

BROWN UNIVERSITY'S

# SLAVERY AND JUSTICE REPORT

*with Commentary on Context and Impact*

2nd Edition

*of the Report of the  
Brown University  
Steering Committee on  
Slavery and Justice*



BROWN UNIVERSITY'S

SLAVERY  
AND JUSTICE  
REPORT

*with Commentary on Context and Impact*

**2nd Edition of the Report of the Brown University  
Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice**

Recognizing the importance of active remembrance of the  
work of Africans and African Americans, enslaved and free,  
who helped build Brown University and this nation

And in recognition of scholars and educators  
who confront history and effect change

BROWN UNIVERSITY'S

SLAVERY  
AND JUSTICE  
REPORT

*with Commentary on Context and Impact*

**2nd Edition of the Report of the Brown University  
Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice**

Edited by Anthony Bagues, Cass Cliatt, and Allison Levy



Published by Brown University  
Providence, Rhode Island

Copyright © 2021 Brown University.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed “Attention: Office of University Communications” at the address below.

ISBN: 978-1-948459-05-1 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-948459-06-8 (pdf)

ISBN: 978-1-948459-07-5 (digital edition)

Front cover image by Nick Dentamaro, Brown University.

Book design by Studio Rainwater.

Printed by Brown University in the United States of America.

First printing of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*, 2006.

Second edition printing, 2021.

Brown University

Box 2004

Providence, RI 02912

[www.slaveryandjustice.brown.edu](http://www.slaveryandjustice.brown.edu)



# Contents

viii            **Acknowledgments**

ix              **Foreword**  
*Christina H. Paxson*

---

## CONTEXT AND IMPACT

1                **“A simple question needed to be met with a  
straightforward answer”: An Interview with Brown  
University President Emerita Ruth J. Simmons**  
*Ruth J. Simmons and Anthony Bogues*

11              **Slavery and Justice at Brown — A Personal Reflection**  
*James T. Campbell*

23              **Tactility, Memory Work, and Martin Puryear’s  
Slavery Memorial**  
*Renée Ater*

33              **The Dialectics of Racism and Repair**  
*Seth Rockman*

43              **Teaching Slavery After the Slavery and  
Justice Report**  
*Emily A. Owens*

**Alumni Reflections****51 A Collective Exploration of Our History:  
An Introduction***Rashid Zia***55 African American Students and Scholars  
at Brown: Activism, Impact, and Inspiration***Spencer Crew***59 In the Service of Ideas and Actions***Wilfred Codrington III***63 Radical Promises***Sean Siperstein***67 Lessons and Commitments***Sophie Kupetz***71 Blueprints and Pathways***Chandra Marshall***73 Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Georgetown:  
A Reckoning Made Possible by the Slavery and  
Justice Report***Marcia Chatelain***83 Confronting Historical Injustice — Past, Present,  
and Future***Anthony Bagues***91 The Evolution of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Work at Brown University: An Institution Changed  
by the Slavery and Justice Report***Shontay Delalue*

---

## **REPORT OF THE BROWN UNIVERSITY STEERING COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE**

102	<b>Steering Committee Members</b>
103	<b>Executive Summary</b>
109	<b>Introduction</b>
119	<b>Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Brown University</b>
165	<b>Confronting Historical Injustice: Comparative Practices</b>
205	<b>Confronting Slavery’s Legacy: The Reparations Question</b>
241	<b>Slavery and Justice: Concluding Thoughts</b>
247	<b>Recommendations</b>
257	<b>Acknowledgments</b>

---

## **UNIVERSITY RESPONSE**

263	<b>Response of Brown University to the Report of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice</b>
-----	--

---

295	<b>List of Illustrations</b>
297	<b>Endnotes</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of the revised and expanded second edition of Brown University's Slavery and Justice Report has been a deeply collaborative effort at every stage. The editors — Anthony Bogues, Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice; Cass Cliatt, Senior Vice President for Communications; and Allison Levy, Digital Scholarship Editor, Brown Library — wish to express their gratitude to the many individuals who brought great care and expertise to this project. These include Sophie Abramowitz, Jennifer Bogdan-Jones, Cosette Bruhns, Crystal Brusck, Jake Camara, Nick Dentamaro, Lindsay Elgin, Julia Hurley, Pedro Germano Leal, Steven D. Lubar, Andressa Macena Maia, Marie Malchodi, Matt Mayerchak, Sara Mohr, Kimberly Nusco, N'Kosi Oates, Sarah Rainwater, Willow Rambert, Kathleen Rose, Ula Rutkowska, Neil Safer, Erica Saladino, Ben Tyler, Sarah Verity, and Nicole Wholeon. These staff and faculty colleagues, students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, and designers contributed their scholarship, insights, and professional talents from Brown's libraries and special collections, academic departments and programs, administrative offices including the Office of the President and Office of University Communications, and Studio Rainwater, the design agency for the second edition.

Special thanks are due to the volume's contributors for their insightful essays, as well as to President Christina H. Paxson, whose robust and enthusiastic support of the project was shared from the outset by Provost Richard M. Locke, University Librarian Joseph S. Meisel, Associate University Librarian for Special Collections Amanda Strauss, and Dean of the College Rashid Zia.

Finally, the editors wish to thank each other for their warm collegiality and tireless commitment to this project.

*A note on the second edition:*

The 2006 *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* included in this volume and the 2007 *Response of Brown University to the Report of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* reflect minor editorial revisions, such as corrected typographical errors, modernized spelling, and updated URLs.

# Foreword

*Christina H. Paxson*

FIFTEEN YEARS HAVE PASSED since Brown released its groundbreaking *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* and, in doing so, confronted and publicly documented the University's complex and painful history with the transatlantic slave trade and its terrible legacies of inequity and injustice. The Report, which was commissioned under the thoughtful leadership of President Ruth J. Simmons, set a high standard for rigorous, unflinching analysis and became a model of responsible scholarship that helped to spark a national conversation, as Brown was among the first institutions of higher education in the United States to publicly catalogue its ties to slavery.

At the same time, the Report established the importance within the Brown community of continued inward examination and ongoing accountability for the profound consequences of slavery, including systemic racism and economic inequality. These values have formed the basis for the concrete actions the University has taken so far, as well as our ongoing commitment, to create a more diverse and inclusive academic community and to ensure that members of historically underrepresented groups can thrive and fulfill their full potential as scholars and as leaders at Brown.

As the president of a university that has engaged as a community in the difficult ongoing work of confronting the scars and open wounds left by slavery, commissioning this revised and expanded edition of the Slavery and Justice Report was important. I believe that institutions of higher education

have a responsibility to continuously re-evaluate their progress toward full equity. Based upon the current state of our country’s — and the world’s — confrontation of systemic racism, we know that the commitment to equity is a perpetual march — one that will perhaps never be complete. The fact that we, as a university, have a precedent of commitment to this work, is not in and of itself enough to meet our obligation to help create a more fair and just society. Rather, it is imperative that our entire community internalizes and bears responsibility for the constant work we must do to reaffirm our commitment to the fight for racial justice.

The nation and the world of 2021 are different in many ways from the moment of the original Slavery and Justice Report’s release in 2006. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color and exposed persisting inequities in health care. The horrific killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and far too many others at the hands of police have spurred a long-overdue reckoning with the terrible legacies of anti-Black racism and anti-Black violence. Troubling voter suppression efforts have emerged across the United States, threatening to restrict access to the ballot box in communities of color. Meanwhile, Black people continue to be harmed by persistent disparities in access to medical care, wealth, employment, housing, education, wages, and food security.

It is through the lens of these complex issues, inextricably intertwined with the legacies of slavery, that we revisit the Slavery and Justice Report. American society in the twenty-first century demands that institutions of higher education continue to evolve and respond to the complex world in which we live as we interpret our past. It is for these reasons that we are publishing this second edition of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*. This edition does not replace the original Report: it expands upon it with new perspectives from faculty, staff, and alumni that — with the benefit of fifteen years to understand and reflect upon the Report’s context beyond what was possible in the difficult moments of its origins — offer new insights on the document’s persistent and evolving impact, both on campus and across the nation and the world.

In this edition, you’ll read an interview with President Emerita Ruth J. Simmons, who comments on her motivations for beginning the University’s examination of its history and offers her reflections on the enduring legacy of

the Report. You'll learn from faculty, including Anthony Bogues, director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, how the CSSJ, which was born directly out of the Report, has become a catalytic entity for public discourse on the historical significance and legacies of slavery. And you'll read reflections from several alumni on the history of Black students at Brown and the impact the Report had on their experiences both as students and, later, professionals.

One of the most physically prominent outcomes of the Report is *Slavery Memorial* by Martin Puryear, which stands outside University Hall on the Front Green, also known as the Quiet Green. The full impact of this memorial and how it is experienced on Brown's campus is detailed in this volume by Provost Visiting Professor of Africana Studies Renée Ater. At its dedication in 2014, I noted that the memorial was placed in such a prominent space on our campus because we know that a polite remembrance is not enough: as a community, we have an obligation to weave the act of remembrance into the daily rhythm of the University and, thus, into all of the work that we do.

An institution's reckoning with slavery does not end with the completion of a report. In many ways, the Slavery and Justice Report marked a new beginning in our commitment to create a more fully diverse and inclusive campus. In the years since the Report was released, Brown has fulfilled many of its recommendations, including the ongoing commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty, the establishment of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, the permanent endowment of the Fund for the Education of the Children of Providence, and other actions.

The University also has moved beyond the recommendations themselves in embracing a new standard for examining our past with a foundation in accountability. This can be seen in the 2016 publication of *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University* (known as the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, or DIAP), and the subsequent DIAP Phase II, which was released in April 2021. As Brown's former Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity, Shontay Delaloe, explains in her essay, through the DIAPs, which were developed through extensive community engagement, the University has created a roadmap for meaningful transformation of culture and practices at Brown that have led to the exclusion of peoples from historically underrepresented groups in higher education. Further, the DIAPs recognize this work as integral to achieving the highest levels

of academic excellence, and require the active participation of all members of the community.

In addition, the impact of Brown's work continues to be felt well beyond Providence and Rhode Island. James T. Campbell, currently the Edgar E. Robinson Professor in U.S. History at Stanford University, who served as chair of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice while a professor at Brown, recounts in his contribution to this volume that Brown's investigation of its history was immediately met with controversy, with some critics furiously asserting that, while slavery was wrong, it had ended — “case closed.” Yet, as Marcia Chatelain, a Brown alumna and Professor of History and African American Studies at Georgetown University, notes in her essay, the actions Brown took in confronting its past ultimately set an international example and have served as a guide for dozens of other institutions of higher education to also engage in this work and to recognize that our past is always with us. Professor Chatelain conveys in her recounting of the process Georgetown University undertook to address its ties to slavery that such an undertaking would never have been considered were it not for Brown's leadership. This reflects the Report's ongoing contributions to historical scholarship on racial slavery in the Americas, and its place as a global model as other colleges and universities address their own historical entanglement with slavery, the slave trade, and their deep legacies.

As part of our original charge both to “tell the truth in all its complexity” and to share that knowledge widely, we are releasing this expanded edition of the Slavery and Justice Report in multiple formats to reach the broadest possible audience for the greatest possible ongoing impact. As a complement to the print edition, the Brown Library's Digital Publications Initiative has produced a digital edition that provides a fully immersive, interactive experience for readers seeking a deeper engagement with the historical sources. The Library has also developed a “teaching edition” for the College's First Readings program for incoming undergraduates, enabling us to make it a regular offering in students' orientation to Brown. Featuring an expanded set of historical documents, an array of supplemental resources, and robust annotation and sharing tools, this version makes the Report accessible to every student, faculty member, and staff member as a shared community experience. Through these efforts to circulate the Report widely on campus, in Rhode Island, and around

the world, we demonstrate that we are a university that will not allow ourselves to fall victim to what the Report describes as the “inevitable tendencies to deny, extenuate, and forget.” It is through these efforts that the work of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice continues to live on in real and lasting ways for future generations.

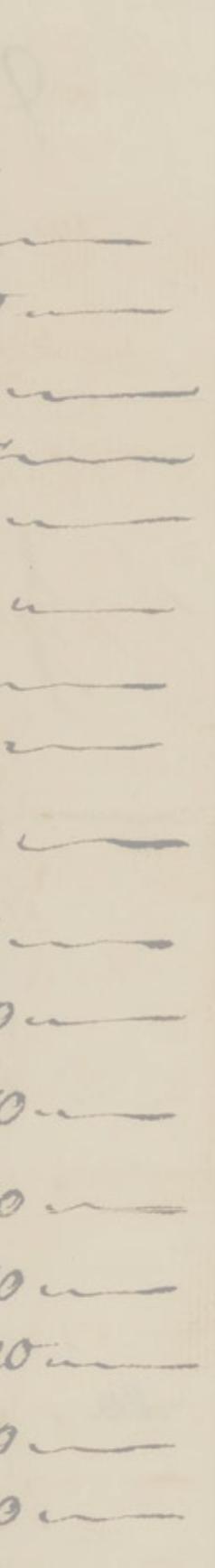
The creation of the second edition of this Report recognizes the importance of the habit of remembrance — the repeated act of recalling the failures of our past — to inform our future. What Brown has achieved through its actions and initiatives in the fifteen years since the Slavery and Justice Report was first published is to take real and concrete steps to continue the important work of creating a more fully inclusive and equitable campus; expand understanding about the impact of systemic racism and racial slavery, with the goal of helping to build a more just and equitable society; and catalyze critical conversations and change as the nation confronts anti-Black racism and other pervasive injustices. When institutions of higher education are confronted with difficult issues — whether they are social, political, economic, or ideological — we address them through scholarship. While some may argue that studying an issue does not have a lasting impact, the Slavery and Justice Report demonstrates that the route through scholarship, when shepherded thoughtfully, does lead to meaningful change.

*Christina H. Paxson is the nineteenth president of Brown University.*

# Stores

4

6 bbl. Tarr	_____	\$18.
a Doctors Chest about,	_____	300
3 bbl. Rosin a \$30	_____	90
1/2 bbl. Oil	_____	35
60. or 70. Sallow and. a 20/.	_____	70
28. Swine fat a \$3	_____	84
7 Swivel Guns	_____	300
1 Cask powder 1/2 c	_____	100
Swivel Shott, Grape Shott & Small	_____	50
arm ditto	_____	
1. cwt. Lead	_____	38
40 hand Cuffs & 40 Shakels a 35/ & 40/.	_____	150
3 Chanes & <del>other</del> 109 w. of Spike, &	_____	170
Det Nails	_____	
4 bbl. Buns & peas	_____	100
24 bbl. Beef a \$70	_____	1680
22 bbl. Pork a \$110	_____	2420
10 bbl. menhadone a \$15	_____	150
30. Bread	_____ a \$24	720



# Context and Impact



# “A simple question needed to be met with a straightforward answer”: An Interview with Brown University President Emerita Dr. Ruth J. Simmons

*Ruth J. Simmons and Anthony Bogues*

ON JANUARY 11, 2021, Professor Anthony Bogues, director of Brown University’s Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, spoke with President Emerita Ruth J. Simmons about her motivations in calling for an investigation into the University’s relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, the significance of the process that undergirded the investigation, and the enduring legacy of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*. This is a transcript of that conversation, edited for length and clarity.

**BOGUES:** *What made you decide to appoint a Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice? There were a lot of things happening at the time, such as reparations arguments and related debates on campus. I tend to think that people who make very important decisions ultimately do so for internal reasons, not only as a response to external factors. What led you to your decision?*

**SIMMONS:** Actually, I was responding to a pretty simple question. One of the things that has animated me throughout my long career in higher education

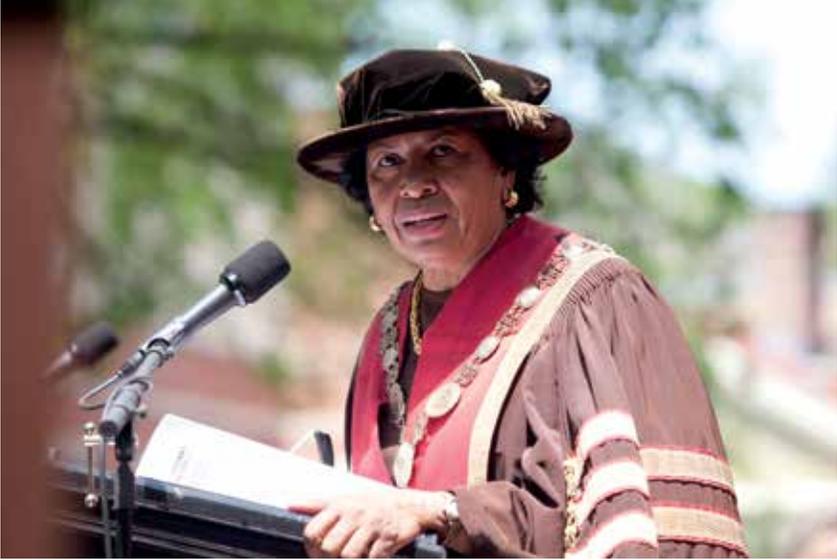
is not to veer too far from certain principles. To me, one of the most enduring elements of establishing sanity [laughs] and being able to be consistent across decades is being transparent and truthful. I never saw any alternative to that in my career. And so a simple question needed to be met with a straightforward answer. That was my assumption.

When I started at Brown, I heard this question: What was the University's relationship to the transatlantic slave trade? And so I dutifully began to look into it to see if I could get some answers. I found no answers. The official histories of the University were silent on this question. When I asked people in public relations to get a statement out about Brown's relationship to the slave trade, they told me there was no such relationship. Given the fact that there was both confusion and obvious discomfort with that question, I thought the only way to address it was to come at it very directly and to find the truth. The way to do that, it seemed, was to use the University's best resources — scholarship and research. And so I reached out to people who had the capacity to research this question and to deliver the answer in a straightforward and unexpurgated way. That's really what animated me. There was a very simple question that needed to be answered, and we needed to answer it in the way that universities typically answer such questions.

**BOGUES:** *What is interesting, though, is that instead of appointing a historian or two, you set up an institutional process. Why such a deeply democratic process? What motivated you to go in that direction?*

**SIMMONS:** First of all, there was the clear prospect that the answer to the question of Brown's relationship to the transatlantic slave trade would create some discomfort and division within the University community, and by that I mean among alumni, among supporters, among students, among faculty, among staff. I really thought it important, therefore, to have a representative group of people present to participate in and observe this question up close, to be able to allow the University to ratify the outcome and to be able to attest that the process was valid. This approach was necessary to make sure that whatever the findings, they could be upheld as valid and truthful.

We had a wonderful group of people who were empowered to ask questions, to express doubt, to change the shape and direction of the investigation



Announcing the appointment of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice in 2004, President Ruth J. Simmons asserted: “So often, students — and citizens — take the purpose of debate to be that of stating to others their point of view rather than improving their understanding by engaging strongly opposing arguments. Quite to the contrary, our Committee on Slavery and Justice brings together different approaches and views to model the use of rigor, discipline, breadth, objectivity, and diversity in the search for truth. The Committee therefore allows us to demonstrate how difficult, uncomfortable, and valuable this process can be.”

when they thought it was useful to do so, and so on. Keep in mind, we talk a lot about democratic processes — we extol them, in fact — but we use them less often than we actually should. So I thought it would be wonderful to establish a process that would demonstrate the following: We were unafraid to do this work as a university because we believed profoundly in the task of universities to investigate, to disclose the truth, to be transparent. We believed in those values, and, therefore, we were unafraid to have a group of people robustly pursue the truth and to give us the result.

I often thought during this process that the most valuable work we were doing, frankly, was modeling that process, claiming it as being robust enough for us to consider any question no matter how uncomfortable it was. In a real sense, I thought the country ought to be doing the same thing, using the same modality to explore the past, and to come to terms with it. I knew that this was very much going to be a process of coming to terms with the University’s history, and if we could model that for the country, would that not be a wonderful thing to do?

Second, I also thought, very selfishly, that I might be compromised in this process because, as unfair as it was, here I was, an African American president, calling for this to be done. I knew that the project would draw immediate criticism only because I was African American. I knew that some critics would say I had some kind of grudge. Thus, it was important that the research profile be so strong and have such integrity because I knew that I would be challenged, as an African American, on my right to call for this process. I often say that had I been Larry Summers or another of the Ivy League presidents doing this, my appointment of the Slavery and Justice Committee never would have been raised as an issue. But I am realistic, and I knew that, because of racism, some would raise the issue precisely because, in their view, I was not entitled to do the same things that other presidents were entitled to do.

**BOGUES:** *One of the things that I remember and always make reference to is something you said to the Committee halfway through the process. We couldn't at that time agree on the outcome of the Report and were planning to write two versions: a majority report and a minority report. When a group of us informed you of our plan over dinner, you turned to all of us at the table and said, "I can't tell you exactly what to do, but if you do that you have failed." At that moment, we knew we had to go back to the drawing board, reassemble, and try to work through our differences. Why did you say that to us?*

**SIMMONS:** I said it because this is such a profoundly necessary thing for the country to do, and it is so important for us to come to terms with a kind of commonality of perspective. I've never believed that it was impossible to get to a shared perspective around these thorny issues. Keep in mind that I grew up in deep segregation in the South, and the opinions between Blacks and whites varied greatly, to put it mildly. But I've always felt since I was a child that the stakes are so high in our country to be able to agree on fundamentals. If we stop working toward that goal, we might as well agree to dissolution, because we cannot coexist in this enterprise if we do not have the strength to hammer through the differences of opinion and come to some agreement on how we go forward.

And so I thought at that moment, "Goodness, if such a committee cannot do that, then what possible hope is there for the University as a whole to

resolve such questions — for the country as a whole to resolve such questions?” I believed that that resolution had to start with the Committee. In a group that had been working together for so long, that knew about each other’s motives, that trusted each other’s honesty, why could one not reach agreement? I wanted to insist that we at least try.

The other aspect of it, frankly, was that I didn’t ever have a sense during that process that the Report would be as important as it has turned out to be. But I thought that it had the potential of being important, and I wanted to make sure that, when released, the Report had a certain integrity. I often say that as we do our work in universities, we ought to own up to the problems we face, we ought not to deny that there are disagreements — profound disagreements, as it were — but at the same time demonstrate how we’re able to hammer out those differences and reach a conclusion that allows us to go forward together. I thought that would be a different and better model for the University.

**BOGUES:** *You talked about opposition. Where did your most serious opposition come from?*

**SIMMONS:** It came from people who were not so much associated with Brown University, but who were flung across the country, wanting to challenge what we were doing as, from their perspectives, somehow corrupt. It was very much the kind of thing that one heard when people began talking about reparations, especially around the question posed by Charles Ogletree and others as to whether or not universities and institutions that had benefited from slavery should have to disgorge the benefits that they had received from slavery. There were people who were enraged at what they saw as a venerable university taking on such an issue. I think our work literally frightened these people into assailing the process as illegitimate because it dared to look into the slavery origins of a university. So we had comments from people like that across the country. We also saw publications that raised questions about whether or not the process might somehow be corrupt, mostly by virtue of the fact that I was African American, and, therefore, must have certain motives in undertaking this project. There were questions, to be sure, from some alumni, but those were pretty muted compared to what most universities have experienced.

As for the Corporation [of Brown University], they said very little to me about it, frankly. I was still in my early days at the University, and I had struck up a conversation with the Corporation before I was actually named to the presidency at Brown. When they approached me about becoming president, I challenged them about whether or not they understood well enough what I was and who I was. I then challenged them to really seek somebody else if they were not prepared to deal with someone like me who could not do the job other than how I saw it — how I felt it — on the basis of my own experience and knowledge. And I said, if you are not prepared to have me be fully who I am, then you should go someplace else and find another president. They had insisted at the time that they understood who I was, and that they were prepared for me to lead on the basis of who I was. That gave me permission, therefore, to do what I was doing, and so the Corporation did not intrude or say something to the effect of “This is a dangerous thing you are doing, please don’t do it.” I never got that kind of instruction from members of the governing body, the Corporation of Brown University.

**BOGUES:** *As the process unfolded, did you think that you were a pioneer?*

**SIMMONS:** Not at all, not at all.

**BOGUES:** *But this was the most difficult task that you were undertaking.*

**SIMMONS:** I didn’t think of it that way, honestly. This did not seem to me to be the most difficult thing that I was undertaking. I did not think it would be remarkable in my tenure as president of Brown, actually. The reason I didn’t think so is because I was approaching the question in my typical way. Remember, I came to Brown after long years in higher education, where I had done things on the basis of what I thought was the right thing to do. I was simply doing the same thing in this instance: seeking the truth, and doing something that was actually good for the University because the process would put to rest questions that some had posed about the corruption of the University, which had hidden the truth of its connection to slavery. So I thought that I was lifting up the University with the truth. It seemed to me that was a good thing to do, but by no means did I consider it the most important thing that I was doing.

Early in my tenure, for example, I indicated that Brown would implement a need-blind admissions policy. Oh my goodness, I thought that was far more important in terms of my tenure than anything else that I was contemplating doing. A good deal of the changes that we were making at Brown were policy changes and investments in the University, and, typically, universities tend to think that those are the important things. The work of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice was just a study, right? Frankly, I thought it was exactly the kind of thing that any self-respecting university leader would do, much as one would take on any issue of the time and try to wrestle with it and deliver an answer to one's community.

**BOGUES:** *The Report is now considered pioneering, and has opened up the floodgates at many universities and other kinds of institutions to do this kind of self-study. For universities, in particular, Brown's undertaking is regarded as the gold standard for this kind of task. I wonder how you reflect on all of this as part of your legacy.*

**SIMMONS:** One is rarely responsible for how, in the end, one is seen, or what of one's work people most value. It has been a great surprise to me that people have seen this work as perhaps the most important thing that I've done in my entire career [laughs]. It does not displease me that this is the case, because I never expected that I would determine how people should see me. And yes, I would note that around the world Brown's investigation into its relationship to the transatlantic slave trade has been a very defining aspect of my work.

Let me be immodest and say something about the ways in which this undertaking has affected my present and my past, and probably my future. First, it was all, in the end, so incredibly sane and sensible: A question arose, we did not shrink from the question, we organized ourselves to answer it, and the Committee did a superb job unearthing the truth. Second, the Report was so superbly written, so deftly constructed with a mix of supporting documents and facts, that it could not be denied. Written in a tone that lacked recrimination, it was evidence of the best work that one can do when turning to a question of such serious violation of human rights. So the fact is that the process itself, the Committee, and the Report all combined to do work that probably would have been very hard to equal by any one person, and I unfairly

got credit for it when it was really the Committee that delivered the results of the investigation in such an unimpeachable form.

Brown's superb handling of the whole undertaking gave permission to a very large number of institutions to do the same. Up until then, nobody would touch the subject; everybody was afraid of the consequences of looking at it. After all, slavery, race, and racism have been the third rail in this country since its founding. Brown gave people reason to believe they could do it also, and that they could carry out such work and survive despite all of the reasons that people said it could never be done.

What are some of those reasons? Number one, we were told that a university dare not do this because supporters would be angry, they would walk away from the University, they'd never give money to the University again, that it would be disastrous because students wouldn't come to the University. The scenario that was painted by some was that such activity would be shameful and would be criticized very harshly, and that what we were doing would be to the detriment of any university.

The fact that we were able to do it at Brown, to do it well, and then to come out on the other side of it as a stronger institution, not a weaker institution, even raising \$1.6 billion for our campaign, gave other institutions permission to undertake this work without fear, and that was the real beauty of it. It has been phenomenal to see the number and types of institutions that have finally engaged with the issue of slavery and what it wrought: insurance companies, investment banks, universities outside the country, the United Nations . . . I don't know the number, but it has to be in the hundreds. I certainly couldn't have predicted such an outcome.

Brown's work has done good for the country — and for the world, frankly. It's made African Americans, in particular, feel so much pride in the fact that, finally, people can talk about a part of the African American legacy in this country that went unexamined for so long. I've benefited because people wrongly think that I'm the right person to handle any complicated issue involving race and slavery [laughter]. Of course, that's not the case, but it did allow me to step into some spheres that I never would have been able to step into because people associate me and will always associate me with the excellent Report that the Committee produced.

**BOGUES:** *I'd like to say, though, that we never would have been able to do that work — to do the research, to write the Report — without your courage and conviction throughout the entire process.*

**SIMMONS:** I was merely doing what my experience over the years told me that universities required. I'm one of those old fogies who just believes so passionately in the unique space that we occupy in universities. Because I grew up with lies — lies about the capacity of African Americans, lies about white supremacy, lies about what slavery actually did, and the legacies of slavery in this country — I came to university life because it was the one space that I could see in the country where one could begin to tell the truth. Scholars did research, they wrote books, they told the truth about history. I was just adhering to the values that I thought universities should stand for.

Now I know that universities don't always tell the truth, and if they don't, I'm usually the first one to castigate them for missing the opportunity to do so. I still believe in these values. When I first came to Prairie View, I think they were very shocked by the things that I said because I believe what I believe no matter where I am. Whether I'm at an Ivy League university or I'm at a historically Black university, I believe the same thing, and I say the same thing. We have work to do in a university that is so important to the advancement of society. If we shirk that responsibility, shame on us. If we fail to do what we need to do in turning a mirror to society, shame on us. And I, for one, never want to be associated with doing that sort of thing.

**BOGUES:** *Any final remarks?*

**SIMMONS:** I hope that Brown lives up to the legacy of the Report and its process. I hope ardently that the University embraces and honors the extraordinary work that the Committee did across time, because people so admire that work around the world. One of the real dangers that the University will face if they fail to honor that work is that people will think far less of the University than they should.

**BOGUES:** *Thanks very much, both for your time and the remarkable work you have done as an educator.*

**Ruth J. Simmons** is President of Prairie View A&M University. She previously served as the eighteenth president of Brown University and founding Chair of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice External Advisory Board.

**Anthony Boggles** is Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Critical Theory, Professor of Africana Studies, and Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University.

## Slavery and Justice at Brown— A Personal Reflection

*James T. Campbell*

IN 1979, NOVELIST Ralph Ellison came to Brown University to speak at a ceremony dedicating a portrait of Inman Page, one of the first two African American students to attend Brown. Born into slavery, Page did not inherit the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness promised in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. Graduating in 1877, just months after the final overthrow of Reconstruction, he was also denied the equal citizenship guaranteed by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. But he lived an estimable life, working as a teacher and community organizer and serving as president of newly established Black colleges in Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Tennessee.

Near the end of his career, Page worked as principal of Frederick Douglass High School in Oklahoma City, where his students included a young Ralph Ellison. Ellison used the portrait dedication ceremony at Brown to share some funny stories, but also to reflect on the stories that Americans elect not to tell, what he called “unwritten history.”

*Thus in the underground of our unwritten history, much of that which is ignored defies our inattention by continuing to grow and have consequences. . . . Perhaps if we learned more of what has happened and why it happened, we will learn more of who we really are, and perhaps if*

*we learn more about our unwritten history, we won't be so vulnerable to the capriciousness of events as we are today. . . . Such individuals as Dr. Page . . . worked, it seems to me, to such an end. Ultimately, theirs was an act of faith: faith in themselves, faith in the potentialities of their own people, and despite their social status as Negroes, faith in the potentialities of the democratic ideal. Coming so soon after the betrayal of the Reconstruction, theirs was a heroic effort. It is my good fortune that their heroism became my heritage, and thanks to Inman Page and Brown University it is also now a part of the heritage of all Americans who would become conscious of who they are.<sup>1</sup>*

I drew many lessons from my tenure as chair of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, but as I reflect on the experience today, more than fifteen years later, what I keep coming back to is the portrait of Inman Page, which I “discovered” while working on the Committee. I don’t know how many times I had walked past it over the years, hanging in the John Hay Library, but I had somehow never really seen it — which is precisely the point that Ellison was making. Our histories, both individual and collective, are a collection of many stories, some of which we remember and celebrate, some of which we contrive to deny, extenuate, and forget. The Report that the Committee produced, now released in a new edition, recounts some of the latter stories. It represents, in Ellison’s terms, an excavation of “the underground of our unwritten history.”

Given all that has happened in our society in recent years, I am more persuaded than ever of the importance of these kinds of excavations, however painful they may sometimes be. This does not mean — as some critics nowadays allege — that I and like-minded academics are only interested in the darkness. To the contrary, I count my time on the Slavery and Justice Committee as one of the most hopeful experiences of my professional life. Institutions, like nations, are profoundly shaped by the values and beliefs of their founders, but they are not eternally bound by them. They change and grow, in sometimes surprising ways. This, too, is what Ellison was trying to tell us. The men who founded the College of Rhode Island, what is today Brown University, could scarcely have imagined that a student like Inman Page would one day grace the campus, much less the ways in which what he learned at Brown would ripple out into the world of freedpeople in the post-Emancipation South. Still less could they

have imagined an African American woman, herself a descendant of enslaved people, becoming the University's eighteenth president and commissioning a report like the one that follows.

Doubtless the Brown of the future will exceed our imagining as well. The students, faculty, and administrators who live and learn there will inhabit a different universe of possibility than ours. They will value things that we neglect and disdain things that we consider precious. They will turn a condescending eye on us, lamenting our blinkered moral imaginations, decrying our comfortable acquiescence to systems of gross injustice. More power to them.

So the next time you find yourself passing through the John Hay Library, please take time to look — really look — at the portrait of Inman Page. If the life of Inman Page represents one of the most inspirational chapters in Brown's history, the episode that triggered the appointment of the Slavery and Justice Committee was one of the most dispiriting. It occurred early in 2001, a moment curiously like our own, two decades later: rife with political partisanship, reeling from a disputed presidential election, and consumed by a rancorous national debate over race. The chief focus of the 2001 debate was not police violence, the issue that fuels today's Black Lives Matter movement, nor voter suppression, now experiencing a gruesome revival, but rather slavery reparations — the idea that African Americans were entitled to some form of compensation or redress in light of their ancestors' 246 years of uncompensated toil.

Reparations was not, in fact, a new idea in 2001 — section three of the Slavery and Justice Report provides a history of the centuries-long reparations debate — but the question had acquired renewed salience in the context of a series of class-action lawsuits seeking damages from corporations alleged to have profited from slavery and slave-related enterprises. Among the institutions in the crosshairs were Brown, Harvard, and Yale, all of which were publicly identified by reparations advocates as “probable targets” of litigation.

In the event, Brown was not sued, and such lawsuits as were filed were quickly dismissed in federal court. (This history, too, is discussed in the Report.) But if reparations claims fizzled in courts of law, they exploded in the court of public opinion, setting off an acrimonious, racially charged national debate. Indeed, contemporary public opinion polls reported that reparations was the single most racially divisive issue ever surveyed.<sup>2</sup> While roughly half

of African American respondents expressed broad support for the idea — responses varied depending on how the question was phrased — a whopping 95% of white respondents expressed opposition, often violently. Try to imagine any other issue on which 95% of white Americans agree.

At this precise political moment, a paid political advertisement appeared in the *Brown Daily Herald* and several other college student newspapers. Headlined “Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea — and Racist Too,” the ad was the work of a right-wing political activist named David Horowitz. As the title suggests, the ad offered a catalogue of critiques of the idea of reparations, some of which were quite inflammatory: Black people had benefited from enslavement, which spared them a life of African poverty; reparations had already been paid “in the form of welfare benefits and racial preferences”; whatever “adversity” Black Americans faced was “the result of failures of individual character rather than the lingering after-effects” of slavery or “racial discrimination”; the real “debt” was the one that Black people owed to the courageous “white Christians” who had freed them, and so forth.

It does no disservice to Mr. Horowitz, who has had a long and distinguished career as a political provocateur, to suggest that the advertisement was designed to provoke a reaction. If so, he hit the jackpot at Brown, where a small group of offended students demanded that the *Herald* rescind the ad and relinquish the money it had accepted to run it. When the student editors refused, the group pledged to prevent the newspaper from circulating until its demands were met. Whether or not one can steal something that is free is an interesting legal question, but the next morning, protesters converged on the *Herald's* distribution sites and made off with the entire day's press run. Some posed for pictures, proudly holding the papers aloft.

Whatever sense of triumph the protesters felt proved short-lived. The “theft” became front-page national news. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, even the *Times of London* all carried stories, as did FOX News, CNN, and MSNBC. I remember those stories, as well as the withering editorial commentary that accompanied them, depicting Brown as a school whose students were so coddled, illiberal, and intolerant that their only response to ideas that challenged their own was to smash the presses. I also remember the obscene, racist phone calls that flooded the office of Brown's Program in Afro-American Studies (now the Department of Africana

PLEASE POST

# Have Memories of Slavery and the Civil War United or Divided Americans?

A lecture presented by  
the University Steering  
Committee on Slavery  
and Justice

Wednesday, November 3, 2004  
7:30 p.m.  
MacMillan Hall, Room 117  
Brown University  
Free and open to the public

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE

BY

David Blight

Professor of History at Yale University and director of the Gilder Lehrman  
Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition



[www.brown.edu/slaveryjustice](http://www.brown.edu/slaveryjustice)

Between 2004 and 2006, the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, as one prong of its work, organized some thirty public programs, including lectures, symposia, film screenings, town hall meetings, workshops, and two international conferences, to help the Brown community—and the nation—engage critically with the complex historical, political, legal, and moral questions posed by present-day confrontations with past injustice.

Studies), where I was then teaching, as if those of us invested in understanding African American experiences must somehow be to blame. It was a truly dispiriting episode.

By significant coincidence, Brown had, a short time before, announced the appointment of a new president, Ruth J. Simmons, who on her accession a few months later would become the first African American to lead an Ivy League university. Given the circumstances — the divisiveness of the reparations issue, the likelihood of litigation, and her own conspicuousness as a descendant of enslaved people heading a historically white university, not to mention the raw emotions left from the recent campus controversy — one might have expected Simmons to give the whole business a wide berth. She chose the opposite course. In her first Convocation address, delivered to the entering class in the fall of 2001, Simmons addressed the seizure of the papers directly. “I won’t ask you to embrace someone who offends your humanity through the exercise of free speech,” she told students, “but I would ask you to understand that the price of your own freedom is permitting the expression of such opinions. We will not stop hoping that men and women will rise above gratuitously specious utterances, but even if they do not, we must fight with all the force within us to preserve their right to be heard even as we work hard to expose the error of their logic.” Pointing to the Van Winkle Gates, through which the entering class had just ceremonially processed, she added, “If you come to this place for comfort, I would urge you to walk to yon iron gate, pass through the portal and never look back. But if you seek betterment for yourself, for your community and posterity, stay and fight.”<sup>3</sup>

Simmons followed the speech with an even more extraordinary action, appointing a University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. The Committee was charged not only to investigate and publicly disclose Brown’s historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, but also to organize public programs that might help members of the Brown community — and the nation as a whole — to think in reasoned, rigorous ways about the complex legal, historical, ethical, and moral questions raised by the raging national debate over slavery reparations. Reparations, Simmons acknowledged, was an extremely controversial subject, on which people “of good will may ultimately disagree,” but it was also a subject on which Brown had “a special obligation and a special opportunity to provide thoughtful

inquiry.” “Understanding our history and suggesting how the full truth of that history can be incorporated into our common traditions will not be easy,” she noted in the statement announcing the Committee’s appointment. “But, then, it doesn’t have to be.”<sup>4</sup>

Simmons’ reference to Brown’s “special opportunity and obligation” requires a bit of explanation. Most Americans today, when they hear the word

A PUBLIC FORUM

---

PRESENTED BY THE WARREN PRESERVATION SOCIETY AND  
BROWN UNIVERSITY'S STEERING COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY & JUSTICE  
*In cooperation with Roger Williams University School of Law*



*Slavery & Justice:*  
*Our other heritage*

<p><i>Navigating the Past: Voyage of the Slave Ship 'Sally', 1764-1765</i></p> <p>The only Warren presentation of this historical exhibition currently touring Rhode Island</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>PROF. JAMES CAMPBELL</b> <i>Chair, Brown University's Steering Committee on Slavery &amp; Justice</i></p>	<p><i>Rhode Island &amp; the Negro Cloth</i></p> <p>Rhode Island's role in the slave trade economy through the participation of local textile mills.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>MS. SUSAN OBA</b> <i>Brown University Honors Program</i></p>	<p><i>Monetary Remedies for the Descendants of Slaves</i></p> <p>Placed in historical context, Prof. Murphy will present efforts in Congress and the courts to consider reparations for slavery.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>PROF. COLLEEN MURPHY</b> <i>Roger Williams School of Law</i></p>
--	--	--

---

**THURSDAY, MAY 25TH, 6:30 PM**

*First United Methodist Church, 25 Church Street, Warren, RI*

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 257-3084

“The charge to the Committee,” President Ruth J. Simmons wrote in her April 30, 2003 invitation to faculty and students to serve on the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, “will be to organize academic events and activities [like this public forum] that might help the nation and the Brown community think deeply, seriously, and rigorously” about the “complicated, controversial questions surrounding the issue of reparations for slavery.”

“slavery,” imagine an institution sharply bounded in space and time — an “Old South” world of porticoed plantation homes and snow-white cotton fields, destined to disappear in the forward march of human progress. But slavery flourished across the New World, and it lasted for a very, very long time — almost four centuries. In the case of mainland North America, what became the United States, the institution of slavery existed for 246 years, which is, by way of comparison, one year longer than the interval between the nation declaring its independence in 1776, and 2021, when I write these words. Slavery thrived in all thirteen British mainland North American colonies and it existed, at least for a time, in all thirteen original states. About one in four residents of New York City was enslaved at the moment of independence, and it would take another half century, until 1827, for New York to abolish the institution completely. The last enslaved African Americans in New Jersey only became free in December 1865, with the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment.

In Rhode Island, too, slavery was a ubiquitous feature of daily life. Close to one in ten Rhode Islanders — more in the city of Providence — was enslaved at the time of the College’s founding. James Manning, the school’s first president, brought an enslaved person with him when he took up the job. Rhode Islanders’ real distinction, however, was in slave trading. Of those African slaving voyages launched from North American ports, more than half sailed from tiny Rhode Island — more than a thousand voyages, bearing more than 100,000 Africans into enslavement in the New World. Some were carried back to Rhode Island, but most were borne to the sugar-producing colonies of the West Indies, where their average life expectancy was something less than seven years. Much of the wealth of New England — and much of the wealth that endowed what is today Brown University — can be traced, directly and indirectly, to this commerce. I do not think that President Simmons knew all of these facts when she appointed the Committee, but she knew enough to understand that the story of Brown’s origins was more complicated than the cheery version presented in prior University histories. She also understood that this forgotten story — this “unwritten history” — had something important to tell our students and the nation.

