

## AAHGS Metro Atlanta – General Meeting

**DATE:** April 25, 2026

**TIME:** 1:00 PM EST

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY:** Clevlyn Anderson

**NUMBER OF ATTENDEES:** 36

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### Welcome and Introduction

The meeting was opened by President **Clevlyn Anderson**, who welcomed attendees to the April meeting. She introduced the other chapter officers present, including Treasurer Dawnya Lindsey and Vice President of Education Tamika Strong. Attendees were reminded that the session was being **recorded**.

### Meeting Etiquette and Disclaimer

- **Etiquette:** Participants were instructed to remain on **mute** once the meeting began, use the "raise hand" icon or chat for questions, and rejoin if experiencing technical difficulties.
  - **Disclaimer:** The **intellectual property and copyright notice** was read, stating that all materials and guest presentations are legally protected and may not be photographed, screen-captured, or replicated without permission.
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### Presentation: Harvesting Ancestors, Lessons from the Garden

**Guest Speaker: Sharon Baptiste-Gillins**, retired college educator and renowned genealogical researcher/instructor.

#### Presentation Highlights:

- **Genealogy is Physical and Messy Work:** Likening research to gardening, Ms. Gillins noted that genealogists will encounter "messy" situations like revisionist history, resistance, secrets, and lies. She shared a case study of her own family's generation-spanning secrets involving a white rancher and a Black woman in Texas.
- **Know Your Soil (Historical Context):** Just as soil conditions dictate a plant's survival, a community's laws, customs, and geography determine an ancestor's life conditions. Researchers should extensively search almanacs, city directories, maps, and land records to understand the "lay of the land".
- **The Harvest Takes Time:** Cultivating credible results requires patience and follows the **Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)**. Rushing causes researchers to "force-fit" facts, leading to a lack of credibility and wild goose chases.
- **Get in Close for Details:** Read every line of every document. Ms. Gillins shared how she initially overlooked her own direct ancestors listed just lines above a targeted relative in a Freedmen's Bureau probate record because she stopped reading too soon.
- **Old-School Tools & Underutilized Records:** Do not rely exclusively on index-searchable databases (the "low-growing fruit"), as names are often misspelled. Genealogists must explore manuscript collections, local courthouses, WPA Historical Records Surveys, slave-era insurance policies, and Southern Claims Commission files to find the richest information.

- **Keep Track & Recycle Scraps:** Use research logs with complete citations to avoid repeating work. Save seemingly irrelevant information ("scraps"), as it may become a vital piece of the story later.
- **Dedication:** The presentation was offered in loving memory of late genealogist and AAHGS member Emma Davis Hamilton.

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## **Business Meeting Membership Update**

- The chapter has grown to **102 financial members**.
- Members were reminded to renew or join via the national website (aahgs.org).

## **Meeting Minutes and Treasurer's Report**

- The meeting minutes and financial reports are posted in the **members-only section** of the chapter website for review and approval.

## **Officer Appointments & Volunteer Needs**

- **Current Officers:** Clevlyn Anderson (President), Tamika Strong (VP), Dawnya Lindsey (Treasurer), Tammy Ozier (Recording Secretary), Sandra Bush (Corresponding Secretary), and Lynda Sampson (Membership Administrator).
- **Vacant/Volunteer Roles:** The chapter is actively seeking a **Chapter Archival Project Coordinator** to manage the consolidation of chapter history at the Auburn Avenue Research Library, and a **Membership Coordinator** to facilitate member orientation and engagement activities.

## **Special Interest Groups (SIGs) & Projects**

- **Active SIGs:** Caribbean, Georgia, SDUSMP, Tennessee, Military, and Alabama.
- **New Writing SIG:** Coordinated by Mallard Benton and Tamika Strong, this new group will hold its inaugural meeting on **Thursday, May 7th at 7:00 PM**.
- **New Member Engagement:** Mallard Benton is heading up a new member engagement project, and Judy Rose Weaver is developing a formal member orientation program.

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## **Announcements**

- **Military SIG Project:** Johnette Brooks announced a 250th-anniversary campaign where members can purchase blooming hosta plants to place on military graves.
- **Georgia State Scholarships Research:** Johnette Brooks requested that anyone with ancestors who utilized Georgia State Scholarships (funds historically given to Black students to attend out-of-state HBCUs or Atlanta University) contact her to compile a broader chapter campaign.

- **Upcoming Chapter Meeting (Date Change):** The next meeting is moved up one week to **May 16, 2026** (to avoid Memorial Day weekend). The guest speaker will be Velma Maya Fan, presenting "*Give Me Back What's Mine: Black women testify before the Southern Claims Commission*".
- **Save the Date:** There will be no regular chapter meeting on **October 24, 2026**. Instead, members are encouraged to attend the all-day AAHGS Virtual Fall Symposium hosted by National.
- **Virtual Events:** Weekly virtual events run by Lynda Sampson will resume starting this weekend.

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### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by President Clevlyn Anderson following closing announcements.