

A historical reenactor in a Revolutionary War uniform is shown in profile, firing a rifle. The scene is filled with smoke and a bright muzzle flash. The reenactor wears a tall, dark bicorne hat and a dark jacket with white epaulettes and a white sash. The background is a hazy, outdoor setting.

## CONSIDERING RE-ENACTMENTS

*THE BATTLE OF GERMANTOWN IN THE LIGHT  
OF 21ST-CENTURY GUN VIOLENCE*

**FINAL REPORT | 2020-2021**

## *History of the Revolutionary Germantown Festival*

On October 4, 1777, Cliveden became a battlefield as General George Washington's Continental Army fought the British for control of Philadelphia. Honoring this significant moment in Philadelphia's Revolutionary history dates to the Centennial Celebration in Germantown in 1877. In 1927 descendants of the American patriots who fought in 1777 and Germantown community members dressed up in their ancestors' clothing to commemorate this historic event with a re-enactment. The Battle of Germantown reenactments began consistently in 1977, and are now the centerpiece of the annual Revolutionary Germantown Festival. Today the festival represents one of the largest history festivals in Philadelphia, educating new generations about the War of Independence and the struggle for freedom.



# Considering Re-enactments

In response to feedback from the local community and an era of gun violence in the United States, Cliveden initiated conversations with local and re-enactment communities about the relevancy and impact of the site’s signature event, the Revolutionary Germantown Festival featuring re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown. The central purpose of the project was to gather reactions from key stakeholders and input from scholars to wrestle with the organization’s interpretation of the American Revolution. How can Cliveden tell the authentic story of the Battle of Germantown that is relevant to the community and not an over-simplified version front loading violence? How can Cliveden include different perspectives in the re-enactment? With societal shifts over the past 40 years and an increase of violence, Cliveden was compelled to confront these questions to face the reality of gun violence in everyday American life. The hope was to discover the impact the current interpretation of Revolutionary-era history has on the communities Cliveden serves.

Through eighteen months that included the start of a worldwide pandemic, Cliveden with project partners and consultants met both virtually and onsite with small groups to hear from constituents what mattered, what worked and what needed help. Data was also gathered using surveys and in-person interviews during a re-vamped Revolutionary Germantown Festival forced by COVID-19. Through this project participants listened and learned from one another. Cliveden looks forward to using the information gathered and the relationships forged and deepened during this project to expand the site’s interpretation of the American Revolution.

Considering Re-enactments: The Battle of Germantown in the Light of 21st Century Gun Violence was supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and by the Interpretation and Education Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, an endowed fund made possible by a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



National Trust for Historic Preservation

## *Cliveden Staff & Board*

### **Staff**

Nancy VanDolsen: Chief Executive Officer  
Libbie Hawes: Preservation Director  
Carolyn Wallace: Education Director  
Jocelyn Rouse: Marketing & Business Operations Coordinator  
Lanette Mackie: Facilities Custodian  
Caroline Slama: Rental Manager & Collections Assistant

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Randall Miller  
Ahsan Nasratulla  
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### The ROZ Group



Rosalyn McPherson is President and Founder of The ROZ Group, Inc., a firm she launched in 2006. Highly regarded as a natural cross-pollinator, builder of strategic relationships, and cross-cultural content enthusiast, she leads her company in providing exhibit development, strategic marketing and communications, and project management to corporations, governmental agencies, and non-profit institutions. Cultural arts, education, and healthcare disparities are among the firm's key areas with content specialties in history and science. The team is particularly adept at community engagement and public input, creating opportunities for people to give voice to the important issues that affect their lives. Participating team members from The ROZ Group include Director, Business Development Leslie Russell Winder and Marketing Coordinator Laura McPherson. The ROZ Group is a certified minority vendor.

### Patricia Scott Hobbs



Patricia Scott Hobbs is a dancer/teacher/choreographer. She started her training with dance pioneer Marion Cuyjet and is a Temple University graduate (B.F.A. Dance Performance), and has performed with PHILADANCO (Joan Myers Brown), The Sybil Dance Company (Eva Gholson) and numerous New Freedom Theatre main stage and touring productions. As an arts educator, she founded the dance program at New Freedom Theatre and was the Director of the Training Program for over 25 years. Patricia worked as a facilitator at two historic sites in the neighborhood of Germantown, Philadelphia, PA. – Cliveden House – Liberty To Go To See and Historic Germantown's The Elephant on the Avenue Project. As a facilitator she uses theatre arts exercises to create safe and nurturing environments for audiences to discuss pertinent issues of the day such as race, Revolutionary War freedoms, civil liberties, slavery, indentured servitude and women's rights.

## Project Consultants



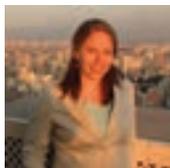
**Jacob D. Charles** joined the Center for Firearms Law as Executive Director after practicing in the appellate group at McGuireWoods LLP, where he briefed cases in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth and Ninth Circuits as well as in numerous state intermediate and high courts. Before his clerkships, Jake practiced in the Washington, D.C., office of O'Melveny & Myers LLP, where he represented clients in government and congressional investigations. Jake also holds master's degrees in theology and philosophy from Biola University and a bachelor's degree in criminology and psychology from the University of California, Irvine.



