



# Exploring Social Identities and Symbols & Artifacts in A Rural Black Cemetery

The Grambling State University Social Research Club

# Presenters and Contributors

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# Abstract

- This study explored social identities and symbols in a Rural Black Cemetery in Northern Louisiana. Tombstones and grave markers were used to obtain social/demographic information (birth, death, age, gender) about historical families of the late 1800s to present. They were also used to identify symbols and artifacts depicting the cultural practices, belief, and values of deceased persons in their earthly life. Some of the preliminary findings included : (1) the writing on the tombstone of Martha Adams, identifying her as the co-founder of Grambling State University; (2) the inscription on the tomb, of the married couple Pinkie and Oliver Washington, which states "In memory of the couple whose written requests for a teacher brought Charles P. Adams" and (3) the Champs, a husband and wife tomb with a picture of a piano and a car, suggesting maybe the occupation of the couple. Research is still in progress.

# Research Questions

- What is the significance of African American Cemeteries?
- Who are the different social identities (gender, age, marital status, religious and military ) buried in the Grambling Community Cemetery (GCC)?
- Who are the veterans buried in the GCC?
- Who are the pre-centenarians/centenarians and veterans?

# Defining Social Identity

- Social identity is established by personal naming
- Personal names are important devices for self definitions in all cultures
- It is through naming that a social group acknowledge a child's birth right and establishes its social identity
- Individuals can have multiple social identities :  
such as Gender (male), Military( Private)  
Occupation (teacher,) Religious (Christian )  
organizational (Mason) , marital (husband) and  
racial (black)

# Significance of the African American Cemetery

- The African American cemetery, a historical resource, offers significant information of the African American culture.
- The cemetery serves as story tellers for young African Americans, providing biographical and historic information that is necessary for a better understanding and appreciation for the black race.

# Methods

- Procedure
  - The GSU Social Research Club and students enrolled in the Anthropology/Sociology classes were instructed to visit the cemetery and take photographs of different tombstones to discover what type of social identities were present. We recorded the date of birth and death of the individuals, name of persons and other relevant information that was written on the tombs.
- Materials
  - Notebook and pen were used to record data from the tomb
  - A list of cemetery symbols was provided by our instructor/advisor of symbols to look for on the tombstones at the cemetery.
  - Digital cameras, pocket cameras, cell phone and cameras were brought with us to take pictures of the symbols artifacts.
  - Informants/Key consultants were used to provide information about some individuals and their families buried in the cemetery. They also provided some history of the cemetery.
  - Jason Church, a renowned Cemetery Preservationist, also served as a key consultant for the first stage of our research.



# Preliminary Findings

## ▣ Table I: Some Names of the People Buried In the Cemetery

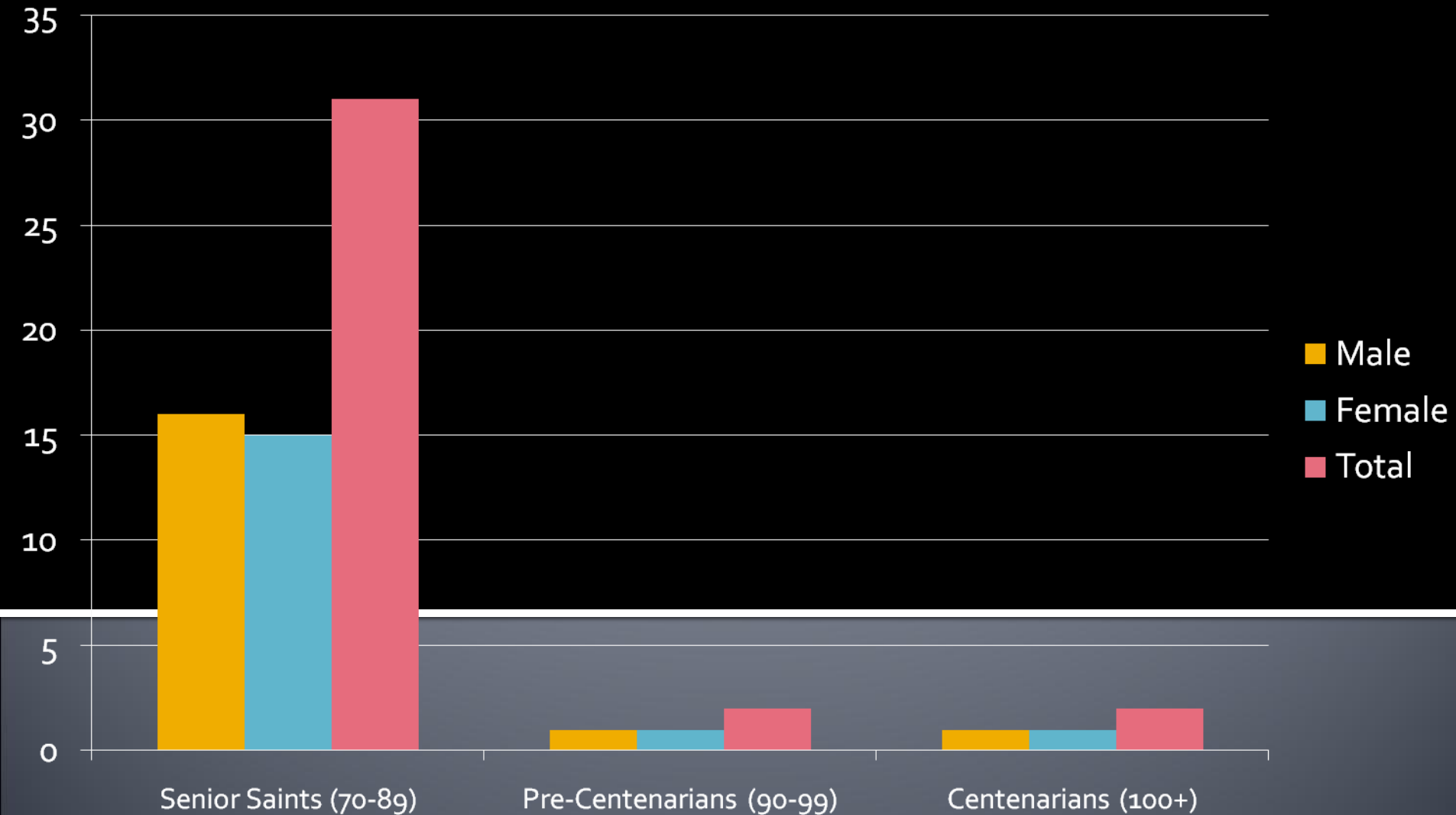
- Mary Loe Reed
- Norman Jackson
- Beddie Younger Jackson
- Tamaladge "Tab" Champ
- Willie D. Champ Sr. & Dorsey Mae Champ
- John Henry Champ
- Jimmy Lee Wright
- Janie B. Scott
- Gloria Lafaye Harris
- Annie Russell
- Della Parrish
- Curtis E. Champ
- John Henry Burks
- Fred Williams
- Bessie Jones
- Pearlina W. Johnson
- Della Stinson
- Christian E. Williams
- Luscious Williams & Bessie B. Williams
- Shelvy L. Ford
- Mollie Wright Jackson
- Rev. J.W. & Pollie Jackson
- Curtis Moore

