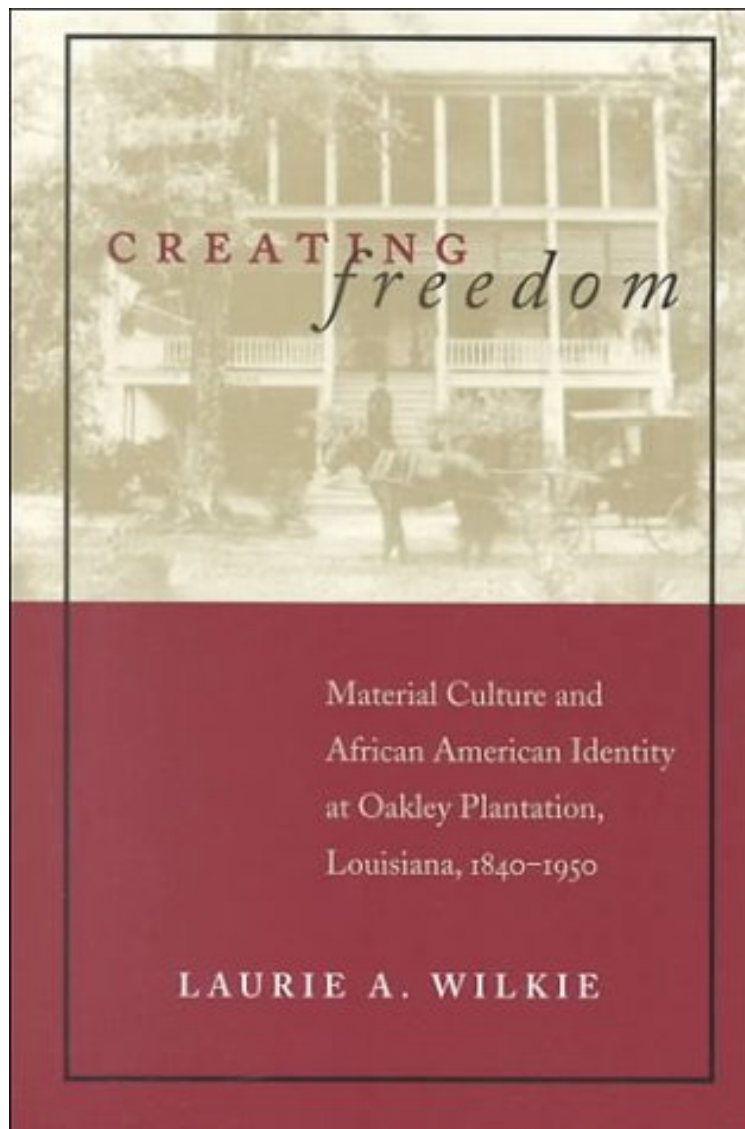


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## **Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840-1950**

*Laurie A. Wilkie*

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## Creating Freedom: Material Culture and African American Identity at Oakley Plantation, Louisiana, 1840-1950:

Historians' conception of plantation life in the American South, both post- and antebellum, derives almost exclusively from the written record, hence mainly from the white owners' perspectives. In *Creating Freedom*, historical archaeologist Laurie Wilkie pulls the half-opened curtain wider by seeking out the experiences of the majority of people who made their home on plantations: the African American laborers. Specifically, Wilkie examines the lives of four black families who lived at Oakley Plantation in south Louisiana's West Feliciana Parish over the course of one hundred years. Using an innovative blend of archaeological evidence and oral interviews, as well as written documents, she builds a composite of their daily existence that is at once riveting and humanizing in its detail and invaluable in its broader applications. *Creating Freedom* is in part Wilkie's attempt to understand how African Americans at Oakley Plantation, and by extension most southern blacks, endured the violence and oppression of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow. It is through their material culture, enhanced by a range of other data, that she describes the complex but uplifting process by which they retained their ties to a cultural past while renegotiating their identity as free persons.

About the Author Laurie A. Wilkie is assistant professor of anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, and currently involved in research in the Bahamas.