**Kimberly Kamara** was born and raised in the Mt. Airy section of the city of Philadelphia. Kimberly is the founder of an organization referred to as "Never Ending E~Motions LLC." aka NEEM which is an online community to assist people with dealing with grief, pain, and other emotions that he/ she feels when losing a loved one or friend. The organization also focuses on young men trying to reform from gang life and conform to the rules of society. Kimberly is also the author of *Where's My Daddy???*, the story is about a young child in search of his/her daddy.



**Noah Lewis** started his Ned Hector presentation 1996 at Bywood School, for his daughter's 4th grade class. While doing genealogical research on his family, he learned about a black continental soldier who fought in the Battle of Brandywine and was held in such high regard by his community that they would name a street after him in the mid 1850's. He was amazed and fascinated by Ned and many other blacks, whom he had not realized existed, and who contributed to America gaining its freedom. In addition, Noah has published a book for a youthful audience – *Edward "Ned" Hector, Black Revolutionary War Hero - Time Traveler*.



**Jessica Roney** studies bottom-up political culture in colonial America. Her first book, *Governed by a Spirit of Opposition: The Origins of American Political Practice in Colonial Philadelphia*, studies voluntary associations and civic culture in Philadelphia from 1682 until the American Revolution. Her current book project, *Revolutionary Settlement: The Colonies of the American Revolution*, examines two linked diasporas that resulted from the American Revolution: one of Loyalists, and one of Anglo-American settlers. Jessica serves as the convener for the Temple Early Atlantic Seminar (TEAS), as co-editor of book reviews for the *Journal of the Early Republic*, and on the executive council for the McNeil Center for Early American Studies.

## *Program Partners*

### **Germantown Espresso Bar**

Germantown Espresso Bar opened in summer of 2017 in the Northwest section of Philadelphia. Beyond a coffee shop, they pride themselves as a community epicenter, a maker space, a place to organize, and a space to build relationships and support each other. The intention behind the coffee shop is to be a welcoming space that encourages dialogue about local and national communities. Their regulars are neighbors, friends, artists, business owners, families, and anyone who happens upon their space. Co-owners Jeffery and Miles' shared experience in the management of social-justice-focused retail organizations provided a strong foundation in launching the community-minded business.

### **Project Learn School**

Project Learn School is an independent cooperative school, serving about 60 students in grades K-8. Situated in the historic Philadelphia neighborhood of Mt. Airy, PLS maximizes the many resources available in a dynamic urban setting. At Project Learn School, teachers, students and parents work together to create a progressive and humanistic community that promotes mutual respect, involvement and curiosity.

### **Re-enactment Community**

The re-enactment community is comprised of a diverse group of individuals who interpret the many experiences of the American Revolution. Members largely live along the eastern seaboard and belong to one of two groups: the British Brigade and the Continental Line. The British Brigade portrays the British, Provincial, French Canadian, First Nations, Native Americans, and German units that served with the Crown Forces during the American Revolutionary War, bringing together hundreds of soldiers and camp followers at historical re-enacting events. The Continental Line, Inc. is an educational organization of recreated units representing the Continental Army, the Continental Artillery, the Continental Marines, the State Navies, the various colonial militias, and units in the service of the French King during the American Revolution.

# COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Hosted at The Germantown Espresso Bar | 2.24.20 | 6:30 - 8:30pm

The ROZ Group worked with Cliveden to facilitate a series of round table discussions about the relevancy and impact of the site's signature event, the Revolutionary Germantown Festival featuring re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown. The central purpose of the project was to gather reactions from key stakeholders to wrestle with the organization's interpretation of the American Revolution. Topics for discussion included the effects of the loud sensory components of the re-enactment, the storytelling focus of the event and celebration vs. commemoration of recreating violent historic events.

## INSIGHTS

- *Consumption of alcohol in close proximity to use of firearms is problematic.*
- *Compensating participants is important but can be problematic depending on the behavior of the paid participants with members of the local community.*



*Participants: Small group of community members, some had attended the festival others had not. Several of the group lived in central or lower Germantown.*

**“How can this be modified where we’re both acknowledging the history while also acknowledging present day, and perhaps also thinking of other ways that we can look at our history as a neighborhood and even the history of Cliveden.”**

# CLIVEDEN CONVERSATION

*The American Revolution & The Right to Bear Arms | 3.11.20 | 7:00pm*

Dr. Jessica Roney, Professor of History at Temple University, discussed the Second Amendment and its roots during the American Revolution followed by a facilitated discussion.



How does America's understanding of the meaning of the Second Amendment change over time and how does that impact how history is shared?

