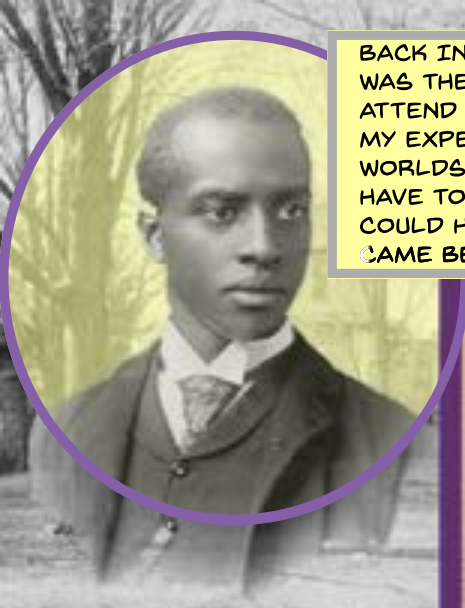
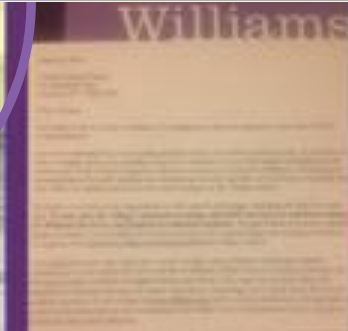


NAVIGATING WILLIAMS



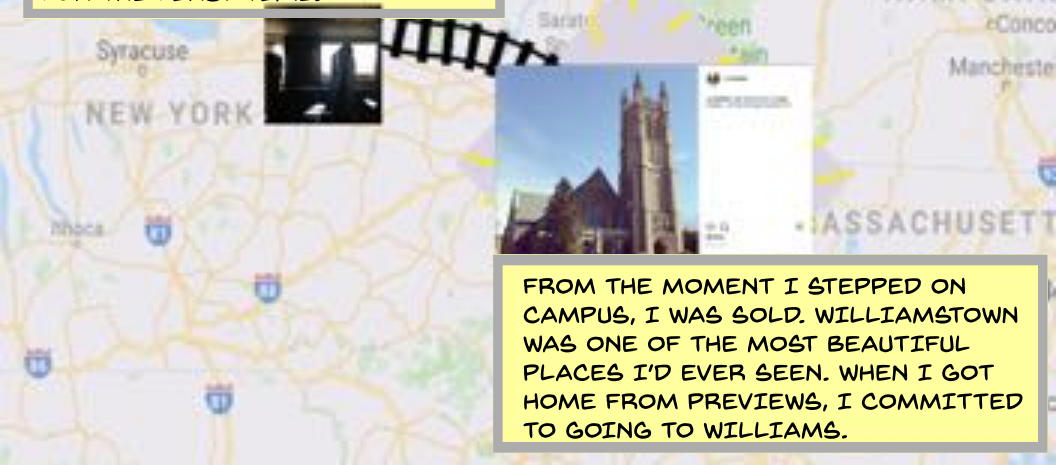


BACK IN 1885, GAIUS CHARLES BOLIN WAS THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN TO ATTEND WILLIAMS COLLEGE. ALTHOUGH MY EXPERIENCE ON CAMPUS HAS BEEN WORLDS DIFFERENT FROM BOLIN'S, I HAVE TO WONDER WHAT PATH MY LIFE COULD HAVE TAKEN WITHOUT THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE ME...



I GOT MY ACCEPTANCE LETTER TO WILLIAMS ON MARCH 1ST, 2014. IT WAS MY VERY FIRST COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE. ALTHOUGH I HAD APPLIED TO WILLIAMS, I DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT, SO WHEN I WAS OFFERED THE CHANCE TO COME TO PREVIEWS FOR FREE, I JUMPED AT THE OPPORTUNITY.

SO, A MONTH LATER, I TOOK THE TRAIN FROM SYRACUSE TO ALBANY, MET UP WITH OTHER PERSPECTIVE STUDENTS, AND MADE THE JOURNEY TO WILLIAMSTOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME.



FROM THE MOMENT I STEPPED ON CAMPUS, I WAS SOLD. WILLIAMSTOWN WAS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES I'D EVER SEEN. WHEN I GOT HOME FROM PREVIEWS, I COMMITTED TO GOING TO WILLIAMS.



WHILE I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GIVE UP MY LAST SUMMER BEFORE GOING AWAY TO COLLEGE, IT'S PROBABLY THE BEST DECISION I'VE EVER MADE.

