into the space. A stanchion or other barrier may need to be placed just within the door to the office to limit visitor access to the room. Visitors will be able to walk just within the doorway area to get a full look into the room to view the exhibit panel and the objects throughout the room.

![Kitchen interior](image)

Visitors will next move into the kitchen where they will learn more about Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson including her educational background and accomplishments. An exhibit panel or pull-up will be displayed between the windows. Key objects will be displayed to emphasize how the kitchen was the heart of the home and domain of Mrs. Jackson.

![Dining room](image)

The exhibits and spaces up to this point serve to emphasize the stories of the Jackson family. As visitors move into the dining room, the story will expand to tell how the Jackson House was the site of nationally significant events. The dining room will be the point where the family's story becomes the community and national story. An exhibit panel will be placed on the wall to the right of the hallway door. The french doors will be shut to funnel visitors in one planned path. Visitors will be able to move
Moving into the center hallway, this space will be used to provide a broader context for the longer history of the home and the families connected to this house. This space will cover a broader time period to help visitors understand the longer arc of civil rights in the nation and the longer family history through use of two exhibit panels and family portraits placed on both walls. From here visitors will also be able to view the other side of the master bedroom and central bathroom before moving into the middle bedroom. The door to the office will be closed to allow for more floor space to place the pull-up exhibit in that room. The door leading into the living room will also be closed to funnel visitors into the middle bedroom.

The middle bedroom will highlight some of the most prominent visitors who either stayed or spent significant time in the house during the Selma campaign of 1964-65. An exhibit panel will be placed on the wall just to the left of the door from the hallway. This panel will introduce visitors to those significant people. Other key artifacts telling the story of how King and the SCLC staff used the space will be displayed in this room.
From there, visitors will move into the front bedroom, which was Jawana's room. This space will be used to tell her story and the experience of growing up in this home. A pull-up exhibit panel will be used in this space to allow flexibility in its placement.
The final stop on the tour of the Jackson House will be the living room. It was in this space that King and others listened to President Lyndon Johnson deliver his address to Congress calling for voting rights legislation and ending with his statement to the nation that "we shall overcome." This space will tell the story of the culmination of the Selma campaign leading up to the passage of the Voting Rights Act. One exhibit panel will be placed on the wall between the hallway door and the front bedroom.

Visitors will then exit out the front door to the porch. This space can be used as a gathering area and space for reflection and discussion.
Exhibit Panel Text

The following is suggested text for each of the primary panels for the spaces described in the previous section. This text will be accompanied by images to enhance the interpretation of each space and the people featured in these panels. The goal of these primary panels is to create a cohesive historical narrative that tells the story of both the Jackson's and the national significant events that took place in this house during the course of the Selma campaign in early 1965.

Panel 1 - Welcome to the Jackson House
Location: Den

“We tried hard to provide a loving environment and a peaceful haven for those who visited here, as well as for each other... where there is love, love is felt. Where comfort is, comfort is felt. Where respect is, respect is given in return.” Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson

The historic Jackson House is one of the most important private spaces in the history of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Located just a stone's throw away from the historically-black Selma University, the one-story frame bungalow was nestled in the heart of Selma's bustling mid-twentieth century African-American community of Black professionals. Built originally in 1906, the historic Jackson House witnessed some of the biggest moments of the campaign to secure the right to vote for African-Americans across this nation. As a strategy center for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) during the Selma Civil Rights Movement, 1958-1965, the home was most notably the temporary residence for out-of-town civil rights activists. Among these activists were several prominent leaders including the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Andrew J. Young, and Dr. Ralph Bunche.

This was also the home of a family: Dr. Sullivan Jackson, his wife Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, and their daughter Jawana. The Jacksons worked hard to make their house a home, and their home a harbor from the sea of white terror unleashed upon actors in the twentieth-century struggle for black freedom, equality and justice.

This space honors their story and those of the families who lived here before them.

It is the story of how a house by the side of the road helped to tear down the walls of state-sanctioned segregation, demonstrating for the world, the inherent value of Black lives in an ongoing struggle for Black dignity.

It is a struggle that is closer to freedom because of the presence of this house and the courage of this family.
Panel 2 - Dr. Sullivan Jackson
Location: Office

Characterized as a kind, quintessential type of man, Dr. Sullivan Jackson was known to his friends as “Sully.” He possessed a “salt of the earth” quality that guided his steady realism. At the center of his life was his family. And at the center of the life of his family was this home.

Born on January 23, 1921 in Dallas County, Alabama, Sully was the youngest of seven children. Humble beginnings created the context for him to be sent north at age eight to be reared with his eldest sister who lived in Anderson, Indiana. Away from the worst of southern racism and with the benefit of better educational opportunities, he grew alongside his niece Norma Jane, to whom he was more like a brother than an uncle.

The patronage of his uncle allowed him to attend West Virginia State College for two years before serving in the U.S. Army during the Second World War from 1943 to 1945. For thirty-two months, he served as a clerk managing the medical records of the sick, wounded, or dead with the 588th Ambulance Medical Company, which was awarded participation credit for the Battle of the Bulge.

After having served in five campaigns in the combat area, Jackson was honorably discharged and resumed his undergraduate career at West Virginia State. Like many African American WWII veterans, Jackson used the educational support of G.I. Bill to attend Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee.