*Participants: Local community members with diverse perspectives on program content and members of the re-enactment community.*

**“The audience was interested in how the history of guns and the rights and responsibilities associated with them in the eighteenth century impinged on the modern day. This particular conversation dealt less with how**

**re-enactments connect to modern-day gun violence, but instead seemed to center on the context, the world that Cliveden and the Battle of Germantown inhabited and thinking about how that legacy matters today.”**

## INSIGHTS

- *Perspective matters. Looking at the different points of view, both historically and today, is important.*
- *People have very different responses to the use and ownership of firearms.*
- *Good history is built on facts.*
- *Making connections between the past and how it is connected and impacts the present and future is important.*

## COVID 19 Pandemic



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cliveden was forced to change the timeline of *Considering Re-enactments: The Battle of Germantown in the Light of 21st Century Gun Violence*. In order to maintain the goals of the project and pivot to make necessary changes for the health and safety of Cliveden staff and stakeholders, staff developed the following modifications:

**Roundtables:** Initially Cliveden planned a total of 6 in person discussions with constituents, with one accomplished prior to March 15. During the spring one roundtable was completed using Zoom as a platform with stakeholders pulled from both the target local community and by respondents to surveys. Staff continued to have concerns around reaching the near neighbors who surround the property using only online methods. In the end, most of the roundtables were held online, with only two offered in person on-site due to restrictions from the city and CDC.

**Surveys:** In order to gather data during local stay at home orders, Cliveden staff developed stakeholder surveys for both the general public and the re-enactment communities utilizing Google Forms. Surveys were circulated through Cliveden's social media channels and emails as well as those with partner organizations such as Historic Germantown. Surveys were also developed for the Revolutionary Germantown Festival.

**Cliveden Conversations:** One Cliveden Conversation with Jessica Roney was completed prior to March 15. Of the remaining three, the two initially scheduled for the spring were re-scheduled for the fall and serve as bookends for a modified Revolutionary Germantown Festival in 2020. The final conversation moved to the winter. Two were offered on Zoom and one in-person on site.

**Revolutionary Germantown Festival:** Due to the nature of the event in its traditional format, Cliveden and the other partners in Historic Germantown reworked the festival for 2020 to utilize initial findings from this project and respond to restrictions in place from Philadelphia due to the pandemic. Participating sites offered interpretation of the American Revolution from different perspectives including those engaged in the war, pacifists, free and enslaved African Americans, Native peoples and everyday citizens of Northwest Philadelphia. Cliveden, and other Historic Germantown sites hosted a limited number of members of the re-enactment community on site as part of the activities for the festival.

# Survey Findings

## INSIGHTS

- The power of place and authenticity are important.
- Some participants were unaware of programs already being offered by the site.
- Some participants felt that the program didn't have a place anymore and a different or other festival could be offered.
- Many found the event enjoyable and helped them to connect to American history.
- The re-enactment community enjoys their meaningful interactions with the public, helping to educate people about America's founding period.

## OTHER WAYS TO TELL STORIES?

"A film by History Making Productions, about the Battle of Germantown, could be shown at the Festival every 30 minutes on a big screen in front of the house, with seats lined up on the lawn like the Dell. Soldiers roaming the festival grounds with insignia identifying their role in The Battle could answer questions about where they appear in the film. Germantown residents could be enlisted as 'extras' in the film, and they could attend the festival wearing their film attire, like celebrities. The film could travel to neighborhood schools, and also be shown at the Independence Mall Visitor Center."

## STAND-OUT COMMENTS:

- "It's an outdated, boring and fictional tradition that smacks of white elitism."
- "Immense pride and profound humility."
- "Too much jingoism/patriotism for my taste."
- "Recreating the battle as entertainment is sending the wrong message about guns and violence."

- Survey responses were collected from participants residing in 9 different states and the District of Columbia
- Re-enactors from 7 different states and 13 separate municipalities responded to the survey

# COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Virtual | 6.18.20 | 4:00 - 6:00pm

The ROZ Group facilitated a roundtable discussion to gather reactions from key stakeholders to wrestle with the organization's interpretation of the American Revolution. Topics for discussion included the effects of the loud sensory components of the re-enactment, the storytelling focus of the event and the celebration vs. commemoration of recreating violent historic events.

*Participants: Diverse group, many who live in Northwest Philadelphia.*

## INSIGHTS

- *There can be a disconnect between what happens at the Revolutionary Germantown Festival and what happens in the community.*
- *Desire to have more interpretation, including first-person, focused on other experiences during the Revolutionary period beyond the life of soldiers.*
- *There were mixed feelings about the use of firearms and some desired to limit the amount of noise from weapons.*
- *There was concern about how the event affects children or others with experience in trauma and what can be done to better inform those people about the event.*

# RE-ENACTOR ROUNDTABLE

Hosted at Cliveden | 8.21.20 | 6:30 - 8:00pm

The ROZ Group worked with Cliveden to facilitate a roundtable discussion about Cliveden's signature event, the Revolutionary Germantown Festival featuring re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown to gather input from key stakeholders to wrestle with the organization's interpretation of the American Revolution to discover the impact the current interpretation has on the community, and how and if it resonates with them. Topics for discussion included the storytelling focus of the event, the focus on celebration vs. commemoration in recreating violent historic events and the effects of the loud sensory components of the re-enactment on visitors and the local community. To ensure the health and safety of all participants, masks and social distancing were required.

## INSIGHTS

- Interest in more living history opportunities.
- Could be more connections with neighborhood groups for both promotion and programming.
- Desire from the re-enactors to connect with the community and help share and educate people about the history of the American Revolution and their experience as re-enactors.
- Power and importance of place and sharing the authentic, complicated history with visitors is important.

