

The Myth of Queen Charlotte

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Summary

There is overwhelming evidence that Queen Charlotte, born Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, was a White woman according to modern racial classification. Her ancestry is well-documented, consisting primarily of aristocratic ethnic German ancestors. Dozens of portraits of her, painted from life, depict her with pale skin and facial features typical of Northern Europe. Numerous contemporaneous descriptions of her describe the same, and there are not more simply because few people thought it important to state the obvious.

The evidence most frequently cited that she was not White is her depiction in two paintings of her (of over 40 paintings done from life), several misquoted or crucially out-of-context contemporaneous accounts, and several ahistorical assertions about two of her distant ancestors. When examined in context and with factual historical information, none of this evidence supports these claims, and some does the opposite.

Since the 1940s, there has been a continually-evolving set of claims about the ancestry, ethnicity, and socioracial identity of Charlotte. These claims began as a contention by Jamaican-American antiracist author J. A. Rogers, who intentionally used the false premises of scientific racism, specifically that a wide nose and mouth was a "Negroid" characteristic, in order to refute the concept of a "pure white race" promoted by segregationists in the United States and the Nazi Party in Germany. Rogers does not claim that she was "Negro" or "mixed race" with the same meaning as the modern socioracial category "Black," as he does for numerous other historical figures, including (most notably) Ludwig von Beethoven. Over time, these claims morphed as they were misunderstood and expanded upon into beliefs that Charlotte was "African", "mixed-race", "biracial", or "Black."

In 1989, after the unveiling of a statue to Charlotte in one of her namesake cities, Charlotte, North Carolina, South African civil rights activist and Methodist minister Motlalepula Chabaku charged in a letter to the editor of the *The Charlotte Observer* that the sculptor had replaced Charlotte's "African features" with a "European or Caucasian appearance" and that "she was a black woman even though she was the consort of King George III." This is the first printed assertion that she was "black" and likely the first time Rogers' work or these claims about her had been publicized outside of the African American press in the 1950s.

In 1999, Mario de Valdes y Cocom (Mario Valdes) claimed in an article he wrote for a PBS Frontline website called "The Blurred Racial Lines of Famous Families" that she had an "unmistakable African appearance" and "negroid physiogomy[*sic*]". Valdes does not cite J. A. Rogers as a source, but uses some of the same evidence and language. Valdes makes the unsubstantiated assertion that one of Charlotte's distant ancestors, Margarita de Castro e Souza, who appears once in her 9th generation and twice in her 10th generation, was from a "black branch" of Portuguese nobility. The article on Charlotte in Wikipedia tied Margarita to Madragana, who was likely Mozarab (an Iberian Christian living in Muslim Iberia), but has been

claimed by one 16th century historian to be a "Moor," which itself has been misinterpreted to mean "black" rather than of Maghrebine Berber or Arab ancestry due to the common racist usage of that term by Europeans. The Valdes article and Wikipedia article were then used by numerous journalists to write articles mentioning this "controversy" about Charlotte when Meghan Markle married Prince Harry.

Introduction

Who we choose to memorialize reflects the values of our community.

Today in Charlottesville, many people have a passionate interest in displacing our long-standing memorials supporting white supremacy, most notably the statues to Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. These particular memorials were erected in the 1920s as a symbol of white supremacy during the "Jim Crow" era of racial apartheid and terror. Many people desire, myself included, to replace them with memorials to women and people of color. We desire to do this not *because* someone was a woman or a person of color, but rather because woman and people of color have been consistently and intentionally overlooked for memorialization because of who they were, in spite of their accomplishments, and because their accomplishments were that much more difficult in the face of patriarchy and racism.

Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, styled as Queen Charlotte after her marriage to King George III, has not been overlooked for memorialization for either reason. At the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, during their reign, the British Empire controlled nearly a quarter of the world's people and land, enabled the kidnapping of 3.5 million Africans to enslave along with Indigenous people in the Americas, and held colonial control over millions of other people. We should not forget this about Charlotte, no matter how keen her interest in art, botany, or Pomeranians might have been. These facts should not be ignored by a quaint or nostalgic view of royalty. Memorializing Queen Charlotte is also complicated by the long history of the use of her by White elites as a symbol of white supremacy in another of her namesake cities, Charlotte, N.C.

There is overwhelming evidence that Queen Charlotte, born Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, was a White woman. Her ancestry is well-documented, consisting primarily of ethnic German aristocratic ancestors. Dozens of portraits of her, painted from life, depict her with pale skin and facial features typical of Northern Europe. Numerous contemporaneous descriptions of her describe the same, and there are not more simply because few people thought it important to state the obvious. Even the numerous, often vicious, caricatures of her depict her with pale skin and large, pointed, upturned nose and chin.

In Britain, she has been widely memorialized as is typical for the British royalty. In Charlotte, North Carolina, she has numerous memorializations, including place names, businesses, and two statues. However, in her other prominent namesake city of Charlottesville, Virginia, she has been largely ignored precisely because she was the political antagonist to our historical patriarch, Thomas Jefferson, drafter of the Declaration of Independence, whose plantation, Monticello, sits within view of the city. Similarly, Charlotte County, Virginia, claims another prominent figure of the American Revolution, Patrick Henry, as a historical patriarch instead of its namesake matriarch.

While Jefferson's imperfections have gained greater public importance over the past several years, notably his racist writings in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, his support of genocide against Native peoples while he was Governor of Virginia, and his enslavement of over 600 people during his lifetime, and greater emphasis on the American Revolution are being less for the abstract reasons of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" and more for the concrete objective of preserving slavery in the American Colonies as promoted by 1619 Project conceived of and led by Nikole Hannah-Jones, the historical fact remains that our American Revolution was against King George III and Queen Charlotte.

While the racial aspect of this narrative has similarities to the Jefferson-Hemings controversy, they are fundamentally different. In the Jefferson-Hemings case, all of the evidence existed, but it had been consistently ignored by historians (exclusively White men) because it did not fit the false conventional narrative they chose to present about Jefferson. The "accusation" that Thomas Jefferson had children with Sally Hemings was widely documented at the time in letters, private writings, and published sources (typically for their scandalous nature). In 1873, one of their children, Madison Hemings, published his recollections in a local newspaper, including the fact that Jefferson was his father¹. It was not until 1997 that Annette Gordon-Reed appropriately analyzed all of the historical evidence to establish a clear argument and more accurate narrative, and DNA testing of descendants provided physical evidence of the claims.

Valdes said that in the current racial climate, the genealogy is important to history. "In reaction to the horrors of what happened in Charlottesville, which is named after this queen, her ancestry is very relevant."²

When we're trying to have a conversation about those who have been overlooked.

Displacement

Displaces a person who actually had challenging lived experience and contributed in spite of that.

Compromise narrative.

"We think your queen speaks to us on lots of levels," says Cheryl Palmer, director of education at the Mint museum. "As a woman, an immigrant, a person who may have had African forebears, botanist, a queen who opposed slavery - she speaks to Americans, especially in a city in the south like Charlotte that is trying to redefine itself."

¹ <https://www.monticello.org/slavery/slave-memoirs-oral-histories/recollections-of-madison-hemings/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/11/27/britains-black-queen-will-meghan-markle-really-be-the-first-mixed-race-royal/>

we're distorting a White woman into the shape we want, when we can can just memorialize other people.

Meghan Markle (Meghan, Duchess of Sussex)

The most recent public revival of this myth surrounded the engagement and marriage of Meghan Markle to Prince Harry. Markle is American and self-identifies as mixed-race, as her father self-identifies as White and her mother self-identifies as Black. This is the first time that a person who was not White³ has married into the British royal family.

However, after their engagement, numerous articles appeared that had the effect of downplaying what was a momentous first, particularly in light of the extreme criticism, much of it overtly racist, that Markle faced. Articles with titles like "Meghan Markle Might Not Be the First Mixed-Race British Royal" [HC], "Britain's black queen: Will Meghan Markle really be the first mixed-race royal?" [WP], and "Is Meghan Markle's mixed-race heritage a first for British royalty?" [PhillyI] revived the Charlotte ancestry myth in service of sensational journalism, with the effect of diminishing Markle's moment. These also have the racist effect of equating Markle's presentation as a Black or mixed-race woman who has enslaved ancestors with Charlotte's presentation as a White woman with a slightly wide nose and mouth who had an ancestor 15 generations back who might have been North African Berber (but was more likely Iberian). This is particularly relevant given the difficulty Markle has told about in finding work as an actor, as her skin is too dark to play White characters but not dark enough to play Black characters, and apparently racially-ambiguous people do not exist in the Hollywood universe.

Meghan, Duchess of Sussex; Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and family, NPG x200211

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw286494>

³ The term "White" is somewhat of an anachronistic term here, as the British royal family predates the modern American concept of "White," which was not developed until the late 17th century. Using the term "European" here is also not accurate given the multitude of ethnicities originating from outside Europe now present.

Claims about Charlotte

The contentions about Charlotte's ancestry and racial identity have three main threads:

1. Because of her visual depiction in several paintings, primarily in a mezzotint⁴ by Thomas Frye in 1762 and a painting by Allan Ramsey in 1761 or 1762, both made immediately after her marriage and coronation in 1761, at around age 17.
2. Because of several contemporaneous accounts that describe her with phrases like "...the nostrils spreading too wide. The mouth has the same fault" (Henry Walpole) and "with a true mulatto face" (Baron Stockmar).
3. Because the de Sousa family from which her 9th (once) and 10th (twice) generation ancestor Margarita de Castro e Sousa (c.1440) was purportedly "black". Further back, Margarita de Castro e Sousa had an ancestor, Madragana (c. 1230), in Charlotte's 15th and 16th generations, who may have been a "Moor".

Since the 1940s, there have been a continually evolving set of pseudohistorical claims about the ancestry of Charlotte. These claims began as a contention by Jamaican-American antiracist author J. A. Rogers using the false premises of racist pseudoscience in order to refute the concept of a "pure white race" promoted by segregationists in the United States and the Nazi Party in Europe. Over time, these claims morphed into a belief that she was "mixed race" or "Black," meaning the socioracial category that African Americans self-identify with or have imposed upon them. Two paintings of her, several misquoted or crucially out-of-context contemporaneous accounts, and several ahistorical assertions have been used to support these claims. These claims have been misunderstood and expanded upon, resulting in numerous claims that interchangeably use "African", "mixed-race", "biracial", and "Black" to describe her. When examined in context and with factual information about history, none of this evidence supports these claims, and some does quite the opposite.

The first documented source of the first two of these arguments comes from J. A. Rogers's *Sex and Race: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands, Volume I: The Old World*, published in 1940, in which Rogers presents antiracist ideas to counter the pseudoscientific belief in distinct "pure" races. Rogers was a prolific author, regularly publishing news and history articles in prominent Black newspapers and writing several books. His trilogy *Sex and Race* is a combined forceful and eloquent antiracist argument against the myth of white supremacy and grab bag of both accurate Black history and Afrocentric pseudohistory.

⁴ A mezzotint is a printmaking method for producing high-quality artwork reproductions

In an article to accompany the PBS series "The African Americans", Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes this about Rogers's historical claims⁵:

If America hadn't already invented the "one-drop rule" by this time, Rogers most probably would have. He seems to have had some sort of miscegenation-meter, which he used to "out" all sorts of "white" people as having black ancestry. And while he erred on the side of excess as he peered into the proverbial woodpile, Rogers got it right an impressive amount of the time, especially considering when he was publishing his work. (At the other end of his collected works, though, stands *The Five Negro Presidents*, which, shall we say, would get the "Black History Wishful Thinking Prize," hands down, were there such in existence.)

...

Sometimes, he was astonishingly accurate; at other times, he seems to have been tripping a bit, shall we say, as in his "Amazing Fact #8," which I quote in full: "Beethoven, the world's greatest musician, was without a doubt a dark mulatto. He was called 'The Black Spaniard.' His teacher, the immortal Joseph Haydn, who wrote the music for the former Austrian National Anthem, was colored, too."

Both claims are false, I am afraid, though I love the work of both composers! But no one can get everything right all the time, correct?

While Rogers' history is dubious, his forceful denunciation of racist ideas is anything but. In the case of Charlotte, Rogers uses the false pseudoscientific claim that anthropometry, or body measurement, could be used to accurately determine a person's racial composition to argue that "race-mixing" has been widespread across Europe, and therefore there is meaningful biological basis for a "pure" race. While Roger's *argument* is invalid because it rests on false claims, his *conclusion* is now widely accepted as correct. The non-existence of race at the genetic level was validated with the results of the Human Genome Project in the early 2000s. This distinction between Rogers' arguments about biological race and our modern view of race as an important social construct is important, as they partially explain the mutation of Rogers' rather banal claims into more recent, bolder claims.

One of anthropometric factors used in "scientific" racism was that a narrow nose and mouth indicate that a person is "Aryan", "Nordic" or "German." This is evident in an iconic photograph from 1940 showing two bespeckled, lab coat-clad Nazi "scientists" using calipers to measure the width of a German man's nose. The overall effect of the photo is quite amusing, if one can ignore the fact that they were doing this in order to classify precisely who was German, and who should be murdered.

⁵"J. A. Rogers' 100 Amazing Facts About the Negro" <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/j-a-rogers100-amazing-facts-about-the-negro/>

Rogers concludes that, based only on a variation of the c.1761 Allan Ramsay portrait showing her with a "wide" nose and mouth and a single contemporaneous description of her stating "nostrils spreading too wide; her mouth has the same fault," that her ancestry contains a "Negro strain" and that she is of the "blond Negroid type." In his 1952 book *Nature Knows No Color-Line: Research into the Negro Ancestry*, Rogers offers as additional visual evidence a derivative work of the 1762 Thomas Frye mezzotint of her supposed "Negro strain."

