

MSU HISTORY PRESENTS

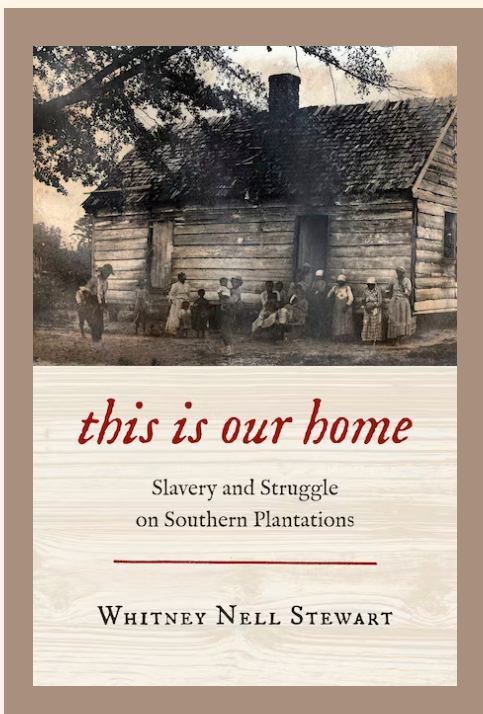
WHITNEY NELL STEWART

THIS IS OUR HOME



The cultural memory of plantations in the Old South has long been clouded by myth. A recent reckoning with the centrality of slavery to the US national story, however, has shifted the meaning of these sites. Plantations are no longer simply seen as places of beauty and grandiose hospitality; their reality as spaces of enslavement, exploitation, and violence is increasingly at the forefront of our scholarly and public narratives. Yet even this reckoning obscures what these sites meant to so many forced to live and labor on them: plantations were Black homes as much as white.

Dr. Stewart (University of Texas, Dallas) joins us to discuss her new book, in which she reads the built environment of plantations, considers artifact fragments found in excavations of slave dwellings, and draws on legal records and plantation owners' papers to illuminate how enslaved people struggled to make home amid innumerable constraints and obstacles imposed by white southerners. Homemaking, she reveals, was a crucial part of the battle over slavery and freedom, a fight that continues today in consequential confrontations over who has the right to call this nation home.



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