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**The Descendants Project Stresses the Importance of Unmarked Burial Grounds
During Opening of The Society of American Archeology's Annual Meeting.**

April 6, 2022, (Wallace, Louisiana) – The Descendants Project opened The Society of American Archeology's (SAA) 87th Annual Meeting last week in Chicago, Illinois with calls to protect the unmarked burial grounds of their ancestors and their community from the encroachment of heavy industry. As part of a conference panel called "PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION: EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD", The Descendants Project were in-person to share their experience regarding burial grounds and encourage Archaeologists to assist in the protection of sites.

The Society of American Archaeology leads the archaeological community by promoting research, stewardship of archaeological resources, public and professional education, and the dissemination of knowledge. The organization's Annual Meeting brings together the archaeological community to share ideas, best practices, and state-of-the-art knowledge; meet and network in interest groups, panels, symposia, and committees; and celebrate their field.

The Descendants Project along with Inclusive Louisiana and Concerned Citizens of St. John organizations provided recorded videos that were played during the President's Forum, the opening event of the annual meeting. Inclusive Louisiana also attended the event in Chicago. The groups spoke on the importance of respecting sacred spaces and the rights of community members to access the burial grounds.

"We were honored to be a part of the President's opening forum and speak about our ancestors and St. John the Baptist Parish," says The Descendants Project co-founder Joy Banner. "It was a moving experience that I will never forget."

Throughout the five-day SAA conference, The Descendants Project participated in numerous educational sessions including a seminar held by Archaeologist Dr. Jayur Mehta called "ARCHAEOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION AT EVERGREEN PLANTATION, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, LOUISIANA". This presentation

featured the slave quarters at Evergreen Plantation, the town of Wallace, and the destructive impacts of Greenfield Louisiana's proposed grain elevator.

Co-Founder of The Descendants Project, Jo Banner, was particularly moved by Dr. Jayur Mehta's session which featured his work at the slave quarters at Evergreen Plantation. Mehta showed graphs and renderings drawn from Greenfield Louisiana's plans for the proposed grain elevator and its impact on the community. During the session, Ph.D. candidate and Vacherie native, Jahna Mitchell presented the importance of acknowledging the area's history, even the painful parts such as slavery, to younger generations. "Seeing Jahna present in Chicago was a highlight of the conference," says Jo Banner. "We look forward to supporting Jahna and her work."

The Descendants Project is looking forward to continuing to build relationships with the archaeologists and anthropologists they met at The Society of American Archeology's (SAA) 87th Annual Meeting. These relationships will continue to be valuable as The Descendants Project works towards its goal of creating programming and opportunities for intergenerational healing, preservation of culture, and the flourishing of the Black descendant community in the Louisiana River Parishes.

Review the **87th Annual Meeting Final Program (Chicago, IL - 2022)** here:

[https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-annualmeeting/final-program/87th-annual-meeting-\(chicago-il---2022\).pdf?sfvrsn=1fe4b065_2](https://documents.saa.org/container/docs/default-source/doc-annualmeeting/final-program/87th-annual-meeting-(chicago-il---2022).pdf?sfvrsn=1fe4b065_2)