However, Rogers's contention in *Sex and Race* is not that Charlotte was "black" in sense of the contemporary racial identity. Here Rogers is making an antiracist argument against the racist idea of a distinctly separate "pure white" European race dominating all other races, most prominently used to justify white supremacist ideology. This was used to justifying racist policies such as segregation throughout the southern United States and Nazi atrocities. This idea is manifest in numerous places, most notably the "one-drop rule" embodied in Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924, supported by registrar of Virginia's Bureau of Vital Statistics Walter Plecker that classified a "white" person as one "who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian", and all others classified as "colored."

In *Sex and Race: Volume I*, Rogers writes:

[H. G. Wells] says, "Everyone alive is, I am convinced of mixed ancestry, but some of us are more white, some of us more Negro, some of us more Chinese."

The good people of Virginia and a dozen other Southern States will hardly be thanking Mr. Wells for this. He'd be putting them all in the jim-crow car. Their "race purity" law is so worded that if it can be proved that even of a person's ancestors had been a Negro as far back as the Neanderthal age he might as well be born at midnight in the heart of the Congo.

Although Rogers is sloppy with his historicity, he is very careful in his language. Throughout both *Sex and Race* and *100 Amazing Facts about the Negro*, he specifically uses the terms "white", "Negro", and "mulatto" when describing people. While these terms are outdated now, his use has generally the same meaning as the self-identity or imposed classification of "white", "Black", and "biracial" do today. Notably, Charlotte is not among the hundreds of people mentioned in this book as being "Negro", even with Rogers's very liberal and frequently inaccurate application of this identity.

From *Sex and Race*:

The portrait of Queen Charlotte Sophia, consort of George III, by Ramsay clearly shows a Negro strain.

...
Charlotte Sophia, German-born consort of George III, had the broad nostrils and heavy lips "of the blond Negroid type" mentioned in Brunold Springer on page 11 of this book.

In an advertisement at the end of *100 Amazing Facts* for another of his books, *Nature Knows No Color-line*, he has the following statement:

One of the Queen Charlotte Sophia, a German princess, consort of George III, shows her Negro strain even more than the one given in Sex and Race. Queen Charlotte was grandmother of Queen Victoria and ancestress of George VI.

The cover of *Nature Knows No Color-line* has a lower-quality derivative of the Frye portrait, but there is only this single mention of her in the text:

With these Negroes in German nobility, the evident Negro strain in Queen Charlotte Sophia consort of George III of England, who was a German princess, might be explained (see her portrait).

As historically significant a person as Charlotte was, if Rogers was making a bold claim that she was "black," he most likely would have spent more than a couple sentences on it in each book, considering how much he writes about other relatively obscure people and topics. It is also unclear as to whether Rogers was making this argument in good faith, since it was based on racist pseudoscience, or if he was simply using them to make a logical conclusion based on these false premises about a woman who was both German and an ancestor of the British royal family that would be disagreeable to white supremacists, i.e., he was trolling Nazis.

Motlalepula Chabaku

It is not well-documented how widespread the belief in or attention to Roger's claims were, as Queen Charlotte had little relevance to 20th century Americans and he gained little exposure among Whites. However, the interest was likely higher in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina, as White elites had been using her as a symbolic matriarch of the city. Gregory states that Whites had been countering the claims about Charlotte since at least 1934, but offers evidence that does not support this assertion.

In 1989, after the unveiling of a statue to Charlotte in one of her namesake cities, Charlotte, North Carolina, Motlalepula Chabaku, a South African civil rights activist and Methodist minister in Charlotte, charged in a letter to the editor of the *The Charlotte Observer* that the statue changed Charlotte's "African features" to a "European or Caucasian appearance" and that "she was a black woman even though she was the consort of King George III." A feature article a few days later uncritically presents several perspectives, including misattributing an assertion by J. A. Rogers to one of Charlotte's contemporaries, Horace Walpole. This is the first printed assertion that she was "black" and likely the first time Rogers' work appeared outside of an African American newspaper, and was likely the first time most White Charlotteans had heard of these claims.

In the article from February 22, 1989 contains several quotes from residents of Charlotte, including a local historian who asserts that "she definitely had African ancestry."

Mario de Valdes y Cocom

In 1999, Mario de Valdes y Cocom (or Mario Valdes) developed content for a PBS Frontline website called "The Blurred Racial Lines of Famous Families". This was a companion website to a documentary produced by June Cross entitled "Secret Daughter", described as "the story of a mixed race daughter and the white mother who gave her away" about Cross' experience being biracial and adopted. The documentary contains no references to Charlotte, though there are several sources that incorrectly claim that it does. The website describes several White European and American individuals and families who had or possibly had non-White ancestors. Valdes, a self-described "historian of the African diaspora," claims that Charlotte had an "unmistakable African appearance" and "negroid physiogomy[sic]". In a 2017 interview, Valdes stated that "I had heard these stories from my Jamaican nanny, Etheralda 'TeeTee' Cole."

Valdes does not cite J. A. Rogers as a source, but uses very similar evidence and language. Valdes asserts that the Ramsay portrait is "the most decidedly African of all her portraits" this and a line engraving after the Frye mezzotint show her "Negroid characteristics." Valdes provides a partial quote from Baron Stockmar, physician-in-ordinary to her granddaughter Princess Charlotte of Wales, describing her as having "a true Mulatto face" (out of the full quote of "small and crooked, with a true Mulatto face", discussed later), and without the context that she was severely ill and within months of dying and stating incorrectly that Stockmar was *her* personal physician. Valdes also cites as evidence a Romantic poem by Samuel Bowden with the line "Descended from the warlike Vandal race, she still preserves that title in her face" with the unusual interpretation that this alludes to "African" ancestry because the Vandals conquered a large area in North Africa, rather than the more obvious interpretation that the Vandals were a Germanic people and it simply references Charlotte's German ancestry. Valdes also asserts that the family of one of her ancestors, Margarita de Castro e Souza, who appears once in her 9th generation and twice in her 10th generation, was from a "black branch of the Portuguese Royal House." There is no evidence that the Sousa family was "black" in any meaningful definition of that word to describe race or ethnicity, and they were not part of the "Royal House," though Valdes could have used this incorrect term to mean that they were Portuguese and part of the nobility.

While Valdes does not explicitly say she was "Black" or "mixed race" in this work, he does describe "mixed-race" ancestry in a *The Sunday Times* article from June 1999. The authors of the article use the term "black" in describing her ancestry, though they do not refer to Charlotte as "mixed-race" or "black". However, it would be easy for someone to look at these sources and make the slight change to claim that she was Black or mixed race. This article is also the first published mention of Charlotte's connection to Madragana, referring to her by the name Madalena Gil. It is well-documented that Charlotte was descended from Margarita de Castro e

Souza, and thereby to King Afonso III of Portugal (1210–1279) and Madragana (c. 1230–?). It is unclear exactly what Madragana's ethnicity was, but it is most likely that she was Mozarab, a term for Iberian Christians living in Muslim Iberia. It has been claimed that she was a "Moor," which would imply either Maghrebine Berber or Arab ancestry.

However, possibility of her being "Moorish" has led some people to erroneously claim that she was "black" because Europeans typically referred to "Moors" using "black" as a racist term, for example, in applying the term "blackamoor" to mean Muslim, even if the people being referred to were light-skinned North African Berbers. However, in the United States, "African" ancestry is most closely associated with sub-Saharan African ancestry because of the transatlantic slave trade, and therefore with African American ethnicity and Black socioracial identity. We can thereby see how the claims of possible (North) African ancestry were misinterpreted as claims that one line of her ancestors or she were "black".

The most recent wave of claims were set off by the engagement and marriage of Meghan Markle to Prince Harry. Numerous articles were produced with headlines like "Britain's black queen: Will Meghan Markle really be the first mixed-race royal?" These typically present information from Valdes and Wikipedia in an uncritical manner, interchangeably use "African", "mixed race," "biracial," and "Black," and even misquote already misquoted accounts. One article even asserts that the Ramsay portrait depicts her with "café-au-lait" skin, a claim that had never before been made by Rogers or Valdes.

The second source of these arguments can be traced to a companion website called "The Blurred Racial Lines of Famous Families" developed in 1999 for a PBS Frontline program "Secret Daughter." The program itself is about the producer's experiences as an adopted biracial woman, and is unrelated to Queen Charlotte. The majority of the website content was developed by Mario de Valdes y Cocom (also cited as Mario Valdes⁶), a self-described "historian of the African diaspora" and has also been described as "a professional genealogist" (*The Sunday Times*).

In a recent article, Mario de Valdes y Cocom, one of the promoters of this myth, was quoted as saying "in reaction to the horrors of what happened in Charlottesville, which is named after this queen, her ancestry is very relevant."⁷

In an interview with the Washington Post, Valdes he first heard the stories about Queen Charlotte from his Jamaican nanny, Etheralda "TeeTee" Cole, and began research after moving from Belize to the U.S. in 1967[citation]. While we should respect oral history, we should also require some form of documentation. If it is true that, as Valdes asserts, "the black community, both in the U.S. and throughout the British Commonwealth, have rallied around pictures of Queen Charlotte

⁶ In this document, I refer to him using the surname "Valdes" as that is how other articles do, even though it would be more typical with a Spanish name to use "Cocom."

⁷ TBD: WP

for generations," we should be able to find more than a single reference to this oral history. Likewise, given that Rogers was Jamaican-American and his quantity-over-quality approach to popular Black History, I find it implausible that if this was the case he would not be aware of it or he would not have included this as "proof" in his writings.

Valdes invokes the contemporaneous account argument, citing the supposed existence of "at least half a dozen quotes by her contemporaries regarding her negroid features," though he only provides two of them: Baron Stockmar's statement of her "true mulatto face" and claiming that a poem by Samuel Bowden makes "allusions to her African appearance." He does not cite Rogers's prior work or include Henry Walpole's description on that site.

Valdes repeatedly asserts the appearance argument ("conspicuously Negroid", "physiological traits that so obviously identify the ethnic strain", "unmistakable African appearance", "Negroid characteristics", "decidedly African", "the Queen's negroid physiogamy [*sic*]"), primarily in reference to the Ramsey portrait. In the article, he includes small images of the same Ramsey and Frye portraits cited by Rogers.

Valdes also introduces the argument that Queen Charlotte was "black" because of her lineage to Portuguese noblewoman Margarita de Castro e Sousa (c.1440)⁸. Margarita occupies three positions in Charlotte's 9th generation of ancestors (reference), though Valdes claims, without sourcing, that there were "six different lines" between them. Through an unsourced and somewhat circuitous argument, Valdes claims that Margarita was "black", because she was part of a "black branch of the Portuguese Royal House" (which does not exist, and of which the Sousa family was not a part, but instead just nobles), which is "black" because two unnamed "art historians" claim that the "black magi" in several Flemish paintings of the Adoration of the Magi were "in all probability, members of the Portuguese de Sousa family". None of these claims cite any evidence or have an historical basis.

⁸ Note that Valdes misspells her name "Margarita de Castro y Sousa," using the Spanish "y" instead of the Portuguese "e" for her second family name.

Historiography and the Evolution of Claims

1940 — Joel Augustus (J. A.) Rogers publishes the first of three books in his *Sex and Race* trilogy, *Sex and Race: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands, Volume I: The Old World*.

In the 1967 (9th) edition, the frontispiece is low-quality, monochromatic reproduction of a portrait of Queen Charlotte painted by the studio of Allan Ramsey around 1762 (NPG 224). Ramsey and his assistants painted numerous similar portraits of Queen Charlotte, but this one is distinguishable by the pearl bracelet on her left arm, given to her as a wedding gift by her new husband, King George III.



While Rogers puts her on the frontispiece, there are only two mentions of her in the book. The first is in a section entitled "Royal Ancestry and the Negro" (p. 206):

The portrait of Queen Charlotte Sophia, consort of George III, by Ramsay clearly shows a Negro strain. Horace Walpole, who saw her, wrote of her, "nostrils spreading too wide; mouth has the same fault." (See frontispiece)

In the "Notes on the Illustrations" section at the end of the book, Rogers further explains his views on Queen Charlotte (p. 288) in reference to the frontispiece portrait:



upper left: low-quality reproduction of a drawing that copies Frye's mezzotint, as found in *Nature Knows No Color-Line* by J. A. Rogers

upper right: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604595/her-most-excellent-majesty-charlotte-queen-of-great-britain-c> Thomas Frye, "HER Most Excellent Majesty Charlotte Queen of GREAT BRITAIN &c." (1762) (RCIN 604595)

lower Left: engraved card, unknown artist, after Frye's mezzotint, from which Rogers's image is copied
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw17686/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz>

PLATE I.

Charlotte Sophia, German-born consort of George III, had the broad nostrils and heavy lips "of the blond Negroid type" mentioned by Brunold Springer on page 11 of this book. Horace Walpole, who saw her wrote: "Nostrils spreading too wide. Mouth has the same fault." (National Biog. Vol. IV, p. 123). It would have been possible to reproduce several pictures of Negroes who resemble this English queen. I have one of a little Negro musician, whose features, especially the mouth, is strikingly like hers.

This blond Negroid type is not uncommon even in Nordic Europe. As was seen, whites and blacks have been mixing all over Europe from the dimmest antiquity. I recall one blonde I saw in a Paris cafe, with very fair skin and light hair, who was so Negroid in appearance, especially the nose and the mouth, that a French person who was with me, exclaimed, "Voila, une Negresse blanche."

It happened that this girl was waiting for some Negro friends of mine, and I made her acquaintance. She was born in Holland of a Dutch father and a Negro mother. She was tall, very well built and like most Europeans with a Negro strain was rather proud of it, and preferred the company of Negroes.

