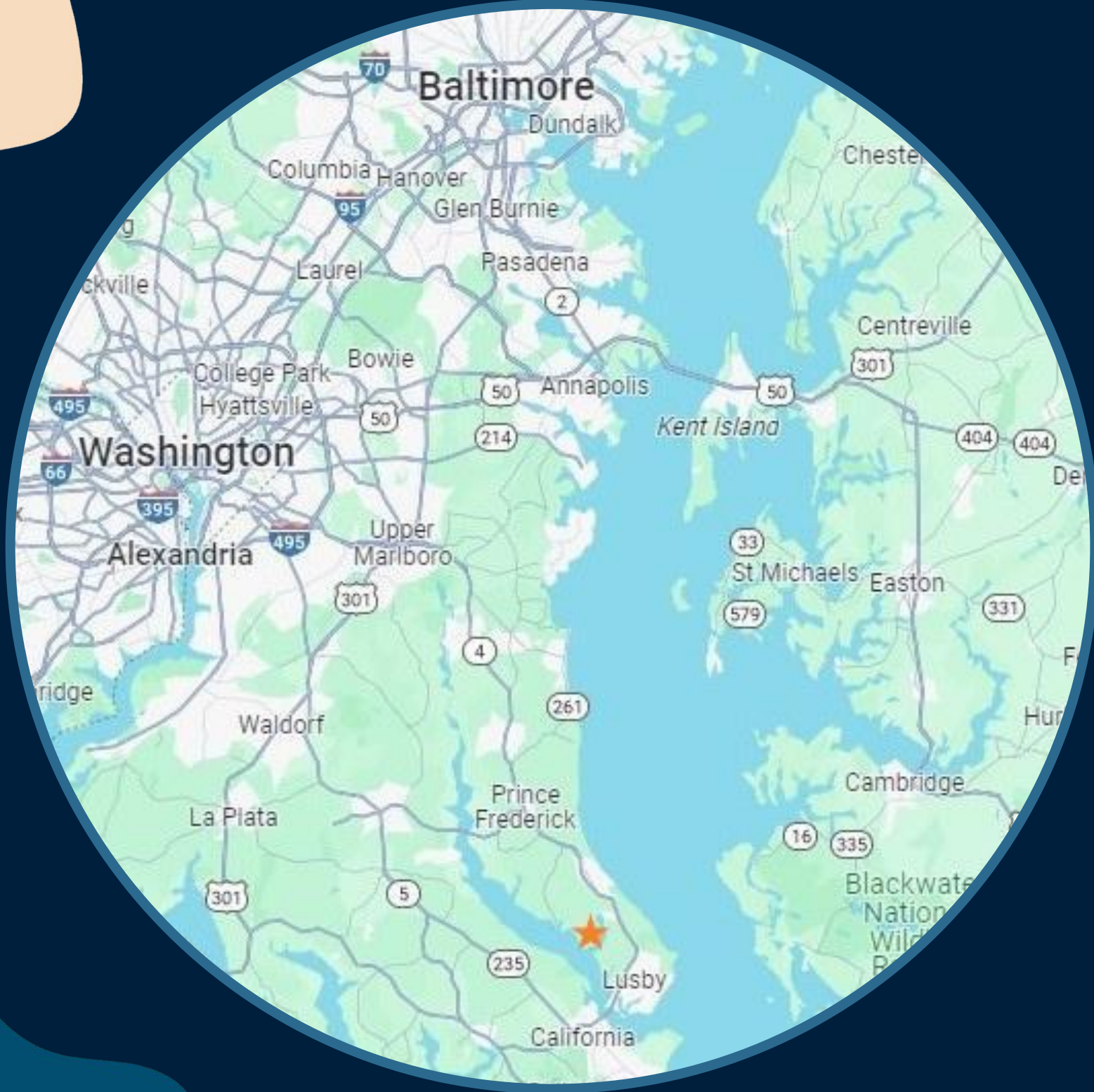


BECOMING
COMFORTABLE WITH
THE
UNCOMFORTABLE

Debra Rantanen, Liz Brant

Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum

Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum



- 10,000 years of history
- Stories of many people
- Tobacco plantation since 1600s

BACKGROUND

Program History

- One room schoolhouse trip
- Call from the community

Kids Work/Is Your Share Fair

- Didn't match curriculum
- Limited by age



8TH GRADE PROGRAM

GOAL

Foster insight into how social and economic systems in post Civil War Maryland impacted rural Black families

- Provide factual understanding of daily life and work
- Humanize and make relatable the hardships facing sharecropping families

Sharecropping in Maryland



21043-0

OUR CHALLENGES

First Challenge

Our lack of comfort with the topic.

- Outside our expertise
- All white staff
- 8th graders!
- Sensitive subject in community



CHALLENGE: DISCOMFORT

“I ... want to encourage the students to realize that during the time period we are discussing there was little, if any, difference between the day to day lives of African American children and white children. This was a time when everyone in Calvert improvised.”

CHALLENGE: DISCOMFORT

Solution

- Educate yourself and ask advice
- Be respectful
- Pick a story you can tell well
- Telling a more complete story is good for all

CHALLENGE: DISCOMFORT

Case Study

- “How do you do history”
- Failed first attempt



OUR CHALLENGES

Second Challenge

Logistics

- Long day for students
 - Dreaded after lunch
- Content timing
- Short field trip



CHALLENGE: LOGISTICS

Solution

- Meet physical needs
- Dynamic and engaging activities
- Focus on impact over facts
- Address lack of prior knowledge
- Stay focused on essential questions



CHALLENGE: LOGISTICS

Case Study

● When was this site being used?