- Easter Moore
  - Robert Moore
  - Eugene Moore
  - Bertha Moore Calloway
  - B.L. Moore
  - Rev. D.B. Bennett
  - Andrew Jackson, Sr.
  - Nora Callahan Bennett
  - Nevada Bennett Jackson
  - Booker T. Jackson
  - Acie Jenson
  - Joe Jenson
  - Ida Jenson Jones
  - Shafter Jenson
  - Rev. Newton Jenson, Sr.
  - James & Marianne Tanner
  - Tombstone written in brail
  - Walsh & Emma Robinson
  - Rosia Garner
  - Rev. Lou Vergus Garner
  - Elsie Garner



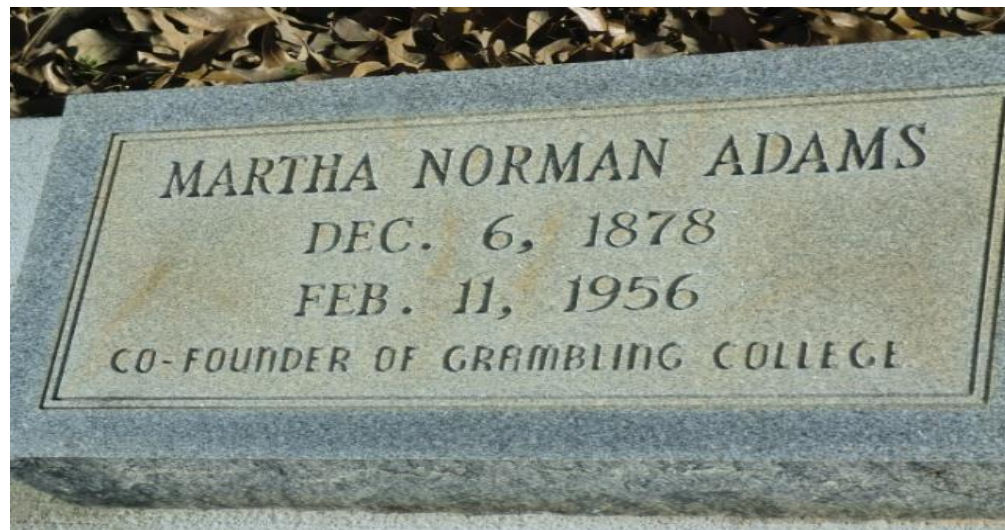
# Male and Female Preliminary Findings

(Centenarians, Pre Centenarians, Seniors Saints)



# Preliminary Findings

- The writing on the tombstone of Martha Adams, identifying her as the co-founder of Grambling State University;



# Finding Con't

- The Champs, a husband and wife tomb with a picture of a piano and a car, suggesting maybe the occupation of the couple.