I hold that white people who show Negroid features had a Negro ancestor, more or less distant. When we see a lighter complexioned Negro with lips and nose rather after the Caucasian mold, we do not hesitate to say that he has "white" blood. It is a poor rule that doesn't work both ways. One's ancestry does not just come out of the air.

For a copy of this portrait of Queen Charlotte see Greenwood, A. D., Hanoverian Queens of England, Vol. II, frontispiece, London, 1909. My copy comes from the National Portrait Gallery, London.

The most relevant part with respect to Charlotte is:

Charlotte Sophia, German-born consort of George III, had the broad nostrils and heavy lips "of the blond Negroid type" mentioned in Brunold Springer on page 11 of this book. Horace Walpole, who saw her wrote: "Nostrils spreading too wide. Mouth has the same fault." (National Biog. Vol. IV, p. 123). It would have been possible to reproduce several pictures of Negroes who resemble this English queen. I have one of a little Negro musician, whose features, especially in the mouth, is strikingly like hers.

This blond Negroid type is not uncommon even in Nordic Europe. As we have seen, whites and blacks have been mixing all over Europe from the dimmest antiquity.

In 1929, Brunold Springer wrote *Die Blutmischung als Grundgesetz des Lebens* ("Racial Mixture as the Basic Principle of Life"). This book, in German, appears to never have been translated into English nor digitized. The only reference in English to this work I could find is the July 1, 1940 *The New York Times* article "Negroid Blood in Hitler's 'Aryans'" (republished in several other newspapers, including the Pittsburgh Courier for which Rogers was a contributor)⁹, of which Rogers reproduces the text here and a copy of in *100 Amazing Facts About the Negro* (Appendix 4).

⁹ "Negroid Blood in Hitler's 'Aryans'" from *The New York Times*, July 1, 1940 (early edition only, it was apparently cut from the late city edition, which what the NYT TimesMachine online archive contains).

While a book from the 1920 by a German on race theory might initially be presumed to be part of the racist Nazi ideology, Springer was actually a German Jewish lawyer with an overtly antiracist agenda, seeking to counter the anti-Semitism inherent in many of the pseudoscientific racist ideas of the day, particularly that of the "master race" that placed the "pure" Nordic and Aryan "races" above all others in a racial hierarchy and was used to justify the Holocaust.

On page 11 in *Sex and Race, Vol. 1*, Springer is quoted (translated to English):

"Often the Negroid aspect is strikingly evidenced in personal appearance, Herr writes, as in the case of Dr. Schweninger, Bismarck's physician, who had warm, African eyes, or of Beethoven, who possessed in addition a strain of Malay or Alpine blood as well. Once the characteristic Negro features become familiar to the glance, blonde Negroes are often discernable. Gabrielle Réjane, the French Actress, had the broad nose and heavy lips of the blonde Negroid type."

Interestingly, Rogers quotes Springer on Portugal, but does not make the connection between Charlotte and her Portuguese ancestors that Mario Valdes uses as evidence, so he either did not know about the lineage or the unsupported theory that the Sousa family was "black". This is important, because I believe it's the connection that Valdes makes (though with an invalid conclusion):

Portugal was the first example of a Negrito republic in Europe. In the Portuguese runs a deep current of Negro blood, and there the Negro has often risen to the caste of the nobility. Napoleon's army had many small, black Portuguese soldiers, who were nicknamed "the fleas."

Rogers also both decontextualizes and misquotes Walpole, which will be discussed later.

Rogers goes on to publish the final two volumes of the *Sex and Race* trilogy in 1942 and 1944.

1952 — J. A. Rogers publishes *Nature Knows No Color-Line: Research into the Negro Ancestry in the White Race*. He uses a keepsake portrait of Queen Charlotte by Thomas Frye (1762) on the cover.

There is only single mention of her in the text:

With these Negroes in German nobility, the evident Negro strain in Queen Charlotte Sophia consort of George III of England, who was a German princess, might be explained (see her portrait).

12 Jan 1952 "Rogers Says: Research Disproves Theory that Black Contributed Little" in the Pittsburgh Courier:

As regards British royalty, one portrait is that of Charlotte Sophia, Queen of England, and grandmother of Queen Victoria. It shows her even more Negroid than that given in my "Sex and Race."

Here is referring to either the Thomas Frye mezzotint or the lower-quality derivative card from it.

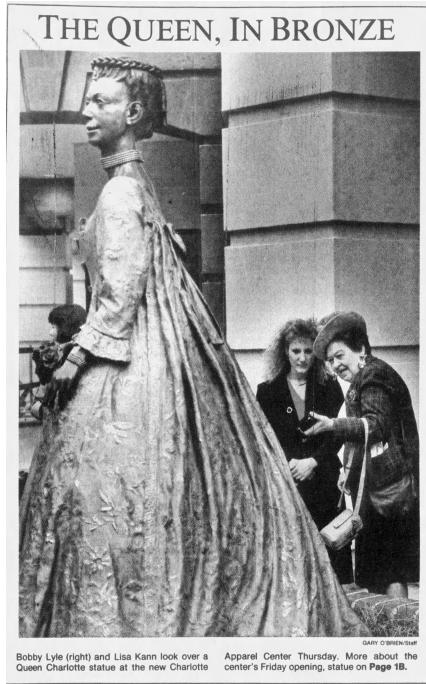
1957 — Likely after 1952 but before the 1957 edition of *100 Amazing Facts About the Negro with Complete Proof*, Rogers includes a reprint of a July 1, 1940 The New York Times article "Negroid Blood in Hitler's 'Aryans'," which contains no mention of Charlotte, alongside a cropped headshot of Charlotte from the 1762 Ramsay portrait.

1975 — Olwen Hedley writes *Queen Charlotte*, the first modern, documented biography of Charlotte. The "mulatto face" quote by Stockmar is included in the book, but with the appropriate context, so it is clear that Stockmar is using this racist term to describe a severely-ill Queen Charlotte, so Hedley makes no other mention that it could even imply a claim of mixed-race, likely because these had not been popularized after misinterpretation of Rogers's claims.

1977 — The National Gallery, London, publishes a book by Michael Levey entitled *A Royal Subject: Portraits of Queen Charlotte*. Levey describes numerous portraits of the Queen and gives historical context around each. Levey presents numerous blunt and critical comments about her appearance, including from Charlotte herself, but makes no mention of even claims of mixed-race, likely, again, because they had not been popularized. This has been liberally interpreted by some as deliberately ignoring "evidence." However, if claims about Charlotte's "ancestry" being visible in her portraits had been known to Levey, he would likely have included it, either XXX as Rogers's benign claim of Charlotte's "Negro strain", or the claim that she was "black" if simply for the opportunity to ridicule it.

1989 - The Jan. 27, 1989 *The Charlotte Observer* has a front page photo of a sculpture of Queen Charlotte by B. Graham Weathers under the title "The Queen, In Bronze," and an article by John

Wildman entitled "Statue of Queen Takes Its Bows." The article includes a fairly standard biography of her. There is no mention of ancestry claims, as the claims were likely not well known to Whites in Charlotte, and the author and Weathers were not aware of them.



Several days later, on Feb. 3, 1989, *The Charlotte Observer* published a letter to the editor from Rev. Motlalepula Chabaku titled "Queen's Features Altered", in which Rev. Chabaku, a Black woman from South African who was a civil rights activist and Methodist minister in the Charlotte area, stated "She was a black woman even though she was the consort of King George III." This is the first printed claim that she was "black." This letter coincided with the start of

Black History Month, for which Rev. Chabaku hosted several events. Chabaku also charges that Weathers "changed Charlotte's "African features" to a "European or Caucasian appearance".

Queen's Features Altered

The writer is minister, United Methodist Church.

I am concerned that *The Observer* has given prominent display (Jan. 27, "The Queen, In Bronze") to the statue of Queen Charlotte, whose African features have been replaced by European or Caucasian appearance.

It is a fact that Queen Charlotte Sophia had mixed ancestry of African and European blood and was the grandmother of Queen Victoria. She was a black woman even though she was the consort of King George III. Why can't we have her as naturally as she was? Why be ashamed of her African features?

Rev. MOTLALEPULA CHABAKU
Newton

On Feb. 16, 1989, Weathers responds to Chabaku's claims in another letter to the editor, defending himself against the accusations that he deliberately changed her appearance and recounting the steps he took in creating her likeness. The tone of Weathers's response indicates that he was unaware of any claims that she was "black," which is likely true given that Rogers's work had not achieved widespread awareness among Whites even while he was alive. Gregory claims there was public debate about this in her thesis, but there is no documentation to support this

statement.

Several days later, on Feb. 22, 1989, *The Charlotte Observer* published a feature article "Some Say Queen Charlotte Can Claim African Ancestry" by Ed Martin. This article uncritically presents several perspectives, and misattributes the modern assertion by J. A. Rogers (the "pictures of Negroes" quote) to a contemporary of Charlotte, Horace Walpole. This was likely the first time Rogers' work or these claims had been published outside of African American newspapers and Rogers' self-published books.

In the article, Weathers is quoted as saying that there was "no suggestion in skin color, width of nose, thickness of lips, that might suggest Negroid descent." He did not use the term "Negroid" in his initial response letter to Chabaku's claim and it is quite an arcane term bordering on racist, something Weathers would have been cautious about in this context in 1989, so it seems likely that Weathers was told about Rogers' work between the letter and the interview. With all of the research into Charlotte that Weathers describes in preparation for the sculpture, if he didn't know about these claims prior to Chabaku mentioning them, then it's unlikely many other Whites did either.

1997 — Feb 27 1997 "Was Queen Charlotte Black? Debate lives" in *The Charlotte Observer*. Prompted by a comics-style drawing of her that accompanied an article about food. This explicitly uses the term "black" and indicates that "some readers objected to the rendering, because it did not show Queen Charlotte as a black woman," including a pair of radio DJs. This claim is the same as those made by Rev. Chabaku eight years earlier.

1999 — PBS Frontline developed a website called "The Blurred Racial Lines of Famous Families" featuring "White" European and American individuals and families who verifiably or possibly had "non-White" ancestors¹⁰ as companion material to a PBS Frontline program by producer June Cross called "Secret Daughter," described as "the story of a mixed race daughter and the white mother who gave her away," about Cross's own experience of being biracial and adopted. It has been widely misrepresented that this program contained content about Charlotte, which it does not — it is only the companion website that has information about her.

The majority of this content was developed by Mario de Valdes y Cocom (also named as Mario Valdes in places), a self-described "historian of the African diaspora." Among the people featured on this website are Alessandro de' Medici, Alexander Pushkin, Peter Ustinov, Heather Locklear, and Queen Charlotte. This is the first instance of many of the claims and the origin of the second generation of the myth.

In this work, Valdes claims Charlotte's link to Margarita de Castro y Sousa, but does not mention the further distant link to Madragana (which appears later in the GEN-MEDIEVAL mailing list thread).

¹⁰ according to the site copyright and Internet Archive Wayback Machine

In this work, Valdes makes several novel claims. None of these are sourced, so it is difficult to verify that the references, though some are so vague as to make that difficult. Oddly, Valdes makes not reference to the work of J. A. Rogers.

Claim 1: "the black community, both in the U.S. and throughout the British Commonwealth, have rallied around pictures of Queen Charlotte for generations"

I have found no evidence for this. If this were true, J. A. Rogers would have undoubtedly mentioned it, as he was both born in Jamaica and lived in the United States.

Claim 2: Charlotte was "descended from Margarita de Castro y Sousa, a black branch of the Portuguese Royal House" and "the Sousa family (who Valdes incorrectly refers to as the "de Sousa" family) was "black" because two unnamed "art historians" claimed that the "black magi" featured in 15th century Flemish paintings of the "Adoration of the Magi" were modeled after members of the Sousa family.

There is no evidence, other than this unsourced claim about a single painting or a category of paintings (it's unclear which), that the Sousa family was "black" by any definition. I have not found any reference to this claim about the models for the Magi being from the Sousa family. It is also possible that this is a misinterpreted reference that the models for the painting were sub-Saharan Africans who were enslaved by the Sousas, rather than Sousas themselves.

Claim 3: there are "six different lines" of ancestry between Charlotte and Margarita.

There are only three lines between the two of them (Appendix 1). Margarita appears once in Charlotte's 9th generation and twice in Charlotte's 10th generation. Likewise, King George III also has three documented lines to Margarita. With the documented three lines, she accounts for only 1/256th of Charlotte's ancestry.

Claim 4: "Sir Allan Ramsay was the artist responsible for the majority of the paintings of the Queen"

This is a severely misleading statement. Ramsay himself only had a single portrait sitting with Charlotte. His studio then produced a large number of variations on his initial portrait, including the one in the Mint Museum in Charlotte, N.C. So, while he, or rather the painters in his studio, were responsible for the largest number of physical paintings of Charlotte, these are all copies of the single original portrait Ramsay painted of her from life.

Claim 5: "[Ramsay's] representations of her were the most decidedly African of all her portraits"

This is the most contentious and unresolvable of all of the claims. However, Ramsay's portrait is the most of all of her other portraits, which clearly show a relatively unattractive White woman.

Valdes presents as visual evidence a small, blurry image of one of the Ramsay variation portraits and the low-quality reproduction of the printed card image after the Thomas Frye mezzotint which appears to be taken directly from the cover of J. A. Rogers's *Nature Knows No Color-Line*.

Claim 6: Simultaneously "The Negroid characteristics of the Queen's portraits certainly had political significance since artists of that period were expected to play down, soften or even obliterate undesirable features in a subject's face." and "It is perhaps because of this fairly obvious case of propagandistic portraiture."

After reading this section numerous times, Valdes seems to be arguing both sides? It's not even clear what he's getting at here. TBD

Claim 7: "at least half a dozen quotes by her contemporaries regarding her negroid features."

Valdes only provides two of these supposed six quotes. I have found five, and discuss them further in the section "Contemporaneous Accounts."