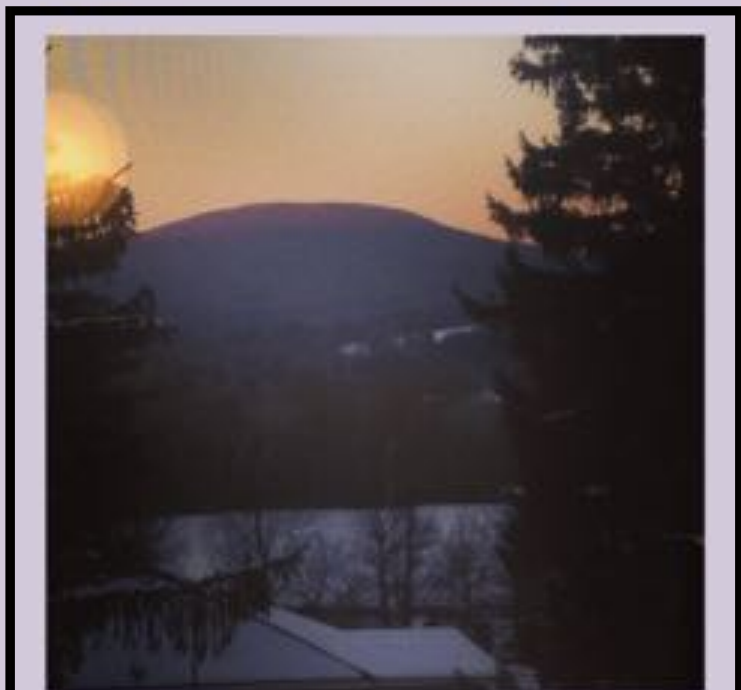


MY FIRST EXPERIENCE LIVING AT WILLIAMS WAS WITH FRESHMEN AND RESIDENT MENTORS AS A PART OF THE **SUMMER HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES** PROGRAM. WE WERE ALL EITHER MINORITIES, LOW-INCOME, OR FIRST GENERATION FRESHMEN



IN ADDITION TO MEETING SOME OF THE BEST FRIENDS I'D HAVE AT WILLIAMS, I EXPERIENCED THE LEVEL OF ACADEMIC WORK I'D BE EXPECTED TO DO AT WILLIAMS. COMPLETING THAT WORK PREPARED ME FOR WHAT WOULD COME IN THE FALL.





I ARRIVED AT WILLIAMS TO OFFICIALLY START MY FRESHMAN YEAR IN THE FALL OF 2014. ALTHOUGH I WAS VERY EXCITED TO MEET MY **ENTRY**, RIGHT AWAY I COULD TELL THAT IT WOULDN'T BE LIKE SHSS AT ALL.

PRESIDENT GARFIELD FIRST PROPOSED THE IDEA OF AN UPPER-CLASS ADVISOR/MENTOR LIVING WITH FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN 1925. GARFIELD MADE CLEAR THE JUNIORS WERE NOT TO "ACT AS PROCTORS BUT THAT THEY WERE THERE SIMPLY TO GUIDE AND AID THE NEW MEN BY PRECEPT AND BY ADVICE." JUNIOR ADVISORS ARE NOT PAID BY THE COLLEGE AND ARE NOT EMPLOYEES OR OFFICIALS OF THE COLLEGE. THEIR ROLE IS NOT THAT OF AN IN-DORM POLICE OR CAMPUS SECURITY OFFICER. JUST AS GARFIELD INTENDED, JAS SERVE AS INFORMAL COUNSELORS AND MEDIATORS, BUT ABOVE ALL JAS ARE FRIENDS, WHO JUST HAPPEN TO KNOW THE LAY OF THE LAND.

PRESIDENT GARFIELD RENOVATED FIRST-YEAR LIVING AT WILLIAMS COLLEGE

IN SPEAKING WITH MY FRIENDS FROM THE SUMMER, WE DISCOVERED A COMMON THEME. THE ENTRY SYSTEM HAS A TENDANCY TO ISOLATE STUDENTS OF COLOR.

DESPITE EVERYTHING, I STILL HAD AN INCREDIBLE FRESHMAN YEAR. THE BEST PART WAS THE VIEW I WOKE UP TO EVERYMORNING IN **PRATT 408**. MY FAVORITE WINDOW AT WILLIAMS.

OR NO KNOWLEDGE", AND SERVE AS ROLE MODELS FOR STUDENTS NEW WILLIAMS STUDENTS.

DESPITE MY ENTRY EXPERIENCE,
I'M THANKFUL TO HAVE SO MANY
BEAUTIFUL FAMILIES HERE AT
WILLIAMS. A SENSE OF FAMILY I
NEVER HAD BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL.

