

OMAR IBN SAID BURIAL SITE RESEARCH & MEMORIAL PROJECT

Beyond Freedom: Commemorating a Scholar's Final Days and Resting Place

From the conflict that tore him from his homeland and carried him across the ocean - to the war that marked his last breath, this project traces the truth of where Omar found rest—after nearly six decades of enslavement.



OMAR IBN SAID
INSTITUTE

OMAR IBN SAID BURIAL SITE RESEARCH & MEMORIAL PROJECT

Beyond Freedom: Commemorating a Scholar's Final Days and Resting Place

From the conflict that tore him from his homeland and carried him across the ocean to the war that marked his last breath, this project traces the truth of where Omar found rest—after nearly six decades of enslavement.

Date & Locations

- December 8 – December 21 2025 | NC: Fayetteville, Raleigh and Wilmington; SC: Charleston

Principal Investigator/Project Lead

- Dr. Kameelah Mu'Min Oseguera, Director, Omar ibn Said Institute for Black Muslim Studies & Research (OISI), a division of Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF)

Co-Investigator/Primary Research Partner

- Dr. Mamaramé Seck, Director, Historical Museum of Gorée; Associate Professor, Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD)

BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

This project is a Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF)-led initiative under the auspices of MWF's division: **Omar ibn Said Institute for Black Muslim Studies & Research**; in partnership with Dr. Mamaramé Seck in his capacity as a Said Institute advisor, Associate Professor (Cheikh Diop Univ, Dakar), and Museum Director (Historical Museum of Gorée). Together, MWF's Director Dr. Oseguera and Dr. Seck are launching a focused transatlantic research effort to uncover new evidence about the last chapter of Omar ibn Said's life.

While Omar's Arabic autobiography and earlier writings have been widely studied, the details of his final months, death, and burial remain incomplete or uncertain. He is believed to have died in the summer of 1863 on or near the Owen family plantation in Bladen County, North Carolina, during the upheavals of the Civil War. Contemporary newspaper accounts describe his death and obituary notices—rare for an enslaved person at the time—but questions persist:

- **With whom did Omar spend his last months of life, and under what circumstances?**
- **What are the exact date, place, and context of his death?**
- **Where, precisely, was he buried, and what became of his grave or marker?**

This research aims to answer these questions through archival investigation, oral history, and site documentation; reconstructing Omar's final years and the broader historical context in which he lived and died. It represents a critical step toward truth and memorialization—grounding future preservation work in verified historical evidence.



OBSERVER.

FAYETTEVILLE.

THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 30, 1863.

DEATH OF A VENERABLE AFRICAN.—The N. C. Presbyterian learns that “Uncle Moreau,” a well known negro slave belonging to Gen. James Owen of Wilmington, died a few weeks since at the residence of H. W. Guion, Esq., in Bladen county. He was about 93 years of age, a devout member of the Presbyterian church, and a constant reader of the Bible in the Arabic language.

From the **Fayetteville Observer** | July 30, 1863.

Notice of Omar’s passing “a few weeks since” at Owen Hill, Bladen County, NC.

A REMARKABLE NEGRO.—The North Carolina Presbyterian mentions the death of a very remarkable negro, known as "Uncle Moreau," and belonging to Gen. Owen, of Wilmington. He was, according to his own account, ninety-three years of age. We quote the following:

He was born in Western Africa, upon the banks of the Senegal river. His name originally was "Omeroh," which has gradually been changed into the French title he now bears. He belonged to the tribe of the Fulahs, but from which of the various nations inhabited by this people he came, it is difficult to ascertain. There is no doubt, however, that he is the most remarkable of his tribe ever brought to this country, and is now perhaps the only one of the nation living in the United States. One of the same was sent back to Africa as early as 1783, by Oglethorpe; another was ransomed and sent to Liberia in 1838; besides these not more than two Fulahs were known in 1855 to be in the limits of the Southern States.

"Uncle Moreau" was brought to this country in 1807, just before the final abolition of the slave trade. He was landed at Charleston. Sometime after he reached this country, he fell into the hands of a cruel master, from whom he escaped. After being arrested as a runaway and confined in jail in Fayetteville he was at length purchased by Gen. Owen, to whom he belonged at the time of his death.