Claim 8: "the most valuable [quote] ... would... be the one published in the autobiography of the Queen's personal physician, Baron Stockmar, where he described her as having '...a true mulatto face.'"

This quote is discussed in greater depth in the "Contemporaneous Accounts" section. Briefly, Stockmar was not "Queen's personal physician," but rather personal physician to her granddaughter, Princess Charlotte of Wales (1796–1817), and described Queen Charlotte this way when she was in severely ill-health a few months before her death.

Claim 9: "Perhaps the most literary of these allusions to her African appearance, however, can be found in the poem penned to her on the occasion of her wedding to George III and the Coronation celebration that immediately followed."

The implication of the phrasing (or at least what I was led to believe the first time I read it) was that the poem was actually part of her wedding and coronation. It was actually written by an obscure poet, Samuel Bowden, who had never even seen an image of her before, and published in a magazine, *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, the same month as her coronation. This is also discussed further in the "Contemporaneous Accounts" section.

Claim 10: "Finally, it should be noted that the Royal Household itself, at the time of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation, referred to both her Asian and African bloodlines in an apologia it published defending her position as head of the Commonwealth."

This is unsourced and there is no evidence this happened. If this did, it would have undoubtedly been an important event and widely reported.

On **June 1, 1999**, Evert Dijkema started a thread on the GEN-MEDIEVAL mailing list asking about the veracity of the information presented on the Frontline website. Leo van de Pas (1942-2016), a prominent genealogist and proprietor of [Leo's Genealogics Website](#), replied several times on this thread, both corroborating and providing detail for the genealogy of Queen Charlotte presented by the "Blurred Racial Lines" site, but disputing nearly every other claim made therein.

This thread is the first mention, by Leo van de Pas, of the link from MCS to Madragana / Magdalena Gil. This link is still documented on [Leo's Genealogics Website](#).

On **June 6, 1999**, *The Sunday Times*, a British newspaper, published a sensationalist article "Revealed: The Queen's Black Ancestors" by Jon Ungoed-Thomas and Eduardo Goncalves. This expands the claims made by "Blurred Racial Lines" into the assertion that "the British royal family has hidden credentials that make its members appropriate leaders of Britain's multicultural society," these "credentials" being "black" and "mixed-raced" ancestors. Given the timing, it seems likely that the writing of this article was somehow related to the recent discussion on the GEN-MEDIEVAL mailing list, given that the Frontline article was six months old by this point.

The article in *The Sunday Times* contains quotes from an interview with Valdes, notes that Duarte Nuno Souso Chichorro Marcao, one of "Afonso III's Portuguese descendants... has confirmed the connection" with Madragana, misidentifies Madragana's father as "Madrem, the Moorish king of the Algarve capital" (her father was actually Aloandro Ben Bekar, and Madrem seems to be entirely made up), a rather disinterested quote from David Williamson, co-editor of *Debrett's Peerage & Baronetage*, and a quote from "race relations activist" Valerie Mason-John, author of the play *Brown Girl In The Ring*.

This is the first published article referencing the connection to Madragana.

Valdes is quoted as saying "many of the state portraits of Queen Charlotte demonstrate quite clearly her mixed-race ancestry." However, this statement is not true, as Valdes only presents the Ramsay portrait (of which the initial was painted from life) and derivative work of Thomas Frye's mezzotint (which Frye claimed to have drawn of her at the theatre). I have not seen any other claims that any of her numerous other portraits done from life show any "mixed-race ancestry."

Valdes makes the claim "what also contributed to the perceptibility of her African heritage was the highly inbred pattern of princely German marriage alliances." However, as previously noted, Margarita de Castro y Sousa only accounts for 1/256th of Charlotte's ancestry, so this can hardly be counted as "highly inbred."

2000 "Racial Disaster in the U.K.: Pushkin's Blood Flows in the Veins of the Future Kings of England" by The Editors, The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education¹¹ (Vol 27, Spring 2000)
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2679023>

This article repeats claims in *The Sunday Times* article, and adds "Official portraits show her with a wide nose, large mouth, and a mulatto complexion." This is important mutation of the claims because it combines the "wide nose and mouth" analysis of the Ramsey portrait and Stockmar's (out-of-context) "mulatto-face" comment into the claim that Ramsey's portrait *shows* her with a "mulatto complexion," which no one had yet claimed, and Ramsey's portrait does not show.

2003 — June 20, 2003 Wikipedia

An anonymous user adds to the initial biography page created on April 12, 2003 by user Deb to add the claims, referencing Valdes' work.

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charlotte_of_Mecklenburg-Strelitz&oldid=1410042

According to information published on www.pbs.org, the official website of the Public Broadcasting System, Queen Charlotte was part black, six times a descendant of Margarita de Castro y Sousa, a black, Moorish, or mixed-race member of the Portuguese royal family who lived in the 15th century. Citing research conducted by Charlotte biographer Olwen Hedley as well as the history department of Canada's McGill University, black-diaspora historian Mario de Valdes y Cocom writes on the PBS website that Queen Charlotte's personal physician, Christian Friedrich, Baron von Stockmar, described his patient as having "true mulatto features" ("ein wahres Mulattengesicht").

This description is significantly different than Valdes' article, even though it's clearly attempting to summarize it.

This Wikipedia article is also the first text to source the claims that Duarte Nunes de Leão, a Portuguese historian, claims Madragana was a "Moor" in his book *Primeira parte das Chronicas dos reis de Portugal* from 1600 and that António Caetano de Sousa, a Portuguese historian, disputed Nunes's claim about Madragana's ethnicity in *Provas da História Genealógica da Casa Real Portuguesa Tomo VI* in 1748. (the exact edit that adds this has not yet been found.) While this wikipedia page is the only place where this content exists, it does seem to be an accurate statement with respect to the source material.

On **February 2nd, 2006**, *The Hook*, a weekly newspaper in Charlottesville, published an article "Was Queen Charlotte black?" by Virginia Daugherty. The article add no new historical

¹¹ While this publication has "journal" in the title, it is not a peer-reviewed publication and acts more as a trade magazine for its titular audience, and is now published only as an online magazine.

information, but puts this myth in the context of one of her namesake cities. This article is primarily a reworking of the Frontline and Wikipedia articles.

This may have been a mistake in the Wikipedia article or a misunderstanding by the author, as she states that Madragana (referred to as Mourana Gil in the article) was not "African", as she was born in present-day Portugal, and is a good example of how the claims mutate.

On March 11, 2009, *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, published an article "Was this Britain's first black queen?" by Stuart Jeffries. This is the first major article since the original one in *The Sunday Times* from 1999. This article frames itself around the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. This article includes numerous quotes from historians, all of whom express skepticism over Valdes' claims.

Jeffries begins the piece with the claim that Charlotte is "the woman said to be Britain's first black queen," in a way that assumes that this is either a correct or widely-accepted statement.

It includes a quote from Cheryl Palmer, director of education at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC, saying that she was "a person who may have had African forebears." Again, this is an expansion from "black Portuguese" or "Moorish" to "African," which has the connotation that they were sub-Saharan African, and thereby would be racially categorized as Black.

Jeffries inflates Valdes's claims, stating "[Valdes] argues that her features, as seen in royal portraits, were conspicuously African, and contends that they were noted by numerous contemporaries," where the supposed six sources Valdes says (only two of which Valdes quoted) now becomes "numerous."

Jeffries include a section with Valdes's claims that Madragana was "a Moor and thus a black African," though he chooses not to provide even the most basic fact check of the misconception that "Moors" were "black." This is interesting as Valdes had never mentioned Madragana, and this was added by *The Sunday Times* article.

Desmond Shawe-Taylor is quoted:

None of them shows her as African, and you'd suspect they would if she was visibly of African descent. You'd expect they would have a field day if she was.

As seen in the Caricatures section of this paper and the numerous examples in the Royal Collection Trust, the political cartoons of Charlotte were brutal, and there is no reason to believe they would never have exploited this, particularly when mocking her anti-slavery actions.

Jeffries also presents the racist statement that "perhaps, instead of just being a boring bunch of semi-inbred white stiffs, our royal family becomes much more interesting," as if "blackness" is so magical that even very distant ancestry automatically makes one "interesting."

One interesting quote is from former Congressman Mel Watt:

In private conversations, African-Americans have always acknowledged and found a sense of pride in this 'secret'. It's great that this discussion can now come out of the closet into the public places of Charlotte, so we all can acknowledge and celebrate it... We were a lot more immigrant-friendly in those days than we were friendly to people of colour.... We all recognised that we all came from some place else. But there was always a sense of denial, even ostracism, about being black. Putting the history on top of the table should make for opportunities for provocative, healing conversations.

Mel Watt's wife, Eulada Watt, also states:

I believe African-American Charlotteans have always been proud of Queen Charlotte's heritage and acknowledge it with a smile and a wink... Many of us are now enjoying a bit of 'I told you so', now that the story is out... Hopefully, the sketchiness will inspire others to further research and documentation of our rich history. Knowing more about an old dead queen can play a part in reconciliation.

2010 Ken Aptekar creates a series of painting around the theme of Queen Charlotte for the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC. As part of this, he holds public feedback sessions.

From Gregory:

Aptekar said the black people of the focus group heavily identified themselves with the queen as a black woman. On the contrary, the white people struggled to understand what that exactly meant to the black people of Charlotte. Aptekar said he was surprised at how many whites actually refused to believe she was black. He wanted to capture this frustration in order to invite all Charlotteans to truly think Queen Charlotte. To do this, Aptekar painted two portraits of the queen with the words "Black, White, Other" and "Oh Yeah She Is" in order to illustrate this opposition.

2013 In the book *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic* edited by Paul Youngquist, Youngquist writes an essay entitled "The African Queen" about the relationship between race and British Romanticism. One of the interesting parts of this essay is how the inclusion of "blackness" various works of art and literature reveals the inherent "whiteness" which was heretofore "transparent." Youngquist intentionally avoids the question of whether than ancestry claims are true or not, and instead analyses various works from the perspective that if race is intentionally included in them, typically in the form of mildly-exoticized features or tangential context, how that affects the "whiteness" at the forefront of those works.

2016 *Commemorating Queen Charlottes: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Memory, 1750 to 2014* by Bethany Rebekah Holt Gregory, as a master's thesis in history at UNC-Charlotte.

This thesis is focused on the historical memory of Charlotte in the city of Charlotte, North Carolina. Gregory asserts that there were widespread disagreement over her racial identity in the city since the 1950s, but provides no sources prior to the 1989 letter to the editor by Rev. Motlalepula Chabaku that directly support this assertion. Several sources are materially misquoted or significantly represented, as described in Appendix 4.

2016 — Dec 19, 2016 "City of Charlottesville Blue Ribbon Commission on Race, Memorials, and Public Spaces Report to City Council". Under new memorial suggestions, "Queen Charlotte (Charlottesville's namesake with African ancestry)" and a question raised at community forum "There are no statues of black people. What about Queen Charlotte, a black woman-why?". Under another section "Why don't we dialogue together" an entry "Queen Charlotte and her African heritage."

2017 — November 27, 2017, the engagement announcement of Meghan Markle (now styled Meghan, Duchess of Sussex) and Prince Harry set off a round of journalists producing articles reproducing this idea, while applying only a limited amount of criticality to the claims.

2017 — November 28, 2017 "Is Meghan Markle's mixed-race heritage a first for British royalty?" by Valerie Russ

<https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/meghan-markle-mixed-race-prince-harry-queen-charlotte-20171128.html>

This was one of the first articles in the "Markle wave" of the myth. It has no new claims or mutations, but does explicitly address the claim that Madragana was a "Moor" and therefore "black." This is described as:

But Ania Loomba, who teaches history of race and colonialism at the University of Pennsylvania, said that it can't be assumed that a person is black if they were once described as Moor, or "blackamoor."

"The word 'blackamoor' in Shakespeare's time meant Muslim. It didn't mean black necessarily," Loomba said. "Moors could be white from North Africa."

November 28, 2017 Britain's black queen: Will Meghan Markle really be the first mixed-race royal? by DeNeen L. Brown

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/11/27/britains-black-queen-will-meghan-markle-really-be-the-first-mixed-race-royal/>

"But Markle, whose mother is black and whose father is white, may not be the first mixed-race royal.... Some historians suspect that Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George III who bore the king 15 children, was of African descent." — actually a person who is not an historian.

use of "Ouruana, a black Moor." — name and "black Moor" is a new statement.

"“I had heard these stories from my Jamaican nanny, Etheralda ‘TeeTee’ Cole,” Valdes recalled."

Stockmar, Scott, and prime minister, though the statement

"Sir Walter Scott wrote that she was “ill-colored” and called her family “a bunch of ill-colored orangutans.”" is highly inaccurate

"In several British colonies, Queen Charlotte was often honored by blacks who were convinced from her portraits and likeness on coins that she had African ancestry."

"In a portrait painted by Sir Allan Ramsay, Queen Charlotte’s hair is piled high in curly ringlets. Her neck is long and her skin appears to be café-au-lait."

May 8, 2018 "Meghan Markle Might Not Be the First Mixed-Race British Royal" by Erin Blakemore for the History Channel website <https://www.history.com/news/biracial-royalty-meghan-markle-queen-charlotte>

But the residents of Buckingham Palace may not be as white as is commonly assumed. According to some historians, mixed-race marriages among European royalty often went unacknowledged due to racism within both the royal family and European society at large. Indeed, Markle may not actually be the first black member of the British monarchy.

The phrasing of "some historians" is used, when Valdes is the only "historian" making the claim. The article also uses the term "black", "biracial", and "mixed-race" interchangeably. The Scott quote is mixed up, saying that he wrote "that Charlotte’s family was filled with 'ill-colored, orang-outang looking figures,' rather than his description of *paintings* of them as such.