*Participants: Both British and Continental re-enactors attended, most living in the region but at least one attending from New England.*

**"I'm glad this dialogue is happening. I'm sad that something we take joy & pleasure in is experienced by some as traumatic & disruptive even disrespectful of their current experience."**



## NEXT STEPS

- *White re-enactors need to be able to answer questions about blacks' experiences.*
- *Re-enactors need to be less rigid in enforcing historical accuracy at the cost of participation by non-white males.*
- *Consider not focusing on the battle as the one big event but rather multiple events through year that focus more broadly and inclusively on history of Germantown. Missed opportunity to only focus on battle.*

# GUN LAWS FROM THE REVOLUTION TO TODAY

## *A Conversation with Jacob Charles*

*Virtual | 9.16.20 | 7:00 - 8:30pm*

An interview with Jacob Charles, Executive Director of the Center for Firearms Law at Duke University, explored the changes in gun legislation since America's founding to today. Time for questions and discussion followed the interview.

*Participants: A diverse group from throughout the region.*

### INSIGHTS

- *Interest in firearm regulations and how those have changed over time, especially recently due to modern violent events such as school shootings.*
- *There are misperceptions around gun violence that omits violent acts like suicide.*
- *The group was interested in dialogue around modern gun ownership, laws, advocacy on both sides of the gun control debate and firearms and the police.*



# SOCIAL MEDIA REACTION

“The Battle of Germantown reenactment is really fun. I went years ago.”

“I was interested in this event [final community roundtable] – until I read more and discovered it’s just one more example of insanely politically correct speech that probably tries to distort true history. Please don’t cancel our glorious history – our country ushered in the end of despotic kings and dictators, and started the era of true freedom.”

“Why not take all the gun violence off of tv and out of movies before you mess with the presentation of local history!”

“really hope significant changes are not forthcoming. I will trust the process for now.”

“Are they considering doing away with the re-eanctment??”

## SOCIAL MEDIA REACTION

“Thank you for your honesty. I never thought about veterans, but I love this reenactment. I missed the discussion. I love that had this conversation. Just being open to listening to another perspective”

“We go every year, always found it to be educational. It is important to study history, not erase it.”

“As a survivor of gun violence, I understand the trauma and can understand the concerns of the community.... I am SURE we can have re-enactments that still tell the ugly forceful truth of how harsh oppression can be; avoiding violence doesn't solve the issues that continue to be THE current issue. This is going to need to be done with a scalpel and definitely needs to capture the breadth of the ugliness and “freedom” in colonial times.”

“I understand the historical part of it...but I'm a lifelong Mt Airy girl and I HAVE NEVER been to the reenactment. NEVER... I always thought it to be a strange thing to be excited about.”

A background image showing the lower legs and feet of several people wearing historical-style clothing, such as breeches and boots, standing on a dirt or stone surface. The image is faded and serves as a backdrop for the text boxes.

“This is Not WHITE history and not BLACK history. It is AMERICAN history.”

“I like the idea of reenactors actually engaging with the community on these treasured historic sites that deserve WAY more attention. The engagement of the living history community with the actual community felt disconnected last time we did it. Plus it’s their community so they should be making the decisions, not reenactors who are coming in from the suburbs.”

“I lived around the corner... It happens the same day every year and the sound is yet different from actual gunfire. I think it’s actually a very good thing for the community and should grow not diminish.”

# Revolutionary Germantown Festival

Saturday, October 3, 2020 | 12pm - 4pm



African American soldiers at the Johnson House Historic Site

British Camp at Cliveden



Cliveden featuring new interpretive signs

For 2020, Cliveden and the sites of Historic Germantown collaborated to present a festival that presented a wider look into how the American Revolution and the 1777 Battle of Germantown affected Germantown citizens. The festival is known for its two re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown, fought on Cliveden's grounds and part of Washington's plan to liberate Philadelphia from British occupation. In 2020, the re-enactments were cancelled but visitors were able to walk through Historic Germantown and participate in activities at sixteen local historic sites, such as Grumblethorpe, the Concord School & Upper Burying Ground, Awbury Arboretum, and Historic Fair Hill to learn the effects of the war on the local community. A guidebook was available to all visitors physically and digitally, featuring a map of Historic Germantown, local restaurants, and the neighborhood.

## SURVEY DATA

- “It wasn’t overwhelming at all, perfect amount of information and the re-enactment was interesting and engaging”

Cliveden received a comment to a previous re-enactment that “to hold a reenactment with guns in our city that’s been plagued by gun violence is absolutely insane.” Do you agree with this comment?

- “This is a historical education thing, has nothing to do with guns in the city”
- No, because it’s placed in a historical context
- Legitimate concern. Advance advertisements could address the concern. Very important to have good relationships with neighborhood.