When "Uncle Moreau" became the property of Gen. Owen he was a very devout Mohammedan, but was soon taught a "more excellent way." He was baptised by the Rev. Dr. Snodgrass, then pastor of the Presbyterian church in Fayetteville, and became a member of that church. His membership was afterwards transferred to the 1st church, Wilmington, of which he died a communicant.—His piety was of the highest order, being characterized by a child like trust in the Saviour that perhaps never was excelled. He spent several months of last year in Fayetteville, a refugee from his home, and during the time though exceedingly feeble in bodily health, he was rarely absent from the house of God during worship. Calling to see him on one occasion, we found him reading his Arabic Bible which was his constant companion; and he gave us a specimen of his composition in Arabic, which though not equal in beauty to others we have seen written earlier in life, does credit to his penmanship of that ancient language.

But the devout, humble christian, reclaimed from the darkness of heathenism, has passed to the immediate presence of his Saviour. And in the judgement of these who knew him best, there are few of those now enjoying this blessed privilege, who have undergone less change at their transition from earth to heaven than "Uncle Moreau."

From the North Carolina Standard | August 19, 1863.

Alongside notices of stock and cotton prices in Confederate States, listing of local casualties in the Battle of Gettysburg and ads for \$50 and \$100 rewards for runaway slaves - this rare announcement of the passing of "a Remarkable Negro" known as Uncle Moreau.



June 2022 | Owen Hill Property, NC - low brick wall marking the Owen family private cemetery; Omar is believed to be buried in or near this location.

PURPOSE

The life and writings of Omar ibn Said represent a rare and invaluable record of West African Islamic scholarship, the transatlantic slave experience, and early Black intellectual history in the United States. Yet, despite his prominence as an author and historical figure, the circumstances surrounding his final months, death, and burial remain largely undocumented.

The purpose of this inquiry is to **identify, document, and ethically commemorate the likely burial site of Omar ibn Said** — believed to be on or near the Owen family plantation — through transatlantic scholarship, community partnership, and restorative dialogue.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. Omar celebrates his 90th birthday in 1860. One year later, the Civil War begins. **Where did Omar ibn Said spend the final years and months of his life, and under what conditions** did he live as war transformed the world around him?
2. **What is the precise location and context of his death and burial**, and what evidence —archival, material, or oral—confirms it?
3. **Who were the individuals and families present at the time of his passing**, and how did their relationships shape how he was remembered or forgotten?
4. **How can the process of uncovering Omar's final resting place contribute to broader acts of remembrance**, truth-telling, and communal healing among Black, Muslim, and Southern communities today?

KEY TEAM MEMBERS



KAMEELAH MU'MIN OSEGUERA, PSYD

Principal Investigator

Founder and Executive Director of the Muslim Wellness Foundation and Omar Ibn Said Institute for Black Muslim Studies & Research, Dr. Oseguera is a psychologist and community leader whose work integrates mental health, faith, and social justice. Dr. Oseguera is also an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Muslim Studies at Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS). Her teaching, research and clinical areas of expertise include: mental health stigma in faith and minority communities, healing justice and faith based activism, Black Muslim psychology and Black Muslim intersectional invisibility.



MAMARAMÉ SECK, PHD

Co-Investigator

A Senegalese historian, linguist and cultural scholar, Dr. Seck serves as Director of the Historical Museum of Gorée and Associate Professor at Université Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD). Among his research interests are the Wolof language and culture, Senegalese society and culture, Islamic discourses in West Africa and the functions of Sufi oral discourse in the practice of Islam in Senegal. Dr. Seck's current research focuses on the narrative about Omar Ibn Said, a Muslim slave from Fouta Toro in the Senegal river valley.

SCHEDULE 2. Slave Inhabitants in Wilmington in the County of Hanover State
of N.C., enumerated by me, on the 25 day of July, 1860. Starke Ass't Marshal.