Again, we have a slight but important mutation in the claims. The article says "...Valdes maintains she was actually black and had dark skin and features consistent with someone of African descent." Valdes was not interviewed for this article, so this phrasing that Valdes claimed she had "dark skin" was created from an expansion of Valdes citing the "mulatto-face" quote.

May 19, 2018 "Meghan Markle, Queen Charlotte and the wedding of Britain’s first mixed-race royal" By DeNeen L. Brown <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/05/15/meghan-markle-queen-charlotte-and-the-wedding-of-britains-first-mixed-race-royal/>

Mostly the same as her November 28, 2017, with some more information about the wedding.

But importantly, transforms Brown's novel assessment of Charlotte's skin color in the Ramsey portrait in the previous article ("in a portrait painted by Sir Allan Ramsay, Queen Charlotte’s hair is piled high in curly ringlets. Her neck is long and her skin appears to be café-au-lait") into a *fact* about Charlotte when she first met George III: "Crowds of commoners stretched to see this

first encounter between the king and his princess, whose brown hair was piled high in curly ringlets falling about her long neck and that appeared to be a beautiful cafe-au-lait."

2018 — August 7 *Summer of Hate* by Hawes Spencer contains a section on Queen Charlotte in the chapter "The Long Shadow of Slavery." (p. 164)

- "Given all that came later, perhaps it's appropriate that Charlottesville was named for a woman who had some African heritage."
- "Her lineage included enough African forebears that her mixed race was evident, a fact that was celebrated with a poem at the time of her coronation."

2018 — September 20 "Royalty, Race and the Curious Case of Queen Charlotte" by Jill Sudbury
<http://acaciatreebooks.com/blog/royalty-race-and-the-curious-case-of-queen-charlotte/>

An eloquent description of Charlotte's life, her numerous portraits, and analysis of the the "African ancestry" claims.

2020 — February 2020 edition of a new online magazine *The Critic* "The 'mulatto' Queen" by Lisa Hilton <https://thecritic.co.uk/issues/february-2020/the-mulatto-queen/>

This article puts the the claims in the context of historical fiction film. One unique variant of the claims is that Stockmar "described her at birth as having 'a true mulatto face'," which I have found no where else, and which Hilton dismisses by stating that Stockmar was born after Charlotte. This is also the only article I've seen correctly quotes the Bowden poem with "And Andalusian" instead of using Valdes's "And and Alusian" mistranscription.

Contemporaneous Accounts

One of the challenges in the past with verifying contemporaneous accounts was actually finding the sources. Many of these sources were previously obscure prior to their digitization and searchability in Google Books and the Internet Archive.

Valdes states:

It was... Dr. Joyce Hemlow, who obtained from Olwen Hedley, the most recent biographer of the Queen Charlotte (1975), at least half a dozen quotes by her contemporaries regarding her negroid features. Because of its "scientific" source, the most valuable of Dr. Hedley's references would, probably, be the one published in the autobiography of the Queen's personal physician, Baron Stockmar, where he described her as having "...a true mulatto face."

Although Valdes claims there are six quotes, out of the numerous accounts of the most scrutinized woman at the time, he only provides two — Stockmar's single line and a misrepresentation of Bowden's poem. In 2017 Washington Post interview, he provides the Walpole quote and the "prime minister" quote, though these are still only referring to her "wide" nose and mouth, which is barely an argument about her ancestry.

Baron Stockmar's *Mulattengesicht*

The first I will address will that from Christian Friedrich, Baron Stockmar. Stockmar was *not*, in fact, "the Queen's personal physician," but rather physician-in-ordinary to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (later Leopold I of the Belgians) and Queen Charlotte's *granddaughter*, Princess Charlotte of Wales (1796–1817). These Charlottes should not be confused with Charlotte, Princess Royal (1766–1828), eldest daughter of Queen Charlotte and King George III, later Queen consort of King Frederick I of Württemberg.

The quote is from the memoir "Denkwürdigkeiten aus den Papieren des Freiherrn Christian Friedrich von Stockmar" written by Stockmar's son, E. V. Stockmar, from Stockmar's notes. In a section containing descriptions of the numerous royals that Stockmar met, he describes Queen Charlotte as such (p. 93):

**Die Königin Mutter (Charlotte, Gemahlin Georg's III.),
„Klein, verwachsen, ein wahres Mulattengesicht.“**

"Klein, verwachsen, ein wahren Mulattengesicht."

In the English translation by Georgina A. Müller:

The Queen Mother (Charlotte, wife of George III.).
 'Small and crooked, with a true Mulatto face.'

"Small and crooked, with a true Mulatto face."

Here "The Queen Mother" is used because Stockmar worked for Leopold and Princess Charlotte, so he's referring to the relationship between Princess Charlotte and her grandmother Queen Charlotte.

This has been verified as an accurate translation, and *Mulattengesicht* is intended to mean "a face like a biracial person," though there exist only a few published uses of this compound word, so it was likely not a common idiom for describing a biracial person. The context for this description is critical—Stockmar made this observation in June 1818, when the Queen was 74 years old and suffering from severely ill health, that would result in her death that November. He is not describing someone who looks genuinely biracial to him, but using *Mulattengesicht* as a racial slur to describe a dying Charlotte. Several quotes from *Queen Charlotte* by Olwen Hedley (1975) make this clear. It is so apparent from the context that Hedley makes no note of it even being a racial description of her.

p. 287, Dec 1817

Towards the end of the Queen's residence in Madame d'Arblay was able to present her husband during the morning assembly at the Pump Room. In appearance Queen Charlotte had suffered conspicuously from the threefold ravages of sorrow, shock and encroaching disease, so that the piquant face of youth with its generous mouth and slightly tilted nose had aged to an almost grotesque mask. Even Madame d'Arblay, the last person to sink to disrespect or malice, felt bound to concede the painful effects, which yet had no power to diminish the transcendent majority.

p. 290, May 1818

Before [the Queen] could set out again for Windsor, where Princess Sophia continued to maintain a solitary and withdrawn vigil, her health deteriorated. On 19 May, her seventy-fourth birthday, it was announced that she was to 'take up her habitual residence in town; the spasms, to which she is subject, frequently requiring the most prompt medical attendance'.

p. 292, June 1818

Unlike the King's politics and the Prince Regent's licentiousness, Queen Charlotte's private life had offered the critics few opportunities to indulge their wit, but her illness and ageing appearance laid her open to attack. 'The Bath Pump Room' is an essay in disenchantment which makes the more valuable Madam d'Arblay's moderate and authentic candor. 'That lovely rose of German mould', proclaims Peter Pindar,

Seem'd also to be scorch'd and fried;
Or, as it had for years untold.
Between two raging fires been dried--

Those cheeks were sallow, sunk and lean,
Their bones, like *tumuli* did rise;
The little vales of flesh between,
Like parapets to guard the eyes.

p. 292, June 1818

Only one person surpassed Peter Pindar and that was Baron Christian Frederick von Stockmar, future confidant of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. His pen-portrait of Queen Charlotte is devastatingly cruel: 'Klein, verwachsen, ein wahres Mulattengesicht'-- 'small and crooked, with a true mulatto face'. Stockmar only reached England on 31 March 1816 to attend Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, with whom he remained at Claremont. Sir Henry Halford could have told him why the Queen's body was hunched towards her right side, and why she was sometimes livid of hue, but there should have been no need. Stockmar was himself a physician. He should have known a dying woman when he saw one.

Sir Walter Scott quote

The Washington Post (2017) "Sir Walter Scott wrote that she was "ill-colored" and called her family "a bunch of ill-colored orangutans." and a 2018 article states "[Valdes] also found other descriptions, including Sir Walter Scott writing that she was 'ill-colored'" and Valdes states the quotes were by "her contemporaries regarding her negroid features."

This quote comes from *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott: In Three Volumes, Volume 4* by Sir Walter Scott¹². Scott is not describing Charlotte herself, as she had been dead for eight years at time, but rather oil paintings of Charlotte's ancestors. Scott is recounting walking through the "old apartments" in Windsor Castle in Oct 1826, while they are being renovated. He states:

¹² Note that Walter Scott's wife was named Charlotte Carpenter, so there are quite a lot of references to "Charlotte" in these memoirs, but only a handful are referring to Queen Charlotte.

"There are some fine paintings, and some droll ones: among the last are those of divers[sic] princes of the House of Mecklenberg-Strelitz, of which Queen Charlotte was descended. They are ill-colored, ouran-outang-looking figures, with black eyes and hook-noses, in old-fashioned uniforms."

Scott is primarily commenting on the near-comical quality of the paintings, comparing the "fine" and the "droll" (curious or unusual in a way that provokes dry amusement). The paint colors are not well-rendered, the bodies have disproportionately long arms, the eyes are simply black circles, and, most interestingly, a description of hook-noses for a family that Valdes is trying to claim would have had wide, flat "African" noses.

"A Prime Minister"

The third quote is just referenced as being from "a prime minister": "Her nose is too wide and her lips too thick." Which prime minister is ever stated, or any source. These are actually relative descriptions, not absolute, and most likely were simply comparing her to the English beauty standard of the day.

Horace Walpole quote

Horace Walpole, who saw her wrote: "Nostrils spreading too wide. Mouth has the same fault." (Dictionary of National Biography. Vol. X (Chamber to Clarkson; 1887) edited by Leslie Stephen, p. 123)[*ed.* this sometimes incorrectly cited as Vol IV, but Charlotte is in Vol. X]:

She is not tall nor a beauty; pale, and very thin; but looks sensible, and is genteel. Her hair is darkish and fine; her forehead low, her nose very well, except the nostrils spreading too wide; her mouth has the same fault, but her teeth are good. She talks a great deal, and French tolerably;... (*The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, Volume 3*, p.434).

Note that in this description we have two features, "pale" and "fine" hair, that directly contract other parts of this quote interpreted as a biracial complexion or that she would have hair tending towards Afro-texture. In the context of these other comments, the descriptor "too wide" relative to the English beauty standard where smaller to nearly non-existent was better. Also that he explicitly says the nostrils are too wide but otherwise "very well", and that her mouth is too wide, not that she has "heavy lips."

Walpole also described her upon her arrival in England as "she looks very sensible, cheerful, and is remarkably genteel."

Samuel Bowden poem

the "the poem penned to her on the occasion of her wedding to George III and the Coronation celebration that immediately followed"[Valdes]. Valdes does not cite who wrote this or for what reason, but the phrasing of this initially led me to believe it was created for the coronation itself. Instead, it was written by the obscure English physician and poet Samuel Bowden, and appeared in several popular magazines and newspapers around the time of the marriage and coronation, including the *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* September 1761 p. 424, *The Scots Magazine* September 1761, and *London Chronicle* September 12, 1761. Bowden had never seen even an image of the new Queen when he wrote this, as she did not arrive in England until September 1761 and no images had been published prior to that.

If Bowden was trying say Charlotte looked "African", he certainly did a good job burying what could have then been a racist slight under a mountain of otherwise laudatory Romantic hyperbole. While any text can be interpreted in multiple ways, taken in context and with knowledge of the most likely intent of the allusions in the poem, there is no reason to believe that Bowden was intending this.

Here is a selection from the poem, with the entire poem in Appendix 2.

On his Majesty's intended Marriage to the Princess of Mecklenberg, and her Arrival in England.

BRITANNIA's monarch, whom three realms
obey,
And the more spacious kingdoms of the sea,
Tho' blest with all the splendor of a throne,
Still reign'd unhappy, while he reign'd alone :
...
Descended from the warlike *Vandal* race,
She still preserves that title in her face.
Tho' shone their triumphs o'er *Numidia's* plain,
And *Andalusian fields their name retain;**
They but subdued the southern world with arms,
She conquers still with her triumphant charms.
O ! born for rule,—to whose victorious brow
The greatest monarch of the north must bow,
With beauty, sense, and probity endu'd,
Happy the princes, who are thus subdu'd.
No sordid views inspir'd his generous mind,
What blest his prudent choice, must bless man-
kind;
...

Frome, Sept. 5, 1761 S. Bowden.

*Andalusia, so called from the Vandals.

Commentary on the Bowden poem relating to Valdes's claims:

*Descended from the warlike Vandal race,
She still preserves that title in her face.*

The Vandals were a Germanic people whose territory migrated through conquest from Scandinavia, to the Iberian peninsula, to North Africa, the Sack of Rome in 455, and after defeat against Rome in the Vandalic War, their dissolution as a distinct people and incorporation into numerous other kingdoms around the Mediterranean. In this context, "race" is used to signify a distinct group of people, rather than in the modern sense of racial identity, and also it rhymes with "face".

Tho' shone their triumphs o'er Numidia's plain,

Numidia was a kingdom of ethnically Berber people in North Africa whose territory covered most of the north of what is now Algeria. The "triumphs" mentioned refer to the fact that the Vandals conquered this area from its Berber inhabitants, perhaps drawing an allusion to the British Empire's numerous colonial territories.

And and Alusian [sic] fields their name retain;

Note that Valdes mis-transcribes "And *Andalusian* fields" as "And and Alusian fields," which typos happen, except he nor anyone else caught the fact that there is no toponym "Alusian", or that the reference is to Andalusia, the area of southern Iberia, which was then and still is widely thought to have been named for the Vandals by later Arab conquerors ("Al-Andalus"). I have found only one secondary source (Lisa Hilton's article) that gets this word correct, indicating they all copied it from Valdes.

They but subdued the southern world with arms,

Again, drawing an allusion between the Vandals conquering North Africa and Britain conquering numerous colonial territories.