His youthful hobby of playing the saxophone, occasionally earned him income that he used to help defray his expenses at West Virginia State and Meharry as a part of the West Virginia State Collegians Band and the Doctors of Rhythm at Meharry.

A Selma native, Sully, upon the recommendation of his sister and dental hygienist Marie Foster, returned to the city to assume work in the dental practice of her employer Dr. E.F. Portock in 1957.

He worked hard and long—including faking a death scare—to convince Richie Jean Sherrod, her parents and Black Selma that he was worthy of marrying one of its most prized darlings on March 15, 1958.

Married life for the Jacksons was shaped by Sully’s personality. His wife Richie Jean remembered him as “a quiet, reserved man with a strength of character that stood by my side, behind me when needed, then in front of me when necessary.”

Sully’s courage was on full display in January 1959, when he and Richie Jean each testified before the United States Civil Rights Commission to protest their disenfranchisement.
The testimony was the beginning of Dr. Jackson's public activism which was not fervently nonviolent. Jackson kept his service firearm and acquired several others throughout the course of his life despite the home's popular use by multiple civil rights activists. In addition to the dangers posed to his and his family's lives, Sully's activism raised the ire of local whites who pressured patrons of his dental practice.

Still, Sully remained easy-going, effortlessly attracting a steady stream of friends dental, medical, musical and military to the Jacksons’ music, laughter and food-filled home he had with his wife and daughter Jawana.

Panel 3 - Mrs. Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson
Location: Kitchen

Known for her lifelong steely determination, it was Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson's head, hands and heart that made this now-famous more than century-old house a home. And at the heart of this home was this kitchen. It is Richie Jean's anchor and her springboard.

While her connection to Selma is several generations-old, Richie Jean Sherrod was born August 30, 1932 to Juanita Barnett Richardson and John William Sherrod in Mobile, Alabama.

She did, however, spend her school-aged years in Selma, returning to the rural community of York for summers and Christmases. In Selma, she attended the music classes of Mrs. Ethel Dinkins along with Coretta Scott, whose family owned a general store in Marion and came to Selma for business.

Following her graduation from Banneker Junior High School and Cardoza High School in Washington, D.C., Richie Jean returned to Alabama for college at Alabama State College—now Alabama State University. Her choice of Alabama State was likely greatly influenced by the patronage of E. Leola Hudson Whitted—"Cousin Leola"—who worked in the President's Office of Harper Councill Trenholm, Jr. where she got Richie Jean hired as well, and for whom this house was first built.

In Montgomery, Richie Jean attended the now-famous Dexter Avenue Baptist Church with Cousin Leola who was an influential church leader and was instrumental in the hiring of a young Martin Luther King Jr. to its pastorate. Richie Jean flourished under the mentorship of Cousin Leola, who was otherwise childless.

Richie Jean graduated with her bachelor's degree in 1954. The previous summer, a chance meeting with a newly minted dental school graduate would change the course of her life. Sullivan Jackson wanted to marry Richie Jean, and he was not deterred by her initial refusals.
A likely contrived health scare by Sully, tipped Ritchie Jean's scales towards engagement and the two were wed on March 15, 1958. His love for Ritchie Jean grew not only with time, but also with her marvelevous dishes. Ritchie Jean could cook—and cook she did.

Not only did she cook for her family and their friends but also for the countless activists who called her house their temporary home. Dr. King especially loved her cabbage, but cooking for the large numbers of people moving in and out of the house wasn't always cheap or easy.

Long before the height of the Selma Movement, she and Sully each testified before the United States Civil Rights Commission to protest their disenfranchisement. And in truth, it was Ritchie Jean's steadily growing commitment to civil rights activism that encouraged her husband's too.

Panel 4 - Where the Family Story Becomes the Community and National Story
Location: Dining Room

Through a web of familial connections and friendships rooted in childhood and their collegial years, the Jacksons opened their home to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, and the SCLC team during the height of the modern Civil Rights Movement. King and others passed through the Jackson House on a regular basis from 1958 to 1965. Their home served as a sanctuary for Dr. King, a place where he could rest, think, and always get a good meal. As the Selma campaign picked up momentum in early 1965, the home became a hub of activity as movement leaders gathered for key strategy sessions to push for passage of voting rights legislation and coordinated the Selma to Montgomery March.

As the Jacksons opened their home to the movement, this dining room became the setting for key meetings that would shape the Selma campaign and have a lasting impact on our nation. On February 5, Mrs. Jackson pulled together a luncheon with a single day's notice for King, SCLC staff, and a delegation of U.S. Congressmen. This meeting followed Dr. King's recent arrest in Selma and publication of "Letter from the Selma Jail" in the New York Times highlighting the fact that more African Americans were in jail in the county than on the voting rolls. Following the shooting of Jimmie Lee Jackson in Marion on the evening of February 18, Rev. C.T. Vivian and other SCLC members gathered here to call King and plan how the movement would respond to the horrific violence against the marchers.

In the early morning hours of March 9, John Doar, United States Justice Department, and LeRoy Collins, Community Relations Services, made a surprise visit to meet with Dr. King in the hopes of negotiating a delay for the upcoming march to respond to Bloody Sunday. Doar strongly pushed King for a delay of the march to allow things to cool off, sharing that U.S. District Judge Frank Johnson would be placing a temporary injunction on any further voting rights marches. Worried that a delay would negatively impact growing momentum in the campaign as supporters from all over the country flooded into Selma, King and Abernathy faced
a critical decision: whether or not to violate a federal court injunction. This was something that they had not done in previous campaigns as the federal courts were seen as an ally of the movement. Collins offered a compromise suggesting that the marchers travel back to the Edmund Pettus Bridge and then return to Selma. Hours later thousands would march to the site of the March 7 attack on the bridge, where they would kneel in prayer before returning to Brown Chapel. This march became known as “Turnaround Tuesday.”