## INSIGHTS

- *Re-enacting is a community, with many participating in the hobby for decades.*
- *Visitors appeared engaged with the activities and visited multiple sites as part of their experience.*

*Attendees came from both the local community and the region and included families with children and a student group. Crowds were limited due to the pandemic.*

# NED HECTOR & AFRICAN AMERICANS DURING THE REVOLUTION

## *A Conversation with Noah Lewis*

Hosted at Cliveden | 10.17.20 | 3:00 - 5:00pm

### INSIGHTS

- *Acknowledging the cost of war is important.*
- *Content warnings could provide participants or visitors an opportunity to opt in or out of content.*
- *Important for re-enactors and first-person interpreters to continue to be thoughtful and sensitive as they engage with members of the public who can have differing comfort levels around firearms.*
- *Firearms can be an important piece of authentic interpretation of the American Revolution.*
- *Increased marketing can help let the community know the event is coming and what to expect.*
- *Museums can be a place to build historical empathy – allowing people to relate with people from the past.*

A conversation with Noah Lewis as he shared his over 20-year experience as a first person interpreter of African American teamster and Revolutionary War veteran, Edward 'Ned' Hector. A question-and-answer session followed the presentation.



*Participants: Local community members and re-enactors.*

# COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Virtual | 10.21.20 | 7:00 - 9:00pm

A dialogue with local and re-enactment communities about the relevancy and impact of the site's signature event, the Revolutionary Germantown Festival featuring re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown facilitated by Patricia Scott Hobbs. Cliveden hoped to discover the impact the site's current interpretation of Revolutionary era history has on the community, how it makes them feel, and if it resonated with them.

*Participants: Diverse group of local community with some re-enactors who portray British soldiers.*

## INSIGHTS

- *Desire for more opportunities to discuss the choices people made and what happened before and after of the Battle of Germantown.*
- *Think about the programs and the story of the Battle of Germantown as a story arc.*

## INSIGHTS

- *Making connections to today and issues in the local community around firearms is important.*
- *“Stepping into an experience you may or may not have endorsed yourself. So for the reenacting within the history. You are tapping into an experience that is not your home to a culture or tradition, a particular time period, or perspective.”*
- *More participation from schools would be great.*
- *Possibilities for including thematic ideals of the Revolution such as freedom, liberty and equality and how do they connect with the struggles in America today.*

## OVERVIEW

The students from Project Learn School were broken into three groups based on age for discussions facilitated by Patricia Scott Hobbes. The groups were kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade and sixth through eighth grade. The students were sent materials about the history of Cliveden and the kindergarten through second grade group had a Q&A session with Cliveden staff in advance of the roundtables. The project was discussed with parents and faculty at their monthly town hall meetings in preparation.

### *Kindergarten - 2nd Grade (11 Students)*

- The group had an understanding that museums were places to learn and were familiar with Cliveden.
- A student expressed sadness about gun violence and people getting hurt.
- The group did not believe telling stories with guns was acceptable and were concerned about people feeling safe and appreciated.
- Group enjoyed stories being read to them.

### *Third – Fifth Grade (6 students)*

- The group had an understanding of what history was and where people could learn about history.
- One student shared that history could help us learn what choices people made.
- Some of the students attended the re-enactment before while others have heard it.
- Students felt gun violence was wrong, bad for society and dangerous.
- The group had various opinions on using guns for telling stories.

## *Sixth – Eighth Grade (6 students)*

- The group had an understanding of history.
- Some people are visual learners and a re-enactment might be a good way for them to learn.
- Some students from this group had attend the festival.
- Group was interested in how the re-enactment worked, was it rehearsed, were the guns real.
- Students were able to connect issues from the past with their experiences in the present.
- The group was concerned about authenticity, censorship and people telling the truth.
- Other options to share these stories are a play, musical, video game, VR or cartoon.



# CLIVEDEN CONVERSATION

*An Interview with Kimberly Kamara*

Virtual | 1.21.21 | 7:00pm

A virtual conversation with local advocate and author Kimberly Kamara where she discussed her experience of loss perpetuated by gun violence followed by a facilitated discussion. Kimberly Kamara was born and raised in Mt. Airy section of the city of Philadelphia. Kimberly is the founder of an organization referred to as “Never Ending E~Motions LLC.” aka NEEM, which is an online community to assist people with dealing with grief, pain, and other emotions that he/ she feels of losing a loved one or friend. The organization also focuses on young men trying to reform from gang life and conform to the rules of society. Kimberly is also the author of *Where’s My Daddy???*, the story is about a young child in search of his/her daddy.

## INSIGHTS

- *Sounds from the re-enactment and fireworks could be traumatizing to those with the lived experience of gun violence*
- *There was a desire to connect past to present and to lift up social issues.*
- *Other ideas for program suggestions included a movie night, walking tours, memorials on the lawn and an open house.*

*Participants: Diverse group largely from Philadelphia, many who knew the speaker, along with a few members of the re-enactment community.*

“I don't want them (children) to see a tank and I want . . . to keep them focused away from guns. . . . (no), you know, wow look at that as a big cannon, you know, something that they probably can never get, but the end of the day is still a weapon. We don't want them to recognize, we don't want that to be part of the toolkit . . . But I believe doing like they do what down at the Constitution Center, and down in downtown put it on the screen. . . people see it that way, as opposed to disturbing the elderly and the nursing homes and people being traumatized and it becomes overwhelming and overbearing at the same time.”

# FINAL ROUNDTABLE

Virtual | 2.17.21 | 7:00pm

Cliveden staff and program participants shared findings from dialogue with local and re-enactment communities about the relevancy and impact from Cliveden's signature event, the Revolutionary Germantown Festival featuring re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown in light of modern-day gun violence. A facilitated discussion explored potential next steps.