Portraits and Other Visual Depictions

In the past, it has been difficult to get access to Charlotte's portraits or accurate reproductions of them. Now, organizations such as the Royal Collection Trust and The National Collection provide beautiful, high-resolution images of the paintings, which, if they were even available, were typically printed only in black-and-white in books. Even Levey's seminal 1977 book on her portraits only has monochromatic plates, whereas now we have access to high resolution and color-calibrated digital images of all of them. The low-quality, monochromatic reproductions in Rogers' work and the tiny, low-resolution images in Valdes' work are far different than what is available on the web today.

Only around 40 of the numerous images of Charlotte were created with her as a live model. While this statement would be obvious to an art historian, it was not initially obvious to me. Many were simply likenesses drawn or engraved from other works.

The most common portrait is that of her at age 17 in 1762 painted by Allan Ramsey. His studio produced numerous copies and minor variations of his initial portrait (from life), including the one held in the Mint Museum in Charlotte, N.C. Horace Walpole stated for the Ramsay portrait that she was "much flattered, and the hair vastly too light" but that it was "not particularly flattering or untruthful likeness."

In his essay "The African Queen", Youngquist argues not that the painters were trying to "cover up" any "African" features she may have been perceived to have had, but rather they were trying to retrofit them onto her to either support their own abolitionist agenda, engender support among the millions of non-White people the British Crown had colonized and/or enslaved, and exoticize her precisely to reveal her whiteness in Romantic style.

Michael Levey includes this a composite description of her appearance in his book *A Royal Subject: Portraits of Queen Charlotte*:

Plain in youth, she grew almost grotesquely ugly in late old age. George III had chosen her as his wife without seeing her and is said to have been rather disconcerted by her appearance when he met her first, at her arrival from Germany on the eve of their wedding. Still, as she became older, her plainness became less noticeable to some of those around her. 'The *bloom* of her ugliness is going off,' her Chamberlain amusingly remarked to the diarist Croker. Fanny Burney too, who met her at Bath in the penultimate year of her life, found the Queen somehow triumphing over the disadvantages of age, infirmity, sickness, diminutive stature '& Ugliness!' The variety of expression in her face, Fanny Burney recorded, made even her features seem agreeable.

Artwork sources

- National Portrait Gallery (UK) Mid-Georgian Portraits Catalogue <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/personExtended/mp00845/charlotte-of-mecklenburg-strelitz?tab=iconography>
- National Portrait Gallery (UK) holds 84 portrait-related materials <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp00845/charlotte-of-mecklenburg-strelitz>
- Royal Collection Trust <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search> "Search the Collection" for "Queen Charlotte, consort of George III", then choose "as subject"
- National Trust Collections <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk>
- WikiArt <https://www.wikiart.org/en/Search/Queen%20Charlotte>

Portraits painted from life

- c.1760 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818), when Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz", artist unknown, but possibly the portrait sent to George III prior to Charlotte's arrival in England. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/12/collection/420189/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-when-princess-of-mecklenburg-strelitz>
- 1761 — "Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz" by Esther Denner http://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_376682/Esther-Denner/Portrait-Of-Queen-Charlotte-%281744---1818%29
- c.1761 — "Princess Sophia Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz", by Johann George Ziesenis RCIN 403562 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/403562/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-when-princess-sophie-charlotte-of-mecklenburg-strelitz>
- c.1761 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)" by Allan Ramsay RCIN 405308 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/405308/queen-charlotte-1744-1818>
- c. 1761-69 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)" attributed to Allan Ramsay RCIN 402413 (variation on RCIN 405308) <https://www.rct.uk/collection/402413/queen-charlotte-1744-1818>
- 1762 — "HER Most Excellent Majesty Charlotte Queen of GREAT BRITAIN &c." by Thomas Frye, Mezzotint with drypoint purportedly from a sketch done from life RCIN 604595 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604595/her-most-excellent-majesty-charlotte-queen-of-great-britain-c>
- 1764 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with her Two Eldest Sons" by Johan Joseph Zoffany <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/400146/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-her-two-eldest-sons>
- c.1764-9 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with her two Eldest Sons" by Allan Ramsay RCIN 404922 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/2/collection/404922/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-her-two-eldest-sons>
- 1767 — "Queen Charlotte with Charlotte, Princess Royal" by Francis Cotes RCIN 452805 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/452805/queen-charlotte-with-charlotte-princess-royal> "so like that it could not be mistaken for any other person" — Lady Mary Coke
- 1769 — "Portrait of Queen Charlotte" by Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland <http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=544>
- 1772 — "Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz" by Thomas Burke, after Angelica Kauffmann NPG D21301 <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw112640/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz?LinkID=mp00845&displayNo=60&role=sit&rNo=21>

- 1773-1774 — "Portrait of Queen Charlotte, the Wife of George III" by Sir Nathaniel Dance-Holland <https://www.heritagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.paintings/39759>
- 1776 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with Charlotte, Princess Royal (1766-1828)" by Benjamin West RCIN 404573 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/64/collection/404573/queen-charlotte-1744-1818-with-charlotte-princess-royal-1766-1828>
- 1776 — "Queen Charlotte" by Benjamin West <https://www.wikiart.org/en/benjamin-west/queen-charlotte-1776>
- 1779 — "Portrait of Queen Charlotte of the United Kingdom, with Windsor and the royal family in the background" by Benjamin West <https://www.wikiart.org/en/benjamin-west/portrait-of-queen-charlotte-of-the-united-kingdom-with-windsor-and-the-royal-family-in-the-1779>
- c.1781 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)" by Thomas Gainsborough RCIN 400934 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/5/collection/400934/queen-charlotte-1744-1818>
- 1782 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)" by Thomas Gainsborough RCIN 401007 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/collection/401007>
- 1784 — "Queen Charlotte Sophia" by Allan Ramsay PD05 <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/queen-charlotte-sophia-223361>
- 1789 — "Queen Charlotte" by Sir Thomas Lawrence NG4257 <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/sir-thomas-lawrence-queen-charlotte>
- 1794 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)" by Edward Miles RCIN 420955 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/5/collection/420955/queen-charlotte-1744-1818>
- 1796 — "Queen Charlotte at Frogmore" by Sir William Beechey RCIN 405423 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/7/collection/405423>
- c. 1800(?) — "Queen Charlotte" by Issac Cruikshank XXX NPG
- 1803 — "Queen Charlotte (1744-1818)" by Henry Edridge RCIN 913865 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/913865>
- c. 1803-1834 — "Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz" by William Say, after Arthur William Devis NPG D11387
- 1807 — "Queen Charlotte" by Peter Edward Stroehling XXX
- 1804/5 — "Queen Charlotte" by Samuel Reynolds after H. Edridge NPG XXX
- 1818 — "Queen Charlotte" by Laurence Gahagan RCIN 913891 <https://www.rct.uk/collection/913891/queen-charlotte>

Depictions not from life

- 1761 - "Princess Sophie Charlotte" by Richard Houston <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604568/charlotte-queen-of-great-britain-c-c> and <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604568/charlotte-queen-of-great-britain-c-c>
- 1772 - "Queen Charlotte among the genius of the Arts" by Thomas Burke after Angelica Kauffman <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604620/queen-charlotte-raising-the-genius-of-fine-arts>
- 1782 - "Silhouette of Queen Charlotte" by Anonymous <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-silhouette-of-queen-charlotte-published-1782-22036001.html>

- 1792 - "Silhouette of Queen Charlotte" attributed to Lind, James <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1047678-al>
- 1786 - "The Queen of Hearts covered in diamonds" by Anonymous <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604685/the-queen-of-hearts-coverd-with-diamonds>
- 1799 - "Queen Charlotte, 'Patroness of Botany...'" by Francesco Bartolozzi after Beechey <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604646/portrait-of-her-majesty-patroness-of-botany-and-of-the-fine-arts>
- 1818 — "Queen Charlotte" by Anonymous after L. Gahagan <https://www.rct.uk/collection/604672/her-most-gracious-majesty-queen-charlotte>

Contemporary works

- 1934 — "Queen Charlotte" Eugene Thomason, after Benjamin West
- 2009 — "Charlotte's Charlotte" by Ken Aptekar 2010.24a-f <http://www.mintmuseums.org/resources/collection-database/item/2010.24a-f/charlottes-charlotte/>

Selected Works



1762 (17 years old)

Thomas Frye, "HER Most Excellent Majesty Charlotte Queen of GREAT BRITAIN &c." (1762) (RCIN 604595)

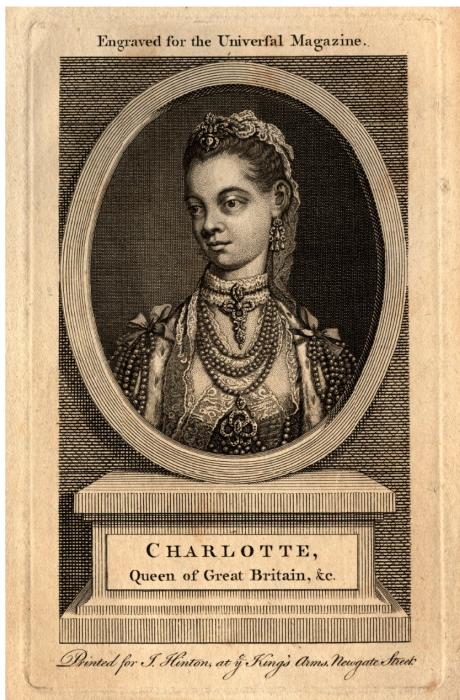
<https://www.rct.uk/collection/604595/her-most-excellent-majesty-charlotte-queen-of-great-britain-c>

Frye claims to have seen her at the theatre and, as he began sketching her, she turned her head to pose for him.



c. 1762 (17 years old)

low-quality reproduction of a drawing that copies Frye's mezzotint, as found in *Nature Knows No Color-Line* by J. A. Rogers



Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz
after Thomas Frye
line engraving, (1762)

NPG D10817

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw17686/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz>



c. 1762 (17 years old)

Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz
by Johann Philipp Haid, published by Johann Daniel Herz
the Younger, after Unknown artist
mezzotint, after 1761
NPG D33077

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw141347/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz>



c. 1762 (17 years old)

the studio of Allan Ramsey around 1762 (NPG 224).
same image, showing different tinting depending on lighting.
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01248/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz>
numerous reproductions of this, including one in the Mint Museum <http://www.mintmuseums.org/art/exhibitions/item/queen-charlotte/>



"Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz" by Henry D. Thielcke, published by Colnaghi & Co, after Henry Edridge (portrait in 1803)
stipple engraving, published 2 December 1818
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw74128/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz>



"Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz"

unknown artist
mezzotint, published 1799
NPG D8013

[https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw41989/
Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz](https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw41989/Charlotte-of-Mecklenburg-Strelitz)

I'm a bit surprised this one has never been used as evidence. The facial coloration is more a product of the mezzotint process than an intention on the artist's part.



portrait by Eugene Thomason, 1934
image from *The Charlotte Observer* Nov 7, 1934,
after Benjamin West (<https://www.wikiart.org/en/benjamin-west/portrait-of-queen-charlotte-of-the-united-kingdom-with-windsor-and-the-royal-family-in-the-1779>)

THIS PORTRAIT of the queen for whom the city was named was painted by Eugene Thomason, local artist. The original from which this was copied is by West and is considered the best likeness of the queen.



(cropped)

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/401407/queen-charlotte-1744-1818>

Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88)

Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) c. 1781

RCIN 401407

Of the Gainsborough (1781) portrait, Sir Henry Bate-Dudley stated that it was "the only happy likeness we ever saw pourtrayed [sic] of her Majesty." (Levey)



(cropped)

1789 by Thomas Lawrence NG4257
[https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/
paintings/sir-thomas-lawrence-queen-
charlotte](https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/sir-thomas-lawrence-queen-charlotte)

Of the Lawrence (1789) portrait, Mrs. Papendick thought the depiction of her "stronger than any I recollect," and one reviewer at the 1790 Academy Exhibition stated it was a 'the strong likeness.' (Levey)

Caricatures

Most of these are from the National Portrait Gallery. Vicious.



'Anti-saccharites, - or - John Bull and his family leaving off the use of sugar'
 by James Gillray, published by Hannah Humphrey
 hand-coloured etching, published 27 March 1792
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw61555/Anti-saccharites---or---John-Bull-and-his-family-leaving-off-the-use-of-sugar>



'Sin, Death, and the Devil'
 by James Gillray, published by Hannah Humphrey
 hand-coloured etching, published 9 June 1792
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw61576/Sin-Death-and-the-Devil>



Medals and Coins



1761 — "Coronation medal of Queen Charlotte, Consort of George III" by Johann Lorenz Natter
RCIN 443292

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/7/collection/443292/coronation-medal-of-queen-charlotte-consort-of-george-iii>



1762 — "Medal commemorating the Birth of the Prince of Wales, 1762" by Lewis Pingo RCIN 440045

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/15/collection/440045/medal-commemorating-the-birth-of-the-prince-of-wales-1762>



1773 — John Kirk's Sentimental Magazine Medal



L Natter coronation medal



1817 — commemorating her visit to Bath



1809 — "King George III (1738–1820) and Queen Charlotte (of Mecklenburg-Strelitz)
(1744-1818)" NT 1258719.1

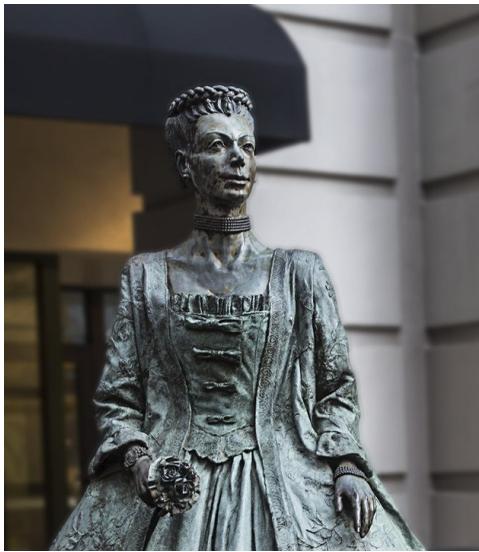
<http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1258719.1>

Statues

Queen Square, Bloomsbury, London, UK.