For Mrs. Jackson, one of the most momentous events took place in the days leading up to the Selma to Montgomery march a couple of weeks later. King invited Dr. Ralph Bunche to join him in Selma for the first day of the march. Dr. Bunche was the first African American to win the Nobel Peace Prize and was widely respected for his work in the United Nations and on various peacekeeping operations. As the two men sat for a quiet breakfast, Mrs. Jackson wrote “a powerful feeling came over me like a warm spring wind after a cold winter. I had two Nobel Peace Prize winners sitting at my dining room table. How remarkable that was.”

Panel 5 - Laying the Foundation for a Movement
Location: Central Hallway

The Selma campaign and the larger modern Civil Rights Movement did not happen spontaneously. The events and people who passed through these halls in 1965 grew out of generations of struggle and progress. In the aftermath of the Civil War, African Americans across the country took their freedom and began building community through organizations such as schools, churches, fraternal societies, and professional groups. These organizations and the vibrant community they grew up around them fostered opportunity for many in spite of the challenges of segregation presented. This house was the home of multiple generations of middle-class black professionals who played a vital role in building that vibrant community here in Selma. They were the beneficiaries, founders, and supporters of the institutions and organizations that developed the community leaders needed to fight Jim Crow, and push the nation to live up to the founding ideals of equality and justice for all.

Dr. R.B. Hudson built this home next door and gifted it to his daughter upon her marriage to Dr. William H. Whitted, a dentist. Dr. Hudson, born just a year after the Civil War, led in the development of a public school system for African Americans in Selma and was a renowned education leader in the state. Dr. Hudson and his wife Lula were early financial supporters of Spelman College in Atlanta and helped organize Selma University, an early African American divinity school in Alabama. He was also a merchant, who established the Hudson Brothers Coal Yard. Hudson held numerous positions in professional, education, and church organizations as well as serving as president of the Selma Negro Business League, a chapter of the National Negro Business League. The National Negro Business League, founded by Booker T. Washington in 1900, sought to expand commercial and economic prosperity for the African American community. Hudson developed a close friendship with Booker T. Washington as both men were committed to educational and economic uplift for their community. Leola Whitted
shared stories with Jawana Jackson as a child about lectures and fireside chats that took place here between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois at the invitation of Dr. Hudson where they discussed education, economic independence and social change.

After the untimely death of her husband, Leola Whitted leased the home to Dr. E.F. Portlock, another dentist who had recently moved to Selma. She saw the need the community had for a dentist. Leola moved to Montgomery where she worked for Alabama State College president H.C. Trenholm and attended Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. Dr. Portlock and wife were active members of the community hosting civic club meetings and other events in their home for Selma’s leading African American citizens.

As Dr. Portlock’s health began to fail in the early 1950s, he began to look for a young dentist who could fill his shoes. His long-time dental hygienist Marie Foster encouraged her brother Sullivan Jackson to return to Selma and work with Dr. Portlock. Dr. Jackson agreed. As newlyweds, the Jacksons needed help with housing. The couple moved in with the widow Portlock, who was renting from Richie Jean’s maternal cousin E. Leola Hudson Whitted.

The Jackson House notably housed three African-American dentists and contributed to the overall uplift of the community as espoused in those early fireside chats by guests like Booker T. Washington.

Panel 6 - Family Tree
Location: Central Hallway

The history of the Jackson House centers around the families that made it a home. As one of the oldest Black-owned homes in Selma, Alabama, it’s more than century-long history grows alongside the cast of characters who lived and loved within its walls.

Slavery robbed most African-Americans of the ability to trace their family’s story to the African continent. Often, the farthest reaches of African-American family histories begin with the sexual abuse of enslaved black girls and women. The Jackson family is sadly no different in either regard.

The Jackson family's documented history begins shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century with the birth of white planter and merchant Jeremiah H. Dial on June 28, 1821 in Greene County, Alabama. Long before Dial, who enlisted in the Confederate Army served in 31st Arkansas infantry regiment and was wounded in the battle of Stone River, Tennessee, in December 1862, became a hero of the Confederacy, he fathered a daughter with a Black enslaved teenager.

Her name was Lavinia and as enslaved persons were considered property, she had no last name until after freedom. Born in 1830, she was held in servitude to Dial’s neighbor and
sister Elizabeth's husband, William Frierson Fulton. Family history suggests that Lavinia was married to an enslaved man named John Emanuel when she was raped by Dial. A girl named Ellen was born to them and into slavery in 1849. Both Lavinia and Dial were excommunicated from the Presbyterian Church on the same day as a result of the unwed childbirth, although Dial would become a pillar of the Presbyterian Church after moving to Arkansas in 1853.

Lavinia and Ellen remained enslaved until after the Civil War, when she assumed her husband's surname. By the time of the 1900 census, Lavinia is documented as eventually having had 12 children, three of whom, including Ellen, married Richardson's. A life-long devoted Presbyterian, she was buried in the cemetery just a short walk from the Presbyterian Church on 11th Street in Birmingham upon her death in 1914.