## INSIGHTS

- “Some have said that we don't re-enact other traumas, but actually some of the most effective and far reaching ways of acknowledging the truth of and processing trauma have been through theater and now film and digital arts, including the Holocaust, domestic violence, repression of other groups -- theater that deals effectively with these hard topics are often used as teaching tools -- Schindler's List, Harvey Milk, Selma, and hundreds of live theater pieces. I have thought of re-enactments as live theater. Intentional, meaningful use of sound, and more fully developed context is important to avoid glorification with no useful education.”
- “I think Cliveden is in a unique location where the battle is in the residents' backyards and they don't have a choice to "attend" vs. historic sites that are more distanced with large field spaces like Valley Forge or Gettysburg and away from neighborhoods. They don't have a choice to hear those gunshots or not. The Battle of Germantown is undoubtedly important to our history and should be showcased in many ways, but if people want to attend battle re-enactments with gunfire there are other historic sites for them to view those.”

*Participants: Large, diverse group from Philadelphia and the region.*

“Deeper varied connections with the immediate surrounding community can offset some of the cons of holding large events of any kind in their midst (guns or no). Go into the schools and build ownership of the history and build the dignity of all stories of the time period. Help people recognize the benefit to the community of having people come in from the outside -- make it a benefit. Coordinate to promote local restaurants and unique features of the neighborhood. Feature the kids projects related to the site at events.”

*“History at times is best learned by experiencing it. Technology cannot replace the sounds, smells, weight”*

“Nearby neighbors cannot opt out of the audio stream of gunfire from the battle. It is inflicted upon them, and that is no longer appropriate. Please engage the public through other aspects of period-specific history.”

*“I grew up in the Germantown West Oak Lane area and the first re-enactment I saw was at Germantown over 20 years ago. The event was what eventually got me into re-enacting. I come to Germantown each year for the children of the neighborhood to show that we [African Americans] were there.”*

“Living history is changing, in part to reflect more everyday life, and not always centered on battle reenactment. I can totally see a plausible shift to other aspects of the revolutionary period being just as valuable to the site.”

# NEXT STEPS - FACILITATORS

## THE ROZ GROUP

### Key Highlights

- Stakeholders care deeply about what happens in the surrounding community. It was important to include the varied voices of the community and those who participated expressed appreciation for being engaged in the process.
- There is a concern from some in the community about the relevancy of the re-enactment of a battle that was lost.
- The re-enactment community is passionate about their work and the authenticity in which their roles are portrayed. It is less about the battles and more about an accurate portrayal of what life was like during the time of the American Revolution.
- Re-enactors were viewed as “outsiders” to the community. Some of the re-enactors have behaved badly, coming in once a year with little respect for residents. However, the majority of those with whom we spoke appear to be committed to a strong historic experience.
- While acknowledging that gun violence is a great concern in the surrounding neighborhood, few found a correlation to battle re-enactment. The participants were not as diverse as expected. This means that the sentiments of people of color were not necessarily represented. It was very difficult to engage and confirm. American Revolution events are often viewed as being for “white people.”
- In one group, there was an expressed concern to show greater sensitivity for those affected by the loud and often startling noise generated by the gunfire at the battle re-enactment.
- In other groups, participants appeared to understand the concern, but the topic did not garner much traction.
- The participants are true history buffs and love the opportunity to reenact.

### Recommendations for Next Steps

- Leverage the local African American churches in the neighborhood to provide young people from their education programs to volunteer and learn about historic sites from a career standpoint. Visit those churches to introduce the work and its importance, especially as the region prepares for the nation’s 250th commemoration.
- Host two to three roundtables per year to gather more feedback. Continue use of both formats, virtual and outdoors.
- Develop a communications plan that is more intentional about inviting residents to participate in the historic activities of this historic community. Perhaps this can be done as a collaborative of Historic Germantown.
- On an ongoing basis, identify more speakers and scholars of color who are engaging in their presentation. This would go a longways to creating a buzz for greater participation and a source of pride.

# PATRICIA SCOTT HOBBS

## Key Highlights

- The public's curiosity about an historical site in the neighborhood and their own personal interests for visiting an historical site seems to outweigh their concerns about gun violence.
- Young people (grade school) seemed to be interested in history. Because of the present-day political environment, the students appeared to prize the truth over incomplete or untruthful presentations of history. The younger they were the more they felt that the gun violence was potentially scary.
- Audiences seem to be more concerned with the purpose and presentation of the Battle of Germantown.
- Gun violence and revolution (violent overthrowing of the government) along with the risks and consequences need to be presented as well.