At the Charlotte International Trade Center, by B. Graham Weathers



At the Charlotte Douglas International Airport by Raymond Kaskey



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Samuel Bowden Poem

The poem by English physician and poet Samuel Bowden appeared in several popular magazines and newspapers around the time of the marriage and coronation, including the *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* September 1761 p. 424, *The Scots Magazine* September 1761, and *London Chronicle* September 12, 1761. Bowden had never even seen an image of the new Queen, much less in person, when he wrote this, as she did not arrive in England until September 1761.

On his Majesty's intended Marriage to the Princess of Mecklenberg, and her Arrival in England.

BRITANNIA's monarch, whom three realms
obey,
And the more spacious kingdoms of the sea,
Tho' blest with all the splendor of a throne,
Still reign'd unhappy, while he reign'd alone :
While solitary hours, and pensive care,
Like gloomy clouds, defac'd each jewel there,
Still was a partner wanting in a bride,
And wanting that, -- he wanted all beside :
The crown no longer glitter'd in his sight,
Dull was the sceptre, nor the diamond bright ;
The court a gaudy solitude became,
And regal grandeur, but an empty name.
When thro' the gloom a meteor from the north,
Like morning light, with welcome rays broke
forth ;
So thro' the fable curtains of the night,
The northern streamers dart a pleasing light,
Still from the north the brightest stars appear,
And purer lustre gilds the polar sphere,
A beauteous nymph--in whose illustrious line
Heroes and kings thro' distant ages shine;
In vision stood confest with all her charms;
The monarch wak'd--and clasp'd her in his arms.

Descended from the warlike *Vandal* race,
She still preserves that title in her face.
Tho' shone their triumphs o'er *Numidia's* plain,
And *Andalusian fields their name retain;**
They but subdued the southern world with arms,
She conquers still with her triumphant charms.

O ! born for rule,--to whose victorious brow
The greatest monarch of the north must bow,
With beauty, sense, and probity endu'd,
Happy the princes, who are thus subdu'd.
No sordid views inspir'd his generous mind,
What blest his prudent choice, must bless man-
kind;

The mercenary wretch, who weds for gold,
A wealthy slave, is only bought, and sold:
What cannot beauty do, and mighty love?
So *Paphos'* queen subdu'd imperial Jove.

Haste, lovely nymph !— — and quit the northern
A clime too barren for such plants as you. [dew,

To waft you o'er, and swell the canvas sail;
 The baneful blighting east, which us'd to pour
 Malignant influence o'er each plant and flow'r,
 Soften'd by you, shall in it's bosom bring
 Indulgent seasons, and a sudden spring.
 See *Neptune* from his amber thrown descend,
 And summon all the sea gods to attend.
 He blew the shell: — old *Ocean* heard the sound,
 And coral caverns murmur'd all around;
 Loud was the signal ! for it shook the deep,
 And wak'd the blue-ey'd *Tritons* from their sleep.
 In azure robes the water-nymphs resort,
 And round the vessel form a splendid court;
 Sleek *Thetis* with her *Nereids* swam before,
 To smooth the seas, and guard her to the shore;
 The wanton dolphins dance along the sea,
 And monstrous whales in awkward gambols play.
 Vain all proud *London's* pomp to this compar'd,
 With such a bright retinue for her guard.
 Eclips'd all landed triumphs will appear,
 Menguard her there — but Gods conduct her here.

Welcome fair princess ! to the British coast,
 Where crouds content who shall applaud you
 most;
 Welcome fair nymph! to Albion's happy shore,
 Whose chalky cliffs look fairer than before.
 Long may you reign serene to the bless the isle,
 And beauteous offsprings in your image smile;
 Illustrious infants round the palace play,
 Born to suppress all arbitrary sway;
 Learning the Peace, and Virtue's cause advance,
 And crush the projects of ambitious France.

Frome, Sept. 5, 1761 S. Bowden.

* Andalusia, so called from the Vandals.

Final page of 100 Amazing Facts



CHARLOTTE SOPHIA
Queen of England
consort of George III,
great-great-grand-
mother of George VI
(see Notes on the Il-
lustrations in SEX and
RACE.)

Facsimile from
THE NEW YORK TIMES

MONDAY, JULY 1, 1940.

NEGROID BLOOD IN HITLER'S 'ARYANS'

**Ancestries Traced in Book on
Racial Mixture Published
in Berlin**

MANY PEOPLES SHOW IT

**Strain of Negro Is Shown in
Circles of Russian, English
and German Nobility**

**On the thesis that no national
entity can correctly designate itself**

as a race and that the people of these entities have in their veins more Negroid blood than is generally supposed, Brunold Springer, in his "Racial Mixture as a Basic Principle of Life," just published by Verlag der Neuen Generation of Berlin, analyzes from the Negroid point of view the characteristics of the so-called "Hitler Aryan," who Der Fuehrer would have prevail in Germany. He writes:

Often the Negroid aspect is strikingly evidenced in personal appearance. Herr Springer writes, as in the case of Dr. Schweninger, Bismarck's physician, who had warm, African eyes, or of Beethoven, who possessed in addition a strain of Malay or Alpine blood as well. Once the characteristic Negro features become familiar to the glance, blonde Negroes are often discernible. Gabrielle Réjane, the French actress, had the broad nose and heavy lips of the blond Negroid type.

Black Strain in Spaniards

There is a very large percentage of Negro blood in the Spanish people. . . . The Spaniards then carried the black strain farther into Europe, into France and the former Netherlands. When the Spaniards were driven out of the latter lands, about 3,000 of them settled in Hamburg, and many a Hamburg citizen today bears a striking resemblance to the citizens of Spain.

Portugal was the first example of a Negrito republic in Europe. In the Portuguese runs a deep current of Negro blood, and there the Negro has often risen to the caste of the nobility. . . . All of this is ancient history. The Romans brought Negro troops to the Rhine and over the Donau. Later merchants purchased the young Negroes as servants; in all large cities of commerce there were several hundred blacks, and many a house was known simply as "at the Moors."

In one circle of people whose members belong to the Russian, English and German nobility there is much Negro blood, inherited from an ancestor who lived at the end of the eighteenth century, and who was the great-grandfather of one of the greatest poets of all lands and of all times, Alexander Sergeivitch Pushkin.

Gregory (2015)

Perhaps the only academic work on the topic of Charlotte and race is Bethany Gregory's master's thesis *Commemorating Queen Charlottes: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Memory, 1750 to 2014*. This is the only work that ties together Rogers' work from the 1940s, the discussion in 1989 in Charlotte, NC precipitated by a statue of Charlotte, and Valdes' work in 1999.

Unfortunately, there are numerous instances in this work that inaccurately quote primary sources, describe the content of primary sources in a way that is not supported by their text, or make novel assertions that are not sourced. Most egregious is the implication that there was an open argument over whether she was "black" or "white" between racial groups as far back as the 1930s in Charlotte. Gregory asserts that this is the case, but provides no evidence of a conflict over this prior to 1989. This seems to be a genuine misinterpretation of the evidence and overzealous attempt to create a narrative around the evidence than it is an intentional fictional creation.

Below are several passages and analysis of them.

p. viii

In the 1930s, however, middle class blacks mounted a challenge, claiming that Queen Charlotte was of African descent and as a result challenged the politics of memory within the city.

This statement is unsourced, and would predate the earliest known claims by J. A. Rogers in *Sex and Race: Volume I* published in 1940.

p. xv

Ramsay's portrait of the queen depicted her with "mulatto" features, including brown eyes, brown skin, curly brown hair, and a "masculine nose."

This is footnoted to Valdes. This misrepresents the text, as it says the portrait *does* depict her this way, rather than that Valdes *claims* it does. Valdes uses numerous terms describing her in the Ramsay portrait, but "mulatto" is not one of them — this term is only used when quoting Stockmar. Valdes also never states she has "masculine nose" and, in fact, states nothing about her nose.

p. 25

In regards to Queen Charlotte, Rogers argued that the only artist who ever painted her as her true self was Allan Ramsay (*Figure 5*), who captured the Queen as a true mulatto.

This significantly misrepresents Rogers' claims about Charlotte. Rogers specifically does *not* state that she appears in the portraits as a "true mulatto," meaning biracial, as he does for

numerous other people, but uses the term "Negro strain" specifically in reference to her "wide" nose and mouth.

p. 27

Here Gregory critically mixes up the work of Rogers, Springer, and Valdes.

Springer argued that based on the mixed Portuguese bloodline of Queen Charlotte, these paintings were not a true depiction of Queen Charlotte. After researching first-hand accounts of those who interacted with the queen, Springer described Charlotte as having "broad nostrils and heavy lips of the blond Negroid type."

Gregory mistakenly states that Brunold Springer claimed in his book *Die Blutmischung als Grundgesetz des Lebens* ("Racial Mixture as the Basic Principle of Life") from 1929 that Charlotte was of the "blond Negroid type." This was probably a misreading fo the Feb 22 1989 *The Charlotte Observer* article, and Gregory never read Rogers' work directly. The section discussing Springer mixes up writing by Springer and J. A. Rogers and imprecisely states arguments from each of them. Springer's book is in German, was never translated to English, has not been publicly digitized, and is quite rare. While it's possible Gregory presents information in that book not available in the New York Times article quoted by J. A. Rogers, I think it unlikely. Springer's work (from 1929) never mentions Charlotte, so he certainly does not make any claims about her, Rogers never says that it does (from 1940), and Rogers never mentions the "Portuguese bloodline," as this evidence not come later until Valdes' work (in 1999).

p. 29

"By the 1930s, hints continued in books, paintings, and newspaper articles that whites and blacks were questioning Queen Charlotte's race."

"Many local elites were in denial that a black queen would ever be the symbol for a white dominated city. White elites in Charlotte called on historians to solve the mystery and answer the question once and for all: was Queen Charlotte black and not white?"

There is no evidence that this was happening among anyone prior to 1940, and no evidence of knowledge of the claims among the general population of white people in Charlotte until 1989. Here Gregory is confusing white writers describing Charlotte's appearance as a white woman and Thomason's painting after West's portrait of her as arguing that she was white instead of "black," instead of them simply stating the obvious facts and being completely unaware that there would even be such a question as to her race.

p. 30

In a quote from a 1934 article by Mary Dwelle "Introducing Queen Charlotte: Woman of Noble Character, Wife of King George III," *Charlotte Observer*, October 7, 1934 (Sunday Edition), a

mention of her "ethnic background" is inserted, which gives the quote a completely different meaning and implies that Dwelle knew of claims about Charlotte at the time and thought it important to mention in what was then the city's white newspaper. It is unlikely she did, as the first reference in Rogers does not appear until 1940.

The article is materially misquoted with:

"information about how the city was named for her, why the locals should love her, her life, character, various portraits, her favorite home, and a few other things concerning her, **regardless of her ethnic background**, may prove to be interesting."

instead of:

"information about how our city happened to be named for her, why we should love her, her life, character, portraits, her favorite home and a few other things concerning her may prove interesting."

Gregory also states that "Dwelle argued that though she was not purely African, Queen Charlotte did have mulatto features", which is a significant misrepresentation of the article. Dwelle does not mention anything about Charlotte being "African" or having "mulatto features" and does not argue about this. Dwelle does include the Walpole quote about her wide nostrils and mouth, but does not even mention that this could be a "mulatto feature." Gregory also inserts the sentence in this section "Locals should be proud of the queen and her significance to Charlotte's history, regardless of her race," footnoting this to the Dwelle article, even though there is no such claim in it.

p. 31

An article by Lillian Crosland, "Women's Courage Praised" *The Charlotte Observer*. November 7, 1934, is described as:

[Lillian F. Crosland] discussed Queen Charlotte's continued influence on the city's history, including why the city named the new town in her honor and how her namesake continued to flourish. In addition, addressing the recent debates over her race, Crosland agreed with Fulford and Dwelle that West's painting was "considered the best likeness of the Queen." Next to her article, Crosland published Thomason's completed portrait of the Queen for the first time. "

This is incorrect. The Crosland article does not discuss Charlotte, but another woman, Jane Parks. The portrait of Charlotte by Thomason is adjacent to Crosland's article, but is not related, and there is no indication that Crosland wrote the text describing the portrait. Gregory also continues the unsourced claim about a "debate over her race" in 1934, of which the portrait's description does not reference overtly or implicitly.

p. 31

Though the newspaper print was not the clearest (and the original has proved difficult to trace), in his painting, she appeared more white than black. "

p. 32

When Thomason painted the queen, he overemphasized white features (petite nose, fair skin), as if he tried to hide any mulatto features that appeared in previous paintings.

The problem with these statements is the inherent assumption that there were "mulatto" features to hide. Thomason's portrait closely matches the Benjamin West portrait and every other portrait of her from that time period. It is also not clear how you could "overemphasize" a small nose and fair skin, especially when you're describing an image that's a scan of a newspaper print of a portrait.

p. 33

Gregory discusses an incident in 1966 where someone "slashed," or more accurately lightly-scratched, a painting of Charlotte by Allan Ramsay's studio after his 1762 portrait of her. Gregory indicates that this incident was because of her "portrayed race", "caused racial tension within the city," and refers to it as a "hate crime", but does not provide a source for these assertions. Gregory states that "the museum director at the time, Robert Schlageter, stated a group of 'culturally deprived youths' made racist comments" and cites an article in *The Charlotte Observer*, but this article has no mention of "racist comments." There is no mention of the race of the "youths," but they were likely white, as the newspaper would have explicitly stated their race if not white during this time period. The person who did this was never identified, so it's unclear if this was an intentional act of vandalism or an accident, and there is no indication that there was any racist intent behind it.

p. 34

This event signified a new turning point in Charlotte's memory of the queen. Though many white elites attempted to portray the queen as white, the publicly displayed Allan Ramsay portrait no longer allowed it. In a time when "black versus white" was very much a part of Charlotte culture, it became common for visitors at the museum to question her race and wonder what that meant for white and black communities. As a result, the queen's image at this time became a very sensitive subject.