Ellen married Anthony Knight Richardson in Hamner, Alabama in 1866. Both husband and wife were literate, a remarkable descriptor and ability for two persons both into slavery. Richardson, who was sold along with his mother, Rosa Knight, by his white father and owner, Thomas Knight, when he was 4, was born in 1845. He was living with the Richardson's by age 14.

Ellen and Anthony's extraordinary work ethic, adding to their literacy, offered them opportunities for success enjoyed by very few newly freedpeople. As a farmer, Anthony Richardson and their three sons would plow into the night. Eventually, he bought a blacksmith shop where he also worked, as well as purchased the house and its surrounding four acres of land.

Together, he and Ellen ultimately owned 1,300 acres in the area—much of it from the plantations of former white slave owners. This remarkable feat of their business acumen may have been surpassed only by their commitment to education. The Richardson's sent all seven of their children, including their daughter Lula, to college.

Daughter Lula Richardson was born on August 12, 1866 and married Richard Byron "R.B." Hudson in 1890, the same year he graduated from Selma University. He was born to Richard and Millie Fleetwood Hudson in Uniontown, Alabama on February 7, 1866. Working to pay his way through school as a printer, Richardson began his legendary teaching career as a tutor and then instructor while in undergraduate school at Selma U. In addition to an unrivaled tenure as the principal of the Clark School, "Prof. Hudson" was the owner of the renowned Hudson Brothers, one of the best coal and wood yards in all of the South.

Their daughter E. Leola Hudson graduated from the high school department of Spelman Seminary—now Spelman College—1909, and from the college program in 1913. Her parents had been among the earliest donors to her alma mater before Lula Richardson Hudson died in 1898.
While her father remarried, his love and support for Leola never waned. In 1906, R.B.
built the now-Jackson House next door and later gave it as a wedding gift to Leola and her
bridegroom, Selma dentist, Dr. William Whitted.

Meanwhile Lula's sister Lavinia Richardson was born in Hamner County, Alabama on
December 10, 1872. She married Lincoln Laconia Burwell who had been born into poverty in
Marengo County, Alabama on October 25, 1867. "L.L." was reared by his older brother Charles
A. Burwell. His knack for learning led him to enroll in the Alabama Baptist Normal and
Theological School—later Selma University—from which he graduated the college preparatory
course in 1886 as valedictorian. He then attended the Leonard Medical School at Shaw
College—now Shaw University—graduating from its four-year program in just three as its
valedictorian.

Together, the Burwells worked to build L.L.'s pharmacy and medical practices. In 1907,
he opened Burwell Infirmary, "with a big store erected and paid for, where the Negro can come
and does comewithout any timidity or fear." Their modern pharmacy boasted soda fountains and
seating, rooms for consultations, and a telephone booth. Widely known for his mentorship of
aspirant Black pharmacists and physicians, he was at the forefront of local civic and religious
efforts until his sudden death on March 6, 1928.

The Richarsons' youngest child was a son, Thomas Knight Richardson. He married
Emma Calhoun and to this union seven children were born. Their daughter Juanita married
John Williams Sherrod. The couple had one child, Richie Jean Sherrod.

With the patronage of Leola Hudson Whitted, Richie Jean Sherrod attended and
graduated from Alabama State College—now Alabama State University—before she married
West Virginia State College—now West Virginia State University—and Meharry Medical College
graduate and dentist Dr. Sullivan Jackson on March 15, 1958.

The Jacksons had one child, Jawana Jackson who graduated from Fisk University in
Nashville, Tennessee.

Panel 7 - Guests of the Jackson House
Location: Middle bedroom

The Jackson House welcomed countless visitors over the years. The reality of
segregation meant that African-Americans traveling around the country often sought out the
hospitality of their extended network of friends and family for safe, comfortable accommodations
as there were few public lodging options available especially in small towns like Selma. Sullivan
and Richie Jean Jackson embraced this custom, opening their home to friends and family.
In those hectic months of the Selma campaign in early 1965, the Jackson House saw a stream of visitors. On the most frenzied days of the campaign, guests spilled out across the house sleeping on every surface imaginable including the tub! Some of the voices that could be heard within these walls during those months include:

Ralph Abernathy, WWII veteran and vice president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was King’s closest friend and advisor. He also had very close ties to the Jackson family. His wife Juanita was a childhood friend of Riche Jean Sherrod Jackson. In the early 1950s, the Abernathys, Kings, and Jacksons developed a close friendship. Abernathy would be a frequent guest in the Jackson home throughout the years. Abernathy was King’s partner in the movement from the beginning of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and carried on Dr. King’s work after his assassination in 1968.

Bernard Lee, who started out as student leader in the Alabama sit-in movement, served as King’s personal assistant and travel companion. In those months of the Selma campaign, he became like a member of the household monitoring calls, visitors, and reporters who gathered around the house and helping Mrs. Jackson manage the frenetic activity of the house.

Andrew Young, promoted to the executive committee of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1964, served as a second in command and would often be entrusted with important assignments. He helped to mediate some of the more forceful and passionate arguments that took place during the intense strategy sessions during those weeks. Young’s wife Jean Childs was a distant cousin of Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson.

Hosea Williams, a WWII veteran and member of the SCLC executive committee, was a gifted protest organizer whom King referred to as “my wild man, my Castro.” Williams led the Bloody Sunday march with John Lewis. During strategy sessions, it was not uncommon to hear him passionately debating ideas with James Bevel and James Orange. In quieter moments, he would sometimes find a quiet spot in the house to take a nap, often on the floor.

