

JUSTIN DUNNAVANT, PHD

ANTHROPOLOGIST

Nominated by **TREVOR WALLACE MN'13**



A POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY'S SPATIAL ANALYSIS RESEARCH LABORATORY, DR. DUNNAVANT WILL JOIN UCLA'S ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT IN 2021. HIS FORMER RESEARCH INTERROGATED THE HISTORY AND REPRESENTATION OF MINORITY GROUPS IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA. CURRENTLY HE WORKS IN THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECOLOGY AND ENSLAVEMENT IN THE FORMER DANISH WEST INDIES. JUSTIN IS DEVELOPING HIS SKILLS IN MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY AND HAS ASSISTED WITH THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE *SLOBODNA* AND *ACORN* WRECKS AS WELL AS THE SEARCH FOR THE SLAVE SHIP *GUERRERO*.

My research explores the relationship between the historic transatlantic slave trade and the environment. I unpack the connections between the dehumanizing system of slavery and commodification and environmental degradation of land in the Americas. Tracing these to the fifteenth century, I find the ramifications of these processes are still felt today.

Moving beyond the role of a traditional academic, I undertake conservation work to offer some form of redress for the environmental legacies of slavery. Engaging in these restorative practices allows me to gain a better understanding of how we can become better stewards of the natural world.

Beyond my academic research, I am an AAUS Scientific SCUBA Diver and I consult for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. My work in co-founding the Society of Black Archaeologists continues to advocate

on behalf of African and African Diaspora artifacts and heritages, while encouraging and supporting more people of African descent to enter the field of archaeology. I hope that more people will engage in the deliberate study of contemporary issues and take it upon themselves to think of new and creative ways to solve them.

Travel, adventure, and recovery of history compel me to spend weeks excavating in the hot Caribbean sun and diving for sunken shipwrecks. I hope the work my colleagues and I do will inspire the next generation of heritage professionals. Collectively, we must remember, remind, and restore to make this world a better place.

ABOVE: JUSTIN DUNNAVANT PHOTO: SUSAN URMY, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY. FACING PAGE: UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY, BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK PHOTO: DR. AYANA FLEWELLEN; MAPPING A SHIPWRECK, KEY LARGO PHOTO: DIVING WITH A PURPOSE.