This is stated as fact, but has no citations. I find it highly unlikely that this was the case, particularly given that the Mint Museum was likely a segregated space at this time, and only whites could patronize it. If there was this much contention about her race in the 1960s, Gregory certainly could have found one source to cite.

p35

"In the 1950s, Mary Dwelle donated a portrait of Queen Charlotte by John Singleton Copley, an early American artist and contemporary of Benjamin West, to the Mint Museum. The painting was an addition to Dwelle's large collection of Queen Charlotte art, in various media, that she contributed over the years. For this occurrence, the *Charlotte Observer* described Queen Charlotte as plain, but youthful, and the artist painted the queen with her vitality and intelligence which 'remained with the queen throughout her long and active life.'"

This is attributed to an article in *The Charlotte Observer* by Marion Wright, "Painting Is Received of Queen Charlotte," November 13, 1958, however, the article is actually from 1942, meaning that this happened in the early 1940s rather than the late 1950s.

Since the intention of mentioning this is about her visual depiction, it is important to note that Copley could not have painted this portrait of her in 1761 as the article claims, as he was in the US in 1761 and was only 23 years old, so would hardly have been given an opportunity to paint the Queen. It is possible he could have painted it later from her earlier portraits, but there is no record of him ever painting her, though he did paint three of her daughters on commission. It is unclear exactly what this situation is, but the painting Dwelle purchased was either not Charlotte, not painted by Copley, or both.

p. 40

Gregory cites Weathers as stating that in "several hundred portraits" he could find "no suggestion in skin color, width of nose, and thickness of lips that might suggest Negro descent," citing the Ed Martin article from Feb 22, 1989. The "several hundred portraits" is mistake in Ed Martin's article, and comes from Weathers stating that there were around 200 portraits of her during her life and he tried to see as many as possible while researching for the statue. Of these 200, only around 40 were unique portraits from life, rather than copies of earlier portraits (e.g., copies from the studio of Allan Ramsey) or were painted with other portraits as the source. So, Weathers did not say he had seen "several hundred portraits." This is also a minor but critical misquote by Gregory of the article, as Weathers uses the rather archaic term "Negroid" instead of "Negro," indicating that he was likely responding to the claims by J. A. Rogers to which he had recently been made aware.

p. 40

"As stated previously, this was the painting that led historian J.A. Rogers to pronounce Queen Charlotte as black."

The painting referenced here is the Ramsay portrait, but the statement is false — Rogers never said she was "black," and instead precisely stating that she must have a "Negro strain" in her ancestry based only on Ramsay's portrait.

p. 48

"They were proud to acknowledge Queen Charlotte's black Portuguese descent and celebrate it during times of race debates and commemorations of the queen."

This passage is referencing Charlotte, NC, in the 1980s. The "black Portuguese descent" claim does not appear before 1999 in Valdes' work, so it would not have been known to anyone in the 1980s. Also, it was unlikely that few people, Black or White, in Charlotte knew of the claims about her from Rogers prior to Chabaku's letter to the editor. If it had been widely known or discussed, it would have undoubtedly been at least mentioned or actively used to manufacture controversy in the articles about the unveiling of the statue of her.

Appendix 6 Queen Charlotte statue controversy in Charlotte, North Carolina, 1989

The Jan. 27, 1989 *The Charlotte Observer* has a front page photo of a sculpture of Queen Charlotte by B. Graham Weathers under the title "The Queen, In Bronze," and an article by John Wildman entitled "Statue of Queen Takes Its Bows."



Several days later, on the Feb. 3, 1989 *The Charlotte Observer* published a letter to the editor from Rev. Motlalepula Chabaku titled "Queen's Features Altered", in which Rev. Chabaku, a Black woman from South African who was a civil rights activist and local Methodist minister, stated "She was a black woman even though she was the consort of King George III."

Queen's Features Altered

The writer is minister, United Methodist Church.

I am concerned that The Observer has given prominent display (Jan. 27, "The Queen, In Bronze") to the statue of Queen Charlotte, whose African features have been replaced by European or Caucasian appearance.

It is a fact that Queen Charlotte Sophia had mixed ancestry of African and European blood and was the grandmother of Queen Victoria. She was a black woman even though she was the consort of King George III. Why can't we have her as naturally as she was? Why be ashamed of her African features?

Rev. MOTLALEPULA CHABAKU
Newton

Weather's reply "Not Ashamed of Queen's Features" from Feb 20, 1989.

Not Ashamed Of Queen's Features

I was somewhat aghast at the Rev. Motlalepula Chabaku's letter (Feb. 3, "Queen's Features Altered"). If I properly understood his letter, he felt that I had altered the features of Queen Charlotte intentionally to avoid showing her African features and that I was ashamed of her physical characteristics.

Portrait sculpture is an art form that enjoys permanently stating the features of a subject as the sculptor sees them.

In the case of Queen Charlotte Sophia, I was forced to rely on the paintings that were done during her lifetime by those who were fortunate enough to have her pose for them.

There were more than 200 portraits painted of the delightfully elegant lady. My artistic process in this particular study was to attempt to see as many paintings as I could and as many photographs of paintings as possible.

After studying what was in the re-



Weathers

gional library and museum sources, I spent time in London at the Victoria and Albert Museum, National Portrait Gallery, the National Museum, the Tate Gallery, The British Museum and Kew Gardens.

Kew Gardens is the lovely palace where her majesty died. It contains dozens of paintings of her, King George III and their 15 children. It also holds many delightful items that were reported to have belonged to the Queen and her family.

As I stood there looking out her window at the beautiful gardens that are similar to the ones she might have seen 200 years ago; saw the chair in which she was sitting when she died; and walked to the gardens that she walked, she became a living, vital person to me. I could almost feel the beauty of her presence.

After studying the many paintings and photographs of paintings, and on the basis of the anatomical composition of the face, mandible, lips, hair, nose, eyes, length of neck, height of forehead, head-to-body relationship and apparent personality, I attempted to sculpt a composite.

~~SEE CORRECTION~~

2/20/89

E.A.

Some of the painters, ordinarily considered to be some of the best of the period, were Gainsborough, Ramsey, Zoffany, Beechey, West, Lawrence, Reynolds and others. It is true that none of the paintings looked exactly alike, for they were painted by many different artists over many years. Yet, the bone structure and basic anatomy of the face were consistent.

Mr. Chabaku, I regret my sculpture does not have the physical features you might wish to see, but I sculpted what I saw and believe to be true and consistent.

Perhaps you would be able to let me see the paintings on which you have based your criticism in order that I might understand your sources.

It was not my intent to offend anyone, but I will stand behind my researched portrait of Queen Charlotte Sophia, for I think I have captured her as a living, elegant queen who needs no excuses made for her appearance.

B. GRAHAM WEATHERS
Stanley

Correction from Feb 20, 1989. It is interesting that Weathers assumed Chabaku was a man, or at least didn't think to clarify, and he didn't address her using the honorific "Rev." that she used in her letter.

Clarification

In "Not Ashamed Of Queen's Features" (Feb. 16), the writer referred to Mr. Motlalepula Chabaku. The Rev. Chabaku is a woman.

Some Say Queen Charlotte Can Claim African Ancestry

By ED MARTIN

Staff Writer

Was Queen Charlotte black? Charlotte's namesake has been dead for 171 years, but a new statue of her is raising the question among some blacks and historians of whether German-born Charlotte Sophia, wife of King George III, had black ancestors.

The statue, by sculptor B. Grant Weathers, was unveiled Jan. 26 at the new Charlotte Apparel Center.

Historians say Charlotte's racial lineage will never be known for sure.

She was born Princess Charlotte Sophia on May 19, 1744, in the duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in Germany. She married England's King George III in

1761, had 15 children and died in 1818.

But some believe, based on a number of portraits by painters of her time and at least one black historical reference work, that Queen Charlotte was partly black. And they say the new statue doesn't show that.

"I was surprised when I saw the statue," says banker Ronald Harrill, a Charlotte authority on black history. "She's depicted as full European, although she definitely had African ancestry."

"There is no pure black, no pure white," said the Rev. Motlalepula Chabaku, who grew up in South Africa and is now minister of three Methodist

See SOME Page 16B



Queen Charlotte in the portrait by Allan Ramsay at the Mint Museum.

Some Say Queen Charlotte Can Claim African Ancestry

Continued From Page 1B

churches in Catawba County. "Why be ashamed of her African features?"

The question of the queen's race came to light in an exchange of letters to The Charlotte Observer between Chabaku and sculptor Weathers.

Chabaku charged that Weathers replaced the queen's African features with "European or Caucasian appearance."

Weathers, a family doctor and sculptor in the Gaston County town of Stanley, says he is stung by the insinuations. "I sculpt what I see," he says.

What he saw in most of several hundred portraits he studied, says Weathers, "was no suggestion in skin color, width of nose, thickness of lips, that might suggest Negroid descent."

Artists have depicted her with differing looks. A painted cup from about 1880 shows a woman with thin lips, arrow-straight, thin nose and receding chin.

Gilbert Stuart, in a portrait in the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh, painted her in powdered wig bearing a striking resemblance to his more famous portrait — George Washington.

In D.A. Tompkins's 1903 "History of Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte," she has blond hair, a tiny mouth, small, sharp nose and light eyes.

The Mint Museum's painting by Queen Charlotte's contemporary, Allan Ramsay, is of a heavy woman with broad nose, full lips and chestnut eyes.

It was Ramsay's painting and eyewitness descriptions of the queen that led historian J.A. Rog-

"To me it doesn't matter if she was black or not."

— Sculptor B. Grant Weathers

ers, in his three-volume "Sex and Race," to pronounce her black.

Rogers wrote that she "had the broad nostrils and heavy lips," characterized by another historian, Brunold Springer, as of "the blond Negroid type."

Rogers, who wrote in the 1930s and 1940s, also quoted an eyewitness description by Englishman Horace Walpole: "It would have been possible to reproduce several pictures of Negroes who resemble this English queen."

Harrill, an assistant vice president of First Union National Bank in Charlotte and graduate of N.C. A&T State University, says Queen Charlotte's case illustrates how white history blurs black roles.

"Our history books were written in America with its beliefs about racial superiority," says Kelly Alexander Jr., president of the state NAACP. "I grew up in an age before I knew Hannibal was black. But you go back and look at the statues of his time, and there was no question he was black."

Sculptor Weathers says he doesn't know whether Queen Charlotte had black ancestors. But the bulk of her portraits and even a lock of her hair still preserved in England give no indication, he says.

"To me it doesn't matter if she was black or not."

Was Queen Charlotte black? Debate lives

Some Observer readers pan portrait of a lady

By KATHLEEN PURVIS
Food Editor

Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was many things in her 76 years, including wife of King George III and a patron of artists and writers.

But was she black?

An image of Queen Charlotte that ran in The Observer's Food section Wednesday showed her with European features.

In painting the illustration, artist Al Phillips used several images of the queen. One was the familiar coronation portrait from Charlotte's 1761 marriage to George III, painted by Allan Ramsay, which now hangs in the Mint Museum of Art.

However, some readers objected to the rendering, because it did not show Queen Charlotte as a black woman, a claim that dates to the 1930s and that resurfaced several years ago in controversy surrounding a statue on College Street.

On "The Breakfast Brothers"

in the three-volume book "Sex and Race" by historian J.A. Rogers, who wrote in the 1930s and '40s, the Ramsay portrait and a disputed eyewitness description were cited in Rogers' claim that Charlotte was of African descent.

However, the Mint's files have 50 images of the queen and each

DEPICTIONS OF QUEEN CHARLOTTE



A painting from the Mint Museum collection, circa 1762 by Allan Ramsay



A portrait from an 18th century enamel beaker



From Wednesday's Observer Food front by Al Phillips

SOURCE: The Mint Museum

Staff graphic

show Wednesday on WPEG-FM (98), hosts Keith Richards and B.J. Murphy called the portrait an error and urged listeners to call The Observer.

Some local historians disputed that claim, however, saying there is no way it can be verified. At Johnson C. Smith University, spokeswoman Vanessa Baxter said members of the history depart-

ment had no information to prove it.

"I've read about her and written about her, and I have never found any documentation to support this question," said Charlotte author Mary Kratt, who wrote the plaque that is with a statue of Queen Charlotte on College

Please see CHARLOTTE / page 9A

pressed in the early 19th century."

"Granted, history is full of surprises," said Busher. "The bottom line, really, is she was one of England's outstanding queens. And if African Americans want to adopt her as their own, I'm all for it."

"Some Say Queen Charlotte Can Claim African Ancestry" by Ed Martin, Charlotte Observer, Feb 22 1989

Harrill - "She's depicted as full European, although she definitely had African ancestry."

Errors in article:

- misattributes the "pictures of Negroes" quote to Horace Walpole (a contemporary of Charlotte who commented about her in his *Letters*), when it was J. A. Rogers writing that about himself
- gets the sculptor's name wrong — it is "B. Graham Weathers" not "B. Grant Weathers"

- "characterized by another historian, Brunold Springer" — Springer was not an historian, he was a Jewish German lawyer who wrote several books about scientific racism from an antiracist perspective.
- Alexander states "I grew up in an age before I knew Hannibal was black." — this is not a historically-accurate description of Hannibal and is widely considered to be Afrocentric pseudohistory.

Feb 27 1997 "Was Queen Charlotte Black? Debate lives" in *The Charlotte Observer*