

Georgia Southern Professor Recounts 'The Most Important Court Case You've Never Heard Of'

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It's one of the most important legal decisions regarding slavery in U.S. history, it happened in nearby Savannah, Georgia, and most people have never heard of it.

Jonathan Bryant, Ph.D., associate professor of history at Georgia Southern University, is bringing national attention to a landmark court case in his recently released book, *Dark Places of the Earth: The Voyage of the Slave Ship Antelope*. Since its release, the book has been reviewed by a number of media outlets and National Public Radio's "The Diane Rehm Show" devoted an hour to Bryant and his book on July 15.

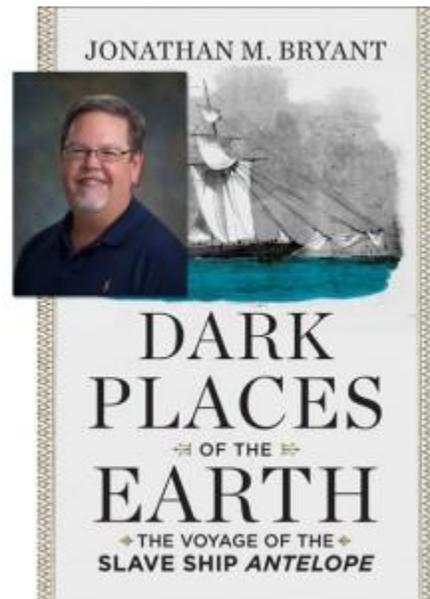
"This is a big case, and yet in many ways had been forgotten by historians," said Bryant. "And that's one reason I think the book is gaining a little traction."

The case began in 1820, when the *Antelope*, a Spanish slave ship, was captured off the coast of Florida. Since the U.S. had outlawed its own participation in the international slave trade, the ship's captives — almost 300 of them — were considered illegal cargo under American law. However, because slavery was such an integral part of the U.S. economy, the case would make its way to the Supreme Court to decide what should be done with them.

For the next few years, the case bounced around circuit court in Savannah, and went to the Supreme Court three times. Chief Justice John Marshall and his court, many of them slave owners themselves, finally wrote the decision that while slaves might be human beings, by law they are property. It was a decision that shaped American law for the next 35 years.

"And that's a hellacious decision," said Bryant. "That in essence says that you can take your property wherever you want to. Slavery can expand westward and it can't be stopped by the state or the federal governments."

As for the captives, they were put to work on Georgia farms while the case made its way through the court system, and some of them waited almost eight years to learn their fate. Bryant says these



captives were children, many of them between the ages of 5 and 10, and their voices are conspicuously absent from the court records.

"It's very very frustrating," he said. "An interpreter is hired numerous times but never once do they record anything said by the captives. The captives themselves had lived in the Savannah area — depending on which one you were — seven to eight years. They learned to speak English, but again, nothing is recorded."

Bryant first came across the *Antelope* case in 1999 while searching for class materials that might better engage his students at Georgia Southern, and revisited it for several years before finally devoting himself to research in 2009. The book was released in July by Liveright, a subsidiary of W.W. Norton in New York.

Bryant says that being published by such a noted company was a true stroke of luck, but he always thought the story would attract interest if given a chance.

"It's a wonderful story of corruption and lies and duplicitous behavior by lawyers — all of those lovely things that we like to read about," he said.

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Georgia Southern Museum Participates in Blue Star Museums Program

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The Georgia Southern Museum celebrates its partnership with Blue Star Museums and invites all active-duty personnel, and their families, to enjoy all the exhibits for free through Labor Day.

Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense and more than 2,000 museums across America. This collective offers free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families, from Memorial Day through Labor Day, Sept. 7.

Georgia Southern has been a part of the Blue Star Museums program since it was established six years ago.

"Our participation in the Blue Star Museum program is one way for us to thank [active-duty military personnel] for their support of our exhibits, collections and for their incredible service to our nation," said Brent Tharp, Georgia Southern Museum director. "The Museum, its exhibits and collections

have long had a close relationship with veterans and military community. They are a significant part of interpreting the history of Georgia Southern, Bulloch County and coastal plain Georgia," he added.

The Georgia Southern Museum is open Tuesday-Friday, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday, 2 p.m.- 5 p.m. Exhibits include The Great War that Changed the World, which commemorates the 100th anniversary of the of first world war, and the mosasaur exhibit, which displays the fossils of the 78 million year old, 26-foot long, marine carnivore.

For more information, visit the Museum's website: <http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/museum/>

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers more than 125-degree programs serving more than 20,500 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered and hands-on approach to education.

Georgia Southern's Black Gold

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Over the past five weeks, Georgia Southern's Center for Sustainability (CfS) has partnered with Eagle Dining and Facilities Services to begin a compost program on campus.

The compost process begins in the dining facilities by collecting organic waste such as coffee grounds, egg shells and orange peels. The organic waste is then mixed off-campus with green materials such as leaves, wood chips and fresh grass clippings. Eventually, bacteria will break down the materials, creating a dark brown, nutrient-rich substance that looks like soil.

"It's like Georgia Southern's own black gold," said Lissa Leege, biology professor and director of the CfS.

The CfS hopes to use food waste from the dining commons to create a nutrient-rich soil that can assist food growth within the campus garden. The compost could also be used by other facilities on campus, including the Garden of the Coastal Plain.

"Everything that is thrown away here at Georgia Southern is trucked away 120 miles to a landfill," said Leege. "Whatever we can defer from that landfill is a really important step in Georgia Southern's path toward sustainability."



Because it takes two to four months for the composting process to complete, there is currently no material ready to be used. However, Leege is pleased with the success of this pilot study and hopes it will provide information to help Georgia Southern increase the scale of composting, encompassing all food waste on campus. The pilot study focused on only fruit and vegetable scraps for compost production.

This August, the CfS plans to visit the University of Georgia to get an understanding of how they process all food waste produced there — including meat and dairy products — into compost.

Scott Blair, the graduate student overseeing this project said, "The partnership with Eagle Dining and Facilities Services is what allows this program to happen. The kitchen workers are the ones who separate the fruit and vegetable scraps we use in the compost and Facilities Services transports it to our composting site."

Currently, the campus gardening program has produced close to 50 pounds of produce with compost that they have imported. With almost 2,000 pounds of food composted, the CfS is optimistic that they can increase the amount of food produced on campus.

"These are the student's sustainability fees at work," said Leege.

There are plenty of opportunities for volunteering, so to get involved please contact: cfs@georgiasouthern.edu

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