11:34



11:20

00:15



15:57

15:55



14:58

WITHOUT THE **COMMUNITY**
WE'VE CREATED HERE, I'M NOT
SURE ANY ONE OF US WOULD
BE ABLE TO SURVIVE THE
PRESSURES OF WILLIAMS.

Ephoria ❤️



THE TERM **SANKOFA** COMES FROM THE ADINKRA TRIBE IN AFRICA. IT MEANS "REACH BACK AND GET IT," OR, AS WE PUT IT, STEPPING FORWARD WHILE LOOKING BACK.

SANKOFA WAS FOUNDED BACK IN 1997 WHEN A GROUP OF LADIES STARTED STEP DANCING ON CHAPIN STEPS. ALTHOUGH WE REHEARSE AT THE 62 CENTER NOW, SOMETIMES, WHEN IT'S NICE OUTSIDE, WE GO PRACTICE IN FRONT OF CHAPIN AS A WAY TO REMEMBER THAT HISTORY.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE STEPPING IN COLLEGE. I ALSO NEVER EXPECTED JUST HOW MUCH STEPPING WOULD DEFINE MY EXPERIENCE AT WILLIAMS. NOT ONLY DO I LOVE STEPPING, BUT ALSO WITH KOFA, I'VE FOUND A BEAUTIFUL, DIVERSE FAMILY OF PEOPLE I NEVER WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED OTHERWISE.



CLAIMING WILLIAMS DAY WAS FIRST CELEBRATED ON FEBRUARY 5, 2009. CLASSES WERE SUSPENDED, AND THE WILLIAMS COMMUNITY—STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY—PARTICIPATED IN A SERIES OF EVENTS AND DISCUSSIONS TO CONFRONT CHALLENGING ISSUES AND TO WORK TO BUILD AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

MY FAVORITE PLACE TO WORK ON CAMPUS IS IN **BAXTER HALL**, OR, WHAT MY FRIENDS AND I FONDLY CALL BLAXTER.

IN AN ENTRY SPARKED A GRASS-JOINED BY STAFF AND FACULTY. AN A FIRST YEAR ENTRY, THE WORD DOORS ALONG WITH PICTURES OF

MALE GENITALS. FOR ONE FIRST YEAR STUDENT, IT WAS THE ESCALATION OF INCIDENTS THAT HAD BEEN GOING ON FOR WEEKS. SHE WAS ACCUSED BY HER ENTRY MATES OF CALLING SECURITY ON THEIR PARTY, AND THEN NIGHT AFTER NIGHT THE NOTE BOARD OUTSIDE HER DOOR WAS DEFAECED, INCLUDING THE BIBLE VERSE SHE WROTE UP DAILY. THE NIGHT THAT THE WORD "NIGGER" WAS WRITTEN ON HER ENTRY'S DOORS, "THE WORD 'FAG' WAS WRITTEN OVER MY SCRIPTURES." SHE RECALLED, ALONG WITH VULGAR PICTURES AND WORD

BAXTER IS THE SPACE ON CAMPUS WHERE YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND STUDENTS OF COLOR TALKING, WORKING, EATING, EVEN SINGING OR DANCING. IT'S ALSO WHERE SO MANY IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS ABOUT HOW TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR OCCUR.

THE COMM FROM COLI DENTS KIM SIONS. ON

COMMUNIT CO-PRESI PEN DISCUS TS SHARED

THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES AND PLANNED COMMUNAL RESPONSES. STAND WITH US EMERGED, A PACT AGAINST INDIFFERENCE AND HATE WAS WRITTEN, CIRCULATED FOR SIGNATURES, AND READ PUBLICALLY. AN "AWARENESS RALLY" DREW AN ESTIMATED 600 STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY, AND WAS FOLLOWED BY A MARCH THROUGH CAMPUS THAT AT ONE MOMENT STRETCHED FROM SCHOW AUDITORIUM TO THE STEPS OF PARESKY. IN ADDITION TO AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE CAMPUS CLIMATE THAT PROVOKED THE INCIDENTS, STAND WITH US HAD "THREE CENTRAL PRIORITIES: A SOCIAL HONOR CODE, A DAY OF DISCUSSIONS ON RESPECT AND DIVERSITY, AND THE INTEGRATION OF RELATIVELY HOMOGENEOUS TEAMS OR ETHNIC ORGANIZATION

DESPITE BEING A VERY PUBLIC SPACE, IT'S WHERE I'VE ALWAYS FLET MOST COMFORTABLE DURING MY TIME AT SCHOOL.

