

AAHGS Metro Atlanta – General Meeting

DATE November 8, 2025

TIME 1:00 PM EST

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY Tamu Taylor

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 31 ONLINE, ~15 IN-PERSON

Welcome and Introduction

The meeting was opened at 5:19 PM. Attendees were welcomed, and audio checks confirmed that participants online could hear clearly.

Meeting Etiquette and Disclaimer

- Members were reminded to mute upon entry and use the “raise hand” feature or chat for questions.
- In-person attendees were asked to raise their hands to receive the microphone.
- Intellectual property disclaimer was read: presentations and materials are protected; no unauthorized recording or reproduction permitted.
- Meeting recording notice was given, with the option for participants to leave if they did not consent.

Presentations: *Breaking Barriers and Lineage Societies*

Janice Bryant – Society of First African Families of English America (SOFIA)

- Explained lineage society membership requirements: proof of ancestry before March 5, 1770 in English colonies.
- Outlined application process: birth, marriage, death records, land patents, emancipation papers.
- Highlighted benefits: heritage recognition, genealogical support, networking, leadership opportunities, scholarships, and youth engagement.

- Shared emancipation papers of her ancestor **Fannie Hickman (born 1765, Georgia)**, freed by Georgia legislature in 1834.
- Demonstrated research methods using land plats, FAN club analysis, and Georgia Black Codes to trace family connections and understand restrictions on free persons of color.

Jonnie Ramsey Brown – Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Middle Passage

- Presented the importance of formally proving lineage to enslaved ancestors.
- Emphasized honoring enslaved ancestors' contributions to building America and preserving their legacy.
- Reviewed reparations initiatives in California, New York, Evanston (IL), Asheville (NC), Georgetown University GU272 descendants, and Howard University's slavery fund.
- Explained application requirements and acceptance of "negative proof" when direct documentation of enslavement is unavailable.
- Compared lineage applications to tax returns: a way to summarize and present proof efficiently.
- Encouraged members to prepare lineage applications to strengthen research and readiness for future opportunities.

Devra Harney – Breaking Barriers in Lineage Societies

- Shared her genealogical journey, documenting lineage back to the 15th century.
- Specializes in African American slave research, U.S. railroads, and Black church communities.
- Contributions include research for PBS *Finding Your Roots* and leadership roles in genealogical societies.
- Highlighted tracing her surname "Harney" back to Ireland (variant "Arnie").
- Discussed challenges and breakthroughs in proving African American lineage for societies traditionally dominated by white narratives.
- Advocated for youth engagement in genealogy, including her 2025 genealogy camp initiative.

Regular Chapter Business Meeting

- **Membership Update:** Current membership stands at 119 financial members.
- **Renew** your membership today for 2026.
- **New Members and Guests:** Introductions were made, with attendees sharing their research interests.
- **Special Interest Groups:** Updates provided on DNA, Freedmen's Bureau, and Railroad Research SIGs. Members encouraged to participate.
- **Chapter Projects:**
 - Ongoing collaboration with the Fayette County Community Remembrance Coalition and Equal Justice Initiative.

- Continued work on documenting African American lineage case studies for educational outreach.
- **Treasurer's Report:** Posted in members' only section of website.
- **Meeting minutes:** Posted in the members' only section of website. No posting for September as this was special events for chapter anniversary.
- **Officer Elections:** Elections for the 2026–2028 term will begin in January 1, 2026.

Announcements

- **Next Meeting:** December 13, 2025 – Members' Show and tell.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded after presentations, business discussions, and announcements.