James Bevel emerged as a key figure in the Civil Rights Movement during the Nashville movement in 1960. He left the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1962 to join SCLC. He was responsible for developing the idea for the Children’s marches in Birmingham. During the Selma campaign, Bevel began staying at the Jackson House and claimed one of the tubs as his bed calling the bathroom his “crisis suite.”

James Orange joined the SCLC in 1963 after hearing Ralph Abernathy at a mass meeting at Sixteenth Baptist Church. He worked to organize local marches in the Black Belt during the Selma campaign. His arrest in Perry County led to the protest march in which Jimmie Lee Jackson was shot and killed by an Alabama state trooper. The outrage over Jackson’s death prompted the Bloody Sunday march.
Other key members of the SCLC such as Joseph Lowery, Fred Shuttlesworth, C.T. Vivian, A.D. King, Nelson Smith, and Jesse Jackson passed through the Jackson House during those intense weeks leading up to the Selma to Montgomery march often participating in one of the many marathon strategy sessions that took place through all hours of the day and night.

Outside of the SCLC, leaders of SNCC came to the Jackson House to meet with Dr. King and others. John Lewis, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, often met with King and the SCLC staff. Despite the growing friction between SCLC and SNCC, Lewis was able to work closely with King and was a trusted ally. Bernard Lafayette, James Foreman, and James Farmer also met with King and his staff here. The tensions and growing rift between the two organizations and its members were kept quiet outside of this house. All understood it was important to present a united front in the fight for voting rights.

In the days leading up to the Selma to Montgomery March, Dr. King invited a few honored guests to meet with him at the Jackson House. This included Rabbi Abraham Heschel, a Jewish theologian and philosopher, and Archbishop Iakovos of America, the primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America. Both had answered King’s call for those in the faith community to join him in Selma. Labor leader Walter Reuther also answered King’s invitation to join in the march to Montgomery.

Panel 8 - Growing Up in the Jackson House
Location: Front bedroom

The only child of Dr. Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson, Jawana V. Jackson was born July 15, 1960 in Selma, Alabama.

Since birth, Jawana’s life was inextricably linked to the Jackson House where she lived with her parents and the widow Benny Portlock, until the latter’s death.

As the beloved child of an African-American dentist father and educator mother, Jawana enjoyed a lovely childhood in the middle class environs of Black Selma within view of Selma University. In 1964, when she was just four years old, the normalcy of her day-to-day life was seemingly changed overnight.

Despite being just a little child, as the daughter of activists housing the most recognizable name and face of the modern movement’s freedom struggle, she was in danger. It was a reality that was not lost on her parents who in at least one instance they put into motion a standing plan they had devised to smuggle her out of the home into safety via a funeral hearse and the back alley of their home.

As a young child at the time her family’s home was at the center of civil rights activism globally, Jawana couldn’t understand the chaos of the busy household. Still, she remembers the
now-famous courageous cast of characters moving in and out of her home as her parents' friends. To her, the home's frequent and arguably most-famous visitor, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was simply, "Uncle Martin."

Jawana didn't mind sharing her room, decorated with her dolls and other early childhood toys with Uncle Martin during his overnight stays. Not only was he always nice to her, and often played with her, he loved to give her $5 bills. To Jawana, who was little more than a toddler when his visits began, those $5 bills were as good as gold.

Despite being so very, very, young, another thing that Jawana remembers about her Uncle Martin is him imparting to her this lesson. "Jawana, touch others so that you will be touched," King said. More than a half-century later, Jawana can still hear his voice and thinks the bit of advice rings true today.

Jawana went on to graduate from the Selma City School System before attending Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and completed graduate work in gerontology at Fisk in 1981.

Panel 9 - From Selma to the Voting Rights Act
Location: Living Room

In the early days of the Selma campaign, the movement pushed for federal voting rights legislation, yet President Lyndon B. Johnson refused to pick up the cause. He cited the recent passage of the Civil Rights Act the year before and argued that the time was not right for federal voting rights legislation. The national outcry after Bloody Sunday and the growing momentum of the Selma campaign created political pressure that forced Johnson's hand. Johnson regularly called the Jackson House to speak with Dr. King. The timing of the calls prompted Mrs. Jackson to wonder if her home was not under surveillance as the White House call sometimes came through the moment King would come through the back door. Mrs. Jackson often sat up the phone in the middle bedroom to allow King a quiet place to take these sometimes marathon calls with Johnson.

The death of Rev. James Reeb brought renewed pressure on Johnson to act. Reeb was an American Unitarian Universalist minister from Boston who had answered Dr. King's call to come to Selma after Bloody Sunday and was murdered by white segregationists after leaving an integrated diner in Selma on the evening of March 9. In the wake of Reeb's death, Dr. King constantly spoke with the White House pushing Johnson to make a national statement about the events taking place in Selma. As Johnson prepared to address Congress, he invited King to Washington, D.C. for the speech. King declined citing the need to be in Alabama as the fight against the march injunction played out in Judge Frank Johnson's court and his need to deliver the eulogy at Reeb's funeral. The day after Reeb's funeral Johnson addressed Congress. Dr. King and everyone else in the Jackson House gathered in the living room around the television
to listen to the president. In the hushed silence of this packed living room, Johnson's words sounded as he talked about the vote as essential to the movement and ended his address with "their cause must be our cause, too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it's all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome." Johnson's words brought King to tears as the president embraced the movement and committed the federal government to securing equal citizenship for African-Americans.