- The inscription on the tomb, of the married couple Pinkie and Oliver Washington, which states “In memory of the couple whose written requests for a teacher brought Charles P. Adams.”



# Major Findings (cont'd)

## ▣ Gender Identity - 1800s

- 12 Men of the 1800's: Norman Jackson-1891, John Scott-1875, Luscious Williams-1880, Rev J.W. Moore-1873, Robert Moore-1892, Eugene Moore-1866, B.L. Moore, Rev. D. Bennett, Andrew Jackson, Rev. Newton Jenson, James Tanner, Rev. Lou Vergus Garner
- 10 Women of the 1800's: Beddie Jackson, Janie B. Scott,( Centenarian) Bessie Willams, Molly Wright Jackson, Polly Owens Moore, Easter Moore, Bertha Moore Callaway, Ida Jenson Jones, Marianne Tanner, Rosia Garner
- 14 Men of the 1900's: Talmadge Champ, Willie D. Scott, John Henry Champ, Jimmy Lee Wright, Curtis E. Champ, John Henry Burks, Fred Williams, Christian E. Williams, Shelby L. Ford, Curtis Moore, Booker T. Jackson, Acie Jenson, Joe Jenson, Shafter Jackson
- 8 Women of 1900's: Mary Lou Reed, Dorsey Mae Champ, Annie Russell, Della Parrish, Bessie Johnson, Pearlean Johnson, Della Stinson, Nevada Bennett Jackson
- 3 Children: Jimmie Lee Wright-9 months old, Gloria Lafaye Harris-1 day, John Henry Burks-17 years old
- 4 Reverends: J.W. Moore, D.B. Bennett, Newton Jenson, Jr., Lou Vergas Garner
- 6 War Veterans: Norman Jackson, John Henry Champ, Fred Williams, Christian E. Williams, Shelby L. Ford, Acie Jenson



# Major Findings (cont'd)





# Findings: Social Identity



- The words on the tombstone of Reverend Wimbush reveal that he was not only a minister, but was also a husband and father. This gives us information on the social roles he played while he was alive.

# African-American Veterans who served their Country in WWI, WWII, the Korean War and in Peace Time

<p>John Henry Champ Louisiana SP4 CO B Patton 40 Armor Jan. 31 1947-June 16.1969</p>	<p>Earnest Giles Louisiana PVT 803 Pioneer INF World War I Nov. 27, 1897- Feb. 14, 1967</p>	<p>Lonnie Harrison Louisiana FLT 0 2143 AAF Base Unit World War II Dec. 5, 1925- Aug.31, 1994</p>	<p>Christian E. Williams US Army World War II Dec. 23, 1925-Jan. 15, 1994</p>
<p>Claude Fowler Louisiana S1 US Navy World War II Dec. 13, 1907- May 15, 1949</p>	<p>Fred Williams PFC US Army World War II May 24, 1913-June 02, 1975</p>	<p>Willie G. Delone Louisiana PFC US Marine Corps Korea July 9, 1933- Oct. 31, 1960</p>	<p>Albert H. Lewis Louisiana Tec 4 US Army World War II Dec. 23, 1907-Feb. 27, 1974</p>
<p>John Wesley Ford Louisiana SGT US Air Force World War II</p>	<p>Shelvey L. Ford PVT US Army World War II Oct. 14, 1920- Sept. 07, 1975</p>	<p>Acie Jenson PVT US Army World War II Aug. 3, 1911- Oct. 15, 1980</p>	<p>LaMarr Gaar Louisiana STM1 USNR World War II Korea June 03, 1926- Sept. 4, 1966</p>
<p>Mamon Smith Louisiana PVT CO K 818 Pioneer INF World War I</p>	<p>Luther Washington Louisiana PVT CO M 803 Pioneer INF World War I</p>	<p>Arthur Ludley Louisiana PFC 810 CO Trans Corps World War I Jan. 27, 1893- Jan. 29, 1951</p>	<p>Norman Jackson Louisiana Tech 4 US Army World War II Dec. 23, 1907- Feb. 27, 1974</p>
<p>George Faison Louisiana PVT 161 Depot Brigade World War I Dec. 5, 1892 – Aug. 4, 1966</p>	<p>George Abner Louisiana PVT 162 Depot Brig January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1941</p>	<p>John W. Abner Louisiana PVT 9 CO 162 Depot Brigade April 7, 1894 – Jan. 11, 1961</p>	<p>Talmadge C. Goree Louisiana PVT 0 M Corps World War II Sep. 30, 1921 - Apr. 25, 1947</p>



# Findings: Social Identity Contd



- This white fence was placed at various places in the cemetery next to the stone slabs and temporary grave markers to identify the “unknown”.

# Future Direction of Research

- To continue to identify other people at the cemetery in different historical periods
- To do a cross-cultural comparison with other rural cemeteries
- To explore gender differences in longevity
- To share our findings with the academic and local community, and to present them at the Southern Anthropological Conference and other Social Science meetings

# Acknowledgements

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