1	2	DESCRIPTION.			6	7	8	9	1	2	DESCRIPTION.			6	7	8	9
		Age.	Sex.	Color.							Age.	Sex.	Color.				
1	1	25	M	B						1	26	M	B				1
2	1	27	M	B						1	25	M	B				2
3	1	27	M	B						1	25	M	M			27-28	3
4	1	26	L	B						1	16	M	B				4
5	1	26	L	B						1	14	M	M				5
6	1	26	L	B						1	10	M	B				6
7	1	26	L	B						1	12	M	M				7
8	1	25	L	B						1	14	M	M				8
9	1	25	M	B						1	15	M	B				9
10	1	25	M	B						1	16	M	B				10
11	1	24	M	B						1	15	M	B				11
12	1	24	M	B						1	25	M	B				12
13	1	23	M	B						1	36	M	B				13
14	1	23	M	B						1	10	M	B				14
15	1	23	L	B						1	9	M	B				15
16	1	21	L	B					<u>James Owen</u>	1	91	M	B			<u>an African Prince</u>	16
17	1	26	L	B						1	61	L	B			<u>called "Morroe"</u>	17
18	1	24	M	B						1	48	L	B				18
19	1	14	L	B						1	24	M	B				19
20	1	13	M	B						1	22	M	B				20
21	1	17	L	B						1	20	L	B				21
22	1	18	M	B						1	18	M	B				22
23	1	17	L	B						1	16	M	B				23
24	1	26	M	B						1	14	L	B				24
25	1	23	L	B						1	11	L	B				25
26										1	9	L	B				26
27										1	7	M	B				27
28										1	5	L	B				28
29										1	24	L	B				29
30										1	8	M	B				30
31										1	7	M	B				31
32										1	5	M	B				32
33										1	2	M	B				33
34										1	30	M	B				34
35										1	5	L	B				35
36										1	5	L	B				36
37										1	1	L	B				37
38									<u>R. J. Jones</u>	1	55	L	B				38
39									<u>H. Carter</u>	1	25	L	B				39
40									<u>E. Murry</u>	1	50	M	B				40

From 1860 US Census | Schedule
2: "Slave Inhabitants in m B
Wilmington in the county of
Hanover, State of NC" m B
enumerated: July 23, 1860. m

Slave Owner: James Owen, 22
slaves ranging in age from 1-91;
One (1) 91 year old Black male -
"an African Prince called Morroe"

James Owen resides at this
Wilmington household with the
enumerated enslaved until shortly
after the beginning of the Civil War (April 1861), at which time he
relocates to Owen Hill. Omar dies
2 years later.

No. fugitives, _____
No. manumitted, _____

No. deaf and dumb, _____
No. blind, _____

No. insane, _____
No. idiotic, _____

A LIVING CONTINUUM OF HEALING AND RETURN



May 2025 | Chief Abdoul Bihe Ba of Coppe Mangay, Fouta Toro Senegal. Coppe is Omar's birth village and Chief Abdoul Ba is a descendant of Omar's brother.