In the days that followed, the hard work to negotiate what would become the Voting Rights Act began. Dr. King and his lieutenants understood it was critical that they have specific demands for what was needed to secure the vote for all African-Americans. Judge Frank Johnson lifted the march injunction two days after Johnson's address and set a timeframe for which the march had to be completed. The Jackson House buzzed with activity as the herculean task of planning commenced. Four days later on March 21 over three thousand marchers including Sullivan and Richie Jean Sherrod Jackson started the march to Montgomery. The march concluded four days later with a crowd of 25,000 gathered at the state capitol. Less than six months later on August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. By the November elections, almost 10,000 African-American voters had registered in Dallas county.

Placement of Objects

For any house museum, it is important to keep a consistent look and time period in mind when setting up the different spaces in the house. For the Jackson House, the core story being told here centers on the events that took place in 1965. The rooms and decor of the house should reflect that time period to help visitors envision the events and stories being told as they walk through each room. Any objects that do not reflect that mid-1960s look should be removed from display. Objects deemed important to telling the follow-up to the events of 1965 should be collected and displayed in the den in one area of that space such as the built-in shelving. Any family photos from the mid-1960s could be used to help recreate the look of the house during that period of time.

When reviewing the items on display to create a consistent look that reflects that mid-1960s look, it would also be prudent to think about decluttering some spaces, especially the china cabinets, to protect fragile items. Visitors moving through the spaces will inevitably bump into furniture or touch objects. Given the tight space in the dining room, this space and the objects displayed need to be carefully considered.

Planning for long-term preservation needs must be considered. Basic environmental controls are important for preserving interior spaces and the objects housed there from excessive temperature and humidity fluctuations. Fabrics and clothing that are currently displayed or might be displayed in the future present should be handled with care. These items should not be hung and should be protected from UV light and pests.
Long-term Projects to Enhance Interpretative Experience

The suggestions listed here are placed in order of their importance to creating sustainable programming options that will benefit the museum and visitors for generations to come.

Oral Histories

Jawana Jackson's memories of her parents and growing up in the home provide an invaluable asset to the Jackson House. As not every visitor can have that one-on-one personal tour with her, it is critical to capture her story through oral histories that can be used by the museum for generations to come. These oral histories interviews should be captured for use as both audio and video supplements for future expansion of the exhibits. The oral history collection should include both a sit-down interview style session and a walk through the house with her sharing stories as she would with a group visiting the house.

Given the wide use of smartphones, a series of short videos of Jawana sharing her memories and talking about key objects displayed could be produced for different spaces in the museum. The videos could be uploaded as private videos on YouTube that visitors could access via a QR code they scanned with their phone. This would keep the videos and their content accessible only to visitors of the museum. It would also limit the cost to introduce videos elements into the museum experience. The primary cost of this would be the cost of video production and editing the footage down to short segments for viewing by visitors.

Interpretative Labels for Key Objects

Currently, there are a few interpretative labels set up throughout the museum. Key items in the house such as the dining room table, phone, and the living room chair need to have interpretative labels that draw attention to the item and why they are significant. The labels should tie into the interpretation provided in the exhibit panels in each room and give visitors additional details. The object labels would serve to give a layered interpretation to visitors interested in learning and reading more as they move through the museum.

The interpretative labels need to be positioned in a way that keeps visitors within the approved walking areas. The stands currently being used provide the flexibility to allow for adjustments and repositioning of objects. They also allow for placement that makes them easily readable even if the object needs to be placed a bit
further away. Labels need to be printed on a durable material that will withstand wear and tear over time.

**Partnership with Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, King Center, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Paper Project at Stanford**

These three institutions have extensive collections of primary source material that relate to the story being told at the Jackson House. Fostering partnerships with each could allow for special programming, temporary exhibits, and access to primary source material to support the story told here. For example, audio recordings of President Johnson’s call to King while he was in residence at the house or video footage of Johnson’s address to Congress would add depth to the exhibit content proposed in this plan. Partnerships with these institutions would allow for future opportunities as the museum grows and expands in the years to come.

**Conversation Programs**

After spending time in the museum, programming could be developed to allow visitors to reflect on the story of the Jackson family and their contribution to the civil rights movement. Museums such as the Tenement Museum in New York City have created this type of program to allow visitors an opportunity to reflect and draw connections between the museum exhibits and current events. Given the rich history of conversation and debate that has taken place here over the years, a facilitated conversation program would extend that tradition to future generations and add a depth to the museum experience not found at all small house museums.

Educational programming like a Conversations Program will require some resources such as necessary staffing. Staff would also need to receive adequate training in how to guide conversations with visitors. Conversation areas could be set up on the back porch, the garage, or den depending on the number of visitors. This programming could be offered at an additional charge to support its cost.
Considerations for Jackson House Collections Plan
By Catie Lathan, Research Assistant, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

The collection of artifacts contained at the Jackson House in Selma, Alabama is a most unique and powerful set of objects related to a successful middle-class professional family who took on pivotal roles in the modern Civil Rights Movement. To tell the powerful story of the Jackson House to the nation and to the world these invaluable objects play should be at the forefront of the museum's interpretation.

