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NBC News Transcripts

SHOW: Today (7:00 AM ET) - NBC

May 6, 2002 Monday

LENGTH: 1227 words

HEADLINE: **John Works** of The Monticello Association, and Shay Banks-Young, descendant of Sally Hemings, explain the situation regarding Thomas Jefferson fathering children with Sally Hemings

ANCHORS: ANN CURRY

BODY:

ANN CURRY, anchor:

For many years, the question of whether Thomas Jefferson fathered children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings, has been a subject of debate. DNA tests show that a male in Jefferson's family, possibly the president, did father Hemings' youngest son. This weekend, The Monticello Association, comprised of white descendants of Jefferson, met and voted not to offer membership to the descendants of Sally Hemings. **John Works** is a member of The Monticello Association. Shay Banks-Young is a descendant of Sally Hemings.

Good morning to both of you.

Mr. **JOHN WORKS** (The Monticello Association): Good morning.

Ms. SHAY-BANKS YOUNG (Descendant of Sally Hemings): Good morning.

CURRY: John, first you. This vote was overwhelming, 67-to-5 in denying membership to descendants of Sally Hemings. Why this decision?

Mr. WORKS: Well, I think family looked at all available facts and evidence, in particular, a report by 13 eminent scholars. And they concluded that it was highly unlikely that Thomas Jefferson fathered any children with Sally Hemings. And, in fact, it was much more likely that his brother, Randolph, was the father.

CURRY: We--as I understand it, this group was--of scholars was basically created, formed at your behest, and you have come out in the past saying that you did not want the descendants of Sally Hemings to be included in the association. Is it fa--is it fair to say that this group of scholars was acting without any regard to any particular point of view?

Mr. WORKS: Yes, what happened was many of us felt uncomfortable with a rush to judgment in November of 1998, when DNA test results indicated that a Jefferson fathered one or more of Sally

Hemings' children. We felt that it was important to do an independent study and analysis so the group that I formed, The Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society, commissioned these 13 scholars all who have PhDs, all who are chaired professors, all who have written individually books about Jefferson, we wanted them to take an independent view and give us an answer as to whether or not it was likely that Thomas Jefferson fathered any of these children. And by vote of 12-1 they concluded that it was highly unlikely that Thomas Jefferson fathered any children by Thomas Jeffer--by Thomas Jefferson.

CURRY: Shay, this decision was not unexpected. How are you and other descendants of Sally Hemings reacting to it? And--and also this argument we've just heard from John?

Ms. BANKS-YOUNG: Well, first of all, you know, for John to talk about the fact that his committee has come up with proof that we're not related to Thomas Jefferson is real insignificant to us. I don't care if he has a report that's 1,000 pages, there's nothing that he or anyone else can do or say to try to make us something that we're not. Our oral history is sufficient for our family. We've known who we are for generations. We have information. I find it really ironic that one of the standards that they've set is that our family does not have a paper trail. Well, as we all know, slaves were not allowed to have a paper trail when they were in bondage here at this plantation and others across the country. It was against the law. We do have a sufficient paper trail for those years after that and also our oral history. For someone to try to make me think that my great grandmother was a liar to me is absolutely absurd. As far as The Monticello Association's vote yesterday it has no bearing on us. It has done nothing to us. We may not be a part of their association, but there's nothing they can do to take us from the family because that is fact that they cannot remove.

CURRY: John, the concerns that racism played a role in this decision were not alleviated by a report. Now, this is a report that you e-mailed a picture of a black man with a zipper across his mouth to a supporter of--of admitting Sally Hemings descendants. Did you, in fact, send that e-mail and did--can you say that racism had no role in this decision?

Mr. WORKS: I, in fact, did send that e-mail. It was a private e-mail to another member of the family. This has--is a diversion, though, from the main issue. And race has never been an issue for the family. What we wanted was precision about whether or not Sally Hemings and Thomas Jefferson had a relationship and whether or not any children were born by that relationship. And there's only two ways to prove that--the first way is an acknowledgement by Thomas Jefferson that he, in fact, had a relationship and, in fact, fathered children by Sally Hemings, and the second is if that doesn't exist, which it doesn't, is DNA and scientific evidence. And the DNA evidence that was presented only suggested that a Jefferson in the family fathered one childre--child by Sally Hemings.

There were two dozen Jefferson males living at the time, approximately eight of which were within a day's drive of Monticello. Then the scholars commission report clearly indicated that it was much more likely that it was his brother Randolph not Thomas Jefferson himself. Race has never been an issue. The slaves here at Monticello, unlike many slaves in the rest of the country, were able to read and write. They could have kept written records about their paternity and they didn't. And the only logical conclusion one can draw is that there wasn't anything to write down, because there was no relationship and there were no children with Thomas Jefferson.

CURRY: John, I let you have the first word. Shay, I'm going to let you have the last. What's your reaction to that?

Ms. BANKS-YOUNG: Well, first of all, these things he's saying about they could read and write, they could write anything they wanted to, we're just going to skip that over. As far as talking about what's not racist, I happen to have a picture of the picture that he did send out. You know, there's been a battle

between the Truscott family who supported us since we began and The Monticello Association.

We--and--and, furthermore, I think we need to point out something and set the record straight on something--only one member of our family has ever requested burial at Monticello. Only two people have ever actually requested membership to the association. The rest of us have been here to support their efforts. The majority of my family, however, have no desire to be buried at Monticello. I mean, to me it's like trying to come back to the plantation to be buried. However, we do support and feel that it is our right and whether or not this organization, he talks about his scholarly group, remember there was another scholarly group that also came out with a report the year before they did, and they also stand toe-to-toe with this organization. There's another report that's done by the National Genealogical Society that has also given very much good information regarding the report that **John Works** and his group have had.

CURRY: All right, Shay...

Ms. BANKS-YOUNG: Scholars are everywhere.

CURRY: ...I'm sorry, but we're out of time. You've made your point most eloquently. Shay Banks-Young, **John Works**, thank you so much as well this morning for joining us on this issue.

Mr. WORKS: Thank you, Ann.

Ms. BANKS-YOUNG: Thank you.

CURRY: Up next, "Spider-Man" scales the box office hype. That's after these messages.

LOAD-DATE: May 6, 2002