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Introduction/Teaser
The Life & Death of African-American Burials
at Brooklyn's Green Wood National Historic Landmark

I've been living in Brooklyn pretty much my whole life and one of my favorite Brooklyn spots is the historic Green Wood Cemetery. Even though it's a place where people are buried, it's actually a beautifully landscaped park with tons of hills and trees and little pathways. One of the biggest attractions for me, though is that Green Wood is also full of amazing old monuments and sculptures. A giant set of carved brownstone arches marks the entrance. Standing there, you can hear the scolding of the Monk Parakeets that nest in the spires of those arches. But the whole cemetery is full of angels and elaborate mausoleums—they're like small stone houses decorated with antique stained glass and stone-carving like an old church. One grave is topped with a small pyramid; lots of others are marked with obelisks—like small versions of the Washington Monument.

As I look around at all these memorials, though, I think about the way people of color have often been excluded from the way we remember and memorialize U.S. history, and it makes me wonder if there are any African Americans buried under these monuments and what the history of Black people is at Green Wood cemetery. When I started to look into this question, I found out that the history of Black burials at Green Wood is pretty complicated; even though there's a powerful history of racial integration at the cemetery and even though it's the final resting place of Black luminaries like Jean-Michel Basquiat,

the famous Brooklyn artist, and Susan Smith McKinney Stewart, New York's first Black woman doctor, it's also true that a lot of African-American graves at Green Wood have fallen into disrepair, or, have even disappeared.

Tune in on November 27 to find out more about ... The Life & Death of African-American Burials at Brooklyn's Green Wood National Historic Landmark!