As a relatively recently opened house museum, the time is right for the organization to consider its collection policy in order to promote the future success of the museum. This report identifies key objects currently used in the interpretation of the house. It then outlines some of the first steps, future steps, and available resources for the Jackson House to begin this process of collections management.

Key Objects Currently Used in Interpretive Programs

Several items are significant to both the history of the Civil Rights movement in Selma as well the Jackson’s family's experience throughout that movement. Because of these items' significance and value, special attention will be need to be paid to these in their documentation (for insurance and record-keeping purposes) as well as mitigating any physical risks to their long-term preservation. These items are grouped by the room in which the interpretive plan places them for exhibit purposes.

The Family Den

- The Sherrod paintings. These contemporary art pieces dominate the Den space today; they were far fewer in number when Mrs. Richie Jean Jackson lived in the house. The paintings represent valuable contributions and must be as fully
documented as possible. The art should never be shown all at once, because then they become the story rather than the Den as a meeting space and family space. We recommend displaying a couple of these paintings at a time and rotating them in and out of the room. There is a need for proper storage of the paintings not on display so that they do not receive damage from mice, bugs, humidity, or any other risk factors. The art work is presently in good condition.

- **Family Bibles.** The interpretive plan encourages the placement of family bibles in the den so they can be placed in display cases for long-term preservation. Placing those crucial objects in the Den allow for them to become part of the family story of the property and the many generations who have placed important roles in local, state, and national history. The collection has five family Bibles. It needs to be determined which ones are specifically related to the Jackson House and which ones actually relate more directly to the Burrell-Dinkins House.
These valuable but fragile objects of family history and faith need conservation. Thus, when selecting the exhibit case for the bibles, it will be important to consider the physical condition of each of the Bibles going on display. Some of them have damaged, worn, or otherwise weakened spines, so those will need book cradles to help support the spines and pages. Recommended examples include those found at Gaylord Archival's site at https://www.gaylord.com/Exhibit-%26-Display/Display-Accessories/Cradles-%26-Mounts/Acrylic-Lipped-Open-Book-Cradle/p/HYB00832). Bibles that are not on display, should continue to be stored in acid free book boxes.
- **Desk and Bookcase.** This c. 1960 piece serves as a memory palace for the family and is a very good way to tell the more contemporary history of the family and house. The piece is in good condition.

**Office**

This room tells the story of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s presence in this house along with the story of the Jackson family's role in the Selma Civil Rights movement. In the interpretation plan, this room is utilized primarily to interpret Dr. Jackson's part of the story. Presently important objects, especially books, portraits, photographs, and recordings, from the Burwell-Dinkins House are being stored in the space. These items are extremely important to that house, and will be moved to the property once its restoration is achieved.

**Wood Desk and Couch.** Items in this room connected to Dr. King include the desk he used when staying at the home as well as the couch he frequently took naps on. Doors separated the office from other parts of the house. It would have been a less distracted place to either work, or take a nap. Both of these objects are in good condition, although the weight of the music albums and books from the Burwell-Dinkins House on the couch should be addressed.
Dentistry artifacts, diplomas, awards. Dr. Jackson’s story in this room are represented by his diplomas from dentistry school along with his dental supply bag and any dental supplies that remain in the home, some of which are in the outside storage of the garage. Presently the biggest risks to these objects are humidity and pest issues, evident in our February 2020 visit.

Figure 4: Dr. Jackson’s Dental Bag. Figure 7: Burwell family portraits and console stereo. Jackson was a gifted musician and the office space was where he could play LP records.
Another key piece of furniture in the office is the metal desk and the personal computer that Mrs. Jackson used to write her award-winning book, *The House by the Side of the Road*, which was published by the University Press of Alabama. Richie Sherrod Jackson was a Civil Rights activist in her own right and her memoir is one of the most important to emerge from the Civil Rights leaders in Selma in the 1950s and 1960s.

**Kitchen**

Based on the interpretation plan, the purpose of this room will largely be to interpret the role of Mrs. Jackson during the Selma Civil Rights movement. Some of the key items in this room include:

- the clock above the stove, which is believed to be original to the house
- pots, pans, dishes, and kitchen items that belonged to Mrs. Jackson
- Appliances, dinette, chairs dating to the period of 1960 to 1992

During the February 2020 visit, we observed that some of the items stored in the kitchen belonged to the Burwell-Dinkins house. These will be moved at an appropriate time.
Additionally, in order to further develop the interpretation of this room and Mrs. Jackson’s experiences, we recommend using photos of Mrs. Jackson that are currently located in the den in the kitchen. Those remain in good condition, and in terms of the tour and allowing visitors to best understand the story of the house, having those in the kitchen will strongly benefit the interpretation of Mrs. Jackson’s significance.

**Dining Room.** The most formal room in the house is also one of the most important. Key pieces include the dining room table as well as the original set of chairs because they were used for SCLC strategy meetings during 1965 as well as SCLC leadership discussed possible alternatives with federal judicial officials and members of Congress. The ceremonial aspect of the dining table dominates the room, which is turn is surrounded by impressive furniture pieces which held, and displayed, the family’s fine ceramics, crystal, and silver, part of their middle-class lifestyle. It is recommended that staff members ensure that visitors do not sit, lean on, or otherwise put any physical pressure on any of these pieces, because overtime this wear and tear would significantly damage these irreplaceable objects.
Hallway

Soon after visitors leave the Dining Room, they enter the main hallway which, as of the February 2020 visit, displayed reproductions of family photos dating back as far the 1860-1870s. The accompanying interpretation plan addresses this space with the recommendation that the currently displayed reproduction photos are, as possible, replaced with the original photos. Additionally, locating the originals of these photos will help with the new interpretation plans, which require a higher resolution scan than the reproduction photos can provide. Once ready for display, the original photos should then be matted with acid free materials and framed in archival quality frames—both of which will help preserve the pictures.
An additional consideration, which is further addressed in the interpretation plan, is the need to check and ensure that any photos displayed that include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. will need to be reviewed and follow copyright laws that apply to his images.