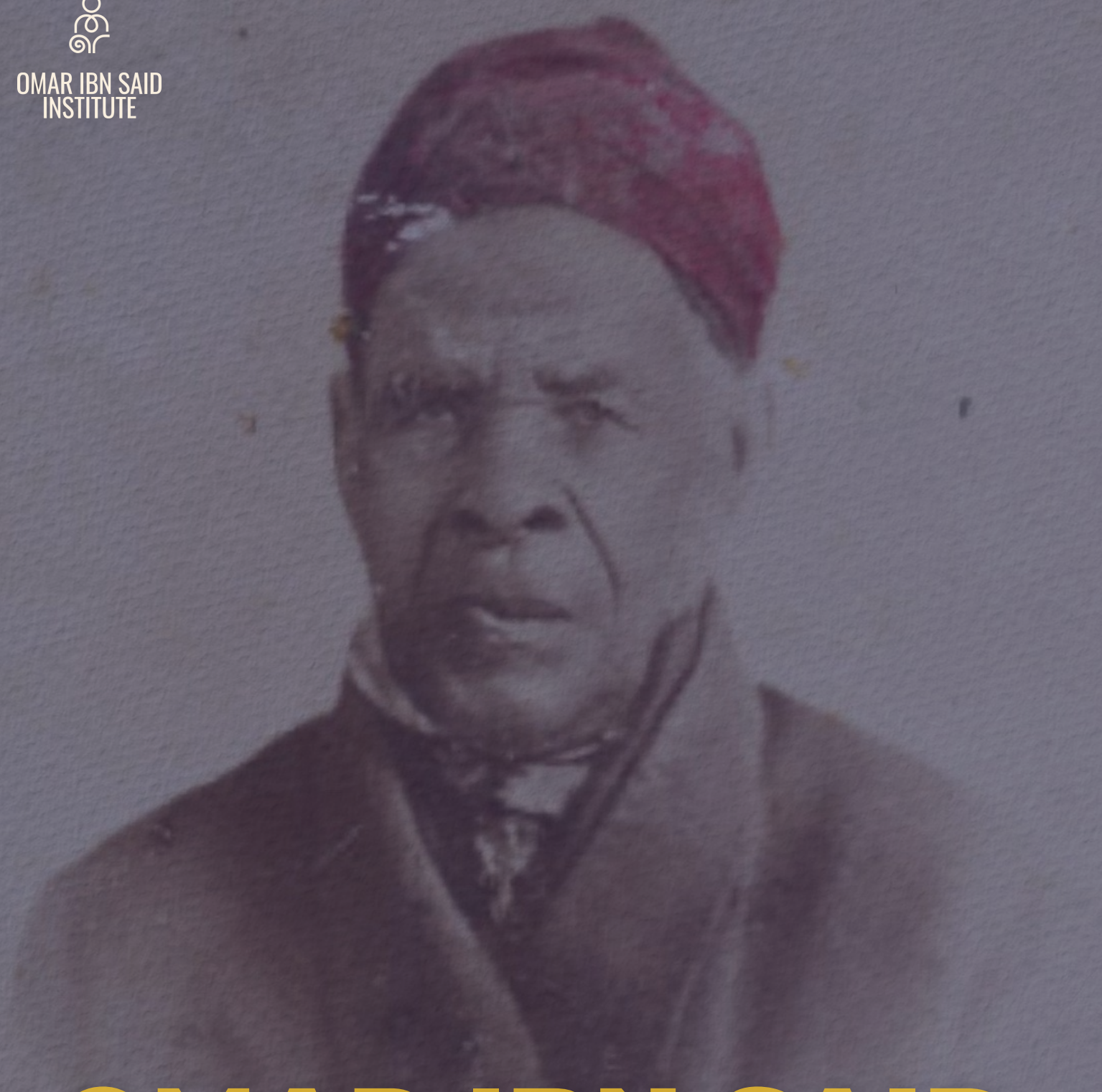
The Omar ibn Said Burial Site Research & Memorial Project extends the vision first set in motion through Muslim Wellness Foundation's earlier work in Senegal, beginning in 2022. That journey established diplomatic, scholarly, and spiritual ties between the United States and Senegal, deepening collaboration with Dr. Mamaram Seck, Cheikh Anta Diop University, IFAN, and the Museum of Black Civilizations. It also led to the historic identification of Coppe Mangay in Fouta Toro — the village Omar described as his birthplace — and the first visits by African American Muslim scholars to retrace his origins.

This current project represents the next chapter in that transatlantic continuum: from retracing Omar's beginnings to uncovering the truth of his end. Together, these interconnected efforts—archival recovery, community engagement, and cultural remembrance—form a sacred circuit of restoration. The work in Fayetteville and Bladen County completes what began along the banks of the Senegal River, linking the soil of captivity to the soil of birth.

As with all initiatives led by MWF, this endeavor is rooted in the conviction that storytelling is a form of healing and that remembering those who were silenced restores dignity to the living. Through the Omar ibn Said Institute, this project continues the journey “beyond freedom”—where scholarship becomes an act of care, history becomes a vessel for healing, and the act of remembrance becomes a pathway to wholeness. Ultimately, the discovery and memorialization of Omar's final resting place will mark a homecoming that unites two continents and calls all who inherit his story to remember, reflect, and restore.