## JACOB CHARLES

### Key Highlights

- One of the participants made the really perceptive observation that Cliveden is located in the middle of an urban area (not having been before, this helped me to contextualize some of the other discussions). Unlike battlefields or memorials that are out in the countryside or other rural areas, the re-enactment takes place among homes and residential areas that complicate the ways that both people internalize the event and that detach it from its historical mooring.
- First, I heard a lot about the desire to contextualize events from the past. In one respect, I think that's what this entire project is about. Cliveden is attempting to explore the links between past gun violence (in the wartime events recounted through the re-enactment) and modern-day gun violence. And this could perhaps be done in more direct ways during the festival itself or in exhibits or programming throughout the year.
- Second, I heard a lot about the desire to hear the untold stories. From the discussions about living history events with Black storytellers to discussions about women's role in the revolution or the barbaric nature of revolutionary-era medicine, participants and community members seemed especially interested in learning and hearing the stories that are often overlooked in traditional histories.
- Third, I heard and agree with the reactions from participants to broaden outreach and engagement with the local community. From some of the concerns raised during the meetings, the rapidly changing perception of guns—especially for those in a community like Germantown that experience many of the negative externalities of gun violence—might mean that firing guns to teach these lessons has detracted from that message.
- To be clear, I agree with many of the commenters at several of the forums that it is important not to whitewash history or ignore all the parts that make us uncomfortable. But, at the same time, just as we can learn about confederate history without monuments celebrating that history, so too we can learn about the atrocities of war without re-enacting it. In other words, whatever their value—and I still think they have value—re-enactments are not an essential part of learning from and about history in my view.
- Changing the location of the actual weapons firing.
- Spreading flyers around town ahead of the event.
- Holding regular events like those that took place during this project.
- Weapons with no firing.
- Removing guns from the festival. I think this would be a fairly drastic move, and it did not seem to me that most of the people who attended these events thought it either necessary or desirable to mitigate concerns that were raised.

# KIMBERLY KAMARA

## Key Highlights

As a community we needed to know more about the festival instead of jumping to conclusions and being narrow minded when it comes to the re-enactments of the Battle of Germantown. These conversations helped ease the pros and cons of the festival that is an annually recurrence each year. My position stands as follows considering the historical value on the re-enactments; I believe the re-enactments should continue to take place with none or limited use of Musket and Cannon. Cliveden House should seek other ways to simulate the firing of these named items with digital sound, as they simulate it or other up to date technology usage.

What some re-enactors don't understand we being the residents don't have a choice. This is our neighborhood and when the festival is over we won't see you again until next year but that child is having flashbacks, or that grieving mother is laying in her bed crying her eyes out because her son/daughter was murdered and the loud noises and vibrations have took her to another place mentally.

Again we must look past our feelings and must open our minds and remember that day is dedicated to celebrate the Cliveden House, bring families for a day of historical education about history that took place on the same grounds, and land surrounding The Cliveden House.

## Recommendations for Next Steps

- The neighbors should be reminded of the festival by placing flyers in the doors, stores such as Rite Aid, Sunoco etc. Representatives of The Cliveden House should talk with the neighbors about the crowd coming into the neighborhood and encouraged them to come out and support the festival by engaging, meeting neighbors, and others.

- Our neighborhood needs healing and you have the platform to assist with providing this to us on this day and throughout the year. On the day of the festival have mobile therapist, counselor's, centers etc. to show Cliveden House is concerned and care about the residents and are willing to assist with the transition to begin to heal together.

## NOAH LEWIS



### Key Highlights

For me to be dressed out and bearing arms communicates something different to the public than the general reenactor. When I'm in public without my arms, it is not unusual for the public to jump to the conclusion that I am a slave. One of the common mistaken beliefs about colonial blacks is that all blacks during the period were slaves. When I'm carrying my musket I do not receive this misconception. I have asked some of my fellow black re-enactors if they had experienced the same reaction. I asked Joe Becton, Algernon Ward, Antoine Watts, and Fred Minus, whom are some of my fellow black re-enactors. They concurred that they all had similar experiences. So for me to be carrying a musket communicates something more than just another soldier shooting a gun. I have noticed in several reenactments, nods of approval and looks of pride from black onlookers to see armed black soldiers marching in the ranks. What's being communicated here, in a nonverbal way, is very important.

"I know within myself I have experienced a greater understanding of who I am, who my people are [not only just being black], my country, and other people."

- Another misconception is borne out of our disconnection from our past. There is the misperception of the gun as only a tool of warfare. Sometimes part of my objective during my presentations is to show how the gun was a colonial necessity for survival in which obtaining food and self-protection was found.
- Here is another point to be considered on this subject, is it our job to censor the history for the public?
- The problem was the audience wasn't properly prepared for what they were going to see.
- It is right to show the battle with all of its aspects, save that of the actual blood and killing. What we need to do is do a better job of preparing our audience, so they can view this event in the proper context and learned from it. I think to ask questions, guns or no guns, is to ask the wrong question.
- Our goal is to take the present day person back to see how it was, not to adapt the history to fit present attitudes and ways.