Middle Bedroom

This room was originally the parents' bedroom but became a guest bedroom once the Jacksons added the large master bedroom at the rear of the dwelling c. 1960. The phone in this room is the one that Dr. King used to talk with President Lyndon B. Johnson during the Selma events of 1965.

The end table on which the phone rests, the lamp on the end table, and the bed are original family pieces from c. 1960. The dresser with mirror dates from c. 2000. Presently the room is used for the display of family bibles.

Jawana’s Bedroom

Jawana’s bedroom provides a powerful opportunity for staff to address the Jackson family’s experience during the Selma Civil Rights movement and the dynamic of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. being such a frequent and comfortable visitor in the family’s home during these years. As Mrs. Jackson’s book
talks about, there are pieces in this room—such as the repaired bed and the pajamas—that can be used to interpret the presence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in this room.

Equally important in this room, however, are those items that clearly mark it as being Jawana's room, as this helps better tell the story of Jawana's experience during these years. Thus, some of the important items in telling her story in this room include the play table and children's books.

Master Bedroom

Based on the interpretation plan, this room is going to primarily be used to interpret the lives of Dr. and Mrs. Jackson throughout the Selma Civil Rights movement. Thus, some of the most important pieces in this room include the furniture and those items most directly associated with the couple.
There is a unique older couch that is in one corner of this room that is yet to be determined as to whether it is original to the Jackson House or the Burrell-Dinkins house. This c. 1900 piece needs more investigation.

**Living Room**

The living room has several pieces that are extremely important in the story of the Selma Civil Rights movement. The most famous and well-recognized items include the TV and the chair where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. watched President Lyndon B. Johnson’s famous speech. The chair in the corner was the one the Rabbi Abraham Heschel used while at the house before the march from Selma to Montgomery. It allows staff members to really emphasize that connected story of the Jewish community in Selma assisting with and being heavily involved with the Civil Rights movement.
Basic Collection Principles

In order to begin the process of organizing and ensuring the endurance of this collection, it is first important to understand key goals for any collections management policy.

- The goal of a collections management plan and policy is to ensure the future continuity, preservation, and organization of a museum's collection of artifacts.
- The document also allows a new employee or member of the organization to gain a basic understanding of the items in the collection, where they are stored, what is their condition, and how they contribute to the organization's goals, mission statement, and vision.
- The document also allows the organization is to better determine which items most belong in the collection because it is not possible, or often ethical, to keep every item that comes through the
museum. By knowing the collections within the context of the overall museum, the organization can move forward more clearly and effectively, in the interpretation and interpretation of its objects.

**Initial Steps in the Collections Process**

In beginning this process, there are a few initial steps that the staff of the Jackson House should take:

- Because items have been moved over the years from the Burrell-Dinkins House to the Jackson House, a clear listing of which items belong to which house should first be compiled.

- Once it is determined which items belong in each respective collection, it will be necessary for staff to begin to separate out those items that do not belong in the Jackson House and its interpretation plan.

- Once it is established which items belong to the Jackson House, staff can begin the process of cataloguing each item and accessioning it into the official collection management database.

- These steps will also allow for a more detailed conditions assessment for the items that are chosen to remain in the collection.

- Next, museum staff will want to consider and implement a policy for adding to and removing items from the collection. This process is often referred to as accessioning (adding to) and deaccessioning (removing from) items from a museum's collection. In cases of house museums such as the Jackson House, this part of the collection's management plan and policy is extremely important simply because there is not infinite space for items to be displayed or stored in the house. By having a plan and policy that outlines which items can be added to the collection, which should be removed, and how that process will work, museum staff can maintain the collection in a way that fits with the organization's larger vision and goals.

- As an immediate next step, we encourage the organization to begin inventorying the items that they decide will make up the collection. This process will create records for the official accessioning of these items, and for their future use within the collection and museum, which then leads into one of the next important points—that of keeping records of the items in the collection.
Collections record keeping serves several different purposes, but some of the most important include making it easier for staff members to easily locate objects, distinguish between similar items, and keep records for insurance and emergency preparedness reasons. The type of software utilized will depend on the needs and preferences of the museum staff moving forward, but we typically recommend the PastPerfect system. The software comes with tech support in order to assist staff members in learning the program.

As this process is continued, staff members will also want to begin considering insurance and risk management steps to be taken in regards to the house and collection.

Conclusion

Overall, the key interpretive objects in the Jackson House are in good condition, a demonstration of the family's excellent stewardship of the property. The next step is instituting a collections management program, which could be addressed with a summer internship for college students. The program will have four major goals: (1) developing a cataloguing system, (2) cataloguing the items, (3) identifying those items that belong in the collection of the Burrell-Dinkins House, and (4) implementing measures to protect the items of the collection from future deterioration.