OMAR IBN SAID
INSTITUTE



OMAR IBN SAID INSTITUTE

FOR BLACK MUSLIM STUDIES & RESEARCH



OMAR IBN SAID INSTITUTE

OUR MISSION

The Said Institute advances the **healing, wellness, and flourishing of Black Muslim communities** through research, education, and cultural preservation. Rooted in the legacy of Omar Ibn Said and the spiritual traditions of the African diaspora, the Institute **cultivates spaces for remembrance, reconnection, and reclamation**—bridging scholarship, storytelling, and community care across generations and geographies.

OUR VISION

A world in which Black Muslim **histories, voices, and ways of knowing** are honored as sacred sources of wisdom and healing. A future where **Black Muslims thrive** in communities grounded in dignity, truth, and collective well-being.

REMEMBERING OUR **PAST**, RECONNECTING OUR **PRESENT**, RECLAIMING OUR **FUTURE**.

The **Omar Ibn Said Institute for Black Muslim Studies & Research** is a division of the **Muslim Wellness Foundation** (MWF), established in 2021 to deepen and expand MWF's 15-year legacy of promoting healing, mental health, and collective well-being in American Muslim communities. Named in honor of Omar Ibn Said, a West African Muslim scholar whose intellect and faith endured through enslavement in North Carolina, the **Institute stands as a living tribute to Black Muslim resilience, scholarship, and spiritual lineage**. It serves as a home for research, education, and creative practice that centers Black Muslim healing, history, leadership, and narrative sovereignty. Through initiatives such as the annual **Black Muslim Psychology Conference**, the **Deeply Rooted Emerging Leaders Fellowship**, and the **Imam Roundtable**, the Institute fosters intergenerational connection and transnational collaboration—from the United States to West Africa. Guided by three interwoven phases of work, the Institute embodies a transformative approach to remembrance and renewal:

Remembrance: Honoring the Past

We recover, preserve, and uplift the histories of Black Muslims whose contributions have been obscured or forgotten. Through archival research, oral history, and storytelling, we ensure that their legacies are not only remembered but recognized as foundational to the story of Islam in America.

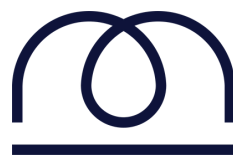
Reconnection: Bridging the Present

We cultivate spaces for dialogue, learning, and care that connect individuals, generations, and communities across the diaspora. This includes programs such as the Black Muslim Psychology Conference, the Deeply Rooted Emerging Leaders Fellowship, and the Imam Roundtable, which nurture intergenerational mentorship, spiritual growth, and collective resilience.

Reclamation: Shaping the Future

We envision and design new models of healing, leadership, and scholarship rooted in Black Muslim ways of knowing. Through research collaborations, cultural exchange, and creative practice, we reclaim agency over our narratives and chart pathways toward thriving, justice, and self-determination.

Together with MWF, the Omar Ibn Said Institute advances a shared vision: to remember, reconnect, and reclaim the stories that sustain us—and to build communities of care where Black Muslims can truly flourish.



MUSLIM WELLNESS FOUNDATION

Established in 2011, Muslim Wellness Foundation (MWF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting healing and well-being in American Muslim communities through dialogue, education and training. The MWF approach to health is interdisciplinary, intergenerational, spiritually grounded, community based, and justice-oriented. From being the first Muslim organization in the country to offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trainings to establishing the annual Black Muslim Psychology Conference (BMPC), MWF has been an outspoken leader in fostering authentic 'visions of possibilities for freedom and wellness'. Our programs and areas of focus demonstrate our keen awareness of the link between oppression, wellness and how communities heal, grow, thrive, and experience joy in the midst of it all. We will continue to lead the way in shifting the conversation on mental health, addiction and trauma - from one narrowly focused on stigma to a healing-centered model of collective well-being, faith, identity and belonging. Join us on this journey!

CONNECT WITH US!

1101 W Lake Street
Floor 2
Chicago, IL 60607

www.muslimwellness.com
info@muslimwellness.com
T: @MWFNational
IG: MWFNational
FB: Muslim Wellness