

## AAHGS Metro Atlanta – General Meeting

**DATE:** March 28, 2026 **TIME:** 1:00 PM EST

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY:** Tamika Strong

**NUMBER OF ATTENDEES:** 32

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### Welcome and Introduction

The meeting was opened by Vice President **Tamika Strong**, who welcomed members and noted that President Clevlyn Anderson was absent to attend the funeral of African American genealogy pioneer Sharon Leslie Morgan. A moment of silence was held to honor the recent passings of both Sharon Leslie Morgan and Empress Emma Hamilton . Attendees were reminded that the session was being **recorded** for documentation and member access.

### Meeting Etiquette and Disclaimer

- **Etiquette:** Participants were instructed to remain on **mute**, put questions in the chat, and disconnect/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: *Shades of Purple in a Landscape of Ward's Chapel Cemetery, a Narrative Analysis of Alice Walker's Home Ground***

**Guest Speaker: Dr. D.L. Henderson**, historian, genealogist, preservationist, and past president of the AAHGS Metro Atlanta Chapter.

### Presentation Highlights:

- **Narrative Analysis:** Dr. Henderson emphasized using narrative analysis to examine family stories for context and meaning, identifying historical, cultural, and social influences even in flawed or imaginative family tales.
- **Historical Focus:** The presentation analyzed Alice Walker's autobiographical poem "*Burial*" and the life of her grandmother, Rachel Little Walker, who died in 1971 and served as the primary inspiration for the character Celie in *The Color Purple*.
- **Family Dynamics & Resilience:** Dr. Henderson explored the realities of Rachel's 1921 marriage of convenience to Henry Walker, following the violent death of his first wife, Kate Nelson . Rachel's life of intense sharecropping labor and multiple hardships was highlighted to document her resilience and stabilizing impact on the family.
- **Cemetery Landscape as a Cultural Repository:** Ward's Chapel Cemetery in Eatonton, GA (Putnam County), functions as the Walker family's genealogical and geographical legacy. Dr. Henderson discussed historic burial traditions (like grazing cattle as an accepted pastoral element) and the symbolism of graveyard plants like ivy, honeysuckle, bittersweet, and sage for protection, healing, and immortality .
- **Handling Sensitive Narratives (Q&A):** Members discussed navigating sensitive or traumatic family histories (e.g., bootlegging, domestic violence) without judgment, noting that modern researchers act as "trustees" of family information and must consider the historical survival context of their ancestors.

- **AI in Genealogy (Q&A):** A brief discussion explored the ethical use of AI tools (like Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT) to generate visual aids and charts, treating them as research and design tool]

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## **Business Meeting Membership Update**

- The chapter currently has **97 financial members**, and members were encouraged to recruit to help the chapter reach a goal of 100 members.
- Renewals for 2026 can be completed via the national website (aahgs.org).

## **Officer Appointments & Vacancies**

- **President:** Clevlyn Anderson
- **Vice President of Education & Programs:** Tamika Strong
- **Treasurer:** Dawnya Lindsey
- **Recording Secretary:** Tammy Ozier
- **Corresponding Secretary:** Sandra Bush
- **Membership Administrator:** Lynda Sampson
- **Vacant Roles:** The chapter is actively seeking volunteers for a **Membership Coordinator** and a coordinator for the **Chapter Archival Project**

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

- **Active SIGs:** Alabama, Caribbean, Georgia, Military, Tennessee, and the legacy application program for the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Middle Passage (SDUSMP).
- **New Writing SIG:** Planning is underway for a new group focused on writing and recording family history; members should stay tuned for a call gauging interest.
- **Archival Project:** Ongoing effort to consolidate chapter historical materials for placement at the Auburn Avenue Research Library.
- **Surname Directory:** The chapter is updating the discerning research list/surname directory to better tailor educational programs; a call for submissions will go out soon.

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

- The January meeting minutes and the financial report are posted on the chapter website and were approved by the membership.

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## **Announcements**

- **Upcoming Chapter Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for **April 25, 2026**, featuring nationally known speaker **Sharon Baptiste Gillins**, who will present "*Harvesting Ancestors, Lesson from the Garden*".
- **Chapter Communications:** Members were reminded to add the new chapter emails (**info@AAHGSATL.org** and **members@AAHGSATL.org**) to their contacts to ensure messages and new member registrations avoid spam filters.
- **Virtual Events:** Weekly virtual events managed by Lynda Sampson will resume next weekend.

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**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:24 PM.