I would like to be able to tell you that the announcement of the Slavery and Justice Committee’s appointment was greeted with broad approval or

at least with open minds, but that would not be true. Responses in the press ranged from bemused to aghast. The *Providence Journal* greeted the news with an opinion piece by a nationally syndicated columnist titled “Simmons’ Hypocritical Race Hustling,” which claimed, without attribution and certainly without truth, that President Simmons had ordered the Committee to disburse Brown’s endowment as reparations checks in order to advance her political career.<sup>5</sup> Mercifully, Twitter had not yet been invented, but email had, and the Committee’s inbox was soon overflowing. Some of those who wrote, including a number of Brown students and alumni, were encouraging and proud, but most were hostile and derisive. “You disgust me, as you disgust many other Americans,” one correspondent wrote. “Slavery was wrong, but at that time it was a legal enterprise. It ended, case closed. You cite slavery’s effects as being the reason that black people are so far behind, but that just illustrates your ignorance. Black people, here and now, are behind because some can’t keep their hands off drugs, or guns, or can’t move forward, can’t get off welfare, can’t do the simple things to improve their life. . . . They don’t deserve money, they deserve a boot in the backside over and over until they can find their own way. . . . Can your ignorant research, and can Ruth Simmons too.”

Fortunately, people who rush to judgment also tend to have short attention spans. The media storm abated and the Committee, which included faculty, students, and administrators, was able to go about its work. Over the next two years, we convened some thirty public programs, including lectures, panels, town hall meetings, and two international conferences, one co-sponsored with Yale’s Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition. In keeping with the charge from President Simmons, we cast our net broadly, looking not only at the American case but also at the experiences of other societies struggling to come to terms with grievous historical injustices. We learned about the Nuremberg Tribunal and South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission; about Australia’s “Stolen Generation” (Aboriginal children taken from their parents as parts of a government campaign of forced racial assimilation); and Korea’s so-called “comfort women” (women compelled to labor in brothels operated by the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II). We organized sessions about the history and politics of the slavery reparations movement, attending to the arguments of proponents and opponents alike, but we also explored the

possibilities and potential pitfalls of other forms of historical redress, including national and institutional apologies, truth commissions, and the erection (or removal) of monuments and memorials. In one of our final programs, we heard from a survivor of modern-day slavery, a sobering reminder that the scourge of human trafficking is not simply a “historical” problem.

The public programs were only one prong of the Committee’s work. Members also conducted historical research, exploring a variety of on- and off-campus archives, aided by an able team of undergraduate researchers. As someone whose own research focused on slavery and its legacies, I began with a better understanding than most of the scale and scope of American slavery, but some of what we found left me stunned. I knew that many prominent Rhode Island families were implicated in the slave trade, including the Brown family, for whom the College of Rhode Island was renamed in 1803, but I did not know that the institution’s early governing body, now known as the Corporation of Brown University, had counted among its members thirty men who owned or captained slave ships. Nor did I know that the streets of Newport were first paved with a duty on imported slaves; that Rhode Island was home to dozens of distilleries, which churned out the high-proof rum that was slavers’ stock-in-trade on the West African coast; that the barrels in which sugar, molasses, and rum were shipped were fashioned by local coopers and ironsmiths; that enslaved Jamaicans subsisted on salted cod harvested by Rhode Island fishermen; that the sugar mills on West Indian plantations were turned by Narragansett ponies; that the spermaceti candles with which plantation owners illuminated their homes were manufactured in Providence. The portrait that emerged, shared in the first section of the *Slavery and Justice Report*, was not of a few evil men enriching themselves on slavery, but of an entire economy organized around enslavement. As one historian hosted by the Committee put it, slavery in New England was literally the business of “the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker.”<sup>6</sup>

Looking back across the years, several episodes stand out in my memory. Perhaps the most vivid is the one with which the Committee began its Report — our belated realization that the beautiful antique grandfather clock standing in the room in which we were meeting was a bequest of the family of Admiral Esek Hopkins. Brother of Governor Stephen Hopkins, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Esek Hopkins served not only as

first commander in chief of the United States Navy but also as a member of Brown's early governing body. He also served as captain of the slave ship *Sally*, a 100-ton brigantine dispatched by the Brown brothers to West Africa in 1764, the year of the College's founding. The voyage of the *Sally*, horrific even by the standards of a murderous trade, is discussed in detail in the Slavery and Justice Report, so I will say no more about it here. But spare a thought for the clock, which not only offers a striking example of history hiding in plain sight but also encapsulates the fundamental questions the Committee faced. As we put it in the introduction to the Report: "How are we, as members of the Brown community, as Rhode Islanders, and as citizens and residents of the United States, to make sense of our complex history? How do we reconcile those elements of our past that are gracious and honorable with those that provoke grief and horror? What responsibilities, if any, rest upon us in the present as inheritors of this mixed legacy?"

By the time the Slavery and Justice Committee issued its Report in 2006, several other universities had launched investigations into their own historical relationships with slavery and the slave trade. Many more have followed since. As of this writing, nearly 100 universities in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain have trod the path that Brown blazed. In the United States alone, the roster includes Columbia, Emory, Georgetown, Harvard, Princeton, Rutgers, the University of Maryland, the University of North Carolina, the University of Virginia, William and Mary, and Yale, to name only a few. I think it is fair to say that we have reached an inflection point, in which the idea of a university telling the truth about its past does not seem controversial at all but rather a basic institutional obligation. The question now, as Brown releases this new, enriched edition of the Slavery and Justice Report, is what do we do with this new historical openness? How do we move from acknowledgment to action, from the discovery and disclosure of dark pasts to the task of building a more just and inclusive present and future? Our real work is just beginning.

*James T. Campbell is the Edgar E. Robinson Professor in U.S. History at Stanford University. Formerly a Professor of American Civilization, Africana Studies, and History at Brown, he chaired the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice.*



## Tactility, Memory Work, and Martin Puryear's *Slavery Memorial*

*Renée Ater*

I HAVE LONG ADMIRERD Martin Puryear's sculpture, attracted to his material surfaces and spare forms. Puryear is a maker of objects, an artist known for the ways in which he engages with materials, employs traditional woodworking methods, and sees the potential for rich psychological, emotional, and sensorial associations with his creations. He has described his work as being about the maker and the materials: "I would say I'm interested in making sculpture that tries to describe itself to the world, work that acknowledges its maker and that offers an experience that's probably more tactile and sensate than strictly cerebral."<sup>1</sup> I first encountered Puryear's work in a 1992 exhibition at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC.<sup>2</sup> In the spacious, white-walled galleries, Puryear's objects challenged me to rethink my understanding of what sculpture could be: the ingenious balance of *Circumbent* (1976), the dark luminous shape of *Self* (1978), the evocative suggestion of time in *Night and Day* (1984), and the sacred biomorphic form of *Sanctum* (1985).

I rehearse this first encounter with Puryear's sculpture because it shapes how I understand *Slavery Memorial* (2014) at Brown University. The tactile and sensate are key to understanding the memorial, as is its location on the Front Green, also known as the Quiet Green, and the memory work that it both does and does not accomplish. Puryear has called the memorial

“something in the nature of an industrial artifact,” referencing the technology of the ball and chain used to shackle enslaved persons as representative of the industrial reality of slavery.<sup>3</sup> The materials of this artifact — ductile cast iron in a rich rust-brown patina, an impact- and fatigue-resistant industrial material — bring into the present the palpable brutality of slavery and Brown’s connection to this slave past. According to Lisa Blee and Jean M. O’Brien, memory work indicates “the myriad ways in which monuments imbedded in a social fabric play a role in how individuals and collectivities make meaning of the past as distinct from the concrete matter of what actually happened.”<sup>4</sup> The concrete historical details of Brown’s ties to the slave trade and the use



**Martin Puryear’s *Slavery Memorial* is located on Brown’s Front Green. On September 27, 2014, President Christina H. Paxson addressed more than 300 University guests who had assembled for its dedication, asserting “The reason this memorial is in such a prominent spot on our campus is that we know a polite remembrance is not enough. We have an obligation, here at this citadel of free speech, to set a higher standard. . . .”**

of enslaved labor on campus are outlined in the Slavery and Justice Report. In its location on the Quiet Green, the memory work of *Slavery Memorial* is dynamic and multivalent, asking the diverse members of Brown's community to contemplate over and over again their physical connection to the past in the context of the everyday.

---

In the early twenty-first century, U.S. colleges and universities have begun to wrestle with the historical role of slavery at their institutions.<sup>5</sup> Several of these institutions have actively engaged the memorialization process and commissioned monuments for their campuses: *Unsung Founders Memorial* (2005) at the University of North Carolina; *Slavery Memorial* (2014) at Brown University; *Baldwin Hall Memorial* (2018) at the University of Georgia; *Memorial to Enslaved Laborers* (2020) at the University of Virginia; and *Commemorative to Enslaved Peoples of Southern Maryland* (2020) at St. Mary's College. With careful thought and consideration, the memorials are reminders of the deep ties these institutions had to slavery, and they serve to confront the slave past in the present through three-dimensional form and interventions into the hallowed spaces of each campus.

Brown University set the stage for the serious consideration of the University's relationship to the transatlantic slave trade and slavery with the establishment of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. The University's efforts to reconcile its slave past came directly from the first African American president of an Ivy League institution, Dr. Ruth J. Simmons. In April 2003, Simmons formed its committee to study the issue of reparations for slavery, the relationship of the slave trade to the University's early benefactors, and the role of slavery at Brown and more broadly in Providence and the state of Rhode Island. From the beginning, Simmons called for the organization of informed and, at times, difficult public conversations about the slave past.<sup>6</sup> In 2006, the Slavery and Justice Committee issued its final Report, recommending that, among other things, the University memorialize its "entanglement with the transatlantic slave trade" with a physical monument, "a living site of memory, inviting reflection and fresh discovery without provoking paralysis or shame."<sup>7</sup>

In 2007, Simmons appointed the Commission on Memorials, a ten-member committee that included faculty, administrators, alumni, undergraduate and graduate students, and local Providence leaders. After meeting throughout 2007–2008, the Commission recommended in 2009 “that the Public Art Committee of the University be asked to commission a memorial that recognized the University’s ties to slave trading, and, as part of the process, the Committee should engage with the wider campus and Rhode Island communities.”<sup>8</sup> Brown’s Public Art Committee, which included faculty, alumni, a student, and local arts leaders, considered more than sixty-five artists, architects, and landscape architects for its memorial. Five finalists were invited to present their potential approaches to the project. The funding for the memorial came from the Corporation of Brown University, the governing body responsible for setting the budget, siting buildings, and establishing policy and strategic plans for the University. In February 2012, the Public Art Committee announced that it had selected the celebrated American sculptor Martin Puryear “for his thoughtful discussion and commitment to the significance of the memorial.”<sup>9</sup> According to Puryear, he felt an overwhelming sense of responsibility to address the “historical truth” of slavery, asking himself, “How do you use your art to somehow do justice to that historic truth?”<sup>10</sup>

---

On April 3, 2015, I visited Brown’s campus for the first time. I drove up with a colleague from New Haven to photograph the monument for my research. We arrived in the late morning on one of those brisk days with slight warmth, alerting us to the arrival of spring. We entered along a path leading from University Hall to Carrie Tower. From a distance, *Slavery Memorial* seemed small in relationship to the architecture surrounding it and the narrow expanse of the Quiet Green. As we drew near, I was struck by the two distinctive parts of the monument: the cast iron dome and broken chain with mirrored-surfaces and the gray and black stone plinth with engraved text.

Up close, *Slavery Memorial*’s tactile connection to the ground is remarkable. The half dome, measuring eight feet in diameter, appears to be half buried in or emerging from the earth, depending on one’s perspective. Its rootedness in the earth of the Quiet Green suggests that *Slavery Memorial* is pushing up

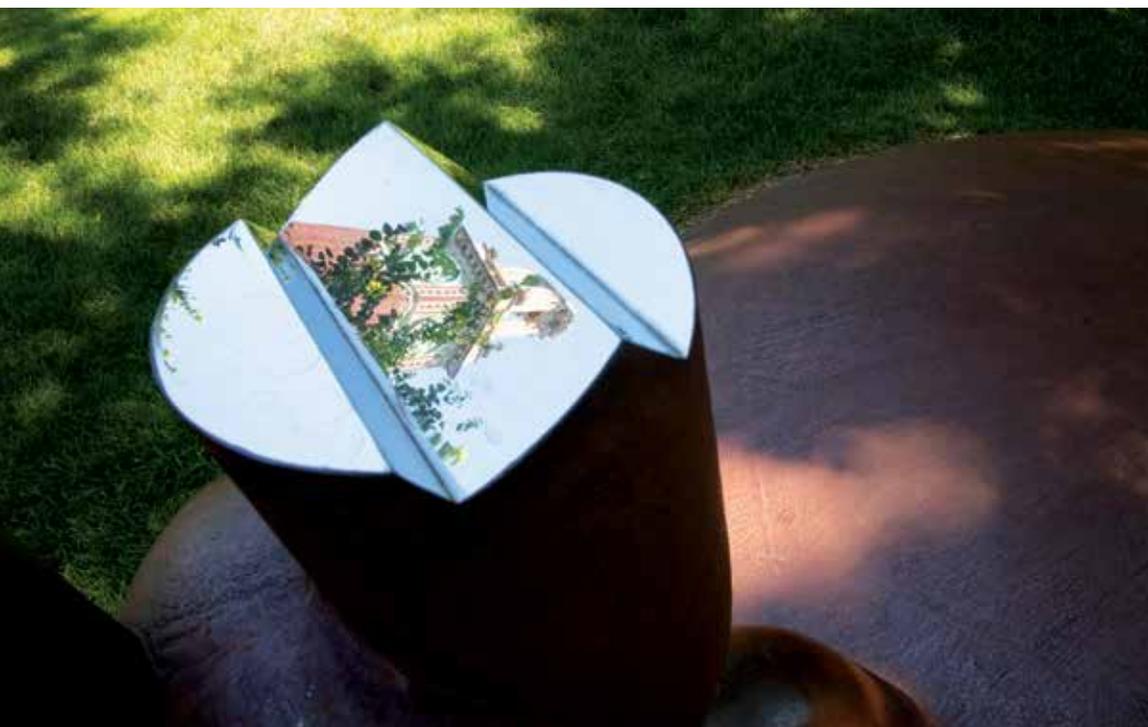
through history, asking for recognition of the painful past. According to the artist, the memorial is an artifact “partially buried — mostly buried — but that will never, ever disappear from memory.”<sup>11</sup> The allure of the monument is its low scale; the surface qualities of rusted iron and mirrored surfaces also elicit interactions and touch. During my visit in 2015, muddied shoe tread marks covered the dome — clearly people had walked across the memorial — and a group of students lounged on the memorial. Initially, I was shocked and disappointed in the behavior and with the visual evidence.<sup>12</sup> I also realized that no signage prescribed how Brown’s community was to interact with the memorial. Did the footprints represent a deliberate attempt at the erasure of memory?



**Puryear’s memorial evokes a ball and broken chain sinking into the Earth: “I chose to create the work in iron, ductile cast iron, an industrial material. . . . [It] is not brittle like gray iron. It’s much more resilient and robust. It’s designed to last as long as any building on this campus.”**

I'm not sure; perhaps they indicated facetious disregard for the memorial's conveyed meaning or a resistance to the University's declaration of the importance of the memorial. On a return visit in spring 2019, I noticed a new sign asking for the community to respect the boundaries of the memorial, setting it apart as a "sacred object." As a hallowed artifact, we are now meant to ignore its material call for us to touch.

Although touch is restricted, the sensate is realized through the strange beauty of the upward sweep of the chain and the use of mirror-polished stainless steel on the end of the broken links of the chain. In both a visual and



The ends of the broken link are finished to a mirror-like surface, reflecting sky, sun, trees, life. *Slavery Memorial* is both immediately accessible—"a blunt monument," Puryear called it at the 2014 dedication—and open to extensive observation, reflection, and interpretation. "After I took on the project, I realized what a weight it was to try to memorialize something as shameful as the practice of buying and selling human beings, which went on for so long in this country. . . . It was a very, very overwhelming sense of responsibility to historical truth."

bodily experience, I found myself fully immersed in the memorial through the reflective surfaces of the jagged ends. The play between permanence and seasonal change captured my attention. On that April day, filled with cerulean skies, the mirrors captured the movement of trees, clouds, and buildings: University Hall, Manning Hall, and Carrie Tower waver in and out of view, reminding us of the long history of Brown and the economics of the transatlantic slave trade that helped to fund the University. The mirrored surfaces reflect the change of time and seasons, but also mark the permanence of these buildings, and in the case of University Hall (1770), remind us of the enslaved labor used to construct the oldest building on campus.

The second part of the memorial is a stone plinth, with a carefully worded text. It reads, “This memorial recognizes Brown University’s connection to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the work of Africans and African Americans, enslaved and free, who helped build our university, Rhode Island, and the nation.” The marker also contextualizes the memorial: “In 2003 Brown President Ruth J. Simmons initiated a study of this aspect of the university’s history. In the eighteenth century slavery permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders dominated the North American share of the African slave trade, launching over a thousand slaving voyages in the century before the abolition of the trade in 1808, and scores of illegal voyages thereafter. Brown University was a beneficiary of this trade.” Puryear has noted that he and the Public Art Committee went through a number of iterations of the text. “For me, the most complicated part was finding the right tone that this project should take. It had to avoid blame and moralizing. It simply had to present the facts.”<sup>13</sup> Although I fully understood the need for interpretive text, the current inscription does not effectively convey the depth of Brown’s process to examine its slave past nor does it fully acknowledge the profound financial gains of Brown’s entanglement with the slave trade.

Seeing *Slavery Memorial* for the first time also called to mind Driss Sans-Arcidet’s *Fers* (2009), which I had seen the previous spring in Paris. Sans-Arcidet (alias Musée Khômbô) created a monumental manacle for la place du Général-Catroux in the 17th arrondissement — two large, rusted iron cuffs with chains. The artist left one cuff closed with broken chains pointing to the sky, the other cuff open with the chains touching the ground. Although the monuments share a common visual language, Sans-Arcidet’s *Fers* and

Puryear's *Slavery Memorial* are fundamentally different in their motivations. *Fers* is a monument dedicated to General Thomas-Alexandre Dumas (1762–1806), who was born to an enslaved Haitian woman and white French nobleman, was the first man of African descent to become a brigadier general in the French army, and was the father of the famed Alexandre Dumas, author of *The Three Musketeers* (1844) and the *Count of Monte Cristo* (1844–1846). The manacles are supposed to represent Dumas' childhood in slavery (the closed iron), then his freedom and contribution to society (the open iron).<sup>14</sup> Puryear's memorial, of course, is not dedicated to an individual. Rather, it works to settle slavery into memory at Brown and to point to future work for social justice and equity.

---

*Slavery Memorial's* location is important for its historic significance as the site of the University's oldest building, and the entrance point for Brown's Convocation and Commencement. I understand *Slavery Memorial* as both a marker of remembrance and as a teaching tool engaged in memory work. Marita Sturken points out that "monuments are a form of pedagogy; they instruct on historical values, persons, and events, designating those that should be passed on, returned to, and learned from."<sup>15</sup> In her dedication remarks, current President Christina H. Paxson argued forcefully for the placement of the memorial on the Quiet Green and the pedagogical work that the memorial could do for the community: "The reason this memorial is in such a prominent spot on our campus is that we know a polite remembrance is not enough. We have an obligation, here at this citadel of free speech, to set a higher standard. We need to commit fully to the act of remembrance. We need to weave it into the daily rhythm of Brown University, and into all of the forms of work that we do on this campus. We must reject the forms of injustice that so freely circulated in 1764, and which have not disappeared nearly as neatly as we would like."<sup>16</sup> President Paxson drew analogies between Brown's efforts to recognize its slave past and the fight against the modern legacies of slavery, including human trafficking, permanent servitude, and inequities in access to housing and healthcare in the twenty-first century, presenting an expansive understanding of *Slavery Memorial's* memory work.

Two student accounts — one for a student-run magazine (2014), the other an undergraduate honors thesis (2019) — make meaning from the monument in very different ways and serve as counterpoints to the administration's view of the memorial. Writing for *Bluestockings Magazine* in 2014, two self-identified Black students, Malana Krongelb and Justice Gaines, assert that *Slavery Memorial* does not acknowledge the humanity of the enslaved persons who labored at Brown: “This Memorial glosses over the experiences of Black people and instead privileges the perspective of white slave owners and beneficiaries of the trade. It twists the slavery narrative as only meaningful for capital gain: in this case, Brown's financial foundation. The *Slavery Memorial* thereby silences the humanity, culture, and resistance present among Black communities in slavery-era Rhode Island. It ignores the presence of Black members of the Brown community today, perpetuating how this predominantly white institution has produced centuries of silence.”<sup>17</sup> For these students, the memorial is a failure because it assuages white guilt and offers no institutional apology for slavery.

As part of her research for her undergraduate honors thesis, Kayla Hill conducted a survey of Brown undergraduate students to assess their feelings about the memorial. Hill noted the conflict some students felt over the design, the motivation for the project, and inappropriate interactions with the memorial: “One student remarked that the design is almost ironic in that it highlights how much of the impact and legacy of slavery is still buried and hidden by the university, despite the university commissioning a memorial; another student felt that the project seems more invested in being a relic of history instead of grappling with the university's continued enactment of the same violence it perpetrated in past centuries.”<sup>18</sup> Both Krongelb and Gaines' response and Hill's findings point to the ways in which memory work is often contested and contentious, reliant not on the past but on current pressing problems and conditions.

As Blee and O'Brien suggest, “Monuments can, by virtue of their design, accomplish many kinds of memory work simultaneously. Because granite and bronze monuments appear permanent and unshifting . . . they can bring a core identity to a place. But once fixed in a landscape, monuments become enmeshed in the complexities of life that are in constant change.”<sup>19</sup> *Slavery Memorial* presents Brown University's community with the ongoing challenge

to reflect on its slave past and to consider this history in the context of the life of the campus. As Anthony Bogue, director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, noted at the dedication, “A memorial is not only a marker that creates pause, that makes us say, ‘That’s done.’ A memorial is also about things to do, recognizing work done but beckoning us forward.”<sup>20</sup> *Slavery Memorial* permanently marks the ground of the Quiet Green while its meaning is constantly reshaped depending on where one stands, metaphorically, in relation to it.

Julian Bonder, one of the co-creators of *Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery* (2012) in Nantes, France, uses the term “working memorial” to describe the project of encouraging collective engagement and active dialogue.<sup>21</sup> He proposes that the role of the artist and architect in creating memorials is to uncover and anchor histories and memories and to create dialogue. “Neither art nor architecture can compensate for public trauma or mass murder. What artistic and architectural practices can do is establish a dialogical relation with those events and help frame the process of understanding,” argues Bonder.<sup>22</sup> With the University’s recent decision to select the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* for the First Readings program for incoming first-year Brown students, *Slavery Memorial* has work to do — to engage the campus about its legacy of slavery and to point a way forward through dialogue and action on the “infinite possibilities of freedom.”<sup>23</sup>

*Renée Ater is Provost Visiting Professor of Africana Studies at Brown University.*

## The Dialectics of Racism and Repair

*Seth Rockman*

FORTUNATELY FOR ME, historians are paid to interpret the past, not predict the future. The re-publication of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* prompted this revelation, as I reflected on my own expectations nearly fifteen years ago, at the time of the Report's initial appearance.

If you had asked me twenty years ago whether the Confederate battle flag would ever be removed from the South Carolina statehouse grounds, whether John C. Calhoun's name would no longer adorn a Yale University residential college, whether Aunt Jemima would cease to smile from the packaging of pancake mix, whether reparations for slavery would figure in the Democratic Party's presidential debates, I would have said *no*. I would have been very confident in the refusal of white America to jettison its treasured symbols and the collective memories that embed racial dominance in the quotidian experience of everyday life. There was no way that businesses would abandon their lucrative brands, let alone confront the slaveholding skeletons in their corporate closets. No public reckoning with slavery could be possible amidst the so-called "culture wars" of the early 2000s.

But if you asked me at that same moment whether the percentage of Black faculty and students was likely to increase substantially at Brown, whether the prevalence of police killings of Black men and women was likely to decrease, or whether the courts could be counted on to enforce civil rights laws, I would

probably would have given a more optimistic *yes*. Institutions like universities and governments could be counted on to create a better and more inclusive future through thoughtful policymaking, and even amidst the political outrages of the Bush-Cheney administration, I remained confident that the arc of history would indeed bend toward justice. Such hopes soon bore witness to the election of Barack Obama to the presidency on a November evening in 2008, when Brown undergraduates gathered joyfully on the Rhode Island State House steps to sing “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Clearly, I’d gotten things wrong, and, in retrospect, perhaps should have known better, since symbolic sacrifices in the aisles of the grocery store are easier concessions than the dismantling of systemic racism. I should not have been surprised by the ferocious ethno-nationalist “whitelash” to a two-term Black president that has characterized almost the entirety of the 2010s and endures to this day.

That said, I don’t want to minimize the gains that come from *not* having to see J. Marion Sims venerated in Central Park, from *not* having to attend a North Carolina high school named for a Confederate general, and from *not* having commercial websites like The Knot promote former slave plantations as romantic wedding sites. Nor is it without significance to find a memorial to the victims of slavery on the grounds of the University of Virginia, to see a film like *Twelve Years a Slave* win Oscars, and of course, to visit the National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall in Washington, DC. The symbolic landscape matters a great deal, whether for eliminating the harms of white supremacy’s built environment or constructing the kinds of inclusive public spaces that might provide the infrastructure for an anti-racist future.

If historians aren’t great at predicting what’s ahead, we are nonetheless committed to the idea that the stories we tell about the past have some bearing on the futures we can (or cannot) collectively imagine. Certain modes of doing history can provide legitimacy to the status quo and serve to make present-day inequalities appear incontestable. Other modes of doing history are predicated on recovering resistance, dissent, and struggle as a testament to the fact that the past was full of paths not taken to the present, the knowledge of which emboldens us to jettison a paralyzing fatalism and recognize our present as something other than inevitable. And yet other modes of history sit at the

intersection of reckoning and healing — a faith that if we tell the truth about the past in all its deromanticized, demystified complexity (warts and all, as the saying often goes), we can move beyond trauma, shame, and denial toward a world in which everyone can thrive and prosper. This would position historical truth-telling as a form of repair, first by ceasing to do any additional harm in the form of incomplete and misleading accounts of what happened in the past, and then by providing the basis for a substantive transformation of society on the premise that the truth will set all of us — the descendants of survivors, victims, perpetrators, beneficiaries, bystanders, witnesses, and innocents — free.

Re-reading the Slavery and Justice Report in 2021, I am struck by its embeddedness in this last tradition and the expectation that a full, honest engagement with the American past would facilitate a different and better American future. This was perhaps also unduly optimistic. Telling the truth about history is a necessary, but insufficient, condition for structural transformation. Any anti-racist future requires it, but it alone cannot create that future. The last fifteen years bear witness to this in complicated ways — not in ways that diminish the Slavery and Justice Report or the spirit in which it came into being, but rather in ways that demand perhaps more utopian thinking rather than less.

The American confrontation with slavery and its legacies accelerated dramatically over the last two decades. “America has slavery on the brain these days” wrote *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow in 2013, taking note of the increasing visibility of slavery in films and public discourse. But Blow was also keenly aware that “the pillars of the institution — the fundamental devaluation of dark skin and strained justifications for the unconscionable — have proved surprisingly resilient.” Blow warned against seeing “progress” when it remained so clear slavery’s “poison tree continues to bear fruit.”<sup>1</sup> The subsequent eight years have borne this out in alarming ways, especially in the devaluation of Black life. Indeed, we are left to confront the uncomfortable relationship between anti-Black violence and the remediation of the symbolic landscape. Why have Confederate monuments come down? Why have Uncle Ben and Rastus the Cream of Wheat Chef left the supermarket aisles? It isn’t because we have told the truth about the past. The precipitating events were shocking murders, not scholarly monographs. Reckonings — always incomplete, but reckonings nonetheless — followed the events in Ferguson,

Charleston, Minneapolis. Things happened *after* a police officer shot Michael Brown; *after* a white supremacist shot nine worshippers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church; *after* a police officer suffocated George Floyd on a city street. This is a dynamic we know from life at American colleges and universities as well: buildings are renamed *after* the false arrest of a student of color; a new diversity curriculum is mandated *after* racist graffiti appears on a dorm wall.

Of course, it doesn't make any sense to say that George Floyd's murder *caused* American corporations to jettison beloved and valuable, if racist, trademarks in the summer of 2020. Mass protests and state violence — millions of Americans in the streets declaring Black Lives Matter, met by the disproportionate force of armed police units — made it impossible to maintain the status quo. Millions of people engaged in civil disobedience, millions of people engaged in acts of solidarity with neighbors and strangers alike, millions of people engaged in speech acts large and small, from the Black high school students who led Providence in peaceful protest to the white families that put “Black Lives Matter” signs up in their predominantly white neighborhoods. Business leaders, university presidents, and public officials ascertained the direction the wind was blowing, and they chose this moment to seek a fuller accounting of slavery's legacies and afterlives. But none of this happened without advocates for justice taking to the streets and demanding an end to police killings of Black Americans. Revelations of righteousness on high rarely occur absent pressure from below.

One might tell the story of Brown's slavery and justice undertaking in a similar, if less dramatic, fashion. Black activists in the 1990s rekindled a conversation about reparations for slavery, filing a federal lawsuit against the insurance company Aetna for issuing policies on the enslaved. They formed groups like the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, and mobilized prominent legal scholars like Harvard's Charles Ogletree to identify other possible targets for civil litigation. These would have to be “legacy” firms or institutions whose present-day wealth could be traced directly to slavery-era activity. Brown University was an obvious defendant in light of the fact that the “founding family” whose name adorns the institution had been active in the eighteenth-century Atlantic mercantile economy. Meanwhile, here on campus, student activists declared their unwillingness to see a demeaning

advertisement circulate in the *Brown Daily Herald*. In the name of free and open debate, an entrepreneur of outrage bought space in the student newspaper to suggest that, among other things, slavery had been of long-term benefit to African-descended people in America. Student activists made sure that that issue of the *BDH* did not circulate, which then generated the predictable (and to some, desirable) outcome of great hand wringing over campus speech and “political correctness.” By most accounts, President Ruth J. Simmons was motivated to form a campus investigative committee in response to a looming reparations lawsuit on the one hand and this incident of campus activism on the other. Both can be understood as pressure from below.

Just as Brown was initiating its self-study, a conversation was emerging within the scholarly literature around “slavery and memory,” as part of a larger move toward the emergence of “memory studies” and “public history” as discrete fields of inquiry. The former stressed the importance of the past to collective identity formation, while the latter was predicated on the idea that most historical learning takes place not in the pages of a book but rather in the public space of markers, museums, and movies. Clearly there was something to be said for studying not what happened in the U.S. before 1865, but what happened in the century and a half that followed, to amplify or suppress our collective understandings of that past. The stories that get told about what slavery was or wasn’t matter to how Americans understand themselves as insiders or outsiders within the culture. The prevailing public understanding of the causes of the Civil War have enormous consequences for the national project. As a result, scholars delved into the efforts of museums and tourist destinations like Colonial Williamsburg to reflect the experiences of the enslaved. They interrogated the twentieth-century proliferation of Confederate symbology (“the Rebels” as a popular sports mascot, for example) far beyond the South. They analyzed textbooks, deconstructed films and television shows, and, critically, located the politics of white supremacy in the nation’s landscape of memorials and monuments.

A number of Brown undergraduates entered this project through a “Slavery and Historical Memory” course I began teaching at Brown beginning in 2002 and that ran concurrent with the Slavery and Justice Committee’s undertaking. Although we read about topics familiar to any professional historian of the United States, the material in the course came as a surprise to most of

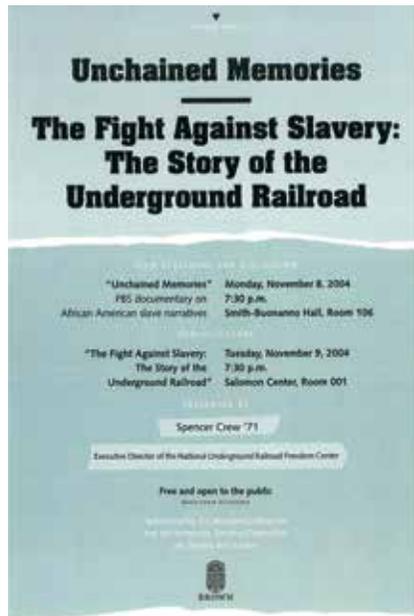
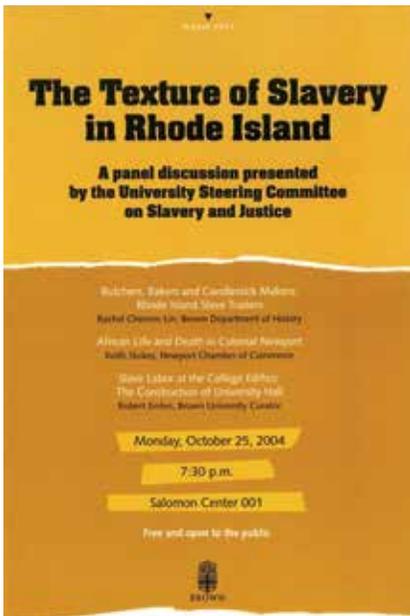
the students in the class. It was, like most classes at Brown, predominantly white-enrolled. It was a class for students in their very first semester of college, and students brought the cultural horizons of eighteen-year-olds — up on the latest Dave Chappelle sketch, immersed in Aaron McGruder’s comic strip, *The Boondocks*, but not knowing about James Forman’s reparations claims in the 1960s, and not having seen *Roots* in the 1970s, but maybe having read a Toni Morrison novel in high school. The students who enrolled in the course were largely products of the American education system’s inadequate capacity to address slavery.

The course was designed to think about power and the production of the past: Who had the power to make their version of events real? To label events? To embed them in textbooks and to memorialize them in public spaces? To shape the law? To have their pain acknowledged? The course concluded with such now-canonical work as Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Nell Irvin Painter’s “Soul Murder and Slavery” essay, Nathan Huggins’ “Deforming Mirror of Truth” article, and Annette Gordon-Reed’s dismantling of the legend that claimed Thomas Jefferson hadn’t fathered Sally Hemings’ children. It took a deep dive into narratives of a specific historical event — Nat Turner’s 1831 slave insurrection in Virginia, running from Turner’s own purported “Confessions” and William Styron’s stylized re-imaginings of that moment, to Sherley Anne Williams’ rejoinder in *Dessa Rose*, and Robert O’Hara’s queering of the Turner story to confront AIDS and the oppression of the closet in *Insurrection: Holding History*. The course looked at racist marketing and plantation tours, and picked up the reparations debate just then revitalized by Randall Robinson’s *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*. One year, the course came with a movie series too, expanding beyond the U.S. to consider Gillo Pontecorvo’s *Queimada* (1969) and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s *La última Cena* (1976), as well as Haile Gerima’s *Sankofa* (1993) and Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* (2000).

The pleasure of the course, for me as the teacher, was having students — regardless of their backgrounds — convey the righteous indignation of realizing that they had been told lies for the previous eighteen years of their lives. Of seeing students grasp analytical language to give power to what had previously been inchoate feelings or sensibilities. Of seeing scales fall from the eyes of other students who had never been asked to see what was obvious all

around them. In some ways it felt too easy: so long as America was profoundly in denial, so long as Black stories still remained cordoned off in the “diverse perspectives” boxes of textbook pages but not in the main text, so long as racist representations of slavery continued to appear in advertisements and film, teaching this class would be a slam dunk.

It wasn't. The engagement of slavery and memory was accelerating with such a speed that students showing up for the class in 2011 and 2013 were armed with a completely different sensibility and a more powerful set of analytical tools. Sure, it was still amazing to put Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract* in front of them, to share Kyle Baker's graphic novel on Nat Turner, and to think with Saidiya Hartman's powerful *Lose Your Mother*. But the starting



President Ruth J. Simmons charged the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice “to help Brown organize its impressive intellectual resources and to supplement them with outside expertise where necessary . . .” The various public programs sponsored by the Committee, such as this panel discussion and film screening, created awareness, according to the Report, “of a history that had been largely erased from the collective memory of [the] University and state.”

point — that the history of slavery, its telling or suppression, and its representation in public space are crucial to the present-day politics of race — was no longer so revelatory, even for students who arrived on campus shrouded in white privilege. Fewer students were coming to Brown feeling like they'd been lied to their whole lives about slavery. And indeed, a more honest conversation about slavery in popular culture, in school curricula, and in museum exhibitions had emerged, albeit as likely to have been precipitated by Black suffering and death (e.g. during Hurricane Katrina) as by enlightenment occasioned by the election of the first Black president. Although the Confederate flag still flew in places, Brown undergraduates — Black and white — were cautiously optimistic that such gratuitous violations of our shared sensibilities would be remedied in due course.

I would like to think that Brown's Slavery and Justice Report had something to do with this. Its impact is not easily assessed. The Report's publication did not convince Rhode Island voters to drop "Providence Plantations" from the state's name in a 2010 referendum (although they would eventually do so in 2020). It did not keep Raymond Kelly, the architect of New York City's racist discretionary policing, from being invited to speak on campus. It did not pull the percentage of Black faculty and students at Brown into double digits. It did, however, mobilize many colleges and universities to see that it was possible to look directly into the slaveholding past and assert an institutional responsibility for that past; it brought a different landscape of memory to campuses like Brown's, where a memorial to the victims of the Atlantic slave trade now sits on the Front Green, also known as the Quiet Green.

This was before Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, or Breonna Taylor. Before #BlackLivesMatter became the requisite hashtag to repudiate callous acts of police violence that suggested that Black lives did not. Of course, racist police violence was not new. But thanks to the cell phone camera, it became visible to an ever-growing segment of the American population, including those not living it on a daily basis. Thanks, too, to a generation of scholarship on mass incarceration and its antecedents in a prison-industrial complex that dated to the nineteenth century, there was a new language available to think about plantations, penitentiaries, and the historical continuities that created "slavery by another name."<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, students were speaking of slavery and its afterlives and its

legacies — a far more powerful term than “memory” for recognizing centuries of structural racism that, thanks to journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and her *New York Times* collaborators, an increasing number of Americans now date to 1619.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, many students had been disabused of the cautious optimism I had sensed in the four or five years following the release of the Slavery and Justice Report. The United States had not, in fact, become post-racial, and the presence of Black presidents — whether at Brown University or in the White House — proved inadequate for the task of dismantling structural racism. More distressingly, police killings of unarmed Black men and women continued unabated, calling protestors into the streets again and again to demand redress. These protests have been powerful, although regrettably less effective in stopping police violence than in compelling corporations to change their brand logos and motivating college and university administrators to undertake new initiatives to combat anti-Black racism on campus. It speaks to a profoundly disturbing dynamic that Caleb E. Dawson, a graduate student at UC Berkeley, frames the question in the starkest terms: “Why does it feel like Black death is a prerequisite of change in how Black lives matter at/ to a university?”<sup>4</sup>

I’ve wondered about teaching the slavery and memory class again. On the one hand, it would still be predominately white-enrolled, and some students would invariably come to ask questions about a misleading plaque in the square of their hometown or whether Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton* botches the history of slavery despite its provocative color-conscious casting. But on the other hand, as a much longer tradition of scholarship in fields like Africana Studies has made clear, as Black feminist authors have hammered home in their scholarship, as activists and abolitionists in the streets have insisted, the temporalities of now and then are not everyone’s lived experiences; the boundary between slavery and memory are too unstable, the legacies and afterlives too powerful to cordon off in a class. But even more, they are too expansive to contain in a semester, too encompassing to limit to the weeks of a syllabus, and indeed, too urgent to be studied as though this were a history past. This is a history we still live inside, not a history we have the luxury to “remember.”

The year 2021 may not be the optimal moment for reflecting on the Slavery and Justice Report. Amidst a global pandemic in which Black mortality

rates are disproportionately high and in which some substantial percentage of the American population denies the existence of COVID-19 altogether, telling the truth about a university's past seems quaint, or even self-indulgent. In the wake of the summer 2020 mass protests that brought down statues, renamed buildings, and even prompted Juneteenth holidays for employees at major firms, is there any reason to believe Black citizens will be safer in their encounters with law enforcement? Alternatively, 2021 may be the optimal moment, as it forces us to recognize the entanglements of anti-Black violence and subsequent efforts toward remediation — a dialectic of racist violence and anti-racist remediation that pulls us forward without offering any assurance of obliterating the former and achieving the latter. Yet to the extent that we are caught in this nexus, we are also reminded of the power of common people, acting in concert and in public space, to wield the necessary pressure from below to push the process forward.

*Seth Rockman is Associate Professor of History at Brown University.*

## Teaching Slavery after the Slavery and Justice Report

*Emily A. Owens*

I ROUTINELY TAKE STUDENTS to visit Martin Puryear's *Slavery Memorial* as part of my first-year seminar, "Narratives of Slavery." The iron and steel monument was installed before any of my students came to Brown, and before I came to Brown, too. Its abstract form serves as an acknowledgment of the wealth that some of the founding donors and Corporation members of Brown University accumulated on the backs of enslaved people, and from which Brunonians past and present continue to benefit. We visit the memorial after slavery, and after the revelation of slavery. This is also to say that we visit it, to use Christina Sharpe's poetic phrase, "in the wake" of slavery's violence and in the wake of Brown's attempt to repair past injustices.<sup>1</sup>

Although the events that the large ball and broken chain memorialize diverge sharply from those represented by other monuments on campus, the permanence of *Slavery Memorial* nonetheless renders it similar to them. Like various bears in bronze or replicas of classical portraits, this monument can fade into the background for passersby. Like monuments in general, *Slavery Memorial* explicitly honors a distant past while implicitly recalling the political moment in which it was installed. These layered memories emerge when one pauses to look. But again, like most monuments, *Slavery Memorial* has become part of the landscape, and so students do not frequently pause. Instead, they

pass by, understanding its presence as part of the background, the setting in which their varied collegiate experiences take place.