# JESSICA RONEY

## Key Highlights

- Because Germantown residents live where the reenactment occurs, they cannot opt in or out of the experience, but must put up with those elements that intrude on their private spaces—again, especially the noise. On the other hand, many come to the reenactment, as participants or spectators, because they are passionate about the history, and particularly the experience of the sights, textures, and, yes, sounds of what the past was like. They see value in the reenactment, but I think there may be a range of opinion as to what might constitute that reenactment. For example, it might be possible to focus more on camp life and other kinds of “stations” to learn about the revolutionary era, rather than actually reenact shots fired and the battle through the city’s streets.
- As a visible and important institution in Germantown, Cliveden has real potential to play a role in facilitating space for many kinds of community events that explore the long history of the house and people who lived there, and events that build space to reflect on Germantown today.
- I have not seen footage of the Germantown reenactment, but it differs from some other reenactments by occurring in the middle of a densely populated urban area.
- Based on response from some community members, Cliveden might explore other opportunities for marking the reenactment of the battle that do not involve simulated gunfire.
- As for the battle itself, one recommendation Cliveden might consider would be to stress the experiential aspect of running through the streets in the context of the battle rather than the actual gunplay that was also happening. To that end, I propose a sponsored Battle of Germantown Run in which participants would run at least in part along routes of historic significance.
- Building on what Cliveden has been doing so well already, Cliveden ought to continue offering the kinds of programs it did for this project, including scholarly presentations, roundtables for local residents, and discussions with activists around guns and gun violence. In the final conversation one participant had a proposal that would actively involve local school-children in some of the programming, which I think is an excellent idea and should be adopted!

## GERMANTOWN ESPRESSO BAR

### Key Highlights

- To us even if one neighbor is experiencing this trauma we need to continue to reimagine how we engage with the broader community around these events if they continue.
- Overall we feel there are better ways than “front-facing-violence” style re-enactments to celebrate, educate, and build more awareness of the historical significance of our neighborhood.
- “It can be made relevant. I think there are some lost opportunities with this reenactment in its current form. What about the aftermath of the battle. You know if you want to talk about gun violence. I mean, why not have a reenactment centered on the aftermath alone... So, there are all these sorts of ways in which you know you can gain a little bit more insights and relevance to the community but also in terms of understanding American history that in its current form I feel that those opportunities are missed...” comment from the 10/21 Round Table
- It is difficult for me to separate the violence happening in our neighborhood, city, and country, from reenacting and performative historic remembrance. Especially when many of the actors involved with this specific event are not based in our neighborhood and community.

### Recommendations for Next Steps

- I feel that Cliveden could continue to create intimate and personal historically dense reenactments like that of the reenactment of Ned Hector’s story. I also liked this idea one person had about a freeze frame history lesson.
- Bringing art and creative expression into the historical lessons being shared. A more hands-on approach. Programmatically Cliveden could continue to have the “Throughline” style lectures where experts bring a historical context to the modern American story..
- Also- having learned of the monetary cost of the Battle of Germantown event, I believe there are many other ways to connect to the community in the neighborhood and the greater Philadelphia over the course of the year beyond one big event.

**“After attending several events as well as reading the available transcripts I am humbled and encouraged by the level of thought and care each participant brought to the table. We are at a time where our country is more divided than ever and it was powerful to be a part of something unifying. Especially when all parties did not agree.”**

# PROJECT LEARN SCHOOL

## Key Highlights

Asking children ages 5 to 14 to think about history, historic places, and present day social issues was a big undertaking. The Project Learn School community appreciates the hard work and thoughtfulness that went into this process.

### K - 2

- Carolyn was great with the kids when they had questions

### 3 - 5

- When the primary group was asked about violence and how they feel about it. They gave answers like “Violence is bad” and “people shouldn’t be mean to others.”
- I think the specific framing around the reenacting and the historical context in light of modern conditions was something a bit abstract for students in the K-2 age range to develop a meaningful relationship with, but I do believe the students appreciated the care and consideration their voices were given by the facilitator of the session and the educational coordinator.

### 6 - 8

- As an educator, it was interesting to listen to our Jr. High students express their feelings that reenactments of battles are okay because the audience understands these are acts of the past to be studied, not a condoning of violence in the present day.
- Students also felt very strongly that our society needs to focus more attention on teaching children, and adults, that violence is not the answer to a problem. They also mentioned that people, who feel themselves drawn in the direction of violence, need to be taken care of, and it is the job of our society to make sure that mental health and peer counseling services are available for those who need it.
- They offered many suggestions about how virtual reality and video games could be used as methods to reach children and young adults for whom this type of software is a natural extension of themselves. The group was also interested in how theatre and day of reenactment performance opportunities could engage the broader community in new ways.

## *Final Thoughts*

Despite the curveballs of 2020, Cliveden staff working with the thoughtful team of consultants and program partners were able to complete a series of conversations with Cliveden's constituents to learn what about current programming resonates with the site's diverse communities. Observations and sharing of lived experiences from project participants will inform programming and processes at Cliveden for the future. Some ideas include:

- Offer more programs leading up to and after festival to expand the perspectives American Revolution and its connections to today.
- Offer only one re-enactment during the festival.
- Continue to work with partners in Historic Germantown consortium to offer programs at other sites to spread the festival throughout Germantown.
- Update and increase marketing efforts to bring greater awareness to programming.
- Create advisory committees with members of the local community and re-enactors to provide continued input for programming.
- Offer programs that explore modern gun violence and support those with traumatic lived experiences.
- Develop a set of Core Values for all Cliveden programs and partnerships.

Cliveden staff looks forward to continuing dialogues with all constituents and working together to find the best ways to learn from the stories of America's founding period.

# Thank You

Cliveden would like to thank all who participated in the Cliveden Conversations, roundtables and surveys. Your input is invaluable.



Scan the QR Code above for a project video by Primitive World Productions



Cliveden

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