CLAIMING WILLIAMS DAY AROSE F TIES AND THE HARD WORK OF A SUB-COMMITTEE. ORGANIZERS HOPED THAT THE COMMUNITY WOULD WORK PRO-ACTIVELY TO PREVENT HURTFUL, HATEFUL INCIDENTS. RATHER THAN JUST RESPONDING AFTERWARDS, THE SECOND CLAIMING WILLIAMS DAY WAS HELD ON FEBRUARY 4, 2010, AND IN MAY OF 2011 THE FACULTY VOTED TO ADD CLAIMING WILLIAMS DAY TO THE REGULAR ACADEMIC CALENDAR.

HOWEVER, TOO OFTEN, BEING AT WIL-
LIAMS IS INCREDIBLY DISORIENT-
ING. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I WALK
AROUND WITH MY BRAIN FULL OF
NOISE, MY SHOULDERS HEAVY, AND ALL
MY SENSES OVER STIMULATED



AT THESE TIMES, THE MOUN-
TAINS CAN FEEL TOO LARGE,
TOO IMPOSING--IMPOSSIBLE
TO CLIMB. NOT WELCOMING
LIKE THEY USUALLY ARE...



MY JOURNAL HAS BECOME MY TOOL
FOR RETREAT AND REFLECTION.
IT'S WHERE I FORCE MYSELF TO
WRITE WHAT I'M FEELING, EVEN IF
IT'S HARD



IT TAKES TIME, BUT EVENTUALLY
I CAN HOPE THAT CAMPUS WILL
REVERT BACK TO IT'S NORMAL,
NOT SO DISORIENTING, NATURAL-
LY BEAUTIFUL STATE. IN AND OUT-
SIDE OF MY MIND



~ THE FUTURE ~

AND ALTHOUGH THE FUTURE
CAN SOMETIMES FEEL
LIKE THAT BIG, IMPOSING,
BLACK HOLE...LOOKING
BACK ALWAYS PROVIDES
ME WITH SOME CLARITY.

WHICH IS WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO THINK
ABOUT **HISTORY**, ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES
THAT BROUGHT ME HERE, AND OTHER EXPERIENC-
ES--APART FROM MY OWN--THAT HAVE ALLOWED ME
TO HAVE THE EXPERIENCE I'VE HAD AT WILLIAMS.

...AN EXPERIENCE THAT'S HAD IT'S OWN HIGHS
AND LOWS. SOME OF WHICH HAVE HAD EVERY-
THING TO DO WITH MY IDENTITY AS A
BLACK-AMERICAN WOMAN, BUT VERY FEW I
CAN SEPERATE FROM THAT **IDENTITY**.

Artist Statement

Caroline Charles is a Senior and English Major at Williams College. Caroline works both digitally and by hand, utilizing collage, comic book aesthetics, and conventions to explore her own story and personal identity. Her academic interests include English, Cultural Studies, and Media Studies. Her senior thesis concerns *Luke Cage*, comic books, adaptation, and racial representations across mediums. Caroline's academic interests, as well as her creative background in music and dance often intersect with her process and her work. The creative pieces Caroline has completed as a part of LATS 348, Drawing Democracy have all been deeply personal projects. Projects like *Democracy DNA*, *Primary Documents*, *Imitation + Inspiration*, and *Where's Waldo* really allowed her to experiment with her photoshop, and collaging skills. In other later assignments, like the *Tattoo Story* and *Futurama*, Caroline had the opportunity to experience hand drawing and coloring in the comic book format. Her final project draws from all of her previous works. In "Navigating Williams" Caroline utilizes a digital, more conventional comic book format to reconstruct her experience as a Black-American Woman at Williams College. The project pays attention not only to her personal history, but also to the history of the college itself.

Final Project

"Navigating Williams"

My project "Navigating Williams" is my attempt to reconstruct aspects of my Williams experience in a visual, comic book format. I worked to develop the style I used in my *Imitation + Inspiration* project, "The Story of Caroline and Her Siblings." My final project pays special attention to history, race, personal identity, & growth in a number of ways. In addition to displaying my very first picture of a building at Williams alongside a picture of myself, the cover "Navigating Williams," also includes archival images of Williams buildings from the late 1800s. These photos were taken by Alexander Davidson, and exist on William's Special Collections website. To portray that my project is

very much centered in Williams and student experience, I've chosen a very loud color pallet across the whole of the project, one that uses an excess of purple and yellow.