● What was this site? What did it look like?



● Who was using this site?

● What were their lives like?

OUR CHALLENGES

Third Challenge

Sources



CHALLENGE: SOURCES

Solution

Leverage your assets

- Sukeek's Cabin & artifacts
- Oral Histories, photos
- Landscape
- Community member reflections

CHALLENGE: SOURCES

Case Study



CHALLENGE: SOURCES

Case Study



COMMUNITY RECEPTION

Formal vs informal feedback

- formal- surveys and questionnaires
- informal- what you observe/
conversations

- both are key

“Everyone was terrific. Very courteous & knowledgeable.”

The activities are well spaced & timed to retain the kids attention. Also, Jeff's beard is epic! Thank you all.”

“Aw man, they're being racist again!”

Who is your audience

- School
District/Teachers
- Students
- Chaperones

OUR PROGRAM

Oral History Lens

Identify what life was like for children of sharecroppers.

Archaeology Lens

Make inferences about the lives of the people who lived at the site based on artifacts found there.

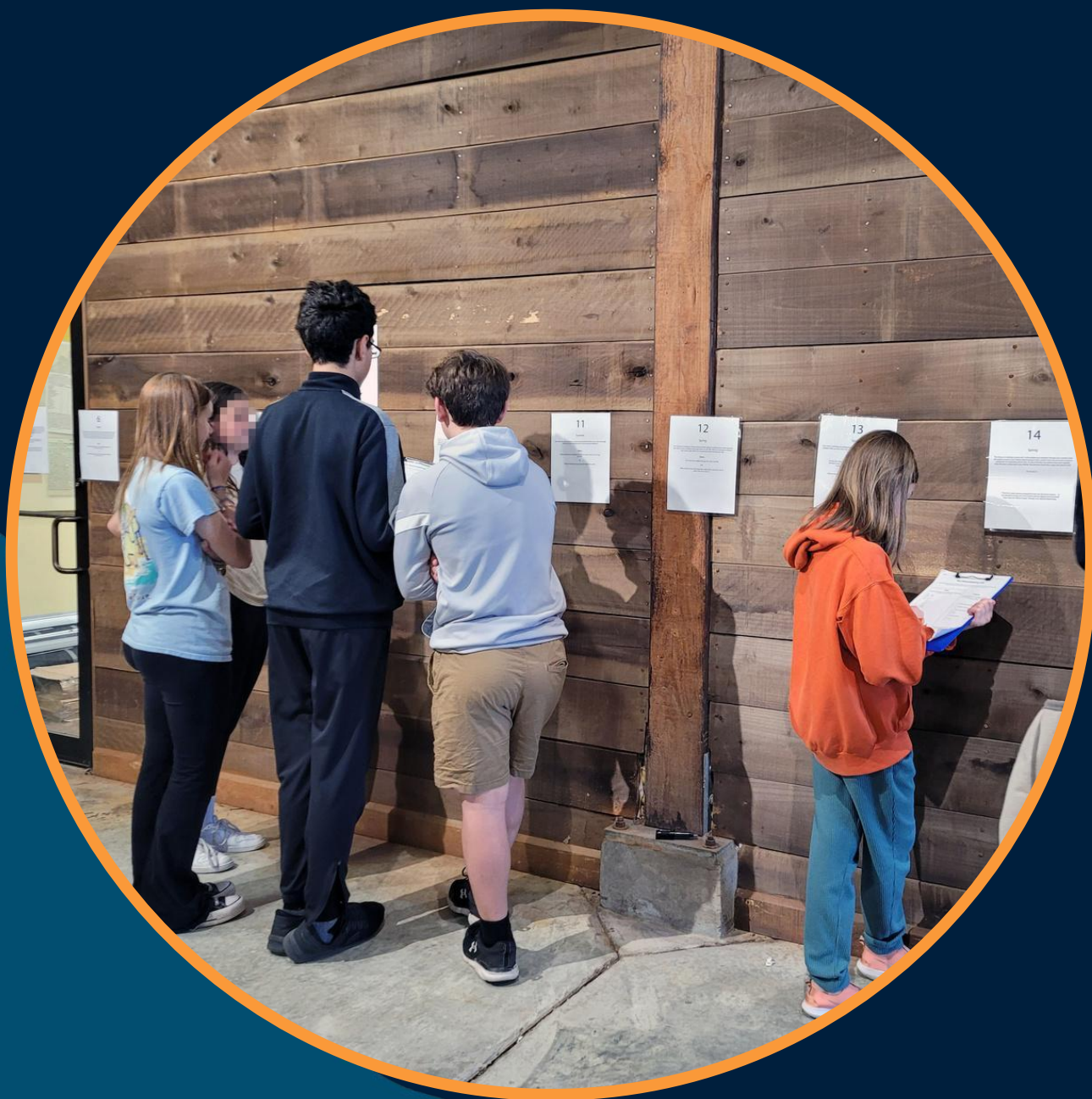
Pulling it All Together:

The Sharecropping Life

Gain insights into the difficult decisions confronting African American families in their quest for success.

SHARECROPPING LIFE

Hands on and engaging



Impactful



Highlight agency within an unjust system

CONCLUSION

● Goals

- Create clear and achievable objectives
- Believe in the importance of the stories you tell
- Know your audience

● Embrace Change

Your program should never be set in stone



THANK YOU

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