



Youth Diving With a Purpose V

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 8 2017:

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Young People join effort to Identify Slave Ship Wreck, “Guerrero.”

July 16-26, 2017 the National Park Service (NPS), caretakers of the Biscayne National Park in Florida, will be joined by young divers ages 16 to 23 from diverse backgrounds on a dive to search for identifying artifacts of the slave ship Guerrero. The Guerrero wrecked in the Key Largo area of the Florida reefs in 1827 with 561 Africans on board. Though remnants have been identified on earlier dives that help to place this wreck in a specific era and country of origin, no “smoking gun” positive identifier has been found to date.

YDWP was created in 2013 by the adult organization, Diving With a Purpose (DWP), to train young people to be underwater archaeology advocates. Advocates are taught basic mapping skills first on solid ground before going out to the site of what is thought to be the Guerrero wreck and execute these techniques 25 feet underwater.

Chris Searles is a DWP instructor, member of the Atlanta Underwater Explores , Chris is a chaperon /mentor for YDWP and has been involved with YDWP since it’s inception . ***“I first heard of the slave ship Guerrero some years ago. I became a member of DWP with hopes of making and documenting historic discoveries. When I found out DWP was starting a youth component of the program I had to be a part of it. I believe in what the program is doing and I know that the youth are our future. Being able to help expose them to the importance of uncovering the history of humanity, their history, through underwater archaeology, what a wonderful task. My involvement with the youth has been as rewarding for me as it has for them. Watching them grasp the procedures and execute the task with growing enthusiasm every day. I see them develop year to year from being shy and reserved to becoming a teacher and a leader, acquiring skills that they will use for the rest of their lives. Both my parents were educators and it is my sincere hope that my input is part of the reason these young people are becoming the responsible adults I see developing right before my eyes. I am so proud of them all. ”***



To date, 48 young people have been trained in maritime archaeology with YDWP, some of them continuing as interns with the NPS on the road to careers in the oceanic sciences.

The NPS has partnered with DWP and it's youth wing on other mapping ventures. The difference this time? This is a suspected slave ship wreck, connecting itself not only to the divers' sense of history, but to their sensibilities as human beings. The measurable outcome of this mission: it is the Guerrero, or we still don't know. Either way, the mere experience of the search will thrust these young people into a historic continuum of a trade of human beings that funded the world's economy for centuries with implications that are still being considered today.

More information can be seen on Diving With a Purpose Facebook page or our web site www.divingwithapurpose.org This will include daily comments by members of the dive crew themselves.

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