My story begins with my acceptance to Williams, and ends with a nod toward the future. In starting the story, I talk about my acceptance parallel to Gaius Charles Bolin's entrance. Bolin was the very first African-American to attend Williams College. Mentioning him right away, displaying his picture next to my own, allows me to historical approach a framework for my project. My story is not just my own, but it is instead a part of, and constituted by an even larger history of circumstances. After briefly discussing my first journey to Williams during previews, I then move on to my very first experience living at Williams during the Summer Humanities and Social Sciences program.

There are three pages in my graphic narrative which utilize text from "primary documents" as either a strategy for historical reconstruction, or a tool for creating a certain dissonance. I include that "primary document" text in background of these pages, overlaying the text with text and images from my own experience in the foreground. The SHSS page is the first of the three to utilize this technique. In the background of my SHSS page, I display the text that the college provides about the Davis Center. This is where the Office of Special Programs is located—the office that's responsible for running SHSS. In doing so, I hope to portray that my very first experience living at Williams was very much rooted in the Davis Center's mission and vision, in a way that's different from the large majority of students' initial experiences at Williams. My page on my freshman year entry experience does some of the same work. While, in the foreground I've placed the view from my freshman year window, in the background I've provided an article which describes the history of the JA and Entry Systems. It discusses how President Garfield proposed a system for freshman-upperclassmen mentorship that was imposed back in 1925—a system that hasn't always necessarily considered students of color in its implementation. The final page where I use primary document text in the background is in my discussion of Paresky's Baxter Hall. While in the foreground I discuss why Baxter is my favorite place to do work, hang out, and have conversations with people of color, in the background I provide the text the college uses to describe the history of "Claiming Williams" day on

their website. Although Baxter doesn't have many direct ties to how Claiming Williams began, I'd like to portray that Baxter is very much a political space at the college. A space people of color claim everyday.

My favorite page in the piece is the one that discusses Williams College's step team, Sankofa. There aren't really any "primary texts" that discuss Sankofa on campus, but there exists a lot of visual documentation. The image on the very top of the page is from a Youtube video posted in the early 2000s. It's from one of the earliest performances of Sankofa's Reunion Step. Other pictures on the page are much more recent, and from the 62 Center Website. I included information on Sankofa not only because the step team has been a very important part of my experience and the formation of my identity at Williams, but also because the concept of "Sankofa" is basically the leading principal of my project. To, "step" forward while looking back.

The biggest challenge of the project was deciding what and what not to include inside of it. To be completely honest, there's so much more that I could have written about, elaborated on, or shared, but I didn't have enough time or space to do it all. It was also hard trying to find the balance between how much of my own experience to include, and how much history about the college to provide. In the end, I decided to lean more toward talking about my own experience. Instead of elaborating on history within the narrative text, I try to use visual techniques to bring in the historical aspects instead. If I had more time, I would do even greater research into a wide breath of experiences at the college. Despite this, I'm still happy with the final product.

In the end, I learned a lot about how my own experience at Williams has really only been what it has because of the so many people who have worked hard to make the college a better place for students of color. For example, without the implementation of the Summer Humanities Program, I wouldn't have the close relationships that I have now with my friends. Without the 5 women who decided to found a step team back in 1997, I wouldn't have a creative outlet here where I feel comfortable to be myself. Putting everything in those terms, I can't help but think about how I, as a citizen of Williams, can do something to improve life for all students at Williams. Which also ties into how my project might relate to ideas of democracy. While democracy isn't perfect, much like

Williams College, it still very much has to be about its people, and catering to *all* of those people's needs. I think a greater attention to *all* aspects of this country's history, could somehow get us closer to meeting more of those needs.

Citation Page:

Outside Image Links

Alexander Davidson Photography
Goodrich, 1897

<https://unbound.williams.edu/williamsarchives/islandora/object/alexanderdavidson%3A194>

Hopkins Observatory, 1898

<https://unbound.williams.edu/williamsarchives/islandora/object/alexanderdavidson%3A175>

Lasell Gym, 1897

<https://unbound.williams.edu/williamsarchives/islandora/object/alexanderdavidson%3A167>

Morgan Hall, 1898

<https://unbound.williams.edu/williamsarchives/islandora/object/alexanderdavidson%3A145>

Gaius Charles Bolin

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/492510909224089153/>

Sankofa Symbol

<http://sankofadesign.tumblr.com/page/2>

Sankofa Reunion Image

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7mbNGGSFek>

Chapin

<https://facilities.williams.edu/files/2010/03/chapin-2008.jpg>

Sankofa Performance Images

<https://62center.smugmug.com/Dance/All-Ensembles-performances>

“Primary Document” Text

Davis Center

<https://davis-center.williams.edu/history/>

Entry System

<https://dean.williams.edu/junior-advisors/>

Claiming Williams

<https://claiming.williams.edu/mission-history/>