*Slavery Memorial* is a useful metonym for the work of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice and its subsequent Slavery and Justice Report, whose recommendations led to its installation. The memorial and the Report are artifacts of the process that President Ruth J. Simmons initiated at Brown in 2003 to excavate Brown's historical ties to the slave trade, clarify the impact of those connections over time, and seek remedies to Brown's entanglement in slavery's violence. A ten-member Commission on Memorials, also appointed by Simmons, recommended the creation of the monument in 2009 after a year of discussion. Years later, the understated design of *Slavery Memorial* and the ubiquitous availability of the Report testify to the Committee's success. Brown's entanglement with the global historical catastrophe of slavery is so much a part of our community's common knowledge as to require little exclamation.

So it is that current students are much more likely to understand Brown's historical relationship to slavery as a given rather than as an ongoing process of research and reconciliation that began in their lifetimes. Furthermore, the impact of Brown's self-revelation has resonated so far beyond this university that it is now unacceptable for universities to claim naïveté about their relationship to the history of slavery. When asked, my first-year students typically report that they "have heard" that Brown's hands were sullied by the slave-trading and slaveholding of its benefactors, and that this was also true of other schools that they considered attending: Georgetown, Harvard, the University of Virginia, and so on. These students presume that universities are not simply bastions of liberality, but also institutions that reproduce and sometimes generate the ideologies of white supremacy and imperialism that we deplore.

In this context, the work of teaching slavery changes shape. Students bring into my classroom a presumption that slavery's history is present even where it isn't immediately evident, even in New England, even at Brown. At the same time, their awareness is imprecise, rendered vague and diffuse as common knowledge that is just clear enough to not warrant further exploration. I worry about this second aspect: Have our students, and our community at large, come to know just enough about the University's relationship with slavery to be comfortable? Once they get to Brown, they can maintain that state of semi-knowing. Incoming first-year students have been assigned the

Slavery and Justice Report as their orientation reading in 2020 and 2021, but outside of classes in a few humanities and social science departments, most students won't have occasion to study this precise history or take field trips to the monument or the exhibit in University Hall, and even fewer will delve into the rich archival holdings in the John Hay Library and the John Carter Brown Library. This raises important pedagogical challenges: What might it mean for our university culture to more fully integrate Brown's historical entanglement in transatlantic slavery? How can we collectively know Brown's relationship to slavery with acuity, specificity, ongoing curiosity, and accountability? Are all of us accountable, or only those who take history as their object of formal study?

Among students who do foreground this history in their coursework, some of whom end up in my class, their responses tend toward critique. When I take students to see *Slavery Memorial*, they rehearse a predictable script. Year after year, students approach the monument quietly, and a few remark that they didn't even know it was there. We stand together, and I usually ask someone to read aloud from the placard. Sometimes, the reader will also verbalize the etching that asks children not to climb on the statue. We then move on to University Hall, where a permanent exhibit details the Slavery and Justice Committee's findings, including reproductions of original documents that attest to Brown's entanglement with slave trading; on other field trips we look at those documents in person, with the help of librarians and archivists at the John Hay Library and the John Carter Brown Library.

Invariably, students critique the monument. They have told me that they are disappointed that it is located on the so-called "Quiet Green," off the central path of student foot traffic on the main College Green. They have told me that they don't like its abstraction. They have told me that it is too small. They have told me that it should be mandatory viewing — that their friends don't know it is there, and that they hadn't known it was there until our walk.

These multivocal critiques converge around a single point. Students experience *Slavery Memorial* as hidden in plain sight. Of course, the history of slavery at and having to do with Brown University has long been hidden in plain sight. The bricks that hold up University Hall are a familiar example of this kind of obscurity. This plain-sight-hiddenness was a core motivator for the Slavery and Justice Committee, which came into being not only because of President Simmons' conviction, but also at the urging of students and other



A granite plinth with explanatory text, which sculptor Martin Puryear considers the key element in *Slavery Memorial*, reads in part: “In the eighteenth century slavery permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders dominated the North American share of the African slave trade, launching over a thousand slaving voyages in the century before the abolition of the trade in 1808, and scores of illegal voyages thereafter. Brown University was a beneficiary of this trade.”

stakeholders who felt they knew too little of the story and wanted more. For students, faculty, alumni, and administrators, the history of Brown and slavery was just out of reach, nearby but difficult to locate. Therefore it is striking that more than a decade later, students express such a similar sentiment. How can it be that years after the explosive revelations of the Report, Brown students once again express frustration that this history feels obscure?

Their frustration is a call to action. Students’ desire for *more* (more revelations, bigger sculptures and monuments, higher circulation of the Report) is unknowingly rooted in the very revelations of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, which created the possibility for students’ critique, to the extent that their desire for more of the story is predicated on their knowing *some* of the story. In other words, that they have a monument to critique is obviously a function of the existence of the monument. Furthermore, their

critical capacity on the history of slavery is shaped by the bevy of classes taught at Brown that either dovetail with or specifically delve into slavery studies, in departments such as Africana Studies, Comparative Literature, English, History, and Political Science, as well as the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society, and the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World. Students' desire for more is rooted in the existence of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ), with which students tend to become acquainted through exhibitions and through initiatives such as the student-founded, student-run Carceral State Reading Group.

The extent to which these many resources exist and thrive at Brown does not invalidate students' critique, but rather should attune us to a different set of questions. Surely students are practicing their task as critical thinkers in the liberal arts, but they are also alerting us to work that remains unfinished, even as monuments, research institutions, and pedagogical commitments achieve one aspect of the Slavery and Justice Committee's recommendations, to "tell the truth in all its complexity."<sup>2</sup> Their insistence raises new possibilities: What would it mean for the CSSJ to gain the capacity to offer a course on slavery's many institutional lives, including at universities, and make it available to undergraduates every academic year? What positive outcomes for the field of slavery studies might emerge if the CSSJ could host an annual, yearlong residential fellowship program where established researchers could collaboratively undertake new research on these subjects?

In addition to taking their critique at face value and indeed moving toward *more* — that is, a bigger presence for the history of slavery at Brown — this student message should provoke more teaching about historical methods alongside teaching on the history of slavery itself. The Report provides a documentary account of Brown's involvement in the slave trade, but it is also an artifact of *how* that history was uncovered, and of the collaborative work of that uncovering. In this way, the Report is a case study in change-making that alerts us to a centuries-old past as well as to the very recent past of recovery. It is a resource for deepening students' understanding of the instability of fact, the uses of history, and the living nature of historical narrative. It is a document that outlines, with precision, how a given historical narrative can change. The Report, then, is not only descriptive but pedagogical, and serves

as an answer to students' desires for more. It is a blueprint that can empower students to not just ask for more, but to set about the work of getting it.

Teaching slavery after the Report, then, is a process of teaching recent history as well as deeper history. Even as students hunger for the history of the Atlantic slave trade (and they do), at Brown we have the unique capacity (and responsibility) to highlight that history alongside the process through which it was produced. If students arrive at Brown with a fundamental but diffuse presumption of universities' complicity in slavery and other processes of violent capital accumulation, then the Slavery and Justice Committee, the Report, *Slavery Memorial*, and the CSSJ testify to our particular inheritance, in which we simultaneously know the past *and* the fragility of that knowing.

These artifacts of the Slavery and Justice Committee challenge us as teachers to lean in when our students are unsatisfied, for it was that spirit of dissatisfaction — that desire for more empirical specificity and more ethical accountability — that made possible our conversations today. The Report provides those of us teaching slavery (while) at Brown a unique ability to put pressure on the stability of the past even as we also embrace and bring depth to the empirical realities of the transatlantic slave trade. At Brown, we are positioned to teach the deep past alongside the relatively recent work of the Committee and its impacts, to alert our students to their own capacity to produce new knowledge, and to elevate the next object of study that could become consensus knowledge.

The puzzle of teaching slavery after the Report inheres in our ability to retain a sense of closeness to this very near past as well as the deeper past. “After” is not a gesture of leaving behind or forgetting, but a simple description of time. We live in a new phase of the Slavery and Justice Committee's work, occupying this campus in its wake. In this moment, our students call on us to remain alert, and help them to do the same. “After” does not — should not — mean finished. But it does suggest a different time, one that raises a new set of challenges for the pedagogical and cultural life of this campus. The brevity of time that has elapsed since the publication of the Report stands in contrast to the ways we have been acculturated to its existence; it seems to have been so long ago. Perhaps, in the short institutional memory of undergraduates, it is pretty old. But on my own annual sojourn to *Slavery Memorial* with my students, I mark time. I watch the monument get older as my students remain

the same age, and with each visit I am reminded of the seductive way that shared knowledge sediments to the point of feeling common, as though it was always there. This knowledge was not always here, and that fact is essential to understanding what this monument was placed there to represent. It can serve as a reminder of the violent past in which Brown is implicated, but it is also a reminder of the bold willingness to confront that past.

To make “after” sound like “finished” is a well-trodden path that our students refuse to take. When they ask for more, they are asking for the specific, complicated, history of slavery. They are asking, also, for *tools*, and we are lucky at Brown to be able to hand them quite a few, in the form of the history of the Slavery and Justice Committee as documented in the Report and as remembered by my Brown colleagues Anthony Bogue, Michael Vorenberg, and others who participated in its writing.

As usual, our students impress us with the high standards to which they hold themselves. As usual, we ought to meet them there.

*Emily A. Owens is the David and Michelle Ebersman Assistant Professor of History at Brown University.*



## A Collective Exploration of Our History: An Introduction

*Rashid Zia*

WHEN ONE WALKS through the gates of Brown University, it is hard not to see this campus as a static, enduring, constant place. Much like the physical texts in our libraries, it is hard to imagine legacy institutions as anything but fixed in time — they seem immutable. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Universities at their best are dynamic places of learning and discovery and community, places where people come together to explore ideas and create change. When welcoming new members to our institutions, therefore, it is essential to ask what drives change, what brings people together, and what enables transformation.

Two decades ago, President Ruth J. Simmons, in one of her first public speeches at Brown, welcomed the Class of 2005 during Convocation with this simple, truthful message:

*Some of the founders and benefactors of our great University were holders or traders of slaves. . . . We must not hide from that fact, for it is a part of our past, and in speaking its truth, we not only let the light in, but we give it air, making it shine more brightly.<sup>1</sup>*

As Brown's current Dean of the College and as an alumnus who recalls the University before the arrival of President Simmons, I cannot overstate how

much the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* that she commissioned has transformed our community — or the air, light, and space it has created.

The alumni reflections that have been gathered for this revised and expanded edition of the Slavery and Justice Report showcase portions of that space, and each essay illustrates how the collective exploration of our history can be an act of both personal learning and public transformation. The authors span a period of more than half a century at Brown. Spencer Crew '71 is an eminent scholar and public historian who was part of the 1968 Black Student Walkout and served on the committee that selected President Simmons, while Wilfred Codrington III '05 and Sean Siperstein '05 are alumni whose undergraduate research projects were among the first supported by the Slavery and Justice Committee. Sophie Kupetz '19.5 worked in the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice as an undergraduate student and helped develop some of its innovative programming; and for Chandra Marshall '20 A.M., the Report was influential as she pursued a master's degree in Brown's Public Humanities program and as she continues her work in cultural heritage today. All of these alumni have their own personal relationships with the Slavery and Justice Report and its meaning.

In March of 2020, Brown's First Readings selection committee chose to assign the Slavery and Justice Report to incoming first-year students as part of their orientation. The First Readings program is designed to serve as an introduction to our shared learning community. It is an opportunity for students to come together as a class — and for faculty and staff to join with students as a campus community — to explore one text in detail, so that we may all have a common touchstone from which to begin and return throughout our students' studies. The creation of a digital "teaching edition" of the Slavery and Justice Report now gives generations of Brown students an opportunity to form their own relationships with Brown's complicated history.

As I shared with the first cohort of incoming students to engage with the Report in its enhanced digital format, reading the Slavery and Justice Report offers an opportunity to revisit histories that some may have thought were settled. The painful truth is that the narratives most commonly shared about our nation's history often overlook the pervasive, persistent, and insidious nature of slavery and racial injustice. As a community of students and scholars, it is

our obligation to understand and learn from this history and its connection to our shared present, so that we may reflect on the meanings of accountability, justice, and repair in order to transform our collective future.

The work of the Slavery and Justice Committee and their Report lives on in its successors at Brown, including the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice and the many scholars who today carry on the radical act of accountability that began our necessary confrontation with history. This commitment



In 2015, several hundred students, faculty, and administrators at Brown University wore black and participated in a student-led “Blackout” protest followed by a teach-in in solidarity with Black students at the University of Missouri (Mizzou) amid reports of hate speech and acts of racism on that campus. Brown students focused their remarks on the racial climate on Brown’s campus, inspired by the organizing efforts at the University of Missouri. Amid a wave of student protests, President Christina H. Paxson and Provost Richard M. Locke expressed Brown’s commitment to diversity initiatives and support for students of color.

to accountability also lives on in Brown's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans, developed under the current leadership of President Christina H. Paxson, and in our community's willingness to publicly share where we have fallen short of our ideals. I hope that this revised edition of the Report, commissioned by President Paxson, and the following collection of alumni essays inspire you, as the words of President Simmons have inspired so many over the past twenty years:

*But I am not here to alter what cannot be changed. . . . I am here to affirm what the University has become today, and what it aspires to be. There is dignity in who we are and the path we have chosen today. Let us be judged by that.<sup>2</sup>*

**Rashid Zia**, who earned his bachelor's degree as a member of Brown's Class of 2001, is Dean of the College and Professor of Engineering and Physics at Brown University.

## African American Students and Scholars at Brown: Activism, Impact, and Inspiration

*Spencer Crew*

THE FIRST STUDENTS of African descent to enter Brown University, George Washington Milford and Inman Page, did not matriculate until after the Civil War, graduating in 1877. African American students rarely numbered more than one or two per class until the 1960s when, influenced by the civil rights movement and federal affirmative action legislation, Brown began admitting increased numbers of African American students. By 1968, there were eighty-five African American undergraduate and graduate students at Brown, of which I was one. As the number of African American students expanded, we pressed Brown to improve the environment we encountered at the University. We wanted more welcoming classes, spaces, and ways of operating, and we challenged the University to think more deeply about how it treated African American students and positioned itself on matters of race and social justice.

Student discontent resulted in several protests pressuring the University to make changes. African American students, myself included, staged a walkout in 1968 to pressure the University to seek out and admit more African American students, add courses on African American topics, and hire professors qualified to examine African American issues. Another protest took place in 1975, when students occupied University Hall, again seeking additional

Afro-centric course offerings and recruitment of more students of color. The aspirations of both protests were to make Brown more sensitive and equitable on matters of race. An important component of this was the addition of more administrators and faculty of color, whose presence and perspective might enrich the Brown experience for all students. Student activism did ultimately result in the hiring of more African American faculty and administrators, such as Walter E. Massey in physics and George H. Bass in theater arts. Some other significant results of student agitation were the creation of a Black Studies program, the dedication of a Third World Center [now the Brown Center for Students of Color], and a sizable increase in the number of African American and other students of color at Brown.

Brown's gradual embrace of its growing diversity, and concomitant expansion of opportunity, had an enormous impact on students like myself. As a history major, it meant that courses in African American history were offered for the first time. Two then-graduate students, Rhett S. Jones and Wilson Jeremiah Moses, spearheaded these courses. Both serious scholars with a passion for their subjects, they were inspiring and demanding teachers. For me, they demonstrated that one should view history not as an abstract concept, but as a tool for analysis and critique of society both past and present. Jones and Moses, along with other history faculty, allowed me to pursue research papers focused on African American topics, an experience that inspired my decision to become a professor of history and a public historian.

The dawn of the twenty-first century brought even greater change with the 2001 appointment of Dr. Ruth J. Simmons as Brown's eighteenth president, and the first African American Ivy League president. As a member of the search committee that selected Dr. Simmons, it was exciting and inspiring to see the committee coalesce around the selection of Dr. Simmons without hesitation — something none of us who participated in the 1968 walkout would have imagined happening at Brown. I was proud of the University and impressed by the qualifications Dr. Simmons brought to the position. She was a strategic and bold thinker who sought to challenge Brown to grow as an institution. With her mandate, the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice was formed. Despite the possible pitfalls of delving into Brown's relationship with slavery, many of us connected with Brown felt it was crucial for an institution of higher learning to fully and critically examine its past.

One of Brown's responses to the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* was to commission a memorial to the enslaved men who helped construct University Hall, recognizing their contribution to Brown. The Commission on Memorials, of which I was a member, interviewed nationally and internationally respected artists, ultimately selecting the concept offered by National Medal of Arts recipient Martin Puryear. Puryear's simple but impactful sculpture was installed on the Front Green near University Hall, along the pathway followed by all Brown students during Convocation and Commencement. For those of us of African American lineage, its location represents an important recognition by Brown of the critical contribution of people of African descent to the University's early history.

I also have been fortunate to join the advisory council for the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ) and to participate in some of its programming. The work of the Center has great appeal to me as a public scholar and museum professional. With the growing interest in social justice in society, it is important that the CSSJ's work be made available for the general public. This research can provide not only historical perspective but also possible pathways toward addressing the challenges facing society.

The Slavery and Justice Report and its results represented an important milestone, reflecting Brown's willingness to examine its past honestly and unflinchingly. There is still much work left to accomplish for Brown University and others concerned with social justice and equity; nevertheless, in many ways, this Report and the broader work of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice are a legacy of both the enslaved people whose lives supported the University's early growth and the subsequent African American students and faculty who worked at or attended Brown. As an African American alumnus and a scholar who has devoted my career to the advancement of public history, I am heartened to see Brown persist in its goals of openly confronting its history and pursuing social justice.

*Spencer Crew, who earned his bachelor's degree as a member of Brown's Class of 1971, is the Robinson Professor of History at George Mason University. He serves as Chair of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice External Advisory Board.*



## In the Service of Ideas and Actions

*Wilfred Codrington III*

AS A SENIOR in the 2004–2005 academic year, I was among a handful of students selected for a special Undergraduate Group Research Project tied to the mission of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. For several reasons, the opportunity to participate was a no-brainer for me.

First, it seemed like a natural and fortuitous way to combine my intellectual interests. I was a philosophy concentrator with a focus on ethics and political theory and, at the time, was working on my honors thesis on Aristotle's theory of slavery. Moreover, throughout my years at Brown, I had taken several courses in the Africana Studies department. A project aimed at examining the role of slavery in Brown's history (and vice versa), as well as the University's consequent moral obligations, was squarely at the intersection of my academic pursuits. The project also presented a chance for me to sharpen vital skills in research, writing, and presentation. The work required students to make regular trips to the University's libraries and the Rhode Island Historical Society to review archived materials, and draft essays and present findings in our weekly small group meetings where Professor James Campbell and Professor Seth Rockman facilitated discussions. All of this was great practice for the rest of my schooling and my professional career, but most important for me was the public service aspect. I was a young Black man and first-generation college student nearing graduation and looking for ways to marry ideas and action. Given my personal and academic background, I viewed this project as

a way for me to contribute. I thought it my responsibility to seize this unique and important opportunity to be a part — however small — of those who would start the tough work of uncovering the darkest parts of the school’s legacy so that it could begin fulfilling its duty to make recompense to the community today.

This important work of looking into the University’s past undoubtedly shaped my thinking about the future. How could I find similar opportunities to gain deeper insight into racial injustice and inequality in America, while applying those learnings in furtherance of the public good? The question nagged me at critical junctures that have led me to where I am today. It was in the front of my mind as I applied to graduate school, and while working to earn my master’s and law degrees. It stuck with me as a staffer on Capitol Hill and a federal district court law clerk working for two trailblazing African American women, themselves dedicated to the pursuit of justice and equality. And it resonated with me as a civil rights attorney, advocate, and researcher working toward a more inclusive and accessible democracy.

That experience with the Committee, and the many subsequent personal and professional experiences that it influenced, have surely played into my decision to join the academy as a law professor. They very much inform my research agenda, which focuses on race, democracy, and constitutional reform, and shape my current work that seeks to discover the ways in which slavery, white supremacy, and racism figured prominently in the establishment of our nation — our Constitution, laws, and government structure — and their continued impact on our modern institutions, political systems, and social norms. As I work to educate students in the classroom and connect with folks beyond the “ivory tower” through books, editorials, public-facing talks, and other media, I try to challenge audiences the way that I was challenged — and indeed the way that Brown was challenged — through that important project a decade and a half ago.

By undertaking the important task of unearthing the legacy of slavery at Brown and beyond, the Slavery and Justice Committee and its progeny, including the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, can claim success for having fostered some profound and essential introspection. Over the next fifteen years, the University has a duty to use its extensive reach and resources to maintain and magnify that praiseworthy work by cultivating the vigorous

research, education, and action required to make restitution for its unjust enrichment. As an alumnus of that project who fully expects to be doing some of that very same work over the next fifteen years, I can attest that it is worth it.

***Wilfred Codrington III**, who earned his bachelor's degree as a member of Brown's Class of 2005, is Assistant Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School and a Fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.*



## Radical Promises

*Sean Siperstein*

THE ACHIEVEMENT, and the ongoing challenge, of the landmark *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* lies in its radical promise. Rather than continuing to allow critical, foundational history to remain “hidden in plain sight,” as President Ruth J. Simmons aptly described it, the University chose to face it head-on and, moreover, to embrace the work of repair as ongoing and requiring deeper effort than just one committee’s work.<sup>1</sup> In that sense, President Simmons’ charge to the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice opened the door to something radical, in the sense that civil rights organizer Ella Baker defined it: “I use the term *radical* in its original meaning—getting down to and understanding the root cause,”<sup>2</sup> in order to point the way toward a truly meaningful and democratic society. That particular radicalism certainly spoke to me as a student of history who had come to Brown precisely because I believed it was the kind of place where (unlike my fairly homogenous white, residentially segregated, suburban upbringing on Long Island) this sort of bold and necessary conversation took center stage—with all of its attendant passions, perils, and, ultimately, promise.

In the spring of 2004, I was one of twenty or so students to sign up for the Undergraduate Group Research Project being commissioned that fall by the Committee. Under the guidance of Professor James Campbell and Professor Seth Rockman, we grappled weekly with readings like Edward Ball’s *Slaves in the Family*, viewed primary sources at the John Carter Brown Library and the

John Hay Library, and engaged with the Committee's public speakers (having lunch with legendary historian John Hope Franklin was a particular highlight). Everyone had some involvement in creating a museum exhibit about the voyage of the slave ship *Sally*, with a subset of the group taking the lead. My classmates studied topics like memorialization, truth and reconciliation, the Black experience at Brown, and the University's historical relationship to the disenfranchisement of Black citizens in Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup> My own project, along with four others, involved examining retrospective justice and accountability in light of contemporary efforts to prosecute those responsible for the murders of activists involved in the Mississippi Freedom Movement of the 1960s.

Our group also felt moved to do something we hadn't been charged with: we delivered our own recommendations to the Committee about what its forthcoming recommendations to the University should entail. As we noted at the time, "Taking the legacies of *Slavery* and contemporary aspirations for *Justice* to their logical conclusions, we quickly realized that the scope of our enterprise extended over four centuries and stretched from historical analysis to present-day policy prescriptions. . . . It is impossible to separate our study of the historical relationship between Brown University and slavery from our obligation to confront the complex legacy of slavery in this country, and Brown's role in perpetuating, challenging, or accepting that legacy."<sup>4</sup> Many of our suggestions overlapped with the Committee's ultimate recommendations, such as the creation of an academic center, commissioning an on-campus memorial, and a material commitment to Providence public schools. Several were more specific, such as strengthening what was then called the Third World Center (now the Brown Center for Students of Color) and Black student representation at the University, and some went beyond the Report's ultimate scope, such as ensuring a living wage for all Brown employees and Brown taking an institutional stance against voter disenfranchisement in Rhode Island.

It is that history of clear-eyed engagement with the deeper implications of the Report, and the profound impact that the Committee's work might have over time, that I still take away each time I revisit it, which motivates my involvement with its living legacy, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ). I currently co-chair the Friends of CSSJ, a group of alumni that supports the Center by highlighting its research and public humanities work

to the global Brown alumni community, and working to expand its network of supporters. Through my involvement with the CSSJ and with the Friends, I've found, as an alumni leader, what I most cherished as a student: a community dedicated to advancing the work of accurately telling the story of America while connecting it to contemporary struggles for justice. In 2020, as the nation grappled with a pandemic that laid bare some of the inequality that traces its roots to slavery, alongside uprisings for racial justice, that work became all the more vital.

In the spring of 2005, I visited the John Brown House near campus, and brought up the namesake's legacy as someone who unapologetically traded in human beings. This subject, which had not been raised on the tour or in exhibits, made the tour guide visibly uncomfortable. A dozen years later, while attending a CSSJ program on campus, I learned that my classmates' exhibit on the *Sally* had ultimately come to reside at the John Brown House. Such is the potential of this Report and the process it unlocked. It calls on us to continue that active reckoning and the work of repair, as a University community, as a nation, and as a global community.

*Sean Siperstein, who earned his bachelor's degree as a member of Brown's Class of 2005, is a litigation attorney and project manager in Washington, DC.*



## Lessons and Commitments

*Sophie Kupetz*

WHEN I HAD the privilege of helping to envision the inaugural Carceral State Reading Group for Brown University's Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ), I returned to the 2006 Slavery and Justice Report. Thanks to the Report, I had an understanding of a history that had long been erased: enslaved people helped build Brown, and founders of the University were involved in and profited from the transatlantic slave trade. I was deeply struck by the Report's recommendations, which outline how the institution can hold itself accountable for its troubling past, recognizing that institutions must not only investigate and acknowledge their histories, but take concrete, material action in the present.

I had previously held a student job at the CSSJ, which is dedicated to continuing the research and work of the Report. The CSSJ quickly became an intellectual home for me on campus, teaching me that publicly engaged, collective scholarship is not only possible, but necessary. And it was this lesson and commitment — to take concrete, material action to address the history and legacies of Brown's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade — that I thought of when tasked with co-creating the Carceral State Reading Group.

As the Report states, Brown has the obligation “to foster research and teaching on . . . slavery and other forms of historical and contemporary injustice, movements to promote human rights, and struggles over the meaning of individual and institutional responsibility.”<sup>1</sup> Examining the carceral state

and resistance to carcerality is clearly consistent with these goals. However, when designing the group, my co-facilitator and I asked ourselves, how can we thoughtfully build and facilitate a group dedicated to learning about the carceral state — a modern-day, for-profit system of racial control — at Brown, an institution rooted in exclusivity and built to maintain power and privilege? We drew inspiration from some of the recommendations outlined in the Report: (1) building public programming geared toward the Providence community; (2) expanding opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade; and (3) using University resources to support quality education in Rhode Island.

We believed that the group must not only be for enrolled Brown University students, but also for people with varying relationships to the University, such as staff members, K–12 students, community organizers, formerly incarcerated people, artists, and educators. We also believed that unlike a university course, the group needed to be built by its participants to foster deep learning, intellectual vulnerability, critical self-reflection, and collaboration. The CSSJ wholeheartedly supported this vision and the group thrived.

Every two weeks, we would gather, either on Brown's campus or at a community space, to share a warm meal and learn about issues of incarceration, criminalization, and policing. Our conversations always went beyond that week's reading. We talked about our days: formerly incarcerated members grounded readings in their lived experiences; a community organizer made sure there was space for laughter; a professor gave a short, impromptu lesson on Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. We were all both students and also teachers.

For one of our final meetings, we decided to read the Slavery and Justice Report. We sat in the CSSJ conference room, enjoying a meal together and discussing the Report's recommendations — what had Brown fulfilled and what had it failed to do in the fourteen years since publishing the Report? What recommendations resonated and what was missing? We brought our different perspectives to the conversation — as Brown University students; as someone who saw rent in their neighborhood rise as Brown expanded; as a teacher who felt angry that so few Providence public school students were accepted to Brown; as someone who leads Black history tours around the city. To me, such honest, reflective conversations honor the work of a report committed

to truth-seeking and accountability. They make clear that neither the Reading Group, nor the Center, are the culmination of the work of the Report. The work is ongoing and can only be accomplished by continuing to reach beyond and expand the bounds of the University.

***Sophie Kupetz**, who earned her bachelor's degree as a member of Brown's Class of 2019.5, is a client advocate at the Harris County Public Defender's Office through Partners for Justice.*



## Blueprints and Pathways

*Chandra Marshall*

EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO, President Ruth J. Simmons appointed the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice to unmask the University's relationship with the transatlantic slave trade. The ensuing *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* is now a landmark text for higher education institutions across the country working to uncover their own ties to slavery. The Report was influential during my time as a master's student in the Public Humanities program at Brown, and it continues to serve as a blueprint that influences my praxis as a cultural heritage worker. The Report's rigor, intention, and fearlessness with respect to the University's long-shrouded entanglement with the transatlantic slave trade has inspired me to continue asking difficult questions and seek out work that centers the histories, legacies, and heritage of historically marginalized communities.

I believe the Report's most important work is in naming the enslaved individuals whose labor was stolen to build the University. By naming these individuals whenever possible, the Report encourages us to think more holistically about their lived experiences and provides suggestions for active steps toward reconciliation.

One of my first tasks as a Fellow for the Public History of Slavery at the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ) was giving Slavery and Legacy Walking Tours, a CSSJ initiative that is based on the Report's findings. University Hall, the campus' first and oldest building, is the third stop on the

tour. Here, I invited participants to take a moment in front of a ledger bearing the name of at least one enslaved African person who constructed the building. I encouraged visitors to pause and look at Pero's name while considering his lived reality. What does it mean for someone to construct the foundation of an Ivy League institution, but not be able to take advantage of it? What does it mean now that Pero's name is in this building, but his descendants remain unaware of his centrality to its creation? The Slavery and Justice Report encouraged me to think deeply about these questions, and my time at the CSSJ allowed me to practice engaging the public in their subsequent discourses.

During the final year of my master's program, I completed a capstone project titled *Entangled Legacies*, a zine that asked four local artists to consider their own artistic practices in relation to Black American and Native American histories.<sup>1</sup> I was inspired to undertake this project not only by my own lack of awareness regarding Native American histories in and around Rhode Island, but also the Report's move toward retrospective justice — and action — through the series of recommendations it offers the University. Although not all of the suggestions have yet been accomplished, they push the Report from being a blueprint outlining a gap in the University's public record to offering a pathway toward actively acknowledging and accepting our complex and often unsettling history. With this pathway in sight, and my work at the CSSJ as a foundation, I remain vigilant in my pursuit of work that is conscientious and dedicated to bringing marginalized histories to the public.

*Chandra Marshall, who earned her master's degree from Brown in 2020, is a program associate in the Public Knowledge program at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.*

# Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Georgetown: A Reckoning Made Possible by the Slavery and Justice Report

*Marcia Chatelain*

LET US BEGIN WITH A CLOCK.<sup>1</sup>

The curious, opening sentence of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* has stayed with me since I first read it in 2006, when I was a Brown Ph.D. student in American Studies. The document that grew out of President Ruth J. Simmons' charge to the Committee, "to examine the University's historical entanglement with slavery and the slave trade and to report [the] findings openly and truthfully," artfully encapsulated this messy and layered task by pointing to Esek Hopkins' clock.<sup>2</sup> This object — formerly owned by Hopkins, the captain of the slave ship *Sally*, which was itself owned by members of the Brown family — prodded me, in my formative years as a scholar and a historian, to take notice of the plaques and portraits that adorn college campuses. Although I hadn't seen that clock and its home in University Hall in nearly a decade, I immediately thought of it in the summer of 2015 when I joined my colleagues at Georgetown to take up a similar task to President Simmons' mandate.

The Georgetown University Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation embarked on the process of identifying the visible and intangible ways that slavery's legacies enveloped the University, founded by John Carroll in 1789. There were the obvious examples, such as the administration building named for Father Patrick Healy, an enslaved woman's son who passed as white and became Georgetown's twenty-ninth president. But there were also subtle parts of campus culture that harkened back to slavery's importance. Georgetown students cheer for athletic teams wearing blue and gray-striped shirts, the school colors representing the period of reconciliation after the Civil War, a conflict in which Georgetown students fought on both sides. Most of the students educated at the College fought for the Confederate cause.

More than a decade after Simmons' call at Brown, Georgetown undertook a similar project and quickly discovered that such a process would have been unimaginable without the Slavery and Justice Report. Georgetown's work was also supported by University President John J. DeGioia, who was committed to expanding the narrative of the University's history. The atmosphere in 2015 was infused with an urgency that forced the Georgetown community to link past and present on an anxious and often overwhelmed campus. We had one year to convene, study, and deliberate. Yet the Working Group's tight timeline was, in many ways, not only the result of our internal deadlines, but also influenced by the urgency of students as they questioned the names on buildings, wore t-shirts memorializing the names of Black victims of racial violence, and paired their chants of "Black Lives Matter" with "Say Her Name."

---

Let us begin with two names. At Georgetown, the reckoning with slavery was sparked by two buildings, one a modest one-story structure that once served as a stable, McSherry Hall; the other a multi-level Federal-style building adjacent to the heart of the campus, Healy Hall. The buildings, after being shuttered for years, were in the process of being redesigned and partitioned into modern, well-appointed student apartments. Like many campus buildings, they were named for two men who oversaw Georgetown in the 1830s, President Thomas Mulledy, S.J., and Superior of the Maryland Jesuits, William McSherry. Like

many university buildings across the country, they were named for two men who were involved in the sale of human capital in the 1830s.

Just as the Hopkins clock had evaded much notice prior to Brown's convening of the Slavery and Justice Committee, the names Mulledy and McSherry were rarely uttered on Georgetown's campus after the buildings were retired from daily use. The section of campus where these buildings stood was known as the FJR — Former Jesuit Residence — a generic description of a specific sliver of the past. During the 2014–2015 academic school year, however, the campus newspaper's historian, Matthew Quallen, visited the University archives and wrote a series of articles about Georgetown and slavery, including a moving piece about the Holy Rood Cemetery, an off-campus property where enslaved and free Black people were laid to rest.

President DeGioia asked the Working Group to do three things: “Make recommendations on how best to acknowledge and recognize Georgetown's historical relationship with the institution of slavery, examine and interpret the history of certain sites on our campus, and convene events and opportunities for dialogue on these issues.”<sup>3</sup> Similar to Brown's process, our fifteen-member body met in subcommittees. Each subgroup signaled what we believed this work could do and many of the subgroups reflected the deliberations of Brown's Committee: Local History to identify how Georgetown contributed to the District's history of slave ports and emancipation movements; Archives to ensure that the history was preserved and prioritized in our University's library; Ethics and Reconciliation to identify the present-day implications of racial repair; Permanent Naming to rechristen the dorms; Memorialization to ensure that the campus preserved the stories we uncovered and the ones that made us wonder; and Outreach to communicate why this work mattered. Community reactions ranged from simple shrugs to vociferous opposition to embarking on this work, lest we make Georgetown look bad. Some people wanted to split hairs between the University and the Jesuits — was it *really* Georgetown that owned slaves?

Georgetown did own slaves, and the majority of the Working Group's research focused on the 1838 sale of enslaved people from plantations in Southern Maryland. Enslaved people were held as assets for Georgetown and the Jesuits at large, who, as members of a religious order, were not allowed to own property as individuals. The sale was “not the only, the first, or the last sale

of slaves to provide operating revenue for the school, but it was the largest.”<sup>4</sup> At the head of the sale were Mulledy and McSherry. The provisions of the sale conformed to the time period’s fantasy of a kinder and gentler human subjugation: The Jesuits indicated that the sale should preserve family groups as they were readied for sale to plantations in Louisiana, and the baptized would have their right to sacraments respected. The monies from the sale would not be used to relieve debts; rather, all proceeds would be placed in the University’s coffers for endowment purposes. The contemporary debates about the sale — from the Vatican’s support of gradual emancipation to the American Catholics who favored repatriation to Liberia — reminded those new to this history that the Jesuits, like all people who were afforded the right of owning other people, had options. A decision was made, a choice exercised. The men entered a sales contract with former Louisiana governor, congressman, and senator Henry Johnson and fellow slave owner Jesse Batey. A copy of the “Articles of



A list of men, women, and children sold by Thomas Mulledy in 1838, “272 in all,” with name, sex, age, family relationship, and plantation affiliation, also notes enslaved people who had run away and those who had been “married off.”

Agreement,” drafted by Mulledy, listed the price of the 272 slaves at more than \$100,000, payable in installments over the following decade. The 272 were dispatched throughout Louisiana parishes, and their current community of descendants claim Maringouin, an Iberville Parish town of about 1,100 today, as where they see and feel their roots most vividly. The town’s name derives from the French word for mosquito, or, more specifically in this part of the world, swamp mosquito.

---

*Universities are . . . conservators of humanity’s past. They cherish their own pasts, honoring forbears with statues and portraits and in the names of buildings.*<sup>5</sup>

After a year’s worth of meetings, public events, and trips to the University archives, the Working Group submitted its *Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation to the President of Georgetown University* in the concluding days of the academic year. I noted that our work began months after a white supremacist tragically took the lives of nine Black churchgoers attending Bible study in Charleston, South Carolina. And as we concluded our work, a candidate widely denounced as racist was seeking nomination by a major political party for President of the United States. My colleagues and I took a deep breath and busied ourselves with the work we had sidelined in order to complete the Report.

After we bid each other adieu, *New York Times* reporter Rachel L. Swarns reported on some stirrings at Georgetown. The university president and a few senior leaders had begun engaging a group of people who traced their family trees to Georgetown. These descendants of the enslaved people once owned by the Jesuits had offered emotional interviews, faded family photographs, and their perspectives on being Black and Catholic despite a history of racial betrayals from their beloved Church. Most, if not all, of the Working Group members were surprised to learn of this group’s identification with Georgetown and the University’s meeting with them. Soon, we would learn that our process — the painstaking editing sessions and the early-morning meetings — was incomplete because the voice of the descendant community had been missing from the process.

In the fall of 2016 — months before that candidate known for his demonstrations of racism was ultimately elected President of the United States — President DeGioia formally accepted the Working Group’s collective effort. The resulting document offered a history of Georgetown and slavery and a list of recommendations about what a university informed by the history of slavery could do, how it could act, and what its responsibilities were.<sup>6</sup> Among the Report’s recommendations was an accepted proposal to rename Mulledy and McSherry Halls. The first was to be renamed for Isaac Hawkins, whose name is the first among the 272 slaves sold by Georgetown in 1838 and whose first name recalls the Biblical Isaac. The Old Testament story of Isaac’s near death at the hands of his father, Abraham, reminds the Georgetown community of the message of sacrifice and obedience to God. The second, which was to be named for Anne Marie Becraft, speaks to the world made by free people of color in Washington, DC, and honors a Black Catholic woman who built a school for girls outside the Georgetown campus and later became an Oblate Sister of Providence in Baltimore, joining the nation’s first African American female religious order.

The longer-term actions recommended in the Report included issuing an apology for the University’s participation in the sale and the nefarious trade in people more broadly, and connecting with the groups of people broadly defined as “descendants.” Before the printing of the final Report, the committee chair was able to include an acknowledgment of the people who trace their family roots to Georgetown, and who have since organized independent associations to connect, lobby the University to develop some type of reparative or restorative practice, and tell a richer story of Georgetown and slavery. The Working Group sought memorialization of the enslaved on the Georgetown campus, in the same vein as Brown’s commissioned piece, *Slavery Memorial*. Additionally, we advised that the group’s work should join the curricular and academic life of Georgetown through research, teaching, and public history initiatives. The Report endorsed a new framework for the University to think about ethics and morality in its current practices, from labor agreements to global activities. It also emphasized that the Working Group only focused on a sliver of Georgetown history — other symbols relating to slavery remained, including the statue of founder John Carroll and his mother Eleanor Darnall, both slave owners.

Members of the descendant community expressed their irritation at being on the outside of the Working Group. They were right. My fellow committee members wished we were told that this relationship was being forged between the descendant community and the University administration. Perhaps the University thought the bonds too fragile, the weight of history too heavy to share the charge, and was uncertain that we could act discreetly before Swarns' article appeared. However, regardless of the reasons, the value of the Working Group's research and recommendations is assessed as much by its exclusions as by its insights. After relying on the example set by Brown's Slavery and Justice Report for more than a year, the Georgetown Working Group realized that, in the matter of connecting with the ever-growing number of people searching for a fuller story of their own history, we were now in a position to enter a new stage of our work. Brown's legacy could be found in Georgetown's early-stage work, but eventually, Georgetown had to write a new chapter on how universities and slavery pivot beyond research to repair.

---

*One of the most elementary ways to repair an injury, though often one of the most difficult in practice, is to apologize for it.<sup>7</sup>*

In a hall named for William Gaston, a Georgetown alumnus from North Carolina who owned humans for most of his life before renouncing slavery altogether, 100 members of the Georgetown slave descendant community celebrated a liturgy of Remembrance, Contrition, and Hope on Easter Monday of 2017. The service began with the singing of "Amazing Grace." Timothy Kesicki, S.J., president of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, offered this apology for slavery: "We pray with you today because we have greatly sinned and because we are profoundly sorry."

The day coincided with Washington, DC's, annual Emancipation Day. The descendant community attended private meetings and a Mass with Jesuits, convening to discuss issues like reparations and to meet newfound family members. Guests shared reflections at tree plantings and dedication ceremonies; they wept and poured libations. The conviviality and camaraderie of the day have waned in the ensuing years. The descendant groups have

organized into different bodies, with different goals. Some members of the community have enrolled as students on campus. Some campus staff members have traced their roots to the 272. Some wonder if they should submit to DNA tests or partner with genealogists to see if the rumors about their “folks back in Maryland” are indeed true.

---

*People who suffer injuries and losses through the malicious or culpably negligent conduct of others have a right to redress — a right, as far as practicable, to be “made whole.” . . . But if the basic principle of reparations is straightforward enough, the application of that principle in specific cases is enormously complex. . . .*<sup>8</sup>

After years of impatience for the full implementation of the Working Group recommendations, students decided to take up the work of addressing Georgetown’s relationship with slavery in their own ways. In the spring of 2019, flyers with lists of names of the 272 enslaved people of Georgetown’s past began to appear on campus. A new student group, a collective of undergraduate and graduate students named the GU 272 Advocacy Team, launched a campaign to create a student-financed Reconciliation Fund. The Fund — which was to be enriched by a proposed student fee of \$27.20 per semester — was a gesture toward reparations, but the team avoided calling it reparations. Rather, they named the fund to touch upon the Catholic sacrament of confession. Reconciliation: the disclosure of sins in the interest of greater freedom; the resolution of debts; the meeting of two elements. As part of the Reconciliation Fund campaign, the names of Georgetown’s enslaved builders were used for campaign buttons. “For Charles”; “For Nelly.” Students diligently chalked all 272 names on sidewalks. The students were demanding justice for the people known only in archival records as “unnamed child,” “Gabe,” and “Biby.”<sup>9</sup>

The Advocacy Team used the student government’s referendum process to create a petition and subsequent ballot initiative that put the question of the Fund before their classmates and peers. At the heart of this proposal was the question of what students in the present owed those who suffered and toiled

because of Georgetown in the past. No one action by the concerned students could answer that question, but the Advocacy Team saw their work as establishing the grounds on which students could contend with the connections between past and present. The proposal outlined what could happen if the Fund referendum passed. The program would be designed to be a direct cash aid program for anyone among the widening ranks of the descendant community, and the yearly fee would collect approximately \$400,000 annually for applicants. The Advocacy Team suggested that those in need could use it for school expenses, healthcare, and rent assistance.

After months of organizing teach-ins, handing out flyers, and organizing interviews with the campus and national press, the Reconciliation Fund was put to a vote by the student body in April of 2019. A little over half of the undergraduate population were moved to vote in the referendum — an impressive percentage, based on prior elections. With nearly 67% of students voting affirmatively for the Fund — a little more than 3,000 students in total voted — Georgetown and slavery again became a topic of interest for journalists. In lieu of a statement of victory upon the announcement that the referendum had passed, the student organizers released an image of all 272 names, printed in white on a black background.

The votes, however, were not enough to declare victory. The new student fee would have to be approved by the University's Board of Directors, and as students waited for the Board to determine whether this history-making initiative would come to fruition, the very idea of college students voting on reparations became a lively topic of debate. Mélisande Short-Colomb, a descendant who entered Georgetown as a first-year student in her sixties, became a student organizer of the Reconciliation Fund. Referencing the image of Jesus washing the feet of his apostles, she told *Politico* that “everything happens for students here on campus. If you can receive a benefit, are you not capable of extending a hand in service? . . . Are you capable of washing feet?”<sup>10</sup> Some of Short-Colomb's fellow descendants have called the students brave; others have called the students naïve, or believe the Fund makes the descendants appear in a demeaning light, as charity cases taken up by wealthy and privileged college students.

After months of waiting for the final decision on the Reconciliation Fund, students learned that the Board of Directors rejected the idea. In its place, the

University committed to a series of initiatives to reach out to the descendant communities, in the form of a university-sponsored charitable foundation.<sup>11</sup> By soliciting donations “from alumni, faculty, students and philanthropists,” the University shifted the Reconciliation Fund’s focus away from compelling all students to engage in a process of financial repair, and, in the view of Fund supporters, changed the spirit of the idea. How can a university take ownership of the consequences of slaveholding without requiring all members of its community to contribute? These are the types of questions that campuses can ask in the aftermath of Brown’s first foray into not only acknowledging the link between universities and slavery, but also making financial commitments to remedy the generational damage caused by it.

---

*If this nation is ever to have a serious dialogue about slavery, Jim Crow, and the bitter legacies they have bequeathed to us, then universities must provide the leadership.*<sup>12</sup>

Since the publication of this statement about universities and slavery, the landscape of higher education has changed. There are dozens of colleges and universities now studying slavery. Institutions founded after the abolishment of slavery are also using Brown’s Slavery and Justice Report to guide explorations on the harms done to Indigenous peoples; land theft at borders; gentrification; displacement; and medical racism. Regardless of the specificities of the harms done by individual universities, Brown has taught all of those who are invested in a transformative higher education that the past is ever-present and, like the ticking of a clock, sometimes requires us to truly listen in order to hear its sounds.

***Marcia Chatelain** is Professor of History and African American Studies at Georgetown University. Chatelain received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Brown University in 2008.*

## Confronting Historical Injustice— Past, Present, and Future

*Anthony Bogues*

*The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us . . . and history is literally present in all that we do . . . it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations.*

— James Baldwin

HISTORICAL TRUTH SHATTERS. It takes what was hidden in plain sight and foregrounds it. It troubles framing narratives.

When the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, appointed by President Ruth J. Simmons to explore Brown's relationship to American slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, first convened in 2003, it was clear to us that we had been given a serious charge, which, if carried out successfully, could be consequential. None of us was aware of the deep historical evidence we would eventually find. Nor did we realize that the results of our research would dramatically transform our understanding of the founding history of the University, creating the possibility of a new course for Brown in the twenty-first century.

As the Slavery and Justice Committee's work got underway, with the help of faculty and students engaged in research projects in and out of the classroom, a fuller history of transatlantic slavery in New England, and Brown's place within it, began to emerge. Up to that point, although Rhode Island had

been recognized by some as a settler colony founded on Indigenous dispossession and racial slavery, the University had always set itself outside of these contexts and conditions.<sup>1</sup> Our research revealed that James Brown II (1698–1739), the individual who established the Brown family fortune, was part of a group of Rhode Island merchants who profited from the transatlantic slave trade, having “established himself early in the mercantile business, trading in rum, molasses, slaves and less controversial wares . . . upon his death, he left a considerable fortune to his sons, who followed him in business under the tutelage of their uncle Obadiah Brown (1712–1762).”<sup>2</sup> And as James T. Campbell notes in this volume, many of the University’s founders and benefactors were involved in the transatlantic slave trade later in the eighteenth century. Moreover, Stephen Hopkins, the University’s first chancellor and author of the nationally popular 1774 pamphlet, *The Rights of Colonies Examined*, owned slaves.

The historical injustices associated with Brown extended to other populations as well. When the College of Rhode Island (renamed Brown University in 1804) moved from Warren to its current location on Providence’s College Hill in 1770, it settled on expropriated Indigenous land. The revelation of the University’s relationship to the Atlantic slave trade not only shattered the prevailing narrative of Brown’s origins — as an institution that had opened its doors to white male students of any religious affiliation and supported the American revolution against British colonial power — it also exposed a fundamental paradox in America’s founding, that American liberty was proclaimed in the midst of racial slavery and Indigenous dispossession, making it a selective kind of liberty from which enslaved Africans and Indigenous peoples were excluded. It is a paradox that continues to haunt this country.

Facing this history, the Slavery and Justice Committee had to grapple with this question: How do we reconcile our past complicity and entanglement with what the ex-slave and Black abolitionist Ottobah Cugoano described as “commerce in humans” with the precepts of religious freedom and liberty in general? In confronting the University’s embeddedness within the social system of racial slavery in America, the Committee faced a second question: How do we describe this social system? Following the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, the *Report of the Brown University*

*Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* proclaimed that racial slavery was a “crime against humanity” and, therefore, a social system of historical injustice. Framing the Report in this way allowed the Committee to explore the concept of historical wrongs and to think about the relationships between the past and the present, paying keen attention to the afterlives of racial slavery in America.

---

The Report is now recognized as a seminal document in the history of American higher education. One of its core recommendations for retrospective justice was that Brown create a center for continuing research on slavery and justice. That recommendation reads in part: “We believe that Brown, by virtue of its history, has a special opportunity and obligation to foster research and teaching on the issues broached in this Report, including slavery and other forms of historical and contemporary injustice, movements to promote human rights, and struggles over the meaning of individual and institutional responsibility.”<sup>3</sup> This recommendation became the basis for the founding of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ), which was established in 2012. A primary objective of its founding was to foster interdisciplinary study of historical forms of slavery while also examining how these legacies live on in our contemporary world.

The Center first had to position itself both within the intellectual landscape of Brown and also in relation to the few other centers devoted to the study of slavery that existed around the world. How would we shape both our mission and institutional structure? In the spirit of the Report — its processes deliberately democratic, filled with robust debate and dissent — we recognized that the deeply complex subject of racial slavery in America and its afterlives was a vexing one not only for Brown but for the entire nation. As such, it demanded continued research, debate, and attention to producing public forms of historical knowledge. As we began to find our footing, it became clear that the Center had to be set up as a scholarly research center with a public humanities mission.

Over the last decade, the Center has initiated and supported a series of projects, driven by faculty-led research clusters on human trafficking, the American criminal justice system, the ways in which slavery and race have

shaped contemporary medical practices, and racial slavery as a comparative global historical phenomenon, among other subjects. A regular seminar series for faculty and graduate students includes the Carceral State Reading Group, described in this volume by Sophie Kupetz. The Center also offers undergraduate and graduate student support in the form of research opportunities and fellowships.

Because the CSSJ recognizes the centrality of racial slavery to the making of the modern world, a series of public humanities and public history programs not only serves to educate wider publics, but also aims to advance national and, where possible, international conversations on slavery's legacy. Public engagement projects include the Civil Rights Movement Initiative (CMRI), an after-school program that serves students from three Providence



Undergraduate students in Professor Renée Ater's fall 2020 seminar at Brown University, "Monuments, History, and Memory in the U.S.," presented their "monument interventions" as part of the "This is America" public humanities webinar series sponsored by the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice. Ciara Sing's *Acknowledgment Garden*, imagined for the Vartan Gregorian Courtyard, is dedicated to Indigenous dispossession and racial slavery.

public high schools; the High School Curriculum Project (developed in collaboration with Brown's Choices Program), which challenges myths and absences in how our schools currently teach the history of slavery; and "This is America," a webinar series that discusses certain social, political, and economic systems as forms of structural violence that are rooted in anti-Black racism. The Center is also collaborating with other institutions on a project titled "Unfinished Conversations" in Africa, Brazil, and elsewhere to create a unique repository of oral histories of enslaved memories.

The public humanities mission of the Center has led to numerous partnerships. With the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, the CSSJ leads the Global Curatorial Project, a network of scholars, museum curators, and community educators who are committed to creating critical new knowledge and innovative forms of public history about the historical experiences and contemporary legacies of racial slavery and colonialism, while seeking to collaborate and transform museum practice with international publics and audiences. Working with acclaimed American documentary filmmaker Stanley Earl Nelson, Jr., the Center is the research arm of a multi-part documentary series that will chart the economic and human cost of the slave trade across the Atlantic basin, underscoring how this expansive system of trade, violence, and profit built the modern world.

Since its founding, following the ethos of the Report, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice has become a catalytic entity, pushing forward conversations and opening up public dialogues about the historical significance of slavery and its afterlife.

---

What propels the work of the CSSJ is its understanding of justice. As we engage in scholarly research and public humanities work, we practice a form of "cognitive justice," which confronts historical elisions and framings that were constructed to conceal historical truths. In this regard, the Center understands history not as a fossilized past but rather as the foundation from which one acts in the present. Within the domain of political thought, justice is often understood as one of the primary principles of a society. The practice of justice demands action. When humans become "superfluous" in any

historical moment, to borrow political theorist Hannah Arendt's phrase, that moment can be identified as one marked by historical injustice. That moment is also marked by what the poet Aimé Césaire calls the process of "thingification." Racial slavery was such an injustice. But it was not a single historical conjuncture; it was a historical catastrophe that resulted in a social system that lasted hundreds of years, sustained by an ideology — anti-Black racism — that has endured well beyond the formal abolishment of slavery. Informed by the historical catastrophe of racial slavery, the practice of justice now demands dignity and forms of equality that go beyond conventional procedural forms.

The CSSJ's research and teaching on historical and contemporary injustice play a critical role in the racial reckoning that marks the current moment. Just as the Slavery and Justice Report opened the door for other universities to confront their own relationship to American slavery, two ongoing features of Black life in America have pushed society to grapple with the afterlives of racial slavery — the mass incarceration of segments of the Black population and the regular police violence against African Americans. From these injustices grew the Black Lives Matter movement, formed in 2013 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin. By the summer of 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and after the murder of George Floyd, "Black Lives Matter" became the rallying cry for twenty-six million people in America and marchers in over four thousand cities around the world. This demand for racial justice in the public square represented a remarkable effort to overthrow the ideology of white supremacy, and to reverse centuries of a hierarchical human classification system that began in the bowels of the European colonial project of the late fifteenth century. This project drew from and then was sustained by racial slavery. For the CSSJ, this worldwide movement prompted us to create new programs that foreground thinking around Black politics and to identify ways of presenting the debates and actions of those who were deeply involved in this historic movement to new audiences.

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the current moment, one might be prompted to question the exhaustiveness of the Slavery and Justice Report's coverage of comparative perspectives. Today's readers might expect a fuller story of Indigenous slavery and its relationship to racial slavery, for example. All pioneering reports are creatures of their time, and Brown's Report is no exception. The question then becomes, what steps must the University now

take to better understand the dispossession and subjugation of Native American nations by settler colonialists, an established system onto which African slavery was then mapped? Recent investigations and new projects supported by the Center have allowed us to begin to grapple with this history. “Stolen Relations: Recovering Stories of Indigenous Enslavement in the Americas,” a community-centered database project, seeks to illuminate and understand the role that the enslavement of Indigenous peoples played in settler colonialism over time. “Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustice, Sovereignty, and Freedom,” a Mellon Foundation-supported collaboration between the CSSJ, Williams College, and Mystic Seaport Museum, will use maritime history as a lens for studying historical injustices and generating new insights on the relationship between European colonization in North America, the seizure of Native American land, and racial slavery in New England. What will it mean for the University as the CSSJ undertakes this research? How might the University grapple with the historical injustice of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, on which the land we reside upon is predicated?

Both the Center and the University have reached an inflection point. If we say that history, in the words of James Baldwin, is carried with us and serves as a frame for who we think we are, if history carries sedimented deposits that shape our structures of life and society, then what kind of justice work should we do now? Over the past few years, the critical question of the various meanings and significance of history has bubbled to the surface, triggered in part by the *New York Times Magazine’s* 1619 Project and by Brown and other universities’ attempts to grapple with their historical relationship to racial slavery and settler colonialism.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, other initiatives, such as *The 1776 Report*, have called for “a restoration of American education, which can only be grounded on a history . . . and a rediscovery of . . . founding principles. . . .”<sup>5</sup> Yet these so-called “founding principles” are fraught. Exclusionary in practice, their conventional telling of American history elides the lived experience of entire groups of humans. The Slavery and Justice Report confronted the hidden historical truths that undergirded those “founding principles,” revealing that those principles were rendered meaningless for the lives of enslaved Blacks and dispossessed Indigenous peoples. Thus, one critical question today is not so much about the importance of history itself but, rather, of *which* history. From which perspective do we interpret the past? The past is not a fixed

moment in time, but one very much informed by the concerns of the present. We all carry history within us, but is this not a moment when confronting history could offer a form of release?

At Brown University, as beneficiaries of settler colonialism and the Atlantic slave trade, we find ourselves in a pivotal moment. The initial impetus for the Slavery and Justice Report, and the concomitant transformation of our thinking, now enables us to move to the next phase of essential, transformative work. Our engagement with the past is not defined by an endpoint, but by the constant and ever-shifting trajectory through which we challenge ourselves to transform the afterlives of the birth of America.

***Anthony Boggles** is the Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Critical Theory, Professor of Africana Studies, and Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University.*

# The Evolution of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work at Brown University: An Institution Changed by the Slavery and Justice Report

*Shontay Delalue*

THE *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* opens with a simple declaration: “Let us begin with a clock.”<sup>1</sup> In the Report, the clock represents Brown’s historical entanglement with the institution of slavery, existing in plain sight yet somehow remaining invisible, long uninterrogated and unnoticed. In considering the lasting impact of the Slavery and Justice Report, I often reflect on that opening, because today, the Slavery and Justice Report itself represents a truth that stands in plain sight — a reckoning with a past involvement with slavery that, once revealed, should never again go unremarked. The Report represents a University forced to examine itself. It made Brown an institution that will continue its self-examination — and demand accountability for what it sees. That is the legacy of the Slavery and Justice Report at Brown University today.

The fifteen years since the release of the Slavery and Justice Report have encompassed many moments of Brown examining the legacies of slavery, inequity, and injustice that must be confronted and addressed — Brown is a changed university because of the many moments of reckoning engendered by

the Report. The Report stands sentry as if to ask, how can we be a university that has committed to “accepting its burdens and responsibilities along with its benefits and privileges,” and yet not achieved greater diversity?<sup>2</sup> How can we not be a fully inclusive campus? How can we not do everything possible to ensure members of historically underrepresented groups can succeed and thrive? How can we not advance knowledge and understanding of the history of racial slavery and its local and global legacies today?

The legacy of the Report is reflected in Brown’s ongoing efforts to address these questions; the answer to these questions is the legacy of the Report reflected in Brown University in the year 2021. The answer has been the work of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice to examine the history of racial slavery and its local and global legacies today. The answer is the diversity action plans developed through inclusive processes involving students, faculty, staff, and alumni to achieve equity and inclusion in recognition that these values are essential to meet Brown’s ideals of a university committed to excellence in academics and research. It’s the investments in education to support learning for children in local schools; the efforts to combat anti-Black racism on campus and in society; the new curricula that impart knowledge to the next generation of leaders; the work of campus centers of support like the Brown Center for Students of Color, the Undocumented First-Generation College and Low-Income Student Center, and the Swearer Center for Public Service. And it’s the ongoing advocacy, activism, and hard work that we know will continue well into the future.

---

But how did Brown arrive at its reckoning with slavery and justice? The work of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice built upon a legacy of impactful activism that took various forms, one of the most prominent examples being the 1968 Black Student Walkout, when African American students from Brown and Pembroke College marched to the Congdon Street Baptist Church, calling for the University to increase enrollment of African American students and offer them more support, namely financial support. This was followed by the 1975 takeover of University Hall, during which students protested against budget cuts they felt would disproportionately affect minority students

and echoed the demands from 1968; and the 1985 occupation of the John Carter Brown Library, when students sought to address instances of racism on campus as a coalition of “Black and Third World Students.” There was also the 1992 takeover of University Hall, where protests by members of Students for Admissions and Minority Aid advanced discussions for need-blind admission policies. Clearly, these calls for equity, inclusion, and justice have reverberated across College Hill for decades. Given this history, Brown was already a place where the work of the Committee could take root.

Still, the appointment of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice was a bold step in publicly documenting the institution’s historical entanglement with slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Brown was among the first institutions of higher education in the U.S. to publicly catalogue these ties and reflect on the complex political, legal, and moral questions posed by confronting injustices tied to the legacies of slavery. At the time, few institutions had endeavored to openly confront their complicated histories and their aftermath. Since the Slavery and Justice Report was published in 2006, this work has influenced how institutions of higher education across the country have reckoned with their own historical connections to slavery. Other colleges and universities have looked to Brown’s Report as a model for how a university can use its resources to conduct in-depth, high-impact research; inspire ongoing learning; and develop plans for transformational change in campus culture by examining their past.

Even as other institutions have looked toward Brown, the Slavery and Justice Report has established an expectation for introspection within the University. The Report represents a moment of concretizing Brown’s commitment to create a more diverse and inclusive academic community — to learn from the past and ensure underrepresented members of the present community can fulfill their full potential as scholars and leaders. It elucidated and acknowledged Brown’s connections to slavery and its profound consequences, including structural racism and economic inequality. Notably, it set expectations for accountability and transformation within our campus community in recognition of this history. This marked a cultural shift, signaling that ongoing dialogue is essential to creating the type of inclusive campus community Brown strives to be. The Report, which begins with a sobering moral analysis and concludes with recommendations, established for Brown that examination

must be followed by action. Institutions of higher education necessarily value the pursuit of knowledge and truth. As such, the Report suggested that it was through these areas that Brown — and other universities — could most effectively address retrospective justice and hold itself accountable for its history.

Following the release of the Report, the University in 2007 identified twelve specific actions for adoption based on the 2006 recommendations, many of which have been fulfilled. These include the establishment of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice; a fuller public accounting of Brown's history; the creation of the Urban Education Fellowship, which offers free tuition to graduate students in education who pledge to serve in public schools in Providence and surrounding areas after graduation; the \$10 million permanent endowment of the Fund for the Education of the Children of Providence; the commissioning of a memorial as a permanent monument to Brown's connection to the transatlantic slave trade and the work of enslaved Black people who helped build the University, the state of Rhode Island, and the United States; and the dissemination of the Report in a free and accessible format to the public, among other actions.<sup>3</sup> Brown also committed to ongoing investment in existing initiatives, such as support for Providence public schools through mentoring, staffing, curricula, equipment, diversity training, and professional development for teachers. Brown's work toward realizing other recommendations, including the strengthening of Brown's relationship with Tougaloo College, remains ongoing.

---

Brown's work toward fulfilling the recommendations of the Slavery and Justice Report was a new beginning, rather than the conclusion of a long investigation of issues of justice. For Brown, facing its history and creating a space for examining the implications of slavery and the slave trade set a new standard for truth-telling and a permanent lens through which the University could address the enduring and painful legacies of the past.

This shift is most clearly evidenced in the work of Brown's ambitious plans to create a more fully diverse and inclusive campus. The 2016 *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University*, commonly known as the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP), set the University

on an ambitious path of concrete, achievable actions to address obstacles that have long stood in the way of the success of historically underrepresented groups in higher education. While conversations to create a new diversity plan for Brown arose from goals outlined in Brown’s 2014 ten-year strategic plan, *Building on Distinction: A New Plan for Brown*, the DIAP was also shaped significantly by fervent nationwide calls for racial justice following the police killings of unarmed Black people, including the student protests that swept the nation in the fall of 2015. These nationwide calls for racial justice were coupled with renewed scrutiny of the experiences of Black students on predominantly white university campuses.

The DIAP recognizes that achieving a truly diverse and inclusive community is only possible when the entire institution shares in the commitment to achieving structural change. In addition to Brown’s overarching plan, it required the creation of diversity and inclusion action plans for the individual academic and administrative units across Brown — with all community



**The Slavery and Justice Report calls on Brown to support the success of Providence students. The Brown Elementary Afterschool Mentoring program, or BEAM, is among the community engagement efforts that now number in the dozens—led by Brown faculty, staff, and students—to support efforts to educate K–12 students in the Providence Public School District. President Christina H. Paxson visited the enrichment program that has operated at William D’Abate Elementary School since 2000.**

members as active stakeholders, not passive onlookers, in effecting meaningful transformation. And it continues to require constant reassessment, with each department carrying out an annual self-reflection on progress. These levels of community engagement and self-examination have directly echoed the process of developing the Slavery and Justice Report.

The DIAP certainly was not Brown's first diversity plan, and it is worth considering whether Brown would have produced such a living document of accountability if the University had not first produced the Slavery and Justice Report a decade earlier. In many ways, the University's recognition of the importance of this work was a consequence of the expectation that Brown would continue to confront its uncomfortable truths. Engaging the entire Brown community of students, staff, faculty, and alumni in the process of developing the DIAP in 2015 and 2016 allowed the University to create a monumental document that has helped to continually transform the institution. In the DIAP, Brown recognized that only if the entire community focused on equity and inclusion could the entire community live up to its ideals — a campus that embraces that “a diverse and inclusive community . . . is the best possible environment for fostering the advancement of knowledge and discovery through free inquiry, and it is also critical to knowledge production in a globalized world.”<sup>4</sup> The DIAP now serves as Brown's strategic plan to fulfill its aspirations for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In April 2021, Brown reaffirmed its commitment to this work through the launch of DIAP Phase II, which serves as a companion document to the 2016 plan and outlines new actions to increase diversity, address barriers to inclusion, and create a more equitable academic community. Both phases of Brown's DIAP drew on the precedent set by the Report in much the same way that almost every conversation about race and justice builds upon a legacy of the contributions of past and present generations of students, faculty, staff, and alumni dedicated to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion at Brown. Today, the two DIAPs serve as new vehicles for Brown University to reflect on what it has and has not yet accomplished. The DIAP and DIAP Phase II together have now taken the mantle of the Brown community's constant guide for keeping these priorities at the forefront of the institution's work and achieving transformational, sustained change.

The six priority areas identified in the DIAP — People, Academic Excellence, Curriculum, Community, Knowledge, and Accountability — have allowed a rich tapestry of ideas to flow from various parts of campus. The focus on historically underrepresented groups ensures Brown is able to “focus on a relatively small number of areas that we believe will have the biggest immediate impact on our community, with the expectation that, as time goes by and we learn from experience, more actions will be needed.”<sup>5</sup> Now, with these plans in place, where does Brown go from here? What will be the legacy of our work?

---

The strength of any community is in its people. The work of achieving diversity, full inclusion, and racial justice, therefore, takes place not only at a university or department level, but among individuals. The DIAP’s focus on investing in the agency and transformative impact of the individual in making change — by establishing “people” as its first priority area — may be the lens through which we evaluate ourselves in fifteen more years.

For me, as an administrator who also teaches, the Slavery and Justice Report and the DIAP presented an opportunity to design and implement a course focused on all six of the priority areas of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. My co-facilitator, Maiyah Gamble-Rivers of Brown’s Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, and I offered an Ethnic Studies course entitled “The African Atlantic Diaspora: Race, Memory, Identity, and Belonging.” The course explored notions of “Blackness” across the African Atlantic diaspora and examined the ways in which Blackness is viewed individually and collectively by groups. We discussed concepts related to the European origins of racial hierarchy, the introduction and maintenance of racial categorization in the U.S., and the necessity of racism as a core element of the economic enterprise of enslaving Africans in the Americas. Through engagement with seminal readings and documentaries, and deep discussions, we grappled with topics such as anti-Blackness and how it impacts the African diaspora today.

One of the most transformative parts of the course was a trip to Ghana. There, we were able to visit places such as the W.E.B. DuBois Memorial Centre for Pan African Culture and engage with Ghanaian college students and

young professionals to better understand their views on race. We took sobering visits to two slave castles, Cape Coast and Elmina, where we were guided to the places where millions of Africans were ushered through the “door of no return.” This course brought to life the history of Brown University and its entanglement with the slave trade as well as the ways in which the systemic racial hierarchy impacts Black people today. There are still so many aspects of race and slavery that we have yet to explore, and the Slavery and Justice Report paved the way for continued scholarship on this topic.

One critical way to ensure that essential teaching and research on issues of power, privilege, and oppression continue is to increase the number of scholars who are trained in these areas. In the 2016 DIAP, Brown made a commitment to double the percentage of faculty from historically underrepresented groups. The national attention Brown has garnered from the critical work of uncovering its past — first through the Slavery and Justice Report and now with the establishment of an aggressive path for the future through the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans — has attracted a number of top scholars to the institution, ensuring that, as a campus community, Brown can continue to grapple with its past to ensure a better future.

In addition to Brown’s commitment to faculty recruitment, the University committed to increasing the number of graduate students from historically underrepresented groups. Ensuring that significantly more graduate students are well-positioned to join the faculty ranks is a critical step toward closing the gap created by the centuries-old legacy of racism. However, the University must also work to build a community in which they can thrive, meaning that Brown must be intentional about building necessary systems of support. This work cannot be limited to faculty and students; a core part of the community that ensures the ongoing operations of any university campus is its staff. The institution as a body cannot function without all of its organs, and so support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff have opportunities to engage in knowledge-building is essential.

---

Fifteen years after the Slavery and Justice Report, our country is currently facing yet another reckoning with systemic racism. Across the United States,

we are witnessing disturbing attempts to enact voter suppression laws that disproportionately affect Black communities. Inequities in healthcare and health outcomes have become more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, we have seen the impacts of climate change disproportionately impact communities of color. These are significant and complex issues that continue to be intertwined with the legacies of slavery.

As we look to the years and decades ahead, we must hope that the current and future generations of Brown scholars and students whom we exhort to confront these important and complex issues will become deeply invested in this work and play a role in dismantling systems and structures of bias and discrimination — and that the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* will serve as a guide. This is far from the first time issues of racism and inequity have reached a boiling point in this country, and it certainly will not be the last. Brown is a university seeking to demonstrate that the country's institutions must be willing to confront these issues to build a better future. This work requires steady and persisting dedication to progress and accountability. Through the Slavery and Justice Report and the subsequent work of its action plans to achieve diversity and inclusion, the University has established an obligation to continue to examine itself and its progress with a critical gaze.

***Shontay Delalue, Ph.D.**, is Senior Vice President and Senior Diversity Officer at Dartmouth College. When composing this essay, she held the position of Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity at Brown University.*

4 do for 1 gun  
1 do for a puter bayon

4 Caggis & 7 flask Munn	47
1 gun 3 large iron bars	12
1 p <sup>d</sup> sholes	8
2 flask powder	4
3 small Lullaphes	3
1 C-y cloth 1 fad <sup>m</sup> bafts	2
2 doz <sup>n</sup> knives 2 bunch beads	4
3 Couets bayo	3
6 Cuntry cloths	6
1 fad <sup>m</sup> bafts	1
for a slave	

2 flask Munn for yarns  
4 do for 2 flask powd.  
2 do for a Cuntry cloth  
6 do for a gun  
5 do to Capator wages a black 10  
1 white cloth for flasks

4 flask Munn for 2 C-y cloths  
2 do for yarns

Report of the  
Brown University  
Steering Committee  
on Slavery and Justice

90 No  
65

low

## UNIVERSITY STEERING COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE

*Reflects Professional Titles upon the 2006 Release of the Report*

**Brenda A. Allen**, *Associate Provost and Director of Institutional Diversity*

**Paul Armstrong**, *Professor of English*

**Farid Azfar '03 A.M.**, *Doctoral Candidate, Department of History*

**Omer Bartov**, *John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor  
of European History*

**B. Anthony Bagues**, *Professor and Chair of Africana Studies*

**James Campbell (Chair)**, *Associate Professor of American  
Civilization, Africana Studies, and History*

**Ross E. Cheit**, *Associate Professor of Political Science  
and Public Policy*

**Steven R. Cornish '70 A.M.**, *Associate Dean of the College*

**Neta C. Crawford '85**, *Adjunct Professor, Watson Institute  
for International Studies*

**Evelyn Hu-DeHart**, *Professor of History; Director,  
Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America*

**Vanessa Huang '06, A.B.**, *Ethnic Studies*

**Arlene R. Keizer**, *Associate Professor of English and American  
Civilization*

**Seth Magaziner '06, A.B.**, *History*

**Marion Orr**, *Fred Lippitt Professor of Public Policy and  
Professor of Political Science and Urban Studies*

**Kerry Smith**, *Associate Professor of History and East Asian Studies*

**William Tucker '04, A.B.**, *Africana Studies and Public Policy*

**Michael Vorenberg**, *Associate Professor of History*

## Executive Summary

IN 2003, Brown University President Ruth J. Simmons appointed a Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. Composed of faculty, administrators, and students, the Committee was asked to investigate the University's historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The Committee was also asked to organize public programs that might help Brown students and interested members of the public to reflect on the meaning of this history in the present, on the complex historical, political, legal, and moral questions posed by any present-day confrontation with historical injustice.

The Steering Committee delivered its final Report in October 2006. Following a period of discussion and public comment, President Simmons and the Brown Corporation, the governing body of the University, issued a formal response in February 2007, outlining specific steps the University would take in light of the Committee's findings.<sup>†</sup>

The Report that follows includes three sections, followed by a conclusion and recommendations.

### Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Brown University

Section One details the Committee's historical findings. Although most Americans today think of slavery as a Southern phenomenon, the institution existed in all thirteen mainland colonies, including Rhode Island, where about ten percent of the population in the mid-eighteenth century was enslaved.

Rhode Islanders also played a leading role in the transatlantic slave trade, mounting more than one thousand African slaving voyages in the century before the abolition of the trade in 1807. In all, more than one-hundred thousand enslaved Africans were carried to the Americas on Rhode Island ships, the majority of them to the sugar-producing colonies of the Caribbean.

Slavery and the slave trade shaped the early history of the College of Rhode Island, what is today Brown University, in numerous ways. The Steering Committee was able to identify approximately thirty members of the College Corporation, the school's governing body, who owned or captained slave ships. Slave owners and slave traders were prominent among the College's early donors, and at least four enslaved laborers contributed to the construction of the College Edifice, which is today called University Hall. Yet Brown also proved to be an important wellspring of the anti-slavery movement. Members of the College Corporation helped to enact some of the first state and federal laws against slavery and slave trading and pressed for the prosecution of those who violated them — including, in some cases, other Corporation members. The dispute split the College's namesake family. The first individual charged in U.S. federal court for illegal slave trading was John Brown, the College's long-time treasurer, who was prosecuted at the behest of the Providence Abolition Society, an organization founded by his younger brother, Moses. The issue also divided students, who argued the merits of slavery and abolition in classrooms, Commencement orations, and debating societies. As the Report's detailed historical reconstruction shows, we are not the first generation to debate Brown's relationship to slavery or to debate our own responsibilities in light of it.

## Confronting Historical Injustice: Comparative Perspectives

In her letter charging the Steering Committee, President Simmons suggested a careful examination of “comparative and historical contexts” that might illuminate Brown's situation, as well as the broader problem of “retrospective justice.” How have other institutions and societies around the world dealt with historical injustice and its legacies, and what might we learn from their experience? A substantial majority of the Committee's public programs

pertained to this aspect of its charge, which is the subject of the second section of the Report.

The section recounts humankind's long and continuing struggle to define, deter, and alleviate the effects of "crimes against humanity," a concept conceived in the eighteenth century and formally codified in international law in the twentieth century. Crimes against humanity include not only slavery and slave trading but also genocide, "ethnic cleansing," mass rape, and other forms of gross injustice. One of the signature developments of the post-World War II era, and of the last twenty years in particular, has been the emergence of an international consensus on the importance of confronting such crimes, as well as the development of a variety of mechanisms for doing so. These mechanisms include not only monetary reparations (the focus of most discussions of the subject in the United States today) but also truth commissions, national and international apologies, the creation of public memorials and days of remembrance, educational initiatives, and a wide variety of other non-monetary reparative programs. The Report examines the possibilities and potential pitfalls of all of these approaches, as well as some of the specific circumstances in which they have been or might be used. It also examines the experiences of societies that have, for one reason or another, declined to confront atrocious pasts. The section includes extensive notes for readers interested in pursuing particular cases or issues in greater detail.

## Confronting Slavery's Legacy: The Reparations Question

President Simmons specifically asked the Steering Committee "to organize academic events and activities that might help the nation and the Brown community think deeply, seriously, and rigorously about the questions raised by the national debate over reparations for slavery." Reparations, she noted, was a highly controversial subject "about which men and women of good will may ultimately disagree," but it was also a subject on which Brown, in light of its own history, had a "special obligation and special opportunity to provide thoughtful inquiry." The president stressed that the Committee would not determine whether or how Brown might pay monetary reparations, nor did she expect it to forge a consensus on the reparations question. Its task, rather, was "to provide factual information and critical perspectives to deepen

understanding” and enrich debate about an issue that had aroused great public passion but little constructive public dialogue.

Section Three of the Report pertains to this aspect of the Committee’s charge. It examines the contours of the current slavery reparations controversy, recounting recent efforts to obtain reparations through legislation or litigation, as well as the criticism and opposition that these efforts have provoked. It also examines the controversy’s deeper historical roots, a context that has been almost completely overlooked in current political debate. What actually happened when slavery was abolished, first in northern states like Rhode Island, and later in the South? What legacies did slavery bequeath to the nation, and what attempts were made to redress those legacies, both in the immediate aftermath of abolition and subsequently? What forms has the movement for redress taken at different historical moments, with what results? In examining these and other questions, the Report does not seek to resolve the reparations controversy but rather to offer factual information and critical perspectives that might help Americans of all persuasions discuss the issues more openly and thoughtfully. This section also contains extensive notes, elaborating particular issues and offering suggestions for further reading.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

As even this short summary makes clear, the Steering Committee’s Report is intended not as the last word on the subjects of slavery and justice but rather as an invitation to continuing dialogue and debate on the Brown campus and in the nation as a whole. Yet in the course of their research, Committee members reached certain conclusions. These are presented in a short final section of the Report, accompanied by a series of recommendations directed specifically at Brown University. These recommendations include:

- Formal acknowledgment by the University of the participation of many of Brown’s founders and benefactors in the institution of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the benefits that the University derived from them;
- A series of initiatives, including the commissioning of a new University history and the erection of a slave trade memorial, to ensure that this

aspect of Brown's and Rhode Island's history is properly understood and memorialized;

- The creation of a dedicated academic center to foster research and teaching on issues related to slavery and other forms of historical and contemporary injustice, as well as the struggles against them;
- Maintenance of the highest possible ethical standards in regard to investment and gifts;
- Expanded opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade;
- An array of initiatives with local public schools to help ensure quality education for the children of Rhode Island.

We cannot change the past. But an institution can hold itself accountable for the past, accepting its burdens and responsibilities along with its benefits and privileges. The *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* is offered in this spirit.



## Introduction

### LET US BEGIN WITH A CLOCK.

In 2003, Brown University President Ruth J. Simmons appointed a Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice to investigate and issue a public report on the University's historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Since that time, the Committee, which includes faculty, students, and administrators, has met periodically in an office on the second floor of University Hall, the oldest building on the Brown campus. In the corner of the office stands an antique clock. A silver plaque on the cabinet identifies it as "The Family Clock of Admiral Esek Hopkins." Built in the 1750s by a local craftsman, Samuel Rockwell, the clock was donated to Brown in the 1850s by Hopkins' granddaughter. Such artifacts and heirlooms abound on the campus, and it took several months for Committee members to notice the clock or to recognize its significance.

Though less celebrated than his older brother Stephen, a colonial governor and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Esek Hopkins is a well-known figure in Rhode Island history. A Providence ship captain, he served as the first commander in chief of the United States Navy during the American Revolution. After the war, he was elected to the state legislature. Like his brother, he was a strong supporter of Brown, then known as the College of Rhode Island, serving as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1782 to 1802. His memory is enshrined today in several public sites in Providence, including the Esek Hopkins Middle School, Esek Hopkins Park (which includes a statue of him in naval uniform), and Admiral Street, where his old house still stands.



An antique grandfather clock, a bequest of the family of Admiral Esek Hopkins, stands in University Hall. Esek Hopkins served not only as first commander in chief of the U.S. Navy but also as captain of the slave ship *Sally*, the one-hundred-ton brigantine owned by Nicholas Brown and Company that sailed from Providence to West Africa on a disastrous slaving expedition in 1764, the year of the College's founding.

There is another aspect of Esek Hopkins' story, unmentioned on any of the existing memorials. In 1764, the year that the College of Rhode Island was founded, Hopkins sailed to West Africa in command of a slave ship, a one-hundred-ton brigantine called the *Sally*. The *Sally* was owned by Nicholas Brown and Company, a partnership of four brothers, Nicholas, John, Joseph, and Moses Brown. Prominent Providence merchants, the Browns were also important benefactors of the College, playing a leading role in relocating the school from its original home in Warren, Rhode Island, to its current location in Providence. (In 1804, the College of Rhode Island changed its name to Brown University, in recognition of a gift from Nicholas' son, Nicholas Jr.) There was nothing unusual about a slave ship departing from Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders dominated the North American share of the African slave trade, mounting over a thousand slaving voyages in the century before the abolition of the trade in 1807 (and scores more illegal voyages thereafter). The *Sally's* voyage was deadlier than most. At least 109 of the 196 Africans that Hopkins purchased on behalf of the Browns perished, some in a failed insurrection, the balance through disease, suicide, and starvation. The records of the venture, from the fitting out of the ship in August 1764 to the sale of surviving captives on the West Indian island of Antigua fifteen months later, are housed in a library on the Brown campus, though few have troubled to look at them, at least until recently.

We shall return to the voyage of the *Sally*, an episode of considerable significance in the lives of the Brown brothers, three of whom seem never again to have invested directly in transatlantic slaving voyages. But let us return first to the clock. What should the University do with it, now that we know more about its origins? Is it appropriate to display it? Should we remove the plaque honoring Esek Hopkins? Attach another plaque? We are obviously speaking metaphorically here, but the underlying questions could not be more direct. How are we, as members of the Brown community, as Rhode Islanders, and as citizens and residents of the United States, to make sense of our complex history? How do we reconcile those elements of our past that are gracious and honorable with those that provoke grief and horror? What responsibilities, if any, rest upon us in the present as inheritors of this mixed legacy? The Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice represents one institution's confrontation with these questions.

## The Committee's Charge

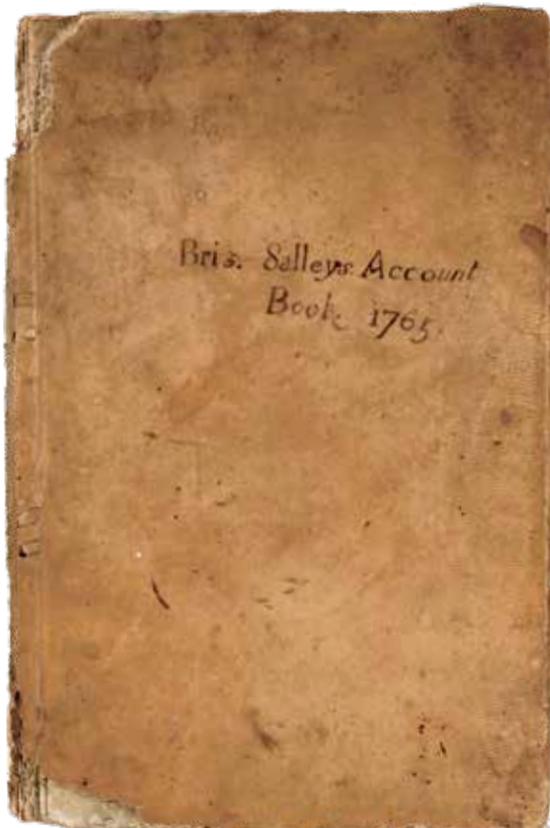
The president's charge to the Committee had two dimensions. Our primary task was to examine the University's historical entanglement with slavery and the slave trade and to report our findings openly and truthfully. But we were also asked to reflect on the meaning of this history in the present, on the complex historical, political, legal, and moral questions posed by any present-day confrontation with past injustice. In particular, the president asked the Committee "to organize academic events and activities that might help the nation and the Brown community think deeply, seriously, and rigorously about the questions raised" by the national debate over reparations for slavery. Reparations, she noted, was a highly controversial subject, presenting "problems about which men and women of good will may ultimately disagree," but it was also a subject on which Brown, in light of its own history, had "a special obligation and a special opportunity to provide thoughtful inquiry." In her letter of charge and in a public statement following the announcement of the Committee's appointment, the president stressed that the Committee would not determine whether or how Brown might pay monetary reparations, nor did she expect it to forge a consensus on the reparations question. Its object, rather, was "to provide factual information and critical perspectives to deepen understanding" and enrich debate on an issue that had aroused great public passion but little constructive public dialogue.<sup>1</sup>

## Overview of Activities

The Steering Committee has endeavored to fulfill this charge. Members of the Committee, assisted by other Brown faculty as well as by undergraduate and graduate student researchers, gathered information about Brown's past, drawing on both published sources and various historical archives. The Committee also sponsored more than thirty public programs, including scholarly lectures, panel discussions, forums, film screenings, and two international conferences exploring the experience of other societies and institutions that have grappled with legacies of historical injustice. In all, we entertained more than a hundred distinguished speakers, ranging from Professor John Hope Franklin, who discussed his tenure as chairman of

One America, President Clinton's short-lived national commission on race, to Beatrice Fernando, a slavery survivor from Sri Lanka, who spoke on the problem of human trafficking today.<sup>2</sup>

The Steering Committee also organized programs and activities beyond the University's gates. Committee members addressed community groups and participated in workshops for local teachers and students. A museum exhibition about the *Sally*, mounted by undergraduate research students working with the Committee, is currently touring public libraries across the state. The exhibition, "Navigating the Past: The Voyage of the Slave Ship *Sally*, 1764–1765," has also been exhibited at the John Brown House, the historic home of one of the ship's owners, and at the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda in St. John's, Antigua, the final destination of the surviving captives from the ship. Members of the Committee also collaborated with the Choices Program,



**Account book for the *Sally*, recording the ship's transactions on the African coast. The book is deposited, along with other records from the voyage, in the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.**

a curricular development group affiliated with Brown's Watson Institute for International Studies, to write and publish a high school curriculum, "A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England." With the support of the office of President Simmons, the Committee was able to donate copies of the curriculum to every high school history and social studies classroom in Rhode Island.<sup>3</sup>

---

**This is an effort designed to involve the campus community in a discovery of the meaning of our past. . . . Understanding our history and suggesting how the full truth of that history can be incorporated into our common traditions will not be easy. But, then, it doesn't have to be.**

**Ruth Simmons, on her decision to establish Brown's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, *Boston Globe*, April 28, 2004**

## Structure of the Report

The Report that follows represents the culmination of the Committee's work. It contains three sections, reflecting the different elements of the president's charge. The first focuses on history, exploring different aspects of the University's relationship to slavery. This section reveals the complicity of many of the University's founders and benefactors in slavery and the slave trade, and outlines some of the direct benefits that accrued to the University. Yet it also seeks to do more. Brown's formative decades coincided with many of the signal events in America's tortuous racial history: the peak of the transatlantic slave trade and the appearance of a popular movement decrying the trade as criminal; the birth of a new nation, dedicated to the proposition that all people were created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights, and the emergence of racist ideologies insisting that people were not equally created or endowed; the gradual abolition of slavery in the northern states and the rapid expansion of the institution in the South. Brown University was shaped by all of these developments, and members of the campus community, including students, vigorously debated their meaning and significance. We are not the first members of the Brown community to confront our University's historical

complicity in slavery and the slave trade or to debate our own responsibilities in light of it.

The second section looks beyond Brown to the problem of retrospective justice around the world. How have other institutions and societies dealt with the legacies of gross injustice — not only of slavery, but also of genocide, “ethnic cleansing,” and other crimes against humanity? One of the signature developments of the last sixty years, and of the last twenty years in particular, has been the emergence of an international consensus on the importance of confronting traumatic histories, as well as the development of a variety of mechanisms for doing so, including international tribunals, truth commissions, national apologies, the erection of public memorials, and a wide array of monetary and non-monetary reparations programs. While this history has spawned a voluminous scholarly literature, it has had relatively little bearing on the slavery reparations debate in the United States, which has, at least in recent years, focused narrowly on the issue of monetary reparations. Our object in this section of the Report is to bring this comparative, global experience to bear on the American case, and on the predicament of our University in particular. What is a crime against humanity? Where does the concept come from, and what does it entail? What legacies do such crimes leave, and what mechanisms exist to redress them? Do all historical injuries merit remedy? When does it become too late to redress an injustice? The section includes extensive notes for individuals interested in pursuing particular issues and questions in greater detail.

---

*“Are we wrong, are we merely superstitious, if we hold that those early leaders, passing through our American colleges, have left a portion of themselves behind?” President Faunce asked. “It is not only ivy that clings to ancient walls — it is memories, echoes, inspirations. The very stones cry out a summons . . .”*

In the final section, we turn to the slavery reparations debate in the United States, examining the contours of the current controversy as well as the issue’s deeper historical roots. In keeping with the president’s charge, our object is not to resolve the reparations debate but rather to illuminate

questions and contexts that are often overlooked in public discussion today. What actually happened when slavery was abolished, first in northern states like Rhode Island, and later in the South? What legacies did slavery bequeath to the nation, and what attempts were made to redress those legacies, both in the immediate aftermath of abolition and subsequently? What forms has the movement for slave redress taken at different historical moments, with what results? In short, where did the current reparations movement come from? This section too contains extensive notes, elaborating particular issues and offering suggestions for further reading.

As should by now be clear, the Steering Committee does not intend this Report as the last word on the subject, but rather as the first words in a dialogue that we hope will continue on our campus and in our nation. Yet in the course of our research, we also reached certain conclusions. We share these at the end of the Report, accompanied by a series of recommendations directed specifically at Brown University.

## A Summons

One of the Committee's first actions was to invite anyone interested in our efforts to submit questions, comments, and criticisms. Hundreds of individuals availed themselves of the opportunity, some of them members of the Brown community, most of them not. The temper of the letters varied widely, but one question arose again and again: Why would Brown launch such an undertaking? Why risk opening chapters of the past that are, inevitably, controversial and painful? We hope that the Committee's work — the programs we organized and the Report that follows — will suffice as an answer. But there is an even simpler answer: Brown is a university. Universities are dedicated to the discovery and dissemination of knowledge. They are conservators of humanity's past. They cherish their own pasts, honoring forebears with statues and portraits and in the names of buildings. To study or teach at a place like Brown is to be a member of a community that exists across time, a participant in a procession that began centuries ago and that will continue long after we are gone. If an institution professing these principles cannot squarely face its own history, it is hard to imagine how any other institution, let alone our nation, might do so.<sup>4</sup>

---

**You disgust me, as you disgust many other Americans. Slavery was wrong, but at that time it was a legal enterprise. It ended, case closed. You cite slavery's effects as being the reason that black people are so far behind, but that just illustrates your ignorance. Black people, here and now, are behind because some can't keep their hands off drugs, or guns, or can't move forward, can't get off welfare, can't do the simple things to improve their life. . . . They don't deserve money, they deserve a boot in the backside over and over until they can find their own way. . . . Can your ignorant research, and can Ruth Simmons, too.**

**Letter to the Steering Committee, April 2004**

As it happens, one of the most eloquent expositions of the idea of the university came from a Brown president, Rev. William Faunce, in a 1914 sermon celebrating the University's sesquicentennial. "Are we wrong, are we merely superstitious, if we hold that those early leaders, passing through our American colleges, have left a portion of themselves behind?" Faunce asked. "It is not only ivy that clings to ancient walls — it is memories, echoes, inspirations. The very stones cry out a summons." He continued: "Have we entered so new a world that we have no further connection with the generation in which these colleges were born? To think so would be to show ourselves without the sense of either historic continuity or moral obligation." It is in that spirit, and with a deep sense of historic continuity and moral obligation, that we offer this Report.<sup>5</sup>

---

**This seems an effort fraught with potential for conflict, embarrassment, and discord. But few issues in U.S. society are so important, and you deserve great credit for taking on this important work. And your efforts—if they are rigorous and critical and comprehensive—could serve as a model for a broader discussion throughout our society of the residue of slavery.**

**Letter to the Steering Committee, April 2004**



# Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Brown University

AMERICANS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY referred to slavery as “the peculiar institution,” but historically it is not peculiar at all. On the contrary, it is a virtually universal feature of human history. The oldest surviving system of written laws, the Code of Hammurabi, includes regulations about slavery, as does the Old Testament. Slavery was ubiquitous in the classical world; about a third of the inhabitants of ancient Athens were slaves, roughly the same proportion as in the antebellum American South. Slavery existed in the Muslim world (usually as a status reserved for non-Muslims) and in Mesoamerica, in Africa and Asia, and in western and eastern Europe. (The English word “slave” derives from “Slav.”) Nor is slavery simply a matter of the past. Though slavery and slave trading are universally prohibited in national and international law, they remain endemic in the world today. While estimates vary, at least eight-hundred thousand and perhaps as many as three million people are trafficked annually, most of them women and children.<sup>6</sup>

## Slavery in Historical Perspective

Slavery was the cornerstone of the colonization of the Americas. Of the ten million or so people who crossed the Atlantic before 1800, about eight and a half million — roughly six of every seven people — were enslaved Africans. By the time the transatlantic trade was finally suppressed in the 1860s, a total of ten million to twelve million Africans had been carried into New World

slavery, while an estimated two million more had died in the passage. The vast majority was imported into the sugar colonies of the Caribbean and South America, where massive mortality of enslaved workers necessitated a constant infusion of laborers. (The average life expectancy of a slave on a Caribbean sugar plantation was less than seven years.) Brazil alone imported at least four million enslaved Africans over the centuries of the trade. Between five-hundred thousand and six-hundred thousand enslaved Africans were imported into mainland North America, including what is today the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Different societies in history developed their own understandings of slavery, as well as their own laws and customs for regulating it. But whatever the local variations, there were certain commonalities that marked slavery as a distinct condition. Slaves everywhere were subject to physical and sexual abuse. They typically served for life and often passed that status on to their children. Perhaps most important, slaves were outsiders, not only in the literal sense of coming from outside the societies in which they were held but also in the sense of being excluded from the basic recognition and rights enjoyed by those who were free. In the United States, for example, the freeborn could contract marriages, buy and sell property, testify in court, and make basic decisions about the welfare of their children. Slaves could do none of these things. In the words of scholar Orlando Patterson, slavery was a form of “social death.”<sup>8</sup>

## Slavery and Race

The dishonor and degradation associated with enslavement inevitably gave rise to contempt for the people who were enslaved. Though the particulars differ, slaves throughout history have been stigmatized as inferior, uncivilized, bestial. Few if any societies in history carried this logic further than the United States, where people of African descent came to be regarded as a distinct “race” of persons, fashioned by nature for hard labor. This process took time. Initially, American colonists justified the enslavement of Africans chiefly in terms of religion and culture; Africans were described as “heathenish” and “savage.” But by the era of the American Revolution such rationalizations had been supplanted by an explicit theory of race, in which Black people’s inferiority was assumed to be innate and ineradicable, a product not of their circumstances or condition but of their physical nature. An early anti-slavery treatise, published

in the *Providence Gazette* in 1773, explained the process succinctly. “Slave keeping,” the anonymous author wrote, was a “custom that casts the most indelible odium on a whole people, causing some . . . to infer that they are a different race formed by the Creator for brutal service, to drudge for us with their brethren of the stalls.”<sup>9</sup>

This process of dehumanization was abetted by developments in American law. In contrast to the plantation colonies of Spain and Portugal, which inherited legal definitions of slavery through the Catholic Church and the tradition of Roman-Dutch law, settlers in mainland North America were left to fashion their own slave codes. And the laws they fashioned, beginning in Virginia in the 1620s and continuing through the Civil War, were historically unprecedented in their complete denial of the legal personality of the enslaved. Slaves in North America were chattel, no different in law from horses, handlooms, or other pieces of disposable property. The North American colonies were also highly unusual in tracing slave descent through the maternal rather than paternal line, a system that ensured, in practice, that most children of “mixed” ancestry would be themselves enslaved. This descent rule, first enacted by colonial legislatures in Virginia and Maryland in the 1660s, would have an enduring effect on American culture, laying the foundations of our distinctive binary system of racial classification, in which even partial African ancestry — one drop of blood, in the terms of the notorious Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924 — renders an individual categorically Black.<sup>10</sup>

---

*Slavery, the author declared, “casts the most indelible odium on a whole people, causing some . . . to infer that they are a different race formed by the Creator for brutal service, to drudge for us with their brethren of the stalls.”*

If American slavery has any claims to being historically “peculiar,” its peculiarity lay in its rigorous racialism, the systematic way in which racial ideas were used to demean and deny the humanity of people of even partial African descent. This historical legacy would make the process of incorporating the formerly enslaved as citizens far more problematic in the United States than in other New World slave societies.

## Forgotten History: New England and Slavery

Most Americans today think of slavery as a southern institution. New Englanders, in particular, have contrived to erase the institution's presence from their collective memory. But slavery existed in all thirteen colonies and, for a time, in all thirteen original states. In New England, the first slaves were Native Americans, captured in the escalating conflict between settlers and the Indigenous population. New Englanders began to import Africans in 1638, initially by exchanging Native Americans captured in the Pequot War for Black slaves from the West Indies. This commerce was revived, on a far greater scale, in the aftermath of King Philip's War in the 1670s, and it continued intermittently through the early eighteenth century. One of the programs sponsored by the Steering Committee brought together descendants of Native American captives transported from Rhode Island to Bermuda more than three hundred years ago with representatives of more than a dozen Indigenous nations in the eastern United States and Canada.<sup>11</sup>

Initially, New Englanders drew a moral distinction between purchasing enslaved Africans from the West Indies (who were assumed to have been captured in war and thus legitimately held) and the actual business of enslaving Africans. Thus the arrival of the first shipload of West Indian slaves in 1638 occasioned no scruples, but when a Massachusetts ship returned from West Africa seven years later with a cargo of new captives it provoked a scandal. The captain and crew were arraigned by the General Court for the "haynos and crying sinn of man stealing" and the captives were returned to Africa at colony expense. This distinction was soon lost, however, and Massachusetts ships began to embark for West Africa.<sup>12</sup>

### Slavery and Abolition in Rhode Island

The first enslaved Africans entered Rhode Island sometime after 1638. Though their numbers were initially very small, they were conspicuous enough to attract the attention of the Rhode Island General Court, which in 1652 passed a law abolishing African slavery. According to the statute, which was evidently never enforced, "no black mankinde" could be forced to serve a master for "longer than ten years," after which they would be "free, as the manner is with

English servants.” In 1659, the legislature acted again, banning the further importation of African captives. But this statute too went unenforced, and the enslaved population continued to grow, as did the gulf between white servants and Black (and Native American) slaves. By the middle of the eighteenth century, about ten percent of Rhode Islanders were enslaved. The greatest concentrations of slaves lived in Newport, the colony’s premier port, and in South County, which was home to a thriving plantation economy.<sup>13</sup>

Slavery endured in Rhode Island for nearly two hundred years. As in Pennsylvania, New York, and most other northern states, the institution ended gradually. In 1784, the Rhode Island legislature enacted a Gradual Abolition Act, which specified that every person born in the state after March 1 of that year would be free. While representing a significant victory for the state’s embryonic anti-slavery movement, the law also showed considerable deference to slaveowners. It did nothing to alter the status of those born before the specified date, who continued to serve their owners for life. Nor did it immediately alter the circumstances of freeborn children, who were compelled to serve their mothers’ owners for twenty-one years before assuming their promised status. But the law did put the institution on the road to extinction in the state. The final few slaves in Rhode Island disappeared, either through death, manumission, or sale out of state, in the early 1830s.<sup>14</sup>

## The Rhode Island Slave Trade

Rhode Island’s distinction lay not in slavery but in the leading role that the colony and state played in the transatlantic slave trade. Though Rhode Islanders lagged behind their Massachusetts neighbors in entering the trade, they soon made up for their slow start. The first recorded transatlantic slaving voyages from the colony embarked in the early years of the eighteenth century. By the close of the trade, more than a century later, Rhode Islanders had mounted at least a thousand voyages, carrying over one-hundred thousand Africans into New World slavery. While such totals are far smaller than those amassed by the Portuguese, British, Spanish, and French, they are extraordinarily high in the American context. In all, about sixty percent of slave trading voyages launched from North America — in some years more than ninety percent — issued from tiny Rhode Island. As we shall see, nearly

half of the Africans transported by Rhode Islanders were trafficked illegally, by ships operating in defiance of a 1787 state law prohibiting residents of the state from trading in slaves; federal statutes of 1794 and 1800 barring Americans from carrying slaves to ports outside the United States; and the 1807 Congressional act abolishing the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>15</sup>

Some of those carried on Rhode Island ships were brought back to Rhode Island; the streets of Newport were literally paved by revenues generated from a duty on slave imports. The vast majority, however, ended up farther south, in the sugar-producing colonies of the Caribbean and, later, in the southern states. In the colonial period, Rhode Island was one corner of what contemporaries called the “triangle trade,” in which slave-produced sugar and molasses from the Caribbean were carried to Rhode Island and distilled into rum, which was then carried to West Africa and exchanged for captives, to produce more sugar, more rum, and more slaves. In 1764, the year of Brown University’s founding, Rhode Island boasted some thirty rum distilleries, including twenty-two in Newport alone.<sup>16</sup>

---

*While the vast majority of enslaved Africans carried on Rhode Island ships were transported to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean, some were brought back to Rhode Island. The streets of Newport were literally paved with revenues generated from a duty on slave imports.*

A few Rhode Island families made substantial fortunes in the trade. William and Samuel Vernon, Newport merchants who would later earn a place in American history for their role in financing the creation of the United States Navy, sponsored more than thirty African slaving ventures. The D’Wolfs of Bristol were the largest slave trading family in all of North America, mounting more than eighty transatlantic voyages, the vast majority of them in defiance of state and federal law. (The primary destination for captives on D’Wolf ships was Cuba, where the family owned its own sugar plantation.) But the real story of the Rhode Island slave trade is not of a few great fortunes but of extremely broad patterns of participation and profit. Even with the inevitable gaps in the documentary record it is possible to identify by name some seven hundred Rhode Islanders who owned or captained slave ships. The roster includes

virtually every substantial merchant, as well as many ordinary shopkeepers and tradesmen, many of whom purchased shares in slaving voyages, much as Americans today buy shares in corporations.<sup>17</sup>

Even those who did not invest directly in the trade often depended on it for their livelihoods. Boatwrights built ships, and blacksmiths and block-makers fitted them out. Sail lofts and ropewalks prepared canvas and rigging. Caulkers scraped and sealed hulls. Carpenters built shelving below decks to hold the ships' human cargo. Distilleries churned out rum, sealed in barrels fashioned by coopers from local pine, oak, and iron. Factories and foundries produced whale oil candles, cloth, and iron bars, all important trade goods on the West African coast. Farmers supplied beef, flour, tobacco, and onions. In the words of historian Rachel Chernos Lin, one of the speakers sponsored by the Steering Committee, the Rhode Island slave trade was literally the business of “the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker.”<sup>18</sup>

Providence March 11<sup>th</sup> 1765

This day agreed with Nicholas Brown & Comp<sup>y</sup> to purchase for them forty Horses that are in good Case fitt for the Suranam Markett which I am to purchase for them on the best Terms I can the whole not amounting to more than One Thousand and Eighty pounds Lawfull Money and are to be all delivered to them by the first day of April Next & the Brownes must pay for them at whatever price is required them at not Exceeding £180. as a price for the whole, in Rum Sugar Molasses and one Negro Girl at the best prices I may procure for them in the purchase of said Horses, as also to pay Me at the Rate of Six Shilling Sixpence Money of day for my time and Trouble in selling the said Horses and purchasing the Horses and they to bear my Expence in doing the whole Briefly as follows My Obed

Isaac Tripp

P.S. None of the Horses to be more than fourteen Hands High

The economy of colonial Rhode Island depended on the provisioning trade with Caribbean plantation colonies. In 1765, the Brown brothers contracted Isaac Tripp, a local merchant, to acquire forty horses “fitt for the Suranam Markett” on their behalf, for a sum not exceeding £180. With money in short supply, the brothers paid for the horses in goods, including rum, sugar, molasses, and “one Negrow Garl.”

## The West Indian Provisioning Trade

Even this litany does not capture slavery's importance to the Rhode Island economy. As important as the triangle trade was, it was dwarfed by the bilateral trade between Rhode Island and the slave colonies of the Caribbean. So profitable was sugar in the eighteenth century that most Caribbean colonies produced little else, relying on imports for everything from food to furniture. Rhode Island dominated this trade, operating, in essence, as the commissary of the Atlantic plantation complex. Rhode Island ships cleared for the Caribbean on an almost daily basis, their holds laden with a cornucopia of local products — beef and butter, hay and horses (Narragansett pacers were much prized by Caribbean planters), candles, shoes, iron, barrel hoops and staves, timber, tar, tobacco, and vast quantities of salt cod, the staple protein source of West Indian slaves. (Rhode Islanders sometimes referred to cod as “Jamaica fish,” reflecting a clear understanding of the commodity's destination.) Between the transatlantic slave trade and the West Indian provisioning trade, it is hard to imagine any eighteenth-century Rhode Islander whose livelihood was not entangled, directly or indirectly, with slavery.<sup>19</sup>

## Slavery and the Coming of the American Revolution

Rhode Island's dependence on slavery was vividly revealed in 1764, the year that saw the founding of the College of Rhode Island and the onset of the imperial crisis between Britain and its thirteen mainland colonies. The Seven Years War between Britain and France had just ended, and the British Parliament, facing a large deficit, announced its intention to begin collecting a duty, previously unenforced, on imported sugar and molasses. The result, as every American schoolchild learns, was a wave of protests against “taxation without representation,” culminating in the colonies' declaration of independence in 1776. Rhode Islanders stood in the van of the struggle, drafting the first formal protest to the new duties, a “Remonstrance” that was personally carried to London by Stephen Hopkins, the colony's governor and chancellor of the new college. The Rhode Island Remonstrance is rightly remembered as a watershed in the coming of the American Revolution, yet

the document itself spoke less of liberty than of slavery. The proposed tax, the authors warned, would cripple the Rhode Island economy, destroying not only the Caribbean provisioning trade but also the burgeoning African slave trade. “[W]ithout this trade, it would have been and will always be, utterly impossible for the inhabitants of this colony to subsist themselves, or to pay for any considerable quantity of British goods,” the document concluded.<sup>20</sup>



**Governor Stephen Hopkins, signer of the Declaration of Independence and first Chancellor of the College of Rhode Island, with the College Edifice in the background. Portrait by John Philip Hagen.**

---

*“Liberty is the greatest blessing that men enjoy, and slavery is the heaviest curse that human nature is capable of;” Governor Hopkins wrote, adding that “those who are governed at the will of another, and whose property may be taken from them . . . without their consent . . . are in the miserable condition of slaves.” The Brown brothers forwarded a copy of the pamphlet to the governor’s brother, Esek, who was then on the coast of Africa aboard the Sally.*

The Rhode Island Remonstrance encapsulated the great paradox of American history, avowing principles of liberty and self-government while simultaneously defending Americans’ right to profit from slavery and the slave trade. The paradox was even more pointed in Stephen Hopkins’ *The Rights of Colonies Examined*, one of the most influential pamphlets of the revolutionary era, published a few months later. Sounding a note that would be endlessly repeated over the next twelve years, Hopkins denounced the new tax not simply as an assault on colonists’ rights but as an attempt to reduce them to slavery. “Liberty is the greatest blessing that men enjoy, and slavery is the heaviest curse that human nature is capable of,” he wrote, adding that “those who are governed at the will of another, and whose property may be taken from them . . . without their consent . . . are in the miserable condition of slaves.” Hopkins, who was a slaveowner at the time, evidently saw no irony in advancing this argument. Nor did the Brown brothers, who forwarded a copy of the pamphlet — “for your amusement” — to the governor’s brother, Esek, who was then on the coast of Africa aboard the slave ship *Sally*.<sup>21</sup>

## The Founding of Brown University

This was the world into which Brown University was born. The nation’s seventh oldest university, Brown was formally chartered in 1764 as the College of Rhode Island. Its initial mission was to train Baptist clergymen, though it was open to students of all religious persuasions, in keeping with Rhode Island’s tradition of religious liberty. The school’s founding documents contain no references to slavery, which most at the time regarded simply as a fact of life, irrelevant to the University’s mission. If any contemporaries were surprised or troubled when the school’s first president, Rev. James Manning, arrived in

THE  
R I G H T S  
OF  
C O L O N I E S  
EXAMINED.

---

—FOR THE CHILDREN OUGHT NOT TO LAY UP FOR  
THE PARENTS, BUT THE PARENTS FOR THE CHILDREN.  
ST. PAUL.

---



---

PROVIDENCE:  
PRINTED BY *WILLIAM* GODDARD.  
M.DCC.LXV.

Stephen Hopkins' *The Rights of Colonies Examined*, a germinal text in the struggle for American independence.

Rhode Island accompanied by a personal slave, they seem never to have said so publicly. (Manning manumitted the man in 1770, shortly before the College moved to its current site in Providence.) And while the religious composition of the College's governing Corporation generated controversy — Baptists were eventually guaranteed a majority of seats on both the Board of Fellows and the Board of Trustees, with smaller allocations for Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Quakers — the presence of slave traders among the group occasioned no discussion. While no precise accounting is possible, the Steering Committee was able to identify approximately thirty members of the Brown Corporation who owned or captained slave ships, many of whom were involved in the trade during their years of service to the University.<sup>22</sup>

28	To Adam for 13 Days Work at the Well a 3/.	1.. 19..
	To p <sup>r</sup> . Adam & Nat. Allen for Ketching Bricks 1 Day each a 3/.	" 6..
30	To 2 hhd's Lime of Otis Whipple	1.. 16..
10	To Henry Paget Esq. for 29 Days Work of Pero & bill a 3/.	4.. 7..
31	To Cash p <sup>r</sup> . Job [Indian] for his Work in the Well Extra from other work Bagmen 8 Days a 1/6.	" 12..
	To paid Mingow Negro	" " 9.
12	To 3 pints W <sup>h</sup> . Rum & Simmon's for Extraordinary Services.	" 1.. 6.
	To 5 Cord of Stones of Jos. Bagley besides the 7 Cord b <sup>r</sup> . June 27. a 5/3 for 3 1/2 Cord, & 1 1/2 Cord a 1/6.	1.. 8.. 6

Building records for the College Edifice, now known as University Hall, built by public subscription in 1770. A few donors to the project honored their pledges by offering the labor of their slaves, including Pero, a sixty-two-year-old African owned by Henry Paget. The construction crew also included Job, a Native American, and Mingow, apparently a free African.

Slavery's role in Brown's early history is revealed more palpably in the College Edifice, what we today call University Hall, the oldest building on campus. As University curator Robert Emlen explained in a presentation sponsored by the Steering Committee, the construction of the building was financed through a public subscription campaign. With hard money in short supply, many donors paid their pledges in kind. Wood for the building, for example, appears to have been donated by Lopez and Rivera, one of the largest slave trading firms in Newport. A few donors honored pledges by providing the labor of their slaves for a set number of days. Emlen has found evidence of four enslaved men who labored on the building, including "Pero," the bondsman of Henry Paget, "Mary Young's Negro Man," "Earle's Negro," and "Abraham," apparently the slave of Martha Smith. Pero Paget, who was sixty-two years old at the time, is buried in Providence's North Burial Ground; the circumstances and fate of the others remain unclear. A facsimile print of the construction records, including references to enslaved workers, has hung for years on the first floor of University Hall, more or less unnoticed. It is an apt metaphor for a history that has long hidden in plain sight.<sup>23</sup>

## Endowing the University

Determining what percentage of the money that founded Brown is traceable to slavery is impossible; part of the point of the preceding discussion is that slavery was not a distinct enterprise but rather an institution that permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island, the Americas, and indeed the Atlantic world. But there is no question that many of the assets that underwrote the University's creation and growth derived, directly and indirectly, from slavery and the slave trade. Links with slavery are particularly apparent in the University's first endowment campaign, which the governing Corporation launched in the late 1760s. The task of raising an endowment was assigned to Morgan Edwards and Hezekiah Smith, both Baptist ministers and members of the Corporation. Edwards sailed to Britain, where, despite the escalating imperial conflict, he succeeded in raising nearly nine hundred British pounds sterling, the equivalent of more than \$150,000 in today's money. Smith sailed to Charleston, South Carolina, where over the course

of several months he secured pledges for more than £3,700 Carolina pounds, the equivalent of about \$50,000 today.<sup>24</sup>

---

*Henry Laurens, who would later succeed John Hancock as president of the Continental Congress, ran the largest slave trading house in North America. In the 1750s alone, his Charleston firm oversaw the sale of more than eight thousand enslaved Africans. He donated £50 to the endowment campaign.*

In the present context, Smith's destination is the pertinent one, for South Carolina was the heartland not only of the Baptist religion but also of American slavery. Even a cursory glance at Smith's subscription book, which is deposited in the archives of the Rhode Island Historical Society, leaves little doubt of the origins of the money that he raised. There are literally hundreds of examples, but let us mention only a few. Lieutenant Governor William Bull, the first name on the list, owned a three-thousand-acre rice and indigo plantation on St. Helena Island. He donated £50. Gabriel Manigault, a merchant and planter who owned more than forty-thousand acres and nearly five hundred slaves, donated £100. Manigault was well known to Rhode Island's mercantile elite, having handled the sale of the first enslaved Africans brought to South Carolina on Rhode Island ships. Henry Laurens, a planter and political leader who would later succeed John Hancock as president of the Continental Congress, ran the largest slave trading house in North America. In the 1750s alone, his firm, Austin and Laurens, handled the sales of more than eight thousand Africans. Laurens donated £50 to the College of Rhode Island.<sup>25</sup>

## The Brown Family and Slavery

In its research, the Committee paid particular attention to the University's namesake family, the Browns of Providence. There is an obvious risk of distortion in focusing on a single family, especially when discussing an institution as pervasive as slavery, but the history of the University is so densely interwoven with the life of this extraordinary family that it is impossible to discuss one without the other. At the time of the College of Rhode Island's founding, there were four Brown brothers, Nicholas, Joseph,

John, and Moses, all of whom were enthusiastic supporters of the school. Nicholas was one of the College's original incorporators, while Moses led the campaign to move the campus to Providence. Joseph, an amateur architect, designed the College Edifice and later served on the faculty as professor of natural philosophy. John laid the cornerstone of the College Edifice and served as treasurer of the Corporation from 1775 until 1796, when he was succeeded by his nephew, Nicholas Jr., who retained the office until 1825. A member of the Class of 1786, Nicholas Jr., was unquestionably Brown's most generous benefactor, providing the money for several of the buildings that still line the University's main green. In 1804, Nicholas Jr., donated \$5,000 to endow a professorship in rhetoric, in acknowledgment of which the name of the school was changed from the College of Rhode Island to Brown University. This tradition of service was carried into future generations by such people as John Brown Francis, Moses Brown Ives, and John Carter Brown, all of whom gave generously to the University of their time and fortunes.<sup>26</sup>

There are at least two other reasons to focus on the family. First, the Browns kept the most meticulous records of any mercantile firm in colonial America, virtually all of which are preserved in the John Carter Brown Library on the University campus. These records, more than a quarter million manuscript pages, make it possible to trace the family's activities, including its involvement with slavery and slave trading, with rare precision. Second and more important, the Brown family publicly split over the question of slavery in the late eighteenth century, with two brothers, Moses and John, conducting a vigorous debate over the morality of the institution, and of the transatlantic trade in particular. Examining this debate, which engulfed the campus and ultimately the nation, provides an ideal vantage on the emergence and evolution of the American anti-slavery movement, as well as on the arguments of those who defended the institution and trade.<sup>27</sup>

Like other members of their class, the Browns were slaveowners. There are records of Captain James Brown, the brothers' father, purchasing slaves as early as 1728, and he left four slaves in his estate upon his death in 1739. By the early 1770s, the brothers owned at least fourteen slaves, several of them in common. Moses, who in 1773 became the first of the brothers to renounce slaveholding, seems to have held the largest number, owning six slaves outright, as well as a quarter interest in several others. Most of the men and women owned by the

brothers worked as domestic and agricultural laborers, though they were also periodically deployed in other Brown enterprises, including the family's whale oil candle works, a seasonal business in which labor demands rose and fell quickly. Moses' decision to manumit his slaves disrupted this arrangement, but the brothers eventually negotiated an agreement in which he supplied his quota of laborers to the chandlery in free workers.<sup>28</sup>

## The Browns and the Slave Trade

By the standards of Rhode Island's mercantile elite, the Browns were not major slave traders, but they were not strangers to the business either. In 1736, James Brown sent a ship, the *Mary*, to Africa. The first slave ship to sail from Providence, the *Mary* carried a cargo of enslaved Africans to the West Indies, returning to Rhode Island with several slaves for the family's own use. James' younger brother, Obadiah, who became the four brothers' guardian after James' early death, served as supercargo on the voyage, the officer in charge of buying and selling captives. For reasons that remain unexplained, the Browns waited more than twenty years before mounting another African voyage. In the interim, the family was involved in small-scale slave trading — purchasing or selling captives individually or in small lots, usually in the context of provisioning voyages. In 1758, for example, the sloop *Speedwell* sailed to the French port of New Orleans with a cargo of candles, wine, and ten slaves, along with a single French prisoner. (Prisoner exchanges under “flags of truce” were a ruse used by Rhode Islanders to evade British restrictions on trading with the enemy.) According to records from the voyage, seven of the slaves were sold at auction, while two were given as “presents” to local officials. The fate of the tenth captive is unclear.<sup>29</sup>

In 1759, the family returned to the African trade, when Obadiah, Nicholas, and John, along with a handful of smaller investors, dispatched a rum-laden schooner, the *Wheel of Fortune*, to Africa. With war raging between Britain and France, it was a risky venture and it ended in failure. The ship arrived safely on the African coast, but it was subsequently captured by a French privateer. While Obadiah had taken the precaution of insuring the voyage, the loss of the ship still represented a substantial financial setback for the family. For the enslaved

Africans on board, the capture of the ship likely made no difference, as they would simply have been carried to the French West Indies and sold there.<sup>30</sup>

With the restoration of peace in 1763, the Browns decided to return to the African trade. (Obadiah had died the year before, leaving the family business in the hands of the four brothers, trading under the name Nicholas Brown and Company.) The North American economy was in the doldrums, and the brothers needed capital to buy supplies for their candle works, as well as for their newest venture, an iron furnace. With slave labor in high demand throughout the Americas, an African voyage promised a quick and substantial profit. The brothers initially planned a joint venture with Carter Braxton, a Virginia merchant and later signer of the Declaration of Independence, but in the end they elected to proceed by themselves. The result was the voyage of the *Sally*.<sup>31</sup>

**S**HIPPED by the Grace of God, in good Order, and well condition'd, by  
*Nicholas Brown and Company*  
 in and upon the good *Brigg* call'd the *Sally*  
 whereof is Master, under God, for this present Voyage,  
*Captain* and now riding at Anchor in the *harbour*  
 of *Providence* and by God's Grace bound for  
 the Coast of *Africa* to fish

158, kls, *Onions*, 8 Gang *lash* & 20 66l *New*  
*England Rum* 27,274 *gals*. 40 66l *flout*, 51 *Load* *Sugar*  
*Candles* 666 *lb*, 1800 *Bunches* *Onions*, 30 *Boxes* *Spermaceti*  
*Candles*, 30 *lb* *Bread*, 25 *Cask* *Rice*, 100 *gals* *Juicy* with *undry*  
*other* *Wares* for *the* *Coast* of *Africa* as *particulars* of *the* *Invoice*, all which  
 is *consigned* to the *Said* *Ship* *Officers* on the *Shooper* *and* *Person*  
 of *the* *Ship* being mark'd and number'd as in the Margin, and are to be delivered in the like  
 good Order, and well condition'd, at the *saidsaid* *Coast* of  
*Africa* (the Danger of the Seas only excepted) unto *John* *Hopkins*  
 or to his *Assigns*, he or they paying Freight for the *saids* *Goods*  
*Nothing* with *Primage* and *Average* *accustom'd*. In *Witness* where-  
 of, the *Master* or *Perfer* of the *saids* *Brigg* hath affirmed to *the* *Bills* of  
 Lading, all of this *Tenor* and *Date*; the one of which *three* *Bills* being *accom-*  
*plish'd*, the other *two* stand void. And so God send the good *Brigg*  
 to her *desir'd* *Port* in *Safety*. *AMEN*. Dated in *Providence* the  
*Eleventh* *Day* of *September*. *1764*.  
*John Hopkins*

Bill of lading for the *Sally* on its departure for Africa, September, 1764. The ship's cargo included thirty boxes of spermaceti candles, 1,800 bunches of onions, and 17,274 gallons of New England rum.

## The Slave Ship *Sally*, 1764–1765

The *Sally* sailed from Providence in 1764, the year of Brown's founding. The ship carried the standard African cargo, including spermaceti candles, tobacco, onions, and 17,274 gallons of New England rum. It also carried an assortment of chains, shackles, swivel guns, and small arms to control the human cargo to come. In their letter of instructions, the Brown brothers ordered the ship's master, Esek Hopkins, to make his passage to the Windward Coast of Africa, to exchange his goods for slaves, and to sell those slaves to best advantage in the West Indies. They also asked him to bring "four likely young slaves," boys of fifteen years or younger, back to Providence for the family's own use.<sup>32</sup>

The voyage was a disaster in every conceivable sense. Many other merchants had the same idea as the Browns, and Hopkins found the West African coast crowded with slavers, including more than two dozen ships from Rhode Island. The market for rum was glutted and captives were scarce and expensive. Hopkins eventually acquired a cargo of 196 Africans, but it took him more than nine months to do so, an exceptionally long time for a slave ship to remain on the African coast, especially for those confined below decks. By the time the *Sally* set sail for the West Indies, nineteen Africans had already died, including several children and one woman who "hanged her Self between Decks." A twentieth captive, also a woman, was left for dead on the day the ship sailed.<sup>33</sup>

The toll continued to mount on the return journey. Four more Africans — one woman and three children — died in the first week at sea. On the eighth day out, the captives rose in rebellion, a fact noted in a terse entry in the ship's account book: "Slaves Rose on us was obliged fire on them and Destroyed Eight and Several more wounded badly 1 Thye and ones Ribs broke." In the weeks that followed, death was an almost daily occurrence; according to Hopkins, the captives became "so Despireted" after the failed insurrection "that Some Drowned themselves Some Starved and others Sickened & Dyed." In all, sixty-eight Africans perished during the crossing, each loss carefully recorded in the account book. Another twenty Africans died in the days after the ship reached the West Indies, bringing the total death toll to 108. (A 109th captive, one of the four "likely lads" requested by the Brown brothers, died en route to Providence.) The survivors, auctioned in Antigua, were so sickly and emaciated that they commanded prices as low as £5 apiece, scarcely one-tenth of the

prevailing price for a “prime” slave. The poor returns on the voyage prompted an apologetic letter from the merchant who handled some of the sales. “I am truly Sorry for the Bad Voyage you [had],” he wrote. “[H]ad the negroes been young + Healthy I should have been able to sell them pretty well. I make no doubt if you was to try this market again with Good Slaves I Should be able to give you Satisfaction.”<sup>34</sup>



**Esek Hopkins, master of the slave ship *Sally* and the first commander in chief of the United States Navy. Engraving by J.C. Buttre.**



## Aftermath of the *Sally*

The Browns did not avail themselves of the offer. In the wake of the *Sally* debacle, three of the four brothers — Nicholas, Joseph, and Moses — withdrew from direct participation in the transatlantic slave trade. Their action appears to have been motivated more by economic than moral qualms: after two failed voyages, they had good reason to believe that slave trading was too risky an investment. There was little evidence of remorse in the letter they sent to Esek Hopkins after learning of the disaster: “[W]e need not mention how Disagreeable the Nuse of your Lusing 3 of yr. Hand and 88 Slaves is to us + all your Friends, but your Self Continuing in Helth is so grate Satisfaction to us, that we Remain Cheerful under the Heavey Loss of our Int[erest]s.” Nor did the experience deter the three brothers from continuing to trade in slave-produced goods, from building a state-of-the-art rum distillery, or from supplying other Rhode Island merchants mounting African voyages.<sup>35</sup>

One such merchant was their brother John. In 1769, John and two partners dispatched a slave ship, the *Sutton*, to Africa. John’s determination to continue slaving unnerved his more cautious brothers, and contributed to their decision to dissolve their partnership. “[W]hoever plays any Game . . . [and] plays the last for the value of the whole gain of the preceding many, will sooner or later lose the whole at one throw,” Moses warned in a 1770 letter to Nicholas and Joseph. While the brothers continued to collaborate on various ventures, most of John’s subsequent trading activities were conducted independently or in partnership with his son-in-law, John Francis. Over the next quarter century, John would sponsor at least three more African slaving voyages.<sup>36</sup>

## The Rise of the Anti-Slavery Movement

While the Brown brothers’ apparent failure to reflect deeply about the *Sally* disaster seems surprising today, it was characteristic of their era and social class. For most Rhode Island merchants in the 1760s, buying and selling Africans was simply a business — just another species of commerce, though one entailing unusually large risks and rewards. Yet these years also saw the beginnings of a movement to abolish the slave trade, a swelling chorus of voices decrying the transatlantic traffic not simply as cruel and impolitic but as

criminal, a violation of the fundamental laws of man and God. The influence of this movement would be felt all across the Atlantic World, nowhere more dramatically than in Rhode Island.

In Rhode Island, as in much of the Anglo-American world, political opposition to slavery was initially synonymous with the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Founded in England in the seventeenth century, Quakerism was a radically egalitarian creed, which preached that every individual could experience the indwelling presence of God, regardless of the circumstances of his or her birth. Such convictions led many in the Society to question the morality of slavery and slave trading. In 1760, the Yearly Meeting in Newport adopted one of the first anti-slave trade resolutions in American history, calling on members “to avoid being in any way concerned in reaping the unrighteous profits of that unrighteous practice of dealing in Negroes and other slaves — in direct violation of the gospel rule which teaches every one to do as he would be done by.” Initially, Rhode Island Quakers stopped short of renouncing slavery itself, merely enjoining members to treat their bondsmen “with tenderness,” including the provision of education and religious instruction for the young. But in 1773, they took this additional step, enjoining all Friends to manumit their slaves or face expulsion from the Society.<sup>37</sup>

By the time the Quakers finally acted, their once lonely crusade showed signs of becoming a substantial movement. As historian David B. Davis has written, “By the eve of the American Revolution there was a remarkable convergence of cultural and intellectual developments which at once undercut traditional rationalizations for slavery and offered new modes of sensibility for identifying with its victims.” The process clearly had something to do with capitalism: as free labor became more common, other labor relations — indentured servitude, debt bondage, slavery — came increasingly to appear antiquated and anomalous. Enlightenment ideas about human equality and shared human nature also played an important part in this process, as did the rapid growth of evangelical Christianity. The Revolution itself was an important catalyst to anti-slavery thought. With American colonists declaring their beliefs in “liberty” and “natural rights” and denouncing a British plot to “enslave” them, it is not surprising that some were moved to question the plight of those whom the colonists themselves enslaved.<sup>38</sup>

765		No
Aug 21	1 gale Slave Dyed	21
22	1 boy Slave Dyed	22
27	1 Woman & 1 boy Dyed	25
28	Slaves Rose on us was obliged fire on them and destroyed 8 and several more wounded but by 1 boy & 2 men who broke	32
30	1 boy & 1 gale Slave Dyed	34
31	1 Woman Slave Dyed	35
Sept 1	1 Woman & 1 gale Slave Dyed	36
2	1 Woman Slave Dyed	38
3	1 boy Slave Dyed	39
4	1 boy Slave Dyed	40
6	1 man Slave Dyed	41
7	3 boy & 1 gale Slave Dyed	45
8	2 Women and 2 boys Dyed	48
9	1 Woman & 1 gale Slave Dyed	49
11	1 boy Slave Dyed	52
12	1 boy Slave Dyed	53
14	1 gale Slave Dyed	54
15	1 gale Slave Dyed	55
16	1 Woman Slave Dyed	56
19	1 man Slave Dyed of his wounds on the Ribs when Runn Ript	57
20	1 boy Slave Dyed	58
22	1 woman Slave Dyed	59
23	2 women & 1 gale Slave Dyed	61
25	1 man & 1 woman Slave Dyed	63
26	2 men & 1 gale Slave Dyed	65

765		No
Sept 27	2 men & 1 woman Slave Dyed	68
29	1 woman & 1 gale Slave Dyed	71
30	2 women & 1 boy Slave Dyed	73
Oct 1	1 woman Slave Dyed	74
2	3 men Slave and 2 women Slave Dyed	77
3	1 gale Slave Dyed	84
4	1 man Slave Dyed	85
6	1 man & 1 woman Slave Dyed	86
8	1 man Slave Dyed	88
11	3 women & 1 man Slave Dyed	90
14	1 boy Slave Dyed and 1 woman Slave Dyed of his wounds on the Ribs when Runn Ript	93
15	1 woman Slave Dyed	95
17	1 woman Slave Dyed	96
24	1 man Slave Dyed	97
28	1 man and 1 woman Slave Dyed	98
29	1 woman Slave Dyed	100
30	1 boy Slave Dyed	101
Nov 5	1 woman Slave Dyed	102
5	1 woman Slave Dyed	104
10	1 boy man Slave Dyed	105
11	1 man boy Slave Dyed	106
14	1 woman Slave Dyed	107
15	1 man Slave Dyed	108
Dec 20	1 man Slave Dyed	109

The *Sally's* voyage was deadlier than most slaving expeditions departing from Rhode Island in the eighteenth century. At least 109 of the 196 Africans that Captain Esek Hopkins purchased on behalf of the Browns perished, many in a failed insurrection. The *Sally's* account book records the lives lost: "Slaves Rose on us was obliged fire on them and Destroyed 8.... 1 boy Slave Dyed and 1 man Slave Dyed of his wounds on the Ribs..."

The result, on both sides of the Atlantic, was an outpouring of petitions, pamphlets, and treatises denouncing slavery and the transatlantic trade on both secular and sacred grounds. Some of the most moving statements were written by Black people, who knew firsthand the horrors of slavery and the slave trade. In 1773, for example, officials in Massachusetts entertained a petition from four slaves requesting facilities to purchase their freedom, after which they proposed to resettle in Africa. "The efforts by the legislature of this province in their last session to free themselves from slavery, gave us, who are in that deplorable state, a high degree of satisfaction," the men wrote, with more than a hint of sarcasm. "We expect great things from men who have

made such a noble stand against the designs of their *fellow-men* to enslave them.” In the years that followed, similar petitions emanated from Black organizations all along the eastern seaboard, including Newport’s Free African Union Society, the nation’s first Black mutual aid association, and its sister body, the Providence African Society.<sup>39</sup>

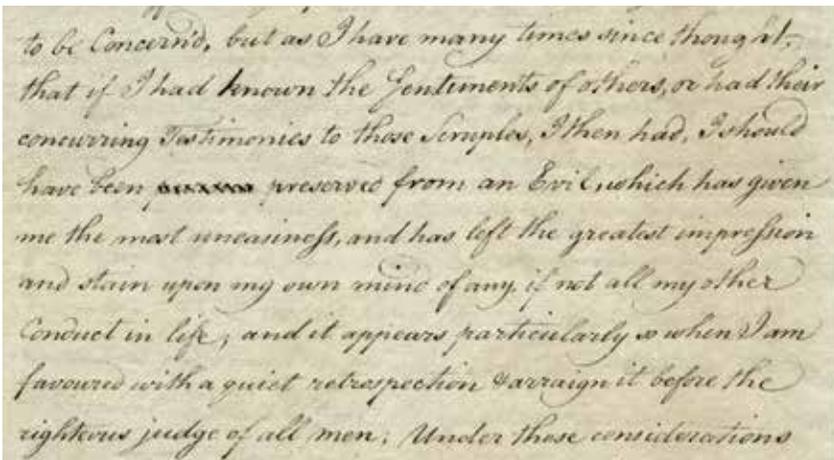
Perhaps the most influential of these early anti-slavery essays was *Thoughts upon Slavery*, published in 1774 by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. First printed in London, the pamphlet was immediately reprinted in Philadelphia and widely circulated in American periodicals, including the *Providence Gazette*. For Wesley, the transatlantic slave trade was not merely an affront to Christian principles and “the plain law of nature and reason,” but also what future generations would call a crime against humanity — an offense so grievous that it diminished all humankind, not merely its immediate victims and perpetrators. “If this trade admits of a moral or a rational justification,” Wesley wrote, “every crime, even the most atrocious, may be justified.”<sup>40</sup>

## The Conversion of Moses Brown

The appearance of Wesley’s *Thoughts Upon Slavery* and other anti-slavery essays in the Providence press was almost certainly the work of Moses Brown. In 1773, Moses experienced a severe emotional and spiritual crisis, brought on by the death of his wife, Anna. He withdrew from the family business and deepened his involvement with the Quakers, with whom he had begun to worship during Anna’s illness. (He was formally accepted into the Quaker meeting in 1774.) He also renounced slavery. “I saw my slaves with my spiritual eyes as plainly as I see you now,” he recalled near the end of his life, “and it was given to me as clearly to understand that the sacrifice that was called for of my hand was to give them liberty.” On November 10, 1773, Brown gathered family and friends together and read a formal deed of manumission: “Whereas I am clearly convinced that the buying and selling of men of what color soever is contrary to the Divine Mind manifest in the conscience of all men however some may smother and neglect its reprovings, and being also made sensible that the holding of negroes in slavery however kindly treated has a tendency to encourage the iniquitous practice of importing them from their native country and is contrary to that justice, mercy, and humanity

enjoined as the duty of every christian, I do therefore by these presents for myself, my heirs etc. manumit and set free the following negroes being all I am possessed of or any ways interested in.”<sup>41</sup>

In the years that followed, Moses Brown threw himself into the anti-slavery movement, exhibiting the same energy and entrepreneurial imagination he had exhibited as a businessman. He exchanged letters with a network of anti-slavery correspondents in Britain and the Americas, circulating the latest anti-slavery essays and pamphlets, many of which he paid to have published. He intervened in court cases involving Black people held illegally in bondage, and lobbied friends and neighbors to divest themselves of slavery and the “unrighteous traffic” that sustained it. As a contemporary remarked, the memory of the *Sally* weighed “heavy on his conscience.” In a 1783 letter to John Clark and Joseph Nightingale, Providence merchants who were rumored to be contemplating sending a ship to Africa, Brown recounted his experience and urged his friends not to repeat his mistake. Had the *Sally* never sailed, he wrote, “I should have been preserved from an Evil, which has given me the most uneasiness, and has left the greatest impression and stain upon my own mind of any, if not all my other Conduct in life.” Clark and Nightingale, both members of the Corporation of the College of Rhode Island, chose not to heed the advice, dispatching a ship, the *Prudence*, to Africa in 1784.<sup>42</sup>

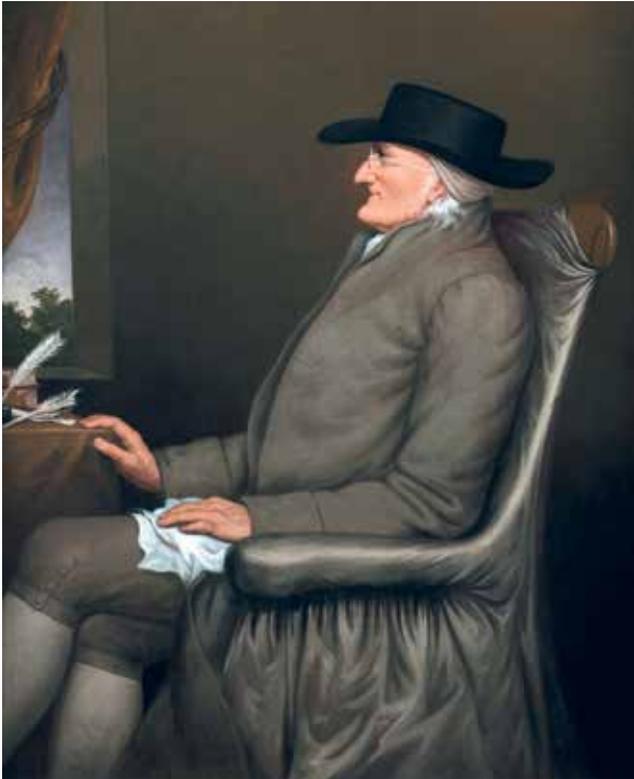


to be concerned, but as I have many times since thought, that if I had known the sentiments of others, or had their concurring Testimonies to these Schemes, I then had, I should have been ~~preserved~~ preserved from an Evil, which has given me the most uneasiness, and has left the greatest impression and stain upon my own mind of any, if not all my other Conduct in life; and it appears particularly so when I am favoured with a quiet retrospection & arraign it before the righteous judge of all men. Under those considerations

Excerpt from Brown’s letter to merchants Clark and Nightingale, August 1783, recounting his experience with the *Sally*.

## Anti-Slavery Legislation and Its Limitations

Moses Brown also lobbied for anti-slavery legislation. His efforts met with mixed success. In 1774, the Rhode Island Assembly passed a bill that he had helped to draft prohibiting the direct importation of slaves from Africa into the colony, though only after weakening it with various loopholes and exceptions. A 1775 bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in the colony was defeated. In 1784, with the Revolutionary War over and transatlantic trade stirring back to life, anti-slavery activists returned to the Assembly, presenting a bill to abolish slavery in the state and to end Rhode Island's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. The second proposal proved more controversial. After a bruising battle, the Assembly enacted Rhode Island's 1784 Gradual Abolition Act, but



**An elderly Moses Brown, in the unadorned coat and broad-brimmed hat of a Quaker. Portrait by Martin Johnson Heade.**

it refused to act against the slave trade. “[T]he influence of the Mercantile interest in the House was greatly Exerted,” Brown lamented, “and the Justice of the Subject thereby Overbourn” In 1787, following state elections and a turnover in the composition of the legislature, the prohibition against slave trading was finally adopted. The victory buoyed Brown, but it soon became apparent that little had changed. While the statute prescribed severe penalties for Rhode Islanders who continued to trade in slaves, state officials had neither the will nor the resources to prosecute offenders. After a brief decline in the traffic, the procession of ships to Africa resumed.<sup>43</sup>

Recognizing the limitations of state law, Moses Brown and his anti-slavery allies also pressed for federal legislation. While the recently adopted federal Constitution forbade Congress from interfering with the slave trade into U.S. ports for twenty years — that is, until 1807 — it did not preclude legislation prohibiting Americans from trafficking slaves to foreign ports, a fact that Brown confirmed in a personal interview with the Constitution’s chief author, James Madison. The result was a pair of federal anti-slave trade acts, the first in 1794, the second in 1800, which forbade American citizens from owning, outfitting, investing in, or serving aboard ships carrying slaves to ports outside the United States. But these laws were also ignored by slave traders, nowhere more flagrantly than in Rhode Island.<sup>44</sup>

## Debating the Trade

Moses Brown’s campaign against the slave trade brought him into conflict with many of his friends and former business associates. His chief antagonist was his older brother, John, who emerged as the slave trade’s most vocal defender even as Moses became its most vocal critic. The battle between the brothers first emerged publicly in 1784, when John, representing Providence in the state legislature, led the opposition to the anti-slave trade bill promoted by Moses. The dispute intensified the following year, when John mounted an African slaving voyage, his first since before the Revolution. In an extraordinary series of private letters, the brothers debated the morality of the trade, with Moses urging John to search his conscience and John assuring him that he had done so and found no cause for concern. If Moses’ pleas illuminate the convictions of the emerging abolitionist movement, John’s replies offer a catalogue of

contemporary justifications of slavery and slave trading: that Black people were an inferior race, incapable of surviving as free people; that slaves were “positively better of[f]” in America, where they were exposed to Christianity and civilization, than they had previously been in Africa; that the slave trade was the most lucrative commerce in the world, the profits of which should flow into American rather than British coffers. This trade “has been permitted by the Supreme Governour of all things for time Immemorial, and whenever I am Convinced as you are, that its Rong in the Sight of God, I will Immediately Dessist,” John wrote in November 1786, “but while its not only allowd by the Supreme Governour of all States but by all the Nations of Europe . . . I cannot thinke this State ought to Decline the trade.” A few days later, he dispatched another ship, the brig *Providence*, to the Gold Coast, where it acquired 88 Africans, 72 of whom survived to be sold in Hispaniola.<sup>45</sup>

---

**The inhabitants of Rhode Island, especially those of Newport, have had by far the greatest share of this traffic of all these United States. This trade in the human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business has chiefly depended. That town has been built up, and flourished in times past, at the expense of the blood, the liberty, and the happiness of the poor Africans; and the inhabitants have lived on this, and by it have gotten most of their wealth and riches.**

**Rev. Samuel Hopkins, *Providence Gazette*, 1787**

The conflict between the brothers escalated in 1789, following the establishment by Moses and other anti-slavery activists of a new organization, the Providence Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the relief of Persons unlawfully held in Bondage, and for Improving the Conditions of the African Race. As its lengthy title suggests, the new society had several purposes, but its primary object was to bring prosecutions against violators of the state’s recent anti-slave trade law. The announcement of the society’s existence ignited one of the most vituperative political debates in Rhode Island history. John Brown, writing under the pen name “A Citizen,” launched a furious counterattack in the local press, denouncing the society’s founders as

religious fanatics and thieves, scheming to impose their personal morality and to “deprive their fellow citizens of their lawful property.” For the next three months, the columns of the *Providence Gazette* and the *United States Chronicle* resounded with increasingly personal and abusive exchanges between Brown and leaders of the Abolition Society, with Moses, who signed himself “A Friend,” seeking to mediate. Both sides invoked the authority of the American Revolution, with abolitionists citing the Declaration of Independence’s promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and John Brown emphasizing the sanctity of property rights. Trafficking Negroes was “right, just and lawful,” John insisted, adding: “[I]n my opinion there is no more crime in bringing off a cargo of slaves than in bringing off a cargo of jackasses.”<sup>46</sup>

---

*Slave trading “has been permitted by the Supreme Governour of all things for time Immemorial,” John reminded his brother, adding: “[W]henver I am Convinced as you are, that its Rong in the Sight of God, I will Immediately Dessist, but while its not only allowd by the Supreme Governour of all States but by all the Nations of Europe . . . I cannot thinke this State ought to Decline the trade.” A few days later, he dispatched another ship, the brig Providence, to the Gold Coast.*

## The College Corporation and the Slave Trade

The struggle to abolish the slave trade was not simply a battle between brothers. The dispute divided the entire state, including the fellows and trustees of the College of Rhode Island. Many of the founders of the Providence Abolition Society were members of the College’s governing Corporation. David Howell, the society’s president, had been affiliated with the College since its establishment, serving as tutor, professor, and fellow. (In the early 1790s, he would serve briefly as the school’s interim president.) Thomas Arnold, secretary of the society, also had close ties to the College, having served as secretary of the Corporation. At the same time, the College’s governors included several practitioners and defenders of the slave trade, led by the vocal John Brown, the school’s treasurer. The very first prosecution

launched by the Providence Abolition Society in 1789 pitted members of the Corporation against one another — Howell, who read the charge on behalf of the prosecution, and William Bradford, one of the attorneys for the defense. Bradford, a former deputy governor and future U.S. Senator, had a personal interest in the outcome, being the father-in-law of two of the state's largest slave traders, James D'Wolf and Charles Collins.<sup>47</sup>

The conflict within the College's governing Corporation erupted anew following passage of the 1794 federal law prohibiting the carrying of slaves to foreign ports. In 1796, the Providence Abolition Society brought a case against Cyprian Sterry, a member of the College of Rhode Island's Board of Trustees and Providence's premier slave trader. In the preceding two years alone, Sterry had sponsored some twenty African voyages. Many of the Africans carried on these ships were sold in the Caribbean, in clear violation of the recent federal statute. Facing a potentially ruinous fine, Sterry settled the case out of court, pledging to leave the trade in exchange for the society withdrawing the prosecution. He remained a member of the Board of Trustees for another seventeen years.<sup>48</sup>

## The Trial of John Brown

Things did not go so smoothly with John Brown, the College of Rhode Island's treasurer and one of its chief benefactors. In 1795, Brown returned to the African trade, dispatching a ship, the *Hope*, to the Gold Coast. The voyage proved a profitable one: of the 229 Africans loaded onto the ship, 198 survived to be sold in Cuba. The Providence Abolition Society responded by bringing a prosecution. A distraught Moses Brown urged his brother to settle the case, but John, "puffed up" by the slave-trading interests of Newport, refused. Thus did John Brown become the first Rhode Islander, and apparently the first American, prosecuted in federal court for illegal slave trading — a prosecution brought, in part, by his own brother.<sup>49</sup>

The case ended in a devastating defeat for anti-slavery forces. Though the offending ship was impounded, John Brown triumphed in the ensuing jury trial, emerging with an acquittal and a judgment for costs against the Providence Abolition Society. Because the transcript of the trial has not survived, it is difficult to say precisely what happened, but Moses Brown attributed the

verdict to the “*Peculiar Turn*” of the Newport jury, as well as to other kinds of favoritism “which I forbear to describe.” It should be noted that the presiding judge, Benjamin Bourn, and the federal prosecutor, Ray Greene, were both longtime allies of John Brown, with whom they had served on the Corporation of the College of Rhode Island. While neither appears to have been personally involved in the slave trade, both had close family ties to the trading community; Bourn would later have the rare pleasure of dismissing a case against his brother, a leading Newport trader. Whatever the exact circumstances, the trial had a devastating effect on the Providence Abolition Society, which went into rapid decline.<sup>50</sup>

---

**Clearly, the North outstripped the South economically because its economy was based on freedom and innovation, not slavery.**

**“The Reparations Scam,” *Providence Journal*, August 21, 2002**

## High Tide of the Rhode Island Slave Trade

The decade between John Brown’s acquittal and the 1807 Congressional act abolishing the transatlantic slave trade marked the peak of the Rhode Island slave trade, with as many as fifty ships per year clearing for Africa. The handful of cases brought to trial almost invariably ended in acquittal. Courts occasionally ordered the forfeiture and auctioning of slave ships, but traffickers observed a gentlemen’s agreement not to bid on one another’s vessels, enabling original owners to repurchase them for as little as \$10. In 1799, an embarrassed federal government tried to close this loophole by dispatching an official to bid on a confiscated ship in an auction in Bristol. On the evening before the auction, the official was visited by the ship’s former owners, James and Charles D’Wolf, accompanied by John Brown, who at the time was one of Rhode Island’s representatives in the U.S. Congress. The three tried to intimidate the official into abandoning his charge. The next morning, the official, who had refused to step aside, was abducted by a group of men and bundled on to a waiting ship. (The assailants dressed as Native Americans, a costume presumably intended to recall the garb of the Sons of Liberty during the

Boston Tea Party.) The terrified official was eventually released unharmed, but only after the auction, at which a representative of the D'Wolfs repurchased the ship for a nominal sum. No one was ever prosecuted for the kidnapping, which became something of a local joke.<sup>51</sup>

Kidnapping a federal official was only the most brazen of the slave traders' offenses. A newly appointed U.S. District Attorney, considered overzealous in enforcing the ban on slave trading, was assaulted on the steps of the local courthouse. A Bostonian who had the temerity to bring a prosecution against a Bristol trader — and the courage to come to the city to testify — had his ear sliced off in a local inn. Always a bloody business, the Rhode Island slave trade had devolved by the end of the eighteenth century into a system of violent organized crime, conducted in defiance of state and federal laws, as well as of the era's own professed beliefs about the fundamental rights of human beings.<sup>52</sup>

---

*Kidnapping a federal official was only the most brazen of the Rhode Island slave traders' offenses. A newly appointed U.S. District Attorney, considered overzealous in enforcing the law against slave trading, was assaulted. A Bostonian who had the temerity to bring a prosecution against a Bristol trader — and the courage to come to the city to testify — had his ear sliced off in a local inn.*

Like organized crime in our own time, Rhode Island slave traders depended on public officials turning a blind eye. When the U.S. customs inspector in Newport began to show signs of enforcing federal anti-slave trade laws, John Brown successfully steered a bill through the U.S. Congress declaring Bristol a separate customs district, freeing local slave traders of any obligation to put in at Newport for inspection. After further maneuvering, the post of customs inspector in Bristol was awarded to Charles Collins, one of the city's most flagrant illegal traders. Like his brother-in-law, James D'Wolf, Collins routinely trafficked slaves to Cuba, where he reportedly owned a sugar plantation. The creation of the separate customs district, and Collins' appointment as inspector, represented the final triumph of the Rhode Island slave traders. William Ellery Jr., representing Rhode Island in the U.S. Senate, hailed the outcome in a letter to James D'Wolf. "There is now, dear Sir, nothing more

to be done for Bristol — everything which she asked is given.” Under Collins, prosecutions stopped and the trade out of Bristol flourished, continuing even after the 1807 Congressional act abolishing the transatlantic trade. How many vessels sailed after 1807 is impossible to say, but there is evidence of slave ships being outfitted in Rhode Island as late as 1819.<sup>53</sup>

## The Slave Trade and Student Life: An Abortive Essay Contest

Brown University grew up in the shadow of the transatlantic slave trade and of the embryonic movement to end it. What effect these circumstances had on the life of students at the College is difficult to say, but there is some suggestive evidence. In 1786, Moses Brown proposed a prize for the best student essay on the slave trade. The suggestion was clearly inspired by a similar contest staged a year before at Cambridge University in England, which had attracted more than two hundred entrants. The winning essay, Thomas Clarkson’s *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African*, was immediately republished in English (original entries had been written in Latin) and became the bible of the British anti-slavery movement. Moses Brown obviously did not yet know just how influential Clarkson’s essay would become, but he recognized the potential value of such a contest in shaping American public opinion. He also recognized the likelihood of opposition to the proposal. “How much to the Honour of Rhode Island College would it be if Similar Measures as far as its Infant State would admit were pursued,” he wrote in a letter to President Manning, “but I am aware that the Corporation has a few members who would be against the Subject receiving the sanction of the College. . . .” Precisely what transpired is not clear, but the contest was never held. Stymied at home, Moses proposed endowing essay prizes at Harvard, Yale, and the College of New Jersey (Princeton). Whether his offer was communicated to officials at the three schools is uncertain, but in any case, the contests never occurred.<sup>54</sup>

---

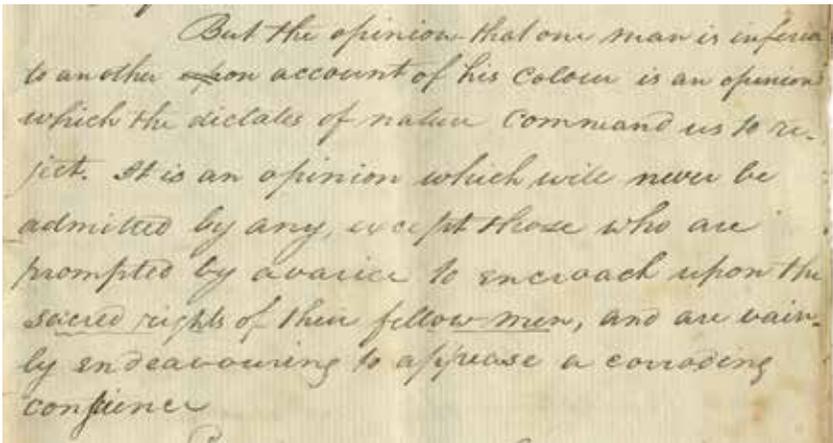
*In 1786, Brown proposed a prize for the best student essay on the slave trade, an idea clearly inspired by a similar contest staged the year before at Cambridge University in England. “How much to the Honour of Rhode Island College would it be if Similar Measures as far as its Infant State would admit were pursued,” he wrote in a letter to President Manning, “but I am aware that the Corporation has a few members who would be against the Subject receiving the sanction of the College.” The contest was never held.*

## A Student Commencement Oration

Despite such setbacks, some students imbibed the ideas of the anti-slavery movement. Indeed, one of the most compelling anti-slavery speeches in American history was delivered by a College of Rhode Island senior, James Tallmadge, at the 1790 commencement ceremony. For Tallmadge, who would later earn renown as one of the leading opponents of slavery in the U.S. House of Representatives, the transatlantic trade was not only “repugnant to the laws of God” but also a patent violation of the principles of the Declaration of Independence, which explicitly stated “that all men were blessed with equal right and privilege and that *liberty* was the birth right, the Palladium of every individual.” In his address, Tallmadge systematically rebutted the arguments advanced by the trade’s defenders, some of whom were doubtless sitting in the audience: claims that Africans were “captives of lawful wars”; that they were happier in the United States than in their homes; that the trade was essential to the state’s and nation’s prosperity, an argument, he noted, that might “with equal propriety” be offered by a thief explaining why “he could not live in affluence without his neighbor’s wealth.” That Americans at the time could seriously entertain such notions, he added, was a matter “for future generations to investigate.”<sup>55</sup>

In his oration, Tallmadge took particular aim at the idea of Black racial inferiority, which had already emerged as the primary intellectual justification for slavery. Of all the “specious reasons for importing and holding in bondage the native African,” he declared, none was more absurd than the idea “that one who was formed with a dark complexion is inferior to him, who possesses a complexion more light.” “Should a thing like this be admitted as general,” he

continued, “mankind would be at once resolved into an unusual monarchy with some weak puny white-faced creature for the sovereign, and those whose color was furthest removed from white, though a Newton or . . . a Washington would be reduced to the most abject slavery.” Such claims, he concluded, could “never be admitted by any except those who are prompted by avarice to encroach upon the *sacred rights* of their *fellow men*, and are vainly endeavoring to appease a corroding conscience.”<sup>56</sup>



“We leave for future generations to investigate . . .” Excerpt from James Tallmadge’s 1790 student commencement oration on the evils of the slave trade.

## Southern Students at Brown

Tallmadge’s oration suggests that students at the College grappled with the great political issues swirling around them. It also reminds us that Brown students’ penchant for speaking plainly to their elders is nothing new. Yet it is also clear that many students at the College lived quite comfortably with the institution of slavery. As the nation’s first Baptist college, the school attracted a large number of southern students, many of them from prominent slaveholding families, and there is little evidence to suggest that their years on campus unsettled their beliefs. Probably the most curious examples are John and George Carter, sons of Robert Carter, the wealthiest planter in Virginia.

Though to the manor born, Robert Carter had always felt great uneasiness about slavery, feelings that escalated after his conversion to the Baptist faith in the late 1770s. In 1787, he dispatched his young sons to the College of Rhode Island, with orders that they not return to Virginia until after their twenty-first birthdays. His object, as he explained in letters to President James Manning, was to shield the boys from the corrupting influence of slaveholding society until their characters and consciences were more fully formed. Four years later, Carter answered his own conscience, embarking on the largest private manumission in American history. The process, undertaken gradually to minimize opposition from white neighbors, eventually included some five hundred slaves, the majority of whom attained freedom after Carter's death in 1804. But if Carter realized his plans for his slaves, his hopes for his sons were unavailing. Both boys returned to Virginia, reclaimed their roles as slaveowners, and set about trying to reclaim their inheritance. John Carter was particularly determined to "overturn and frustrate" his father's will, often selling individuals immediately before (and in a few cases after) they became free.<sup>57</sup>

More striking than the presence of southern students on the campus was the procession of New England-born students who headed south after graduation, to earn their fortunes as merchants, lawyers, planters, teachers, and clergymen. The southward migration was facilitated by business links between Rhode Island and the South, as well as by a dense web of family and society ties, particularly with the gentry of South Carolina, many of whose members summered in Newport. Richard James Arnold, who graduated from Brown in 1814, provides a striking example. Arnold was a member of one of Providence's leading anti-slavery families; his uncle, Thomas, was a Quaker and founding secretary of the Providence Abolition Society. But this did not stop him from marrying a southern woman and settling in the South. As his biographers note, Richard Arnold lived a double life, spending half the year in Providence, where he was a respected businessman, and the other half on his plantation in Bryant Country, Georgia, where his large retinue of slaves cultivated rice and cotton. He was also one of the longest-serving trustees in Brown University history, with a tenure that stretched from 1826 to 1873.<sup>58</sup>

## The Rise of the Rhode Island Textile Industry

The commercial ties between Rhode Island and the South that Arnold embodied highlight one last strand in the University's long and tangled relationship with American slavery. One of the tactics that Moses Brown hit upon in his fight against the slave trade was to encourage local manufacturing, in the hope that creating new investment opportunities would wean Rhode Island merchants from the slave trade. Manufacturing success, he suggested, would influence "money'd men of Newport and especially the Guiney traders who disgracefully Continue in the Beaten Track of that inhuman Traffick." In 1789, the same year he founded the Providence Abolition Society, Brown launched a textile manufacturing firm in partnership with his son-in-law, William Almy. A year later, the firm hired Samuel Slater, an English mechanic, who proceeded to build the nation's first water-powered spinning mill on the Blackstone River. The American Industrial Revolution began within a few miles of the Brown campus, and its chief sponsor was Moses Brown.<sup>59</sup>

---

**Shuttles in the rocking loom of history,  
the dark ships move, the dark ships move,  
their bright ironical names  
like jests of kindness on a murderer's mouth . . .**

**Robert Hayden, *Middle Passage*, 1945**

Some of Brown's allies were skeptical of his idea that manufacturing might displace the slave trade. "An Ethiopian could as soon change his skin as a Newport merchant could be induced to change so lucrative a trade . . . for the slow profits of any manufactory," one warned. But there was an even bigger problem. Textile mills spun and wove cotton, a commodity produced almost exclusively by enslaved labor, initially in the West Indies and later in the American South. In effect, Moses Brown, in seeking to disentangle Rhode Islanders from one aspect of slavery, ensured their more thorough entanglement in another. John Brown, who had long felt the sting of his brother's disapproval, appreciated the irony. "I hope the abolition society will promote our own

manufactories; especially the cotton manufactory, for which great experience has accrued and is accruing,” he wrote during his 1789 newspaper war with the Providence Abolition Society. “This is most certainly a laudable undertaking, and ought to be encouraged by all; but pause a moment — will it do to import the cotton? It is all raised from the labour of our own blood; the slaves do the work. I can recollect no one place at present from whence the cotton can come, but from the labour of the slaves.”<sup>60</sup>

Moses never responded to John’s taunt, which seems, in retrospect, to highlight an obvious contradiction. Probably the best that can be said is that he believed, as did most early abolitionists, that slavery was “consequent” upon the trade — that is, that the institution depended on the continued importation of Africans and would naturally wither away once the trade had been stemmed. That belief may have had some validity for the sugar colonies of the Caribbean, where massive mortality required the constant infusion of fresh labor, but it was not true in the United States. With the invention of Eli Whitney’s cotton gin in 1793, American slavery gained a spectacular new lease on life. Over the next generation, cotton cultivation spread across the lower Mississippi Valley and as far west as Texas, sustained by an interstate slave trade that could be as inhumane and disruptive of family bonds as the transatlantic trade had been. By the 1850s, cotton was the lifeblood of the American economy, supplying more than sixty percent of the nation’s exports and the lion’s share of federal government revenues. The total market value of the slaves who produced that cotton exceeded the value of all American banks, railroads, and factories combined.<sup>61</sup>

The rise of the Cotton Kingdom had a dramatic effect on the New England economy. Nearly three hundred textile firms opened in Rhode Island in the years between 1790 and 1860, ranging from small, short-lived “manufactories” to massive, state-of-the-art mills, with thousands of spindles. Hundreds more mills were built in neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut. A host of ancillary enterprises grew up in the industry’s wake, including machine shops and railroads, banks and insurance companies. Just as the wealth of eighteenth-century New England had flowed from slave-produced sugar, so did the region’s vastly enlarged wealth in the nineteenth century flow from slave-produced cotton.

## Rhode Island and the “Negro Cloth” Industry

Nowhere was New England’s continuing economic dependence on slavery more dramatic than in Rhode Island, which came to rely on the plantation South not only as a source of raw materials but also as a primary market for its goods. Facing mounting competition from larger, more modern mills in Massachusetts, Rhode Island textile manufacturers carved out a niche in the production of “Negro cloth,” the cheap cloth sold to southern planters as clothing for slaves. A coarse cotton-wool blend, “Negro cloth” was designed to degrade its wearers — to create (in the words of a South Carolina grand jury) a visible “distinction . . . between the whites and the negroes, calculated to make the latter feel the superiority of the former.” But the market was huge, as were the potential profits, and Rhode Islanders seized the opportunity.<sup>62</sup>

The role of northern factories in clothing southern slaves was noted by observers at the time. “[A]s to the clothing of the slaves on the plantations,” wrote Frederick Law Olmsted in his famous 1853 travel narrative of the South, “they are said to be furnished by their owners or masters, every year,



In 1758, a group of Rhode Island ship captains found themselves together in the Dutch Caribbean colony of Surinam and decided to commemorate the occasion by commissioning a portrait. The result was John Greenwood’s *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam*, which depicts the men disporting themselves in a tavern amidst ill-clothed African slaves. Of the ten men in the painting who have been identified, six were future trustees of the College of Rhode Island — what is today Brown University. Two became governors of Rhode Island.

each with a coat and trousers, of a coarse woolen or woolen and cotton stuff (mostly made, especially for this purpose, in Providence, R.I.)” Had Olmsted probed further, he might have noted that Rhode Island manufacturers had also cornered the market for slave blankets, bagging (the sacks used for harvesting cotton), and brogans, the cheap, ill-fitting shoes produced for southern slaves. He might also have noted that the owners of the firms dominating the southern trade included not only old slave-trading families but also several families who had been leading members of the Providence Abolition Society a generation before. Peace Dale Manufacturing Company, for example, the firm that pioneered the Negro cloth trade, was owned by the Hazards, a Quaker family long noted for its opposition to slavery. Like many of Rhode Island’s textile manufacturers, the Hazards were major donors to Brown University.<sup>63</sup>

---

*“I hope the abolition society will promote our own manufactories; especially the cotton manufactory, for which great experience has accrued and is accruing,” John Brown wrote mockingly. “This is most certainly a laudable undertaking, and ought to be encouraged by all; but pause a moment — will it do to import the cotton? It is all raised from the labour of our own blood; the slaves do the work. I can recollect no one place at present from whence the cotton can come, but from the labour of the slaves.”*

## Abolitionism and Anti-Abolitionism

Understanding the links between southern slavery and northern manufacturing helps to explain Rhode Islanders’ response to the establishment of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Founded in 1833 by William Lloyd Garrison, the society was far more radical than earlier abolitionist movements, insisting not only on the complete abolition of slavery but also on African Americans’ right to full American citizenship. The society first came to national prominence in 1835, when it distributed more than a million anti-slavery appeals through the U.S. postal system. The campaign provoked a furious backlash, with northerners and southerners alike denouncing the abolitionists as irresponsible fanatics bent on racial amalgamation. While

Congress responded with a law prohibiting the circulation of abolitionist literature through the mails, mobs burned anti-slavery publications and assaulted abolitionist speakers. One historian has counted more than two hundred anti-abolition mobs in the antebellum period, with 1835 marking the peak of activity.<sup>64</sup>

The rise of the American Anti-Slavery Society provoked intense opposition among business leaders in Rhode Island, who saw the society as a threat not only to social order but also to their livelihoods, which revolved around slave-produced cotton. The appearance of an agent of the society in the state in 1835 prompted a series of public meetings, where state leaders left little doubt about where they stood on the matter of racial equality. Black people were “a race whom nature herself has distinguished by indelible marks, and whom the most zealous asserters of equality admit to be — if not a distinct species — at least a variety of the human species,” participants at an anti-abolition meeting in Newport declared. “Great, therefore, as was the original error of introducing slaves into the country, it would be a far greater error and evil ever to resort to the experiment of converting them into freemen. . . .”<sup>65</sup>

A short time later, local newspapers published the resolutions adopted at the inaugural meeting of the newly created Providence Anti-Abolition Society. “We, the People of Providence,” the resolutions began, in an obvious evocation of the American Constitution, before proceeding to demand federal suppression of the abolitionist movement on the grounds that it threatened “sacred rights of property” as well as “the existing relations of friendship and of business between different sections of our country.” The officers of the society included many of Rhode Island’s premier political and business leaders, several of whom were members of the Brown Corporation. The resolutions were drafted by a committee chaired by William G. Goddard, a Brown professor of moral philosophy and later a member of both the Board of Trustees and the Board of Fellows. Among the vice presidents of the Providence Anti-Abolition Society was Nicholas Brown Jr., the University’s namesake and a member, forty years before, of the Providence Abolition Society.<sup>66</sup>

All these events were watched with interest by Nicholas’ uncle, Moses. Ninety-seven years old, Moses had outlived his brothers, his son, and most of his nieces and nephews. In 1835, as the controversy over abolition raged, he summoned his attorney and added a codicil to his will, leaving \$500 to the local

branch of the American Anti-Slavery Society, “to publish such pamphlets as the society might judge useful for abolishing slavery.” He died the following year.<sup>67</sup>

## Slavery and Abolition on College Campuses

Like the battle over the slave trade in the eighteenth century — and like the slavery reparations controversy of our own time — the abolition debate spilled onto college campuses, compelling institutions to reflect on the nature of slavery and, more broadly, on the responsibility of universities when faced with issues arousing great public passion. Different schools responded in different ways. A few cast their lot with the anti-slavery movement, providing forums for abolitionist speakers and admitting Black students. African Americans graduated from Amherst and Bowdoin as early as 1826. Wesleyan enrolled a Black student in the early 1830s, but it appears that fellow students hounded him from the school. Oberlin College went furthest, admitting both Black men and Black women on a regular basis beginning in 1835. Of the roughly four hundred African American students to earn degrees at white colleges in the nineteenth century, nearly a third of them studied at Oberlin. During the antebellum years, the campus also served as an important stop on the Underground Railroad.<sup>68</sup>

---

*Dubbing themselves the Providence Anti-Abolition Society, the gentlemen demanded federal suppression of the abolitionist movement on the grounds that it threatened “sacred rights of property” as well as “the existing relations of friendship and of business between different sections of our country.” Among the vice presidents of the Anti-Abolition Society was Nicholas Brown Jr., the University’s namesake and a member, forty years before, of the Providence Abolition Society.*

Most colleges took a more conservative approach. Harvard and Yale, institutions with substantial numbers of southern students and large contingents of textile manufacturers among their trustees and donors, did not admit African American students into their undergraduate colleges until the 1870s. (Princeton, the most southern of northern universities, did not admit Black students

until World War II.) At Harvard, the abolition question was considered so inflammatory that President Josiah Quincy sought to prevent students and faculty from even discussing it. At least one faculty member was dismissed for expressing anti-slavery sentiments, and others received formal warnings. “I . . . distinctly stated to you that . . . I held it an incumbent duty of every officer of the Institution to abstain from any act tending to bring within its walls discussions upon questions on which the passions and interests of the community are divided, and warmly engaged,” Quincy reminded one junior instructor. Quincy’s concerns were seemingly borne out in the early 1850s, when a trio of African American students were briefly admitted to Harvard’s medical program. The experiment appears to have been launched by the local chapter of the American Colonization Society, which planned to transport the three men to Africa after they had completed their studies, but it was cut short after protests from other students, who complained that “the admission of blacks to the medical Lectures” undermined the “reputation” of Harvard and lessened “the value of a degree from it.”<sup>69</sup>

## Slavery as a Problem of Moral Philosophy: The Presidency of Francis Wayland

Brown charted its own idiosyncratic course. Like most of its peer institutions, Brown did not admit Black students during the antebellum years — the first African Americans enrolled only in the 1870s — and it certainly did not render any formal support to the abolitionist movement. But the College also made no effort to suppress discussion of the issue. On the contrary, students were actively encouraged to grapple with the moral and political issues raised by the controversy. The architect of this unusual policy was Rev. Francis Wayland, who served as Brown’s president from 1827 to 1855. America’s premier moral philosopher — his textbook, *The Elements of Moral Science*, sold more than two-hundred thousand copies in the nineteenth century — Wayland was a staunch opponent of slavery, which he regarded as both an offense against God and a patent violation of the nation’s founding principles. But he was also extremely hostile to the new abolitionists, whom he saw as irresponsible agitators. “Slavery in this country will yet cease, for it is wrong,” he wrote a correspondent in 1837. “But it will never be made to cease by the present

efforts. They have on them, in my opinion, every mask of failure, for they are not made in the fear of God or with love to man. They may destroy the union, plunge this country into a civil war, break us up into a half dozen different confederacies, but abolish slavery as they are now attempting to do it — they never will. You may note my words, *they never will.*<sup>70</sup>

Wayland had pragmatic reasons for seeking a middle ground in the escalating conflict over slavery and abolition. Not only was he the president of a university in a state dominated by textile interests, but he was also president of the national convention of the Baptist Church, which was bitterly divided on the slavery question. (The church finally split into southern and northern wings in 1845.) Yet his approach also reflected his philosophical precepts. For Wayland, moral progress came not through conflict and name-calling, but through a gradual process of enlightenment, nurtured by respectful, reasoned dialogue. He sought to model this approach in both his teaching and his writing, most notably in *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution*, a published debate with a pro-slavery clergyman from South Carolina. Slaveholders, Wayland believed, could be brought to see the evil of slavery, but not in the overheated atmosphere created by abolitionism. He elaborated this position in *The Limitations of Human Responsibility*, published in 1838. In the book, Wayland argued that people had a right, indeed an obligation, to try to persuade slaveholders of the error of their ways, but beyond that their rights and obligations did not go. Responsibility for acting or not acting on the advice lay with each individual slaveholder. “I have no right, for the sake of carrying a measure, or stirring up excitement, or swaying the popular opinion, to urge, as a matter of universal obligation, what God has left as a matter to be decided by every man’s conscience,” he wrote. The problem, of course, was that very few southern slaveholders were open to persuasion, a fact that even Wayland eventually came to acknowledge. The deeper problem, from a philosophical point of view, lay in the portrayal of moral responsibility as a transaction solely between white men. There was little suggestion in Wayland’s argument that people might also bear responsibilities toward those who were unjustly enslaved.<sup>71</sup>

## Brown Students Debate Abolition

Whatever the limitations of Wayland's approach, it created wide latitude for Brown students to discuss the issues swirling about them. And discuss them they did, not only in classrooms but also in commencement orations, Phi Beta Kappa lectures, and formal debates staged by a half dozen campus societies. Were Black and white people endowed with equal capacities to reason? Would it be politic for America to emancipate its slaves? Was the "existence of slavery in a nation prejudicial to its morals?" Did southern planters have a right, "under the present circumstances," to hold slaves? Could slavery be justified in terms of scripture or "the Principles of Political Economy"? Wayland himself dedicated several weeks of his senior seminar to the problems of slavery and abolition. "He permitted the largest liberty of questioning and discussion," one of his students later recalled, insisting only "that the student should state his point with precision."<sup>72</sup>

Determining the exact proportion of Brown students who supported or opposed slavery in the antebellum years is not possible. Clearly many students, southerners and northerners alike, were pro-slavery, or at least anti-abolition. Most formal debates for which a result is recorded seem to have been resolved against abolition. When abolitionist Wendell Phillips came to speak at a Providence church in 1845, he was heckled and abused by a large contingent of Brown students. (Phillips, no stranger to heckling, reportedly told the students that "they might be silly as geese or venomous as serpents, he would speak if they stayed until midnight." They did, and he did.) Other students, however, joined the ranks of the abolitionist movement. The founding members of the Providence branch of the American Anti-Slavery Society included eleven Brown students. At least one Brown graduate, named Dresser, became an agent for the society. He was later arrested in Nashville and publicly whipped for distributing abolitionist literature.<sup>73</sup>

In the end, slavery was abolished in the United States not by reasoned debate or by the progress of moral enlightenment but by force of arms. At least twenty-one Brown University students died in the service of the Union Army. A plaque in Manning Chapel, on the University's main green, honors their sacrifice. At least thirteen Brown students died in the uniform of the Confederacy. Their service, like so much else about the University's tangled relationship with slavery, would soon be forgotten.<sup>74</sup>

Inventory of stores loaded onto the Sally, September, 1764. The list includes implements needed to control the anticipated cargo, including seven swivel guns, various small arms, gunpowder, chains, and "40 hand Cuffs & 40 Shackels."

Stores		
1	66 <sup>l</sup> Tarr	£18
	a Doctors Chest about,	300
	3 66 <sup>l</sup> Rosin a 300	90
1764	7/2 66 <sup>l</sup> Oil	35
	60 or 70 <sup>l</sup> Tallow and a 20 <sup>l</sup>	70
	28 <sup>l</sup> Twine f a 23	84
	7 Swivel Guns	300
1764	1 Cash powder 7/2	100
	Swivel Shot, Grape Shot & Musket	50
	arm (ditto)	
	1 <sup>o</sup> wt Lead	38
	40 hand Cuffs & 40 Shackels a 35 <sup>l</sup> each	150
	3 Chances & other 109 <sup>l</sup> of Spikes, &c	170
	24 <sup>l</sup> nails	
	4 66 <sup>l</sup> Duns & pins	100
1764	24 66 <sup>l</sup> Beef a 70	1680
	22 66 <sup>l</sup> pork a 110	2420
1764	10 66 <sup>l</sup> murthered a 15	150
	30 <sup>l</sup> Bread	720
	8 white oak hhd for 2 <sup>o</sup> 84 Twine	100
	20 Shaken hhd <sup>o</sup> white oak, &c	200
	10 ditto with heads	11
	12 Gang Caske a 8	96
	10 Iron Bound Batts a 20	200
	1 Red oak water hhd	8
	2 1/2 p p, &c	50
	8 Small Arms a 30	240
	10 pulleys a 5	50
	2 Don leaders f a 21	42
	Wooden Bolts, Lines, Hooks, Sails	
	Needles, Nails, Stammers &c	400
1764	1 Bolt Tub ten bags 121 Ells a 38	2350
	4 Bolts Roushie Duck, &c	500
	7 1/2 Bolt Ravins Duck	70
	a new fable 2 horses 3 Day Ropes and sundry other Riggers wt 30 <sup>l</sup> a 295	2850
	a New Boat 22 feet long Sails & all to her belonging	1050
	a Small New Boat	285
	one New Anchor 29 <sup>l</sup> a 19	191
	Sundry Iron work, 1st Murthered above	250
	Coopers & Carpenters Tools	120
1764	4 66 <sup>l</sup> Vinegar, 4 66 <sup>l</sup> Salt, 150 Brit a 200	150
	100 <sup>l</sup> Red Oak	30
	1 Load wood	
	Carried to p. 5	28600-12-

## Confronting Historical Injustice: Comparative Perspectives

IN HER LETTER appointing the Steering Committee, President Simmons charged us not only to examine Brown's history, but also to reflect on the meaning and significance of this history in the present. She particularly asked the Committee to examine "comparative and historical contexts" that might illuminate Brown's situation, as well as the broader problem of "retrospective justice." How have other institutions and societies around the world dealt with historical injustice and its legacies, and what might we learn from their experience? A substantial majority of the Committee's public programs pertained to this aspect of our charge, to which we now turn.

### Humanity in an Age of Mass Atrocity

Human history is characterized not only by slavery but also by genocide, "ethnic cleansing," forced labor, starvation through siege, mistreatment of prisoners of war, torture, forced religious conversion, mass rape, kidnapping of children, and any number of other forms of gross injustice. Different civilizations at different historical moments have developed their own understandings of such practices, specifying the conditions under which they were allowed or forbidden and against whom they might legitimately be directed. Jews, Christians, and Muslims all devised rules for slavery, the conduct of war, and the treatment of prisoners and civilian populations. Our era is hardly the first to grapple with humanity's capacity for evil.<sup>75</sup>

The idea that certain actions were inherently illegitimate and should be universally prohibited, no matter the circumstances or the particular target group, emerged in the eighteenth century. At the root of this belief was the idea of shared humanity, the belief that all human beings partook of a common nature and were thus entitled to share certain basic rights and protections. This conviction, which animated the early movement to abolish the slave trade, received its classic expression in the preamble to the American Declaration of Independence, with its invocation of “self-evident” truths about equality and inalienable rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Obviously, these rights have not been extended to all people at all times. As we have already seen, the idea of race, also a product of the eighteenth century, has played a particularly important role in blunting the claims of certain groups to full equality. Yet there is no question of the historical importance of the idea of shared humanity, which undergirds the whole edifice of international humanitarian law.

In bequeathing us the ideas of shared humanity and fundamental human rights, the eighteenth century also left us with a series of practical and philosophical problems. How are human rights to be enforced and defended? Do nation-states have the right to treat their own citizens as they please, or are there occasions when the demands of humanity trump national sovereignty? How are perpetrators of human rights abuse to be held to account? Such questions are obviously most pointed in the midst or immediate aftermath of atrocities, but they have longer-term implications as well, for great crimes inevitably leave great legacies. Are those who suffered grievous violations of their rights entitled to some form of redress, and, if so, from what quarter? Do such claims die with the original victims, or are there occasions when descendants might also deserve consideration? How do societies move forward in the aftermath of great crimes?

These are not merely academic questions. On the contrary, the global effort to define, deter, and alleviate the effects of gross historical injustice represents one of the most pressing challenges of our time. The modern era will go down in history as the age of atrocity, an age in which the fundamental human rights that most societies profess to cherish have been violated on a previously unimaginable scale. No single factor accounts for this grim reality. The birth of modern nation-states, with sophisticated bureaucracies and

unprecedented industrial might; the creation of colonial empires; innovations in military technology; the rise of “total war,” involving the mass mobilization of civilian populations and the deliberate targeting of noncombatants; the growth of totalitarian ideologies; the emergence of ever more virulent forms of racial, ethnic, and religious bigotry; the rise of mass media, and the use of those media to foment hatred and fear: all these developments and more have radically enhanced humanity’s propensity and capacity for annihilation. Viewed in this context, the attempt to uphold basic principles of justice and humanity may seem a little like trying to hold back the tide, but few can doubt its urgency.<sup>76</sup>

## Defining Crimes against Humanity

Broadly speaking, the history of efforts to restrain and redress the effects of gross human injustice has proceeded in two phases, both of which are of potential relevance to the current debate over slavery reparations in the United States. The first phase, stretching from the late eighteenth century to the aftermath of the Second World War, revolved around efforts to define and enforce international norms of humanitarian conduct in regard to three scourges: slavery and the slave trade; offenses committed during times of war; and genocide. These efforts reached a climax of sorts at Nuremberg, where an international military tribunal prosecuted the leaders of Nazi Germany, a regime that combined all the worst attributes of slavery, war crimes, and genocide. The second phase, beginning at Nuremberg and continuing to our own time, has focused less on prevention or prosecution than on redress — on repairing the injuries that great crimes leave. At the most obvious level, this entails making provision for the victims of atrocities and their survivors, but it also involves broader processes of social rehabilitation, aimed at rebuilding political communities that have been shattered.

In both guises, retrospective justice rests on the belief that some crimes are so atrocious that the damage they do extends beyond immediate victims and perpetrators to encompass entire societies. The most common label for such offenses is “crimes against humanity,” a term meant to convey not only their great scope and severity but also their distinctive logic. Crimes against humanity are not simply random acts of carnage. Rather, they are directed at

particular groups of people, who have been so degraded and dehumanized that they no longer appear to be fully human or to merit the basic respect and concern that other humans command. The classic example is the Holocaust, the Nazi campaign to exterminate Jews and other “subhuman” races, but the same logic can be seen in a host of other episodes, from the slaughter of more than a million Armenians by Turkish authorities during World War I to the systematic rape of more than twenty thousand Muslim women by Serbian soldiers in Bosnia in the 1990s. While obviously directed against specific targets, such crimes attack the very idea of humanity — the conviction that all human beings partake of a common nature and possess an irreducible moral value. By implication, all human beings have a right, indeed an obligation, to respond — to try to prevent such horrors from occurring and to redress their effects when they do occur. At the most obvious level, this means trying to prevent further bloodshed, to break the “cycles of atrocity” that crimes against humanity all too often spawn. But it also means confronting the legacies of bitterness, contempt, sorrow, and shame that great crimes often leave behind — legacies that can divide and debilitate societies long after the original victims and perpetrators have passed away.<sup>77</sup>

---

*Crimes against humanity are not simply random acts of carnage. Rather, they are directed at particular groups of people, who have been so degraded and dehumanized that they no longer appear to be fully human or to merit the basic respect and concern that other humans command. Such crimes attack the very idea of humanity — the conviction that all human beings partake of a common nature and possess an irreducible moral value. By implication, all human beings have a right, indeed an obligation, to respond — to try to prevent such horrors from occurring and to redress their effects when they do occur.*

## Slavery and the Slave Trade in International Law

The first international humanitarian crusade was the campaign to abolish the transatlantic slave trade, which stands historically and conceptually as

the prototypical crime against humanity. As we have seen, Rhode Island played a conspicuous, if contradictory, part in the campaign, becoming the first state in the United States to legislate against the slave trade even as local merchants continued to play a leading role in the traffic. The movement's crowning achievement came in 1807, when the British Parliament and the U.S. Congress both voted to abolish the transatlantic trade. While the United States made only a token effort to enforce the ban, Great Britain launched a major suppression effort, dispatching a naval squadron to the African coast and negotiating a series of bilateral treaties with other nations, permitting the boarding and inspection of vessels suspected of carrying slaves. Offenders were tried in special "Courts of Mixed Commission" scattered around the Atlantic World, an early example of the use of international judicial bodies to enforce humanitarian law. Africans redeemed from captured ships were taken to Freetown, in the West African colony of Sierra Leone, where they were settled in "recaptive" villages, each with its own school.<sup>78</sup>

It is difficult to appreciate, in retrospect, how remarkable this development was. In the course of a single generation, a commerce that had scarcely ruffled the world's conscience for two and a half centuries was recast as a singular moral outrage. That the suppression campaign was led by Britain, the nation controlling the largest share of the transatlantic trade at the time, makes it more remarkable still. Yet the victory was less than complete. While the British Anti-Slavery Squadron apprehended hundreds of ships and liberated tens of thousands of people, it did not end the trade. Over the next half century, another two to three million Africans were carried to the Americas, chiefly to Cuba and Brazil. Equally important, the growing consensus on the criminality of the slave trade did not immediately extend to the institution of slavery itself, which continued to exist, and to enjoy wide acceptance, long after the trade had been banned. Britain abolished slavery in its colonies only in the 1830s, and it took another generation and a civil war to end the institution in the United States. In Brazil and Cuba, the last American nations to enact abolition, slavery survived until the 1880s.

The decade of the 1880s also saw the first multilateral anti-slavery treaties. At the Berlin Conference of 1885 and again at the Brussels Conference of 1889, delegates from fourteen nations — all the major European powers, plus the United States — solemnly pledged to use their offices to halt the trafficking

of enslaved Africans, whether over land or water, anywhere in the world. But the rhetoric was deceptive, indeed rankly cynical. Alleviating the plight of enslaved Africans served as the chief rationalization for partitioning Africa into formal European colonies. While Britain and France came away with the greatest number of colonies, the single largest territory — the Congo Free State, an area equivalent in size to all of western Europe — was given as a protectorate to one man, King Leopold of Belgium. Over the next twenty years, Belgian officials in the Congo would oversee one of the most notorious forced labor regimes in human history in their relentless drive to produce more ivory and rubber. By the time Leopold was finally compelled to relinquish control of the territory in 1907, an estimated ten million people — about half of the population of the Congo — had died. It would take another two decades after that, until the 1926 League of Nations Slavery Convention, for the nations of the world to commit themselves formally to “the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms.”<sup>79</sup>

## War Crimes

The year of the last documented transatlantic slaving voyage, 1864, also witnessed the first international treaty regulating the conduct of war, the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies of the Field. Signers of the convention pledged not only to provide medical attention to enemy combatants, but also to refrain from firing upon hospitals, ambulances, and other medical facilities, provided that they were clearly marked — hence the treaty’s common name, the “Red Cross” agreement. Amended in 1906 and 1929, the convention was dramatically expanded after the Second World War to guarantee proper treatment of prisoners of war as well as the protection of civilians during times of war. (The terms of the 1949 agreements have recently come in for renewed debate, with American officials disputing their applicability to prisoners apprehended in the ongoing war on terror.) New protocols were added in 1977, extending protection to civilian victims of armed conflicts, including those waged within the borders of a single country.<sup>80</sup>

---

**We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live.**

**Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951**

The Hague Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, signed in 1899 and extended in 1907, was more ambitious in scope but less effective in practice. The aim of the Convention was to establish basic rules of warfare, by prohibiting such tactics as the use of chemical weapons (chiefly poison gas) and aerial bombing. The 1907 convention also created a permanent court of arbitration, designed to resolve international disputes before they could escalate into war. The convention obviously did not achieve its objectives. It did not prevent the outbreak of World War I in 1914, nor did it deter belligerents from employing precisely the tactics they had renounced. While poison gas retained the odor of criminality, aerial bombardment soon lost it, and the practice was freely indulged by all sides in the Second World War, which ended with the deliberate incineration of civilian population centers. At the end of World War I, the victorious Allies made an effort to prosecute the leaders of Imperial Germany, bringing indictments against some eight hundred military and civilian officials for what were described as “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity.” But the postwar German government refused to hand them over, citing its precarious political position, and the Allies did not press the point. A small number of the accused were later prosecuted in German courts, but the few who were convicted escaped with light sentences, on the grounds that they had merely followed orders.<sup>81</sup>

## Genocide

The aftermath of World War I also saw the first international confrontation with genocide, the systematic attempt to eradicate an entire group of people on national, ethnic, racial or religious grounds. While the term is of recent vintage — it was coined in 1944 by jurist Raphael Lemkin from the Greek

word for race and the Latin word for killing — the process it describes reaches back to Biblical times and beyond. The colonization of the Americas offers a host of examples, from the destruction of the Taíno, the Caribbean islanders who greeted Columbus, to the slaughter of the Pequots in New England in the 1630s. The onset of European colonialism in Africa was also a genocidal business, as the exigencies of conquest intersected with racist ideology and imperial greed to produce murder on a mass scale. While the horror of the Congo Free State generated the greatest number of fatalities, the 1904–1907 Herero genocide in German South West Africa was in some respects more ominous, given German commanders’ expressed determination to bring about the “complete extermination” of people described as “nonhumans.” No one was ever prosecuted for the Herero genocide, which is today the subject of growing scholarly interest and a budding reparations movement.<sup>82</sup>

---

*In the 1920s, Turkish courts convicted several perpetrators, in absentia, for their role in the “deportation and massacre” of Armenians, but the effort collapsed in the face of international indifference and resurgent Turkish nationalism. By the end of the 1920s, the official Turkish position on the matter was that the Armenian genocide had never occurred, a position upon which the government still insists today.*

If colonialism represents one of the historical seedbeds of genocide, then total war represents another. In 1915, shortly after the outbreak of World War I, Turkish authorities launched a campaign to eliminate the Ottoman Empire’s Armenian minority. Over the next two years, an estimated one million Armenians were killed, while thousands of others were lost to their communities through deportation and forced religious conversion. These events were widely noted at the time, including by leaders of the Allied powers, who issued a joint declaration in May 1915 condemning the Turkish campaign and pledging to prosecute all responsible for these “crimes . . . against humanity and civilization.” Little ultimately came of that threat. In the 1920s, Turkish courts convicted several perpetrators, in absentia, for their role in the “deportation and massacre” of Armenians, but the effort collapsed in the face of international indifference and resurgent Turkish nationalism. By the end of the 1920s,

the official Turkish position on the matter was that the Armenian genocide had never occurred, a position upon which the Turkish government still insists today. The lesson was certainly not lost on future genocidaires, including Adolph Hitler. “Who after all speaks today of the extermination of the Armenians?” he is reputed to have asked on the eve of the invasion of Poland.<sup>83</sup>

## Nuremberg and its Legacy

Ultimately it took the horrors of World War II to compel the international community to face squarely the problem of crimes against humanity. In 1945, the Allied powers created a special tribunal to prosecute some of the men responsible for the horrors of Nazism. In a powerful symbolic gesture, the tribunal was convened in Nuremberg, the city in which the Nazis had first promulgated the “race laws” that stripped Jews of citizenship. In 1946, a second court, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, or Tokyo Tribunal, was convened to prosecute leaders of imperial Japan. Prosecutors and judges at Nuremberg and Tokyo were acutely aware of the unprecedented nature of the proceedings, which posed a variety of legal problems, not least deciding the specific charges on which perpetrators would be tried. They also appreciated the importance of their work in creating procedures and precedents for future generations facing the challenge of mass atrocity. Probably the most important accomplishment of the tribunals, and of Nuremberg in particular, was to establish that those who committed crimes against humanity could be held to account even when their actions were “not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated”—in short, that people were responsible for their conduct even when they acted “legally” or “under orders.”<sup>84</sup>

The primary institutional outcome of the postwar tribunals was the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The convention not only clarified and codified the still novel concept of “genocide,” but also committed signatories to taking concrete action to prevent and punish it, whenever and wherever it occurred. While prompted by the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews, the convention revealed the continuing importance of slavery and the slave trade as quintessential crimes against humanity. The list of offenses defined as constituting “genocide” included not only “enslavement,” but also

forcible transfer of population, rape and other forms of sexual abuse, persecution on racial grounds, inhumane acts causing serious physical and mental harm, deprivation of liberty, and forced separation of children and parents. As one of the speakers hosted by the Steering Committee noted, had the Genocide Convention been in effect during the transatlantic slave trade or American slavery, signatories would have been obliged, at least in theory, to take action against them.<sup>85</sup>

## International Humanitarian Law, National Sovereignty, and the United States

The tribunals created after World War II and the international conventions and protocols to which they gave rise represent watersheds in the history of international humanitarian law. Yet the tribunals have not fully realized the hopes of their architects, either in terms of deterring future atrocities or of prosecuting perpetrators. The rapid onset of the Cold War was a severe blow, making it all but impossible for the international community to mount any united response to murderous regimes, a weakness vividly displayed in the late 1970s, as genocidaires in Cambodia, Guatemala, and East Timor slaughtered millions with virtual impunity. At the same time, the growing emphasis on international responsibility under the auspices of the United Nations collided with still powerful ideas about the sovereignty of individual nation states. This problem became apparent immediately after the signing of the Genocide Convention, when the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the treaty. Though the intellectual and political foundations of the convention were chiefly laid by Americans, Senate opponents still balked at the prospect of U.S. citizens being tried before international tribunals rather than in American courts, where they were guaranteed certain constitutional protections. (The Senate finally ratified the treaty, with reservations, in 1988, forty years after its drafting.)<sup>86</sup>

Prospects for collective action have improved somewhat since the end of the Cold War. While the international community was fatally slow to acknowledge and respond to the outbreaks of genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia in the early 1990s, the appointment of international criminal tribunals for both cases revives hope that at least some murderers will be punished for their crimes. More recently, special “hybrid” tribunals, blending elements of national and

international judicial systems, have been appointed to prosecute surviving perpetrators of the Cambodian and East Timorese genocides, as well as those responsible for more recent atrocities in Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Maintaining a multiplicity of courts, each with its own personnel and procedures, has inevitably produced complications and delays, but together these tribunals bespeak a new international determination to hold perpetrators of gross human rights abuse to account. In 1998, delegates from 140 nations signed the Rome Statute establishing a permanent International Criminal Court dedicated to investigating and prosecuting genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, but the court's stature and effectiveness remain unclear. In 2002, the United States formally withdrew its signature from the accord, again citing the issue of national sovereignty, as well as concerns that the court might be used to arraign American civilian and military personnel.<sup>87</sup>

At the time of writing, the primary challenge to the international humanitarian regime lay in Darfur, a region in western Sudan that is the site of an ongoing genocide. Whether the international community has the capacity and will to stop the killing or to bring those responsible to justice remains to be seen.

## The Limitations of Retributive Justice

The tradition begun at Nuremberg and continuing in the various international tribunals operating today represents a form of what is known as retributive justice. Justice, in this view, centers on punishing evildoers. Historically, this is the most common form of justice and it is generally uncontroversial. But it has limitations. It is time bound. While crimes against humanity are generally excluded from statutes of limitation, prosecution is obviously only possible while perpetrators live. It also raises questions about selectivity. In a world rife with injustice, how do we determine which offenses are sufficiently grievous to require prosecution? And how do we determine whom specifically to prosecute? In the Nazi Holocaust, hundreds of thousands of people, virtually an entire society, became implicated in genocide, yet the original Nuremberg trials featured only two dozen defendants.<sup>88</sup>

These problems point to others. Crimes against humanity typically involve not only large numbers of perpetrators but also vast numbers of victims, with a range of different injuries, some of which persist for generations. While

seeing perpetrators in the dock may bring some satisfaction to victims or their descendants, it does little in itself to rehabilitate them, to heal their injuries or compensate them for their losses. More broadly still, approaches focused solely on prosecution do little to rehabilitate societies, to repair the social divisions that great crimes inevitably leave. In other words, crimes against humanity raise issues not only of retributive but also of reparative justice.<sup>89</sup>

## Reparative Justice and its Critics

As in the case of retributive justice, the history of reparative justice efforts is closely associated with the Holocaust. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the government of West Germany, spurred in part by pressure from the United States, launched a series of programs intended to repair at least some of the damage wrought by Nazi atrocities. The West German effort, which included a formal acknowledgment of responsibility by the prime minister on behalf of the German people, as well as the payment of substantial reparations to victims, remained a more or less isolated example during the decades of the Cold War; but in the years since the 1980s, the world has seen a proliferation of reparative justice initiatives, stretching from Argentina to Australia, South Africa to Canada. While it is too early to assess the long-term effects of many of these programs, the idea that victims of crimes against humanity are entitled to some form of redress is today a more or less settled principle in international law and ethics. This status was confirmed with the publication in 2003 of the United Nations' "Draft Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law."<sup>90</sup>

Not everyone has welcomed these developments. In every society, there are many people who dismiss the whole reparative justice project as divisive, foolish, or futile. In the United States, such criticisms have emanated from both ends of the political spectrum. For some on the right, the quest for historical redress, and for monetary reparations in particular, is just one more symptom of the "culture of complaint," of the elevation of victimhood and group grievance over self-reliance and common nationality. For some on the left, the preoccupation with past injustice is a distraction from the challenge of present injustice, a reflection of the "decline of a more explicitly

future-oriented politics” brought about by the collapse of socialist and social-democratic movements around the world. Advocates of reparative justice offer several rebuttals to these criticisms. Far from fomenting division, they argue, confronting traumatic histories offers a means to promote dialogue and healing in societies that are already deeply divided. This process, in turn, can generate new awareness of the nature and sources of present inequalities, creating new possibilities for political action. Viewed in this light, reparative justice is not an invitation to “wallow in the past” but a way for societies to come to terms with painful histories and move forward.<sup>91</sup>

While recent discussions of slavery reparations in the United States have chiefly focused on monetary payments, the history of reparative justice initiatives around the world suggests a wide variety of potential modes of redress. Broadly speaking, these approaches can be grouped under three rubrics: apologies (formal expressions of contrition for acts of injustice, usually delivered by leaders of nations or responsible institutions); truth commissions (public tribunals to investigate past crimes and to create a clear, undeniable historical record of them); and reparations (the granting of material benefits to victims or their descendants, including not only money but also nonmonetary resources such as land, mental health services, and education). Conceptually distinct, these approaches often overlap in practice. The 1988 U.S. Civil Liberties Act, for example, combined all three modes in addressing the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, including a national commission to study the matter and collect public testimony, modest monetary reparations (\$20,000 to each surviving internee), and a formal apology, tendered by the President on behalf of the nation.<sup>92</sup>

---

*The notion of reparative justice has attracted criticism from both ends of the political spectrum. For some on the right, the quest for historical redress is just one more symptom of the “culture of complaint,” of the elevation of victimhood and group grievance over self-reliance and common nationality. For some on the left, the preoccupation with past injustice is a distraction from the challenge of present injustice, a reflection of progressive paralysis following the collapse of socialist and social-democratic movements around the world.*

## Apology

One of the most elementary ways to repair an injury, though often one of the most difficult in practice, is to apologize for it. In 1951, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer issued a formal statement acknowledging the responsibility of the German people for the crimes of the Holocaust. The statement, produced after long and rancorous negotiations, was something less than an unqualified apology. “The overwhelming majority of the German people abhorred the crimes committed against the Jews and were not involved in them,” Adenauer insisted, adding that many had risked their lives “to help their Jewish fellow citizens.” “However,” he continued, “unspeakable crimes were committed in the name of the German people, which create a duty of moral and material reparations.” While tentative, Adenauer’s acknowledgment of responsibility, together with his government’s agreement to pay substantial reparations to victims of Nazi persecution, represented a crucial step in Germany reclaiming its status within the community of nations. It also sharply distinguished the West German government from its counterpart in communist East Germany, which disclaimed any connection to or responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi regime.<sup>93</sup>

In 1951, the idea of a representative leader of a nation or institution formally taking responsibility for the offenses of predecessors was a novelty. Today, examples abound. In 1995, Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to issue a formal apology to her subjects, directed to the Maori of New Zealand, for “loss of lives [and] the destruction of property and social life” occasioned by British colonization. In 2000, Pope John Paul II used the occasion of the first Sunday of Lent to apologize and “implore forgiveness” on behalf of the Catholic Church for a long catalogue of sins, including the violence of the Crusades and Inquisition, the humiliation and marginalization of women, and centuries of persecution of Jews. In 2005, ninety-two U.S. Senators endorsed a resolution formally apologizing for the Senate’s role in abetting the lynching of African Americans by refusing to enact a federal anti-lynching statute. The list goes on.<sup>94</sup>

Several speakers hosted by the Steering Committee discussed the recent proliferation of national and institutional apologies, offering sharply different analyses. Some were critical, dismissing the wave of recent apologies as

a vogue, “contrition chic,” the triumph of the therapeutic and symbolic over the political and substantive. What can an apology possibly mean, one asked, when the people offering it neither enacted nor feel directly responsible for the offense for which they are apologizing, and when the people accepting the apology did not directly experience the offense? Others defended apology as an essential aspect of historical redress, particularly when accompanied by some material demonstration of seriousness and sincerity. Far from just “cheap talk,” they argued, apologies offer an opportunity to facilitate dialogue, nurture accountability, and enrich political citizenship. As one speaker noted, most atrocious crimes in history begin with the denial of the equal humanity of a certain class of people; thus any project of social repair must begin with some acknowledgment of the dignity of that group and of the seriousness of what they suffered. Apologies are one vehicle to accomplish this.<sup>95</sup>

---

. . . [C]ivilization discovered (or rediscovered) in 1945 that men are not the means, the instruments, or the representatives of a superior subject—humanity—that is fulfilled through them, but that humanity is their responsibility, that they are its guardians. Since this responsibility is revocable, since this tie can be broken, humanity found itself suddenly stripped of the divine privilege that had been conferred on it by the various theories of progress. Exposed and vulnerable, humanity itself can die. It is at the mercy of men, and most especially of those who consider themselves as its emissaries or as the executors of its great designs. The notion of crimes against humanity is the legal evidence of this realization.

**Alain Finkelkraut, *Remembering in Vain: The Klaus Barbie Trial and Crimes Against Humanity*, 1992**

## The Politics of Apology: Australia's "Stolen Children" and Korean "Comfort Women"

As several speakers noted, apologizing can be a complicated business. As in relations between individuals, apologies between groups and institutions involve subtle assessments of sincerity and motive, timing and tone, all of which are inevitably complicated by the variety of actors and the passage of time. The case of abducted Australian Aboriginal children, the subject of one of the programs sponsored by the Steering Committee, offers a dramatic example. Between 1900 and the early 1970s, the Australian government, working with Christian missions, removed an estimated one-hundred thousand Aborigine children from their families and consigned them to boarding schools and white foster families as part of a forced racial assimilation policy. (The policy focused on light-skinned, or "half-breed," children; full-blood Aborigines were presumed to be unassimilable and destined for extinction.) In the 1980s and '90s, the fate of the "stolen children" became an important political issue in Australia, culminating in the appointment of a government commission of inquiry; the commission, which issued its report in 1997, recommended a formal government apology to affected families.<sup>96</sup>

The commission's recommendation was rejected by the newly elected conservative government of John Howard, who insisted that current Australians bore no responsibility for the sins of their forebears and should not "embroil themselves in an exercise of shame and guilt." The prime minister also expressed fears that an official apology would lead to massive compensation claims against the Australian government. Howard's position prompted an immediate outcry, leading to the passage of apology resolutions in several state parliaments and the organizing by community groups of an annual "National Sorry Day." The groundswell prompted Howard to amend his position, and in 1999 he introduced a resolution that expressed "deep and sincere regret" for the forced assimilation policy, but also stopped short of apologizing or accepting responsibility for it. The controversy continues today.<sup>97</sup>

The politics of apology have been even more contentious in East Asia, where the conduct of the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II — and the refusal of subsequent Japanese governments to accept full responsibility

for that conduct — continues to shadow relations between Japan, China, and North and South Korea. Over the last fifteen years, Japanese leaders, including the current emperor and the prime minister, have issued numerous statements expressing regret and contrition for wartime atrocities, but the belatedness of the statements and their emphasis on personal remorse rather than collective responsibility have left many victims groups distinctly unsatisfied. The controversy has come to focus on the predicament of so-called “comfort women” — women and children from Korea, China, and other occupied territories who were abducted from their homes and forced to work as sex slaves in military brothels. In 2001, after more than half a century of denial, the Japanese government acknowledged “military involvement” in the system and offered survivors up to \$20,000 in “atonement” money from a privately funded “Asian Women’s Fund.” But a group of surviving comfort women, mostly from Korea, rejected the money, insisting that any funds should come directly from the Japanese government, accompanied by an unequivocal acceptance of responsibility and a formal apology.<sup>98</sup>

---

*In the American case, skepticism about institutional apologies reflects not only deeply ingrained beliefs about individual responsibility but also wariness of the nation’s litigious culture. In the United States today, there is a widespread sense that to apologize for or even to acknowledge an offense exposes one to legal liability and invites claims for damages.*

The comfort women controversy is doubly relevant here, because the case has become a political issue in the United States. Outrage over the treatment of the women was the main inspiration for the Lipinski Resolution, a joint U.S. Congressional resolution introduced in 1997 which called upon the government of Japan to “formally issue a clear and unambiguous apology for the atrocious war crimes committed by the Japanese military during World War II; and immediately pay reparations to the victims of those crimes.” The resolution attracted dozens of congressional sponsors but was eventually scuttled by the State Department, chiefly because of concerns that it would encourage other reparations claims. In April 2006, another joint resolution was introduced into Congress, again calling upon the Japanese government

to “acknowledge and accept responsibility for” the enslavement of comfort women, and also to take steps to “educate current and future generations about this horrible crime against humanity.” The bill, which is pending, omits any reference to reparations, though it enjoins Japan to “follow the recommendations of the United Nations and Amnesty International with respect to the ‘comfort women’”— recommendations that include payment of monetary reparations.”<sup>99</sup>

## National Apologies in the United States

Leaving the question of monetary reparations momentarily aside, there is a distinct irony in demands for a governmental apology coming from Americans, who tend to be skeptical of the value of collective apologies for past wrongs, at least when their own history is concerned. As innumerable letters sent to the Steering Committee made clear, many Americans reject, indeed resent, the suggestion that they bear some responsibility for actions in which they took no part, actions that may have occurred before they were born. The very notion collides not only with deeply ingrained beliefs about individual responsibility, but also with quintessentially American ideas about historical transcendence, the capacity and fundamental right of human beings to shake off the dead hand of the past and create their lives anew. This skepticism is reinforced by the nation’s litigious culture. In America today, there is a widespread sense that to apologize for or even to acknowledge an offense exposes one to legal liability and invites claims for damages.

Despite these constraints, there are several examples in recent American history of government apologies. Japanese Americans forcibly interned during World War II received a presidential apology — in fact three: one from Gerald Ford in 1976, one from Ronald Reagan, when he signed the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, and one from his successor, George H.W. Bush, when implementing the act. In 1993, Bill Clinton issued a formal apology to the Indigenous people of Hawaii for the American government’s role in the destruction of Hawaiian sovereignty. Four years later, Clinton apologized to victims of the Tuskegee “Bad Blood” experiment, in which the U.S. Department of Health deliberately and deceptively withheld treatment from African Americans infected with syphilis in order to study the effects of the unchecked disease. The 2005

Senate resolution on lynching represents the most recent example of a government apology, though it was offered on behalf of a particular institution rather than of the nation as a whole.<sup>100</sup>

## Apologies Untendered: Native Americans and African Americans

American leaders have been notably slower to extend apologies to the two groups who would seem to have the most obvious claims to them: Native Americans and African Americans. While the Indigenous people of Hawaii have received a presidential apology, native peoples on the mainland have not. In 2000, the Bureau of Indian Affairs apologized for its role in the “ethnic cleansing” of native lands and the deliberate annihilation of native culture, but the gesture’s impact was muted by the fact that it came from an assistant secretary of the Department of Interior, on behalf of a government agency, rather than from the President, on behalf of the nation. (The fact that the official who issued the apology was himself Native American further reduced its effect.) In 2004, a trio of senators, led by Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Republican from Colorado and member of the Northern Cheyenne tribe, introduced a joint Congressional resolution to “acknowledge a long history of official deprecations and ill-conceived policies by the United States Government regarding Indian tribes and offer an apology to all Native Peoples on behalf of the United States.” But the bill received a negative recommendation from the Senate’s Committee on Indian Affairs and died without reaching the Senate floor.<sup>101</sup>

The government has been even more reticent on the subject of slavery. While a growing number of American churches, corporations, and universities have acknowledged their complicity in slavery and the slave trade, the nation as a whole has not. In 1997, Congressman Tony P. Hall of Ohio introduced a one-sentence concurrent resolution — “Resolved by the House of Representatives that the Congress apologizes to African Americans whose ancestors suffered as slaves under the Constitution and the laws of the United States until 1865” — but the bill languished in committee without ever coming up for debate on the floor of Congress. In the meantime, the closest the U.S. government has come to a formal apology is a pair of statements by President

Clinton in 1998 and President Bush in 2003, both delivered at the same spot: the old fortress at Goree Island in Senegal, West Africa. Both presidents expressed regret for the slave trade, but they also carefully stopped short of apologizing for it. President Bush gave a particularly stirring speech, describing the slave trade as “one of the greatest crimes of history” and slavery itself as “an evil of colossal magnitude,” the latter characterization borrowed from his eighteenth-century predecessor, John Adams. Yet he offered no apology, nor any suggestions about what Americans in the present might do in light of this painful history. Whether the bicentennial of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in 2007 will provide the occasion for a more forthright apology remains to be seen.<sup>102</sup>

## Telling the Truth

If there is a single common element in all exercises in retrospective justice, it is truth telling. Whether justice is pursued through prosecution, the tendering of formal apologies, the offering of material reparations, or some combination of all three, the first task is to create a clear historical record of events and to inscribe that record in the collective memory of the relevant institution or nation.

---

*In 1997, a Congressman from Ohio introduced a one-sentence concurrent resolution apologizing for slavery: “Resolved by the House of Representatives that the Congress apologizes to African Americans whose ancestors suffered as slaves under the Constitution and the laws of the United States until 1865.” The bill died without coming up for debate on the floor of the House.*

Of course, the truth is not always easy to discern. Most crimes against humanity are sprawling events, unfolding over months or years and involving vast numbers of actors, who often have very different perspectives, both at the time and in retrospect. Documentation is often in short supply, sometimes because records were not kept, sometimes because they were deliberately destroyed. Even the Holocaust, the most thoroughly organized and documented genocide in human history, has proved to be an elusive affair. Historians today estimate that only about half of those who perished under

the Nazis died in death camps, the balance having been shot, stabbed, beaten, worked, or marched to death in a myriad of individual acts of atrocity. Even today, more than sixty years later, historians continue to uncover details of killings long forgotten or suppressed, including most recently a series of murderous pogroms launched by Poles against their Jewish neighbors, some after the war was over.<sup>103</sup>

As such revelations suggest (and as the controversy they have unleashed abundantly confirms), not everyone wishes to have the full truth told. As a general rule, perpetrators and their associates are particularly anxious to see societies “turn the page” on the past. But even after perpetrators have left the scene and the immediate threat of prosecution or retaliation has receded, the idea of unearthing the past often confronts significant opposition from people who fear that such inquiries may threaten their social standing or undermine cherished national myths. Both of these motives can be seen in the Turkish government’s continuing insistence that the Armenian genocide of 1915–1917 never happened, a claim flatly contradicted by thousands of eye-witness accounts, newsreel footage, and an abundant documentary record. (Under current Turkish law, anyone asserting that the genocide occurred is liable to prosecution for the crime of “denigrating Turkishness,” an offense punishable by up to three years in jail.) This is obviously an extreme example, but the same impulse to evade, extenuate, or deflect the full burden of the past can be seen in many other cases, from Konrad Adenauer’s insistence that the vast majority of Germans had “abhorred” Nazi crimes and played no part in them to the time-honored refrain in New England that slaves in the region were treated kindly.

## History and Memory

As these examples show, the struggle over retrospective justice is waged not only in courts and legislatures but also on the wider terrain of history and memory — in battles over textbooks and museum exhibitions, public memorials and popular culture. The Steering Committee organized many programs around these issues, on topics ranging from the design of Holocaust memorials to the efforts of some citizens of Philadelphia, Mississippi, to come to terms with the murder of three civil rights workers in their community in 1964. Many of these programs focused on the history and

memory of American slavery, the focus of the Committee's charge. Speakers discussed the erasure of slavery and the slave trade from New Englanders' collective memory; the history and mythology of the Underground Railroad; representations of slavery in twentieth-century African American art and literature; the politics of slavery reenactments at historical sites like Colonial Williamsburg; and popular reactions to recent DNA tests that appear to confirm long-standing allegations that Thomas Jefferson fathered children by one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. While different speakers offered different conclusions, all agreed that slavery remains an extremely sore subject for many Americans, white as well as Black. If one of the defining features of a crime against humanity is the legacy of bitterness, sensitivity, and defensiveness that it bequeaths to future generations, then American slavery surely qualifies.

## Commissioning the Truth

The Steering Committee also organized several programs on truth commissions, which have emerged in recent years as one of the primary mechanisms for societies seeking to come to terms with atrocious pasts. The best-known example is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, established in 1995 during that country's transition from racial apartheid to democratic rule, but South Africa is far from alone. Since 1982, at least two-dozen countries have convened truth commissions of one sort or another. While the United States government has never formally convened a truth commission, the model has been used at the national, state, and even municipal level to examine specific historical injustices.

Though the particulars differ, truth commissions typically share certain features. Almost by definition, they are convened in societies that have seen massive violations of human rights, usually perpetrated by the state or its agents, thus creating a need for some kind of extraordinary body, beyond the normal system of judges and courts, to address them. Not surprisingly, they are usually associated with periods of political transition, as societies struggle to erect new, legitimate governments atop the ruins of old, discredited ones. At the same time, they tend to occur in societies in which leaders of the old regime continue to exercise substantial power, rendering prosecution impractical. In some cases, truth commissions have been part of broader reparative

justice campaigns, including apologies, reparations payments, and other initiatives designed to promote social repair and reconciliation. In other cases, they have stood alone. In a few instances — Sierra Leone, for example — truth commissions have proceeded alongside prosecution efforts, but in most cases they have been convened in lieu of prosecution. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was empowered to award amnesty to perpetrators who testified before it as long as they met certain criteria, including a demonstrable political motive and full disclosure of their crimes.<sup>104</sup>

## The Politics of Truth Commissions: The Latin American Experience

How well truth commissions succeed depends in large measure on the political circumstances in which they are appointed, a fact illustrated by the experience of Latin America, which has been the site of no fewer than ten commissions, most convened amidst transitions from military to civilian government. The earliest commissions, appointed to determine the fate of thousands of political opponents who “disappeared” during military rule, quickly ran up against the continuing political influence of military authorities and their elite allies. Several were forced to disband before they filed final reports, including the first one, the Bolivian National Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances, appointed in 1982. Argentina’s National Commission on the Disappeared, appointed in 1983, fared somewhat better. The commission’s report included information on some nine thousand disappearances, some of which was used to prosecute officers of the old junta. But growing opposition from the military and parliament forced the government to suspend the prosecutions. Under revised guidelines, officials in the military, police, and government were declared exempt from prosecution so long as they acted in accordance with the orders of superiors — precisely the defense rejected by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg four decades before.<sup>105</sup>

Some commissions were designed to fail. The Historical Clarification Commission of Guatemala was asked to investigate crimes committed over the course of a thirty-six-year civil conflict, but it was not given authority to subpoena witnesses or to name perpetrators in its final report. The National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in Chile began in a similarly

unpromising fashion. Charged to investigate human rights abuses between the military coup of 1973 and the restoration of civilian rule in 1990, the commission was hampered not only by the blanket amnesty that leaders of the old regime had given themselves but also by the fact that the former president, General Augusto Pinochet, remained commander in chief of the Chilean armed forces. Yet despite these obstacles, the commission succeeded in collecting fresh evidence about government crimes, which was later used to overturn the amnesty provision and prosecute some perpetrators. (Because they had disposed of victims' bodies, chiefly by dumping them in the ocean, military officials were unable to prove that they had actually killed the people they kidnapped, making it possible to prosecute them for "ongoing sequestration," a crime not covered by amnesty provisions or statutes of limitations.)<sup>106</sup>

## The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the best known of recent international commissions and the one that best illustrates such institutions' possibilities and potential limitations. Over a period of two years, the commission, which was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, collected more than twenty thousand statements from victims of gross human rights abuse, as well as more than seven thousand amnesty applications from perpetrators detailing their crimes. Several thousand of these people testified in public hearings — hearings that were televised nationally and discussed in innumerable public and private forums. The commission's report, along with volumes of supporting material, was widely distributed and is now an unerasable part of the historical record of the nation.<sup>107</sup>

---

**But I feel what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now I — it feels like I got my sight back by coming here and telling you the story.**

**Lucas Sikwepere testifying to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the police shooting that left him blind, April 25, 1996**

Yet the South African process was not without flaws, as several speakers made clear. Many prominent political leaders refused to apply for amnesty or to testify before the commission, calculating (correctly) that the new government would not have the ability or will to prosecute them. The commission also interpreted its mandate in quite narrow ways, not only by confining itself to violations between 1960 and 1993 but also by limiting its attention to crimes that were “politically motivated”—crimes undertaken explicitly to defend or overthrow the apartheid regime. The effect of these decisions, as one speaker noted, was to focus attention on the struggle over apartheid and away from the inherent violence and depravity of the apartheid system itself. The creation of great wealth and great poverty; the denial of education; the destruction of families; the multifarious legacies of a half century of racially driven social engineering, coming on the heels of three centuries of colonialism: all these concerns fell outside the commission’s purview.<sup>108</sup>

---

*Over a period of two years, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission collected more than twenty thousand statements from victims of gross human rights abuse, as well as more than seven thousand amnesty applications from perpetrators detailing their crimes. The commission’s report, along with volumes of supporting material, was widely distributed and is now an unerasable part of the historical record of the nation.*

## Truth Commissions and Historical Repair

Yet as several speakers reminded us, the significant fact is not that truth commissions are imperfect but that they happen at all, that facts that in previous generations would likely have been forgotten or suppressed are today discussed and dissected in public forums. Obviously, commissions cannot by themselves repair the legacies of trauma and deprivation that crimes against humanity leave behind, but they do create clear, undeniable public records of what occurred — records that provide an essential bulwark against the inevitable tendencies to deny, extenuate, and forget. Perhaps most important, truth commissions offer the thing that victims of gross human rights abuse

almost universally cite as their most pressing need: the opportunity to have their stories heard and their injuries acknowledged.<sup>109</sup>

One speaker sought to illustrate the value of truth commissions by posing a counterfactual question: What if the United States had convened a truth and reconciliation commission following the abolition of slavery in 1865? The question is both anachronistic and unanswerable, but worth pondering. Suppose that large numbers of formerly enslaved African Americans had been given a public forum to describe their experiences in captivity: decades of unremunerated toil; physical and sexual abuse; loved ones consigned to the auction block. Suppose that those who participated in and profited from the institution — a category that included slaveowners and non-slaveowners, northerners and southerners — were likewise asked to account for their conduct. And suppose also that these testimonies were broadcast widely, provoking public discussion and becoming enshrined in the nation's collective memory — in textbooks and public memorials, political speeches and Hollywood films. Would the nation's subsequent history have unfolded as it did? Would discussions about race provoke the misunderstandings and raw feelings that they so often provoke today?<sup>110</sup>

## Truth Commissions in the United States

Though the United States has never formally convened a truth commission, the model has been used in more local contexts. The federal commission appointed to investigate the World War II internment of Japanese Americans is the obvious example, but truth commissions have also been established to examine injustices against African Americans. In 1993, the House of Representatives of the State of Florida funded a scholarly commission to investigate the 1923 Rosewood Massacre, a murderous assault on an all-Black town by a white mob following (false) reports of the rape of a white woman by a Black man. The legislature responded to the commission's report by enacting the Rosewood Compensation Act, providing monetary compensation to families who had lost property in the attack and creating a small college scholarship fund for "minority persons with preference given to direct descendants of the Rosewood families." (The legislature refrained from offering an apology.) More recently, two different cities in North Carolina

launched truth and reconciliation initiatives: Wilmington, which created a commission to investigate the city's 1898 race riot, essentially an armed coup against one of the last municipal governments in the South with substantial Black political participation; and Greensboro, which appointed a commission to investigate the 1979 massacre of Black union organizers by members of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>111</sup>

While the North Carolina commissions have been widely praised for providing information and facilitating dialogue on painful chapters in the state's history, the experience of the Oklahoma state commission appointed to investigate the 1921 Tulsa race riot was more mixed. The riot, which destroyed the most prosperous African American community west of the Mississippi, was one of the bloodiest in American history: an estimated three hundred Black people were killed and thousands more were driven from their homes by a white mob armed and deputized by local authorities. The commission succeeded in recovering the truth of an episode that had been completely erased from official histories of the city and state, but its significance as a vehicle of reconciliation was attenuated when the Oklahoma legislature, rejecting one of the commission's primary recommendations, refused to appropriate money to compensate the small number of surviving victims. Bitter survivors responded by filing a class-action reparations lawsuit in federal court. The suit, *Alexander v. Oklahoma*, was dismissed in 2005 on statute-of-limitations grounds.<sup>112</sup>

## Reparations: Theory and Practice

As many of these examples reveal, official apologies and truth commissions have often been accompanied by the payment of some kind of compensation or material reparation. Though "reparations" are sometimes dismissed by critics today as a recent innovation, the underlying legal principle is ancient and well-nigh universal: people who suffer injuries and losses through the malicious or culpably negligent conduct of others have a right to redress — a right, as far as practicable, to be "made whole." This principle, a cornerstone of common law, has a very long history in cases involving historical injustice. Family members of men and women executed during the Salem witchcraft trials of the 1690s, for example, were paid reparations by the Massachusetts colonial legislature. In recent years, this principle has been widely applied to

cases of human rights abuse, with literally scores of different groups around the world receiving reparations of various kinds.

---

*While most of the speakers entertained by the Steering Committee acknowledged the importance of redressing injuries, several warned of the danger of “commodifying” suffering, of defining claims to justice in narrowly material terms. Others spoke of the “one-time payment trap,” in which a single check is taken to absolve society of any further responsibility for injustice.*

But if the basic principle of reparations is straightforward enough, the application of that principle in specific cases is enormously complex, as various speakers sponsored by the Steering Committee made clear. What form should reparations take? Who is entitled to receive reparations and who is responsible to provide them? How is the value of an injury to be calculated? What happens to reparations claims with the passage of time? Beneath these practical matters lay deeper moral and political questions. What are reparations intended to accomplish? Are they an end in themselves or one aspect of a broader process of repair and reconciliation? While most of the speakers entertained by the Steering Committee acknowledged the importance of redressing injuries, several warned of the danger of “commodifying” suffering, of defining claims to justice in narrowly material terms. Others spoke of the “one-time payment trap,” in which a single check is taken to absolve society of any further responsibility for the legacies of historical injustice.<sup>113</sup>

## Determining the Medium of Reparation

The easiest reparations claims to understand, if not always to implement, are simple restitution claims — returning stolen property, looted artworks, sacred relics, and other such personal and cultural property to the rightful owners. Unfortunately, most cases of gross historical injustice do not admit of such tidy resolution. How does one make restitution for a human life or time in a torture chamber? In such circumstances, reparation must be made in some other currency. In the American case, the medium of choice

is usually money, but there are abundant examples, in the United States and elsewhere, of reparations being paid in other forms, including land, education, mental health services, employment opportunities, preferential access to loan capital, even the creation of dedicated memorials and museums to ensure that a group's experience is not forgotten by future generations. In the case of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, for example, the tendering of a presidential apology to the handful of surviving victims was accompanied by the commitment of federal funds to create a research center in biomedical ethics on the Tuskegee University campus.<sup>114</sup>

---

**Pain can sear the human memory in two crippling ways: with forgetfulness of the past or imprisonment in it . . . too horrible to remember, too horrible to forget: down either path lies little health for the human sufferers of great evil.**

**Theologian Donald W. Shriver, Jr., one of the speakers sponsored by the Steering Committee, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics*, 1995**

What happens when those representing the interests of victims and perpetrators do not agree on the appropriate form of reparation? The history of Native American land claims illustrates the problem. Native Americans represent something of a special case in reparations theory, not only because of the scope of their injuries but also because of the existence of written treaties to undergird many of their historical claims. In 1946, the U.S. Congress, facing a raft of potential land disputes, created the Indian Claims Commission to hear and resolve all tribal claims against the United States, whether treaty-based or merely "moral." The commission, which operated until 1978, was seen by its creators as a gesture of liberality, but it quickly became an adversarial body, enforcing strict eligibility standards and restricting awards to the minimum possible amount. The biggest bone of contention was the commission's insistence that compensation be paid in money rather than land; to restore stolen land to its original owners, the commissioners reasoned, was both impractical and unfair to the land's current owners, most of whom had purchased their property legally and in good faith. While many Indigenous nations accepted

this logic, some did not, most notably the Sioux, who insisted on the actual return of ancestral lands in the Black Hills. With accumulated interest, the compensation awarded by the commission is today worth hundreds of millions of dollars, but the Sioux refuse to accept it, arguing that the Black Hills are sacred space and cannot be bought or sold.<sup>115</sup>

## Calculating Compensation

Even where money is accepted as the medium of reparation, the question of determining the appropriate amount remains. Are such payments literally compensation, based on a calculation of actual losses, or are they more symbolic or broadly rehabilitative, in which case everyone in a given class should receive the same sum? The September 11 Victims Compensation Fund pursued the former approach. Created by Congress to forestall potentially crippling litigation against airline companies, the fund has dispensed some \$3 billion, an average of about \$1 million per family, to survivors of the men and women killed in the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. Obviously, the fund represents an unusual case in reparations history: the agency providing compensation, the U.S. government, was not responsible for the original offense; the perpetrators, Al Qaeda, have expressed no remorse for their crime nor any interest in repairing the resulting injuries. What makes the fund noteworthy here is both the size of the reparations and Congress' decision to award different amounts to victims, based on income and a calculation of likely future earnings, a decision that ensured, in essence, that the largest sums went to the wealthiest families.<sup>116</sup>

Most recent reparations programs have taken the second, more symbolic approach. Under the terms of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, for example, all surviving victims of the Japanese American internment camps received \$20,000, regardless of their actual losses in property and earnings. The sum of \$20,000, in fact, has become something of a touchstone in the international reparations field. The government of Canada, which also interned citizens of Japanese descent during World War II, paid reparations in the amount of \$21,000, reflecting the greater severity and duration of internment there. The private "atonement" money offered to surviving "comfort women" by the Japanese government in 2001 was the equivalent of \$20,000, as was the sum

recommended by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as reparations for victims of gross human rights abuse who had testified before the commission. (The amount eventually appropriated by the South African government was less than \$4,000 per person.) \$20,000 was also the sum recently offered to surviving First Nations children who were taken from their families and shipped to white mission schools in the Canadian counterpart to Australia's forced racial assimilation policy.<sup>117</sup>



Memorial to Brown University students who died fighting for the Union during the Civil War. Manning Chapel.

## Reparations and the Holocaust

The conceptual and practical problems inherent in any reparative program are well illustrated by the sixty-year struggle over Holocaust reparations, a struggle in which Americans have played a leading role. In 1947, as the tribunal at Nuremberg completed its work, U.S. military authorities in occupied West Germany imposed the country's first Holocaust restitution law, providing for the return of real estate, factories, and other property stolen from Jews as part of the Nazi's "Aryanization" of the economy. American occupation officials also helped to draft the first model law for paying reparations to individual victims of Nazi atrocities, a step that many U.S. officials held out as a precondition for the restoration of German national sovereignty. In the years that followed, the West German government enacted a series of reparations programs, providing monetary grants and pensions to individual victims and their survivors, with prescribed payments for loss of life, loss of health, losses of property and professional advancement, and other specified injuries. American officials also helped to facilitate the 1952 treaty between West Germany and the state of Israel, providing for the transfer of 3.5 billion DM worth of money, machinery, and other goods to assist in the resettlement of Jewish refugees.<sup>118</sup>

Even with the memory of Nazi atrocities still fresh, many Germans objected to the idea of paying reparations. Critics decried reparations as victor's justice, an exercise in guilt-mongering, even as a Jewish conspiracy against the German nation. In the early days in particular, opponents sought to undermine the program by imposing tight deadlines and strict eligibility standards, including, for a time, a requirement that victims prove that their injuries flowed from "officially approved measures." Entire categories of victims were excluded from receiving reparations, including homosexuals, communists, and victims of the vast Nazi forced labor regime. Yet even admitting these limitations, the Holocaust programs represent the most ambitious social repair project in history. By the time of German reunification in 1990, the government of West Germany had dispensed some 80 billion DM in reparations, the bulk of it to individual victims and their survivors.<sup>119</sup>

## Holocaust Litigation in American Courts

Half a century after the end of World War II, the Holocaust reparations issue was reborn in a new venue: American courts. In 1996, a class-action lawsuit was filed in federal district court in Brooklyn against the three largest private banks in Switzerland, charging them, in essence, with trying to defraud Holocaust victims and their descendants by refusing to release assets deposited in them prior to World War II. (Among other devices, the banks insisted that heirs produce death certificates for deceased account holders, a condition that was impossible to meet in the circumstances of the Holocaust.) Facing protracted litigation and a public relations nightmare, the banks settled the suit for \$1.25 billion. In exchange, plaintiffs agreed to drop all future litigation against the banks, as well as the Swiss government and other Swiss corporations.<sup>120</sup>

Even at the time, there were some who saw the settlement more as a victory for the banks, which escaped future litigation for a relatively modest sum, than for Holocaust victims, the vast majority of whom received only token \$1,000 payments. But the precedent had been set, and more than forty class-action lawsuits followed, all filed in American courts against private corporations alleged to have profited from Nazi atrocities. Most of the suits pertained to the exploitation of forced laborers, a group excluded from previous Holocaust reparations programs. At least ten million people were compelled to work in the Nazi war machine during World War II, including Jews (many of whom labored in a dedicated “extermination through work” program) as well as non-Jews. Fifty years later, more than a million of those people survived, as did many of the companies for which they had labored. Some of these firms had operations in the United States, making them vulnerable to suit in American courts.<sup>121</sup>

Viewed purely in legal terms, the German cases were considerably weaker than the Swiss bank cases. In 1999, courts in New Jersey dismissed suits against Ford Motor Company (whose German subsidiary had employed slave labor during World War II), Siemens, and several other major multinational firms, citing the expiration of statutes of limitations as well as the terms of the treaties ending World War II. But the barrage of bad publicity, as well as mounting pressure from American political leaders, prompted the companies

to offer a settlement. According to the terms of the eventual agreement, German companies, with the assistance of the German government, made a one-time payment of \$7,500 to surviving “slave” laborers, chiefly Jewish survivors of the extermination-through-work program, with smaller payments to other surviving “forced” laborers, chiefly Eastern Europeans. The entire settlement, including a fund for indigent survivors and a small “Remembrance and Future Fund” to promote Holocaust education, totaled about ten billion DM (\$5 billion). In exchange, German companies and the German government were guaranteed “legal peace” from any further litigation in American courts. Appreciating the value of such an arrangement, the government of Austria and Austrian corporations immediately offered a forced-labor settlement of their own, valued at \$500 million, or one-tenth of the value of the German settlement.<sup>122</sup>

## Limits of Litigation

We shall return to the Holocaust reparations litigation, which served as the direct inspiration and model for a series of class-action lawsuits brought in the early 2000s by African Americans seeking reparations from American corporations alleged to have profited from slavery and the slave trade. In the present context, the Holocaust example is useful for illuminating the possibilities and pitfalls of litigation as a vehicle for pursuing reparations claims. As the Swiss and German suits showed, litigation often generates publicity, raising awareness of an injustice and increasing public pressure for action. Being linked to atrocious crimes can also be embarrassing to corporations, perhaps inducing them to settle. Should defendants refuse to settle, however, the impediments to successful reparations litigation are enormous, at least in American courts. As several of the speakers invited to Brown by the Steering Committee noted, reparations lawsuits, whether directed against the federal government or private corporations, face a host of procedural hurdles before they can even be heard on the merits, including the government’s sovereign immunity from suit; expired statutes of limitations; problems of establishing standing and a justiciable case (essentially, the need to establish a link between a specific injury in the past and a specific plaintiff in the present); and the so-called “political questions” doctrine (the idea,

first articulated by John Marshall in the 1820s, that courts have no business intervening in matters properly belonging to the legislature). Some of these obstacles might be overcome: Congress has the authority to waive sovereign immunity and extend statutes of limitations; courts can be more or less strict in interpreting standing or the meaning of political questions. But in the present political circumstances, it is very difficult to imagine lawsuits seeking reparations for slavery or other historical injustices making any headway in American courts.

Some of the scholars invited by the Steering Committee went further, questioning not just the practicality but also the wisdom of using litigation as the medium for confronting questions of historical injustice and social repair. While acknowledging that reparations suits are often filed as a last resort, these speakers suggested that courts of law, with their inherently adversarial structure, their focus on past injuries, and their narrow conceptions of “injury” and “settlement,” are precisely the wrong venue for promoting reconciliation and a better future. Not only does litigation risk pulling people into the “one-time payment trap,” but it also creates no opportunity for dialogue, for the descendants of victims and of perpetrators to exchange perspectives and to develop shared understandings of their past experience and present predicament. Such speakers were certainly not disavowing reparations per se, or the moral and political urgency of confronting legacies of injustice, but rather attempting to move a debate currently waged on narrowly legalistic grounds onto the broader terrain of history, memory, and moral obligation.<sup>123</sup>

---

*Some speakers questioned not only the practicality but also the wisdom of pursuing historical redress through litigation. While acknowledging that reparations suits are often filed as a last resort, these speakers suggested that courts of law, with their inherently adversarial structure, their focus on past injuries, and their narrow conceptions of “injury” and “settlement,” are precisely the wrong venue for promoting reconciliation and a better future.*

## Reparations Claims and the Passage of Time

Every exercise in retrospective justice is unique, as are the horrors that prompt it. Yet great historical crimes have at least one thing in common: all direct participants, both perpetrators and victims, eventually die. Their passing raises one final, thorny set of questions. What happens to reparations claims with the passage of time? Are the descendants of victims of gross human rights abuse ever entitled to redress (as they would be, say, in the case of a stolen painting) or do all such claims die with the original victim? Is the responsibility to make reparation ever handed down, or is that obligation also expunged after one generation? What about crimes — such as slavery and the transatlantic slave trade — that produced great wealth? Are the descendants of those responsible free to enjoy the fruits of injustice simply because they took no part in the original offense? All of these questions have both legal and ethical dimensions. They also have obvious relevance to the current American debate over reparations for slavery, an institution that ended in the United States before all currently living Americans were born.

---

*As vexed as reparations claims involving living victims can be, the conceptual and practical problems presented by multi-generational cases are far greater. But there are also obvious problems with limiting one's moral and political concern to "current" injustices. Not only does such a standard ignore the profound and lasting legacies of crimes against humanity, but it also invites societies emerging from atrocious pasts to temporize.*

If recent public opinion polls are any guide, a large majority of Americans, or at least of white Americans, are extremely skeptical of historical claims, insisting that only those who directly perpetrated an injustice can be held responsible for it and that only those who directly experienced the injustice have a right to reparation. This standard has the virtue of clarity. As vexed as reparations claims involving living victims can be, the conceptual and practical problems presented by multi-generational cases are far greater. Specifying the nature of the injury; determining the appropriate form of reparation; establishing the boundaries of the class of eligible recipients:



Gravestone of “Pero, an African Servant to the late Henry Paget,” and one of four enslaved Africans to work on the construction of the College Edifice, what is today University Hall. North Burial Ground, Providence.

all these problems and more escalate as the original offense becomes more remote in time. But there are also obvious problems with limiting one’s moral and political concern to “current” injustices. Not only does such a standard ignore the profound and lasting legacies of crimes against humanity — an issue to which we shall return — but it also invites societies emerging from atrocious pasts to temporize, to delay confronting historical injustice until all victims and perpetrators have passed away, at which point it becomes “too late” to act. Consider again the Korean “comfort women,” doggedly insisting on their rights to an unequivocal apology and state-funded reparations from the government of Japan for the horrors they experienced during World War II. These people are the direct victims of atrocious crimes. But the people upon whom their demands fall — the current government and population of

Japan — are not, except in a tiny number of cases, direct perpetrators. Indeed, the vast majority of Japanese people were not yet born when the offenses occurred. Does this fact absolve them of all moral obligation? Will delaying another decade or two, until all the women are dead, absolve them?

## Time, Responsibility, and the ‘Immigrant Problem’

Such questions turn not only on the meaning of time but also on our understanding of the nature of responsibility. As several speakers noted, one of the distinctive features of the current slavery reparations controversy in the United States, particularly when compared to retrospective justice debates in other societies, is its narrowly individualistic cast. Is person A responsible to pay reparations? Is person B entitled to receive them? To some extent, this reflects the legalistic terms in which the debate has recently been waged, but it also bespeaks a deeply individualistic strain in American culture. Yet societies, even societies like the United States, are not merely aggregations of individual atoms colliding in space. We live in communities, many of which began before we were born and will continue after we die. We are members of families, students and teachers in universities, employees of corporations, adherents of religious organizations, members of voluntary associations, and citizens and residents of cities, states, and a nation. We draw a host of material and nonmaterial benefits from these affiliations. To study or teach at an institution like Brown, to live in a country like the United States, is to inherit a wealth of resources and opportunities passed down from previous generations. Is it so unreasonable to suggest that, in assuming the benefits of these historical legacies, we also assume some of the burdens and responsibilities attached to them?

This question also casts light on the “immigrant problem,” which is frequently cited in popular discussions in the United States as an unanswerable objection to historical redress claims. As critics of slavery reparations note, a majority of the people living in America today are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants who entered the country after the final abolition of slavery in 1865. What possible responsibilities can people bear for an institution that ended before their ancestors even arrived in the country? Yet as several visiting speakers argued, the issue is more complicated than it initially

appears. In the first place, immigration and naturalization were not privileges accorded to all. One of the very first laws enacted after the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, the 1790 Naturalization Act, specified that only immigrants who were “free and white” could become American citizens. This linking of race and citizenship was a direct outgrowth of slavery, and it persisted, for most practical purposes, until the 1950s and ’60s. In the second place, immigrants came to the United States chiefly because of the wealth and opportunity it offered — wealth and opportunity piled up by the labors of previous generations of Americans, including the unpaid labor of slaves. To be sure, newly arrived immigrants endured discrimination and hardship, but they also drew immediate and substantial benefits from these accumulated assets. They drank from municipal water systems, walked city streets, and sent their children to public schools, all of which had been built by the labor and taxes of previous generations. In accepting these benefits, they also accepted certain responsibilities. Immigrants were (and are) required to pay taxes on the national debt, for example, even though that debt was accumulated before they entered the country. The underlying principle — that one who assumes the benefits of a legacy also assumes any attendant liabilities — is the same whether one is an immigrant or a native-born American.

Whether slavery constitutes some kind of historical burden or liability on the current generation of Americans is, of course, a question on which different people have sharply different opinions. It is also one of the central questions in the slavery reparations debate, to which we now turn.



## Confronting Slavery's Legacy: The Reparations Question

AS WE HAVE SEEN, the quest for retrospective justice is a global phenomenon, with a host of different groups proffering claims for some form of acknowledgment or material consideration for historical injuries. In the United States alone, legislatures and courts have entertained reparations claims from Japanese Americans interned during World War II; Indigenous Hawaiians seeking compensation for lost land and sovereignty; Native Americans seeking the return of ancestral land and sacred relics; Korean “comfort women”; American veterans subjected to severe abuse in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps during World War II; descendants of victims of the Armenian genocide pursuing unpaid insurance claims from American corporations; Jews and non-Jews compelled to work as slave laborers by the Nazis; families of Holocaust victims seeking the return of artwork, bank deposits, and other assets stolen during World War II; and the families of people killed in the 9/11 terror attacks, to name only some of the recent cases. But the claims that have generated the most controversy — the claims that most Americans immediately think of when they hear the word “reparations” — are those advanced by African Americans seeking redress for the injuries of slavery.<sup>124</sup>

## The Modern Reparations Debate and Brown University

While debates over reparations for slavery have a long history in the United States, the recent salience of the issue can be traced to the 1990s. Inspired in part by the successes of other historical redress movements, a growing number of African American individuals and groups began to press for reparations for the injuries of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The resulting debate, unfolding in legislatures, federal courts, and in the court of public opinion, has proceeded along distinctly racial lines. Contrary to some media portrayals, not all African Americans advocate slavery reparations. Many regard the idea with indifference; some are vociferously opposed. But when surveyed on the matter, a majority of Black Americans express support for some form of reparations for slavery — somewhere between half and two-thirds, depending on how the question is posed. White Americans, in contrast, are almost unanimously opposed — and often intensely hostile — to the idea, particularly when the question centers on monetary payments. The most systematic study, conducted by scholars at Harvard and the University of Chicago, found that just four percent of white respondents believed that “the Federal Government [should] pay monetary compensation to African Americans whose ancestors were slaves.”<sup>125</sup>

---

*The theft of the newspapers by student protestors was widely cited in the national media as evidence of Brown’s failure to nurture the free exchange of ideas. Among the newspapers chiding the University was the New York Times, which noted that “overlooked in much of the uproar over [the Herald’s] publication of the advertisement is the deeper national debate on reparations over slavery, which could have found fertile ground for discussion on this campus.”*

Just as Brown was an important terrain in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century battles over slavery and abolition, so did it find itself thrust into the middle of the modern slave reparations debate. In 2001, conservative author David Horowitz placed a paid advertisement, “Ten Ideas Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea — and Racist Too,” in college newspapers around the

country, including the *Brown Daily Herald*. As its title suggests, the advertisement offered a series of arguments against reparations: that Black as well as white Americans had benefited economically from slavery; that reparations had already been paid in the form of “welfare benefits and racial preferences”; that “most Americans have no connection (direct or indirect) to slavery”; that the continuing “hardships” of some African Americans were a “result of failures of individual character rather than the after-effects of racial discrimination and a slave system that ceased to exist well over a century ago.” The appearance of the advertisement provoked controversy on several college campuses, nowhere more than at Brown, where a group of student protestors demanded that the *Herald* print a retraction or at least relinquish the money it had received to run the ad. When the editors refused, some of the protestors stole an entire day’s press run of the paper. The papers were later returned, but the story of the theft appeared in newspapers all across the United States, often accompanied by editorials pillorying Brown for its failure to protect the free exchange of ideas. Among the newspapers chiding the University was the *New York Times*, which noted that “overlooked in much of the uproar over [the *Herald’s*] publication of the advertisement is the deeper national debate on reparations over slavery, which could have found fertile ground for discussion on this campus.”<sup>126</sup>

The issue resurfaced at Brown in 2002, with the filing of the first in a series of class-action lawsuits by descendants of African American slaves seeking monetary damages from private corporations alleged to have profited from slavery and the slave trade. As fate would have it, the first defendant in the first suit was FleetBoston, a bank whose lineage traces back to the Providence Bank, founded by the four Brown brothers in 1791. While Brown was not a named party in the action, it was mentioned (along with Harvard) in the narrative portion of the complaint as an example of a wealthy institution with assets derived from slavery and the slave trade. A few days later, Harvard University Law Professor Charles Ogletree, chair of a recently established Reparations Coordinating Committee, published an opinion essay in the *New York Times* announcing that Brown, Yale, and Harvard were all “probable targets” of a lawsuit to be filed by his organization later that year.<sup>127</sup>

The threatened lawsuit was never filed. As for the other suits, federal courts have dismissed virtually all of them on various procedural grounds.

At this writing, there seems to be little chance that federal courts will entertain slavery reparations claims. But this outcome was not clear when the Steering Committee began its work, which doubtless accounts for some of the public interest aroused by news of the Committee's appointment.

## Reparations in Historical Perspective

In keeping with its charge from President Simmons, the Steering Committee devoted a great deal of attention to the slavery reparations issue. We organized several programs on the topic, hosting public addresses by prominent supporters and critics of reparations, as well as by scholars studying the issue's legal, theological, political, and philosophical underpinnings. Our goal, again in keeping with our charge, was not to resolve the issue but rather to "provide factual information and critical perspectives" to enrich discussion of the issue on our campus and in the nation as a whole. As our research proceeded, we became particularly interested in the historical roots of the reparations issue, a context that is almost completely ignored in the current controversy. What actually happened when slavery was abolished, first in northern states like Rhode Island and later in the American South? What burdens did slavery impose — not simply on the formerly enslaved, but on the nation as a whole — and what attempts were made to alleviate them? What forms have demands for redress taken at different times, and what responses have they elicited? In short, where did the reparations issue come from?

---

**And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.**

**Deuteronomy 15:13–15**

Probably the most striking thing that our investigation revealed was just how long the debate has raged. In both the North and the South, the post-emancipation years saw widespread acknowledgment of slavery's terrible legacy, as well as a variety of proposals for remedying it, from the colonization of Black people beyond the borders of the United States to programs of land redistribution and publicly funded education. A few such programs were begun. But in the end, very little was done to compensate the newly free for their years of unremunerated toil, and still less was done to bridge the racial chasm that slavery had carved in the nation. On the contrary, the years after abolition saw an intensification of white racist attitudes, accompanied by the enactment of policies designed to ensure continued Black subordination and to perpetuate the economic disparities inherited from slavery. What bearing this history has on current reparations demands is an issue on which different readers will draw different conclusions, but it certainly deserves to be entered into the debate.

## Reparations Arguments in the Eighteenth Century

Surely the most common misconception about the slavery reparations issue is that it is new — a “scam” (in the words of a recent *Providence Journal* editorial) “devised by trial lawyers to keep the victim industry humming and themselves rich.” In fact, the debate reaches back to the eighteenth century, with Providence as one of the main theaters. The Quakers who spearheaded the anti-slavery movement in Rhode Island were virtually unanimous in insisting that manumitted slaves were entitled to reparations from their masters, finding warrant in Scripture (particularly the Book of Deuteronomy, which enjoins masters to share their estates with former slaves as a show of respect and appreciation) as well as in the demands of plain justice. If holding another person in slavery was sinful, the Quakers reckoned, then surely perpetrators should atone for the offense by offering some kind of amends to their victims. Moses Brown had not yet been formally admitted to Quaker meeting when he manumitted his slaves in 1773, but he recognized this obligation, providing his former slaves with access to land and a promise of education for their children.<sup>128</sup>

In 1783, the Massachusetts legislature entertained one of the earliest extant reparations petitions. The appellant was an aged African-born woman named Belinda, who sought a small portion of the estate of her erstwhile master, Isaac Royall. A British loyalist, Royall had fled Massachusetts shortly after the battles of Lexington and Concord. His property was confiscated by the legislature, and Belinda, who had served him for forty years, became free. But she was old and without any means to provide for herself and her invalid daughter, forcing her to turn to the state. While the petition's authorship is unclear — other sources suggest that Belinda was illiterate — there is no doubting the power of the words, which traced her life from her capture in Africa to her current plight, in which, “by the very laws of the land, [she] is denied one morsel of that immense wealth, a part whereof hath been accumulated by her own industry, and the whole augmented by her servitude.” Whether motivated by sympathy, principle, or the pleasure of disbursing the estate of a disgraced Loyalist, the Massachusetts legislature awarded Belinda and her daughter a £15 annual pension, though it is unclear how long the payments were made.<sup>129</sup>

---

*The 1784 Rhode Island Gradual Abolition Law specified that the children of slaves were to be “instructed in reading, writing, and Arithmetic” at public expense. A year later, however, the legislature amended the law, after towns protested that providing “Support and Education” to the children of slaves was “extremely burthensome.”*

## Freedom Dues and the Problem of Gradual Abolition

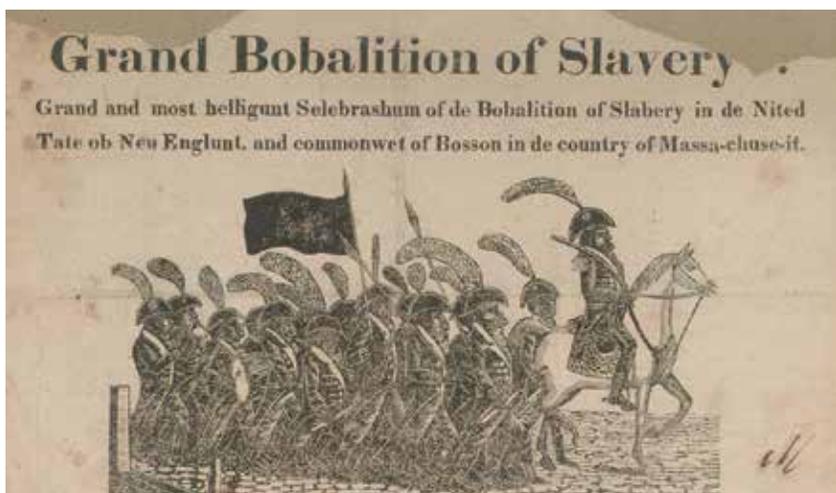
The idea that former slaves were entitled to reparations would not have seemed outlandish to most eighteenth-century Americans. In a society in which individual towns were responsible for the indigent, it was customary to provide the newly free with some form of provision to ensure that they did not become “chargeable” to the public. Apprentices acquired marketable skills as well as an elementary education. Indentured servants received “freedom dues” upon the end of their terms, typically land and a suit of clothes, to mark their new status. The question, put simply, was whether Black people

emerging into freedom would receive similar consideration. The problem was complicated, in Rhode Island and in most other northern states, by the nature of the gradual abolition process. Rhode Island's abolition law freed no one, but merely specified that individuals born in the state after March 1, 1784, would be free. The issue of slavery reparations was thus entangled with the immediate question of providing for the maintenance of small children whose parents, or at least mothers, were still enslaved.

The Rhode Island legislature recognized the problem, and debated how to address it. In the original Gradual Abolition Act, infants were left in the care of their mothers, while the responsibility for supporting them was placed on individual towns. This responsibility included a publicly funded education. In a passage that clearly bore the imprint of Moses Brown, the act specified that "such Children be educated in the Principles of Morality and Religion, and instructed in reading, writing, and Arithmetic"—a promise that routinely appeared in indenture agreements involving white children, but that had never previously been applied to Black children. A year later, however, the legislature amended the law, after towns protested that providing "Support and Education" to the children of slaves was "extremely burthensome." The new act shifted the onus back onto individual masters, who became responsible for the upkeep of their female slaves' freeborn children. To compensate the masters for assuming these costs, as well as for the loss of valuable property, the amended law required such children to serve their mothers' owners—in effect, to serve as slaves—for terms of twenty-one years. The amended law said nothing about compensating or educating the newly free. The promise of publicly funded education simply fell away.<sup>130</sup>

## After Slavery: Free People of Color in Rhode Island

In the end, Rhode Island's newly free received nothing, entering society not as independent citizens but as quasi-slaves, members of an impoverished and degraded class. A kind of self-fulfilling cycle was created, with Blacks' degraded condition offering seeming proof of prevailing assumptions about their innate inferiority and dependence, thus justifying continued discrimination against them. Racial lines hardened. Free people of color faced exclusion from public facilities and all but the most menial jobs. They were



**“Bobalition” broadside, New England, c. 1830. A common form of racist caricature, such broadsides mocked Black pretensions to freedom and citizenship.**

subject to a nightly curfew, enforced by white patrols, and required to “bind out” their children as apprentices, as insurance against “idleness.” In 1798, the Rhode Island legislature, alarmed by an apparent increase in the free Black population, made it more difficult for masters to free their slaves, while also increasing the penalties for anyone caught abetting fugitives. Another law, passed the same year, prohibited the marriage of “any white person with any Negro, Indian, or mulatto.” (The law apparently did not prevent sexual congress across the color line, since two years later the legislature barred Black women, free or slave, from bringing paternity suits against white men.) Rhode Island was also one of two New England states to racialize the franchise. In 1822, a six-person committee of the legislature (including five Brown alumni and two members of the Brown Corporation) inserted the word “white” into the state’s voting laws, disenfranchising even the small number of Black men who met the property qualification.<sup>131</sup>

In Rhode Island, as elsewhere, the impulse to exclude free Black people existed in counterpoint with the impulse to control them. During slavery, most Black people lived in or near their masters’ homes, ensuring close supervision. The emergence of distinct Black neighborhoods after emancipation generated great anxiety among whites, who saw such districts as dangerously disorderly,

vice-ridden places. The result, in cities all across the North, was a wave of “race riots”—essentially pogroms, in which white mobs rampaged through Black neighborhoods, burning buildings and beating inhabitants. Providence experienced two such riots. Hardscrabble, an aptly named Black neighborhood, was attacked by a mob in 1824. Snow Town was razed seven years later. Victims of the attacks were not compensated for their losses, nor were the perpetrators punished for their crimes. The Hardscrabble rioters were prosecuted, but they escaped with acquittals or token sentences after a rousing speech by their defense attorney, Joseph Tillinghast, a Brown alumnus and future member of the Brown Corporation, who compared the destroyed neighborhood to “ancient Babylon,” with its “graven images” and “idolatrous rites and sacrifices.” Hardscrabble, Tillinghast declared, was a “nuisance” and “sink of vice” whose destruction was a “benefit to the morals of the community.”<sup>132</sup>

## Black Rhode Islanders and the Quest for Education

Black Rhode Islanders did not simply submit to this regime. They created businesses, organized churches and benevolent societies, and defended their right to urban space. The Hardscrabble riot, for example, was sparked by a group of Black men refusing to cede the sidewalk to a group of approaching whites. Above all, they sought education. Denied the publicly funded education pledged in the original act of abolition and excluded from most private academies, Blacks in Providence launched a subscription campaign to build a school of their own. The fruit of their efforts was the “African Union Meeting and School-House,” which opened in 1821, on land donated by Moses Brown.<sup>133</sup>

---

*In 1858 and '59, as the nation tumbled toward civil war, the politics of Rhode Island were consumed by the debate over integrating public schools. The terms of the debate eerily anticipated the struggle over southern integration a century later, with proponents of integration speaking of benefits of mingling “different classes of children” and their more numerous opponents dismissing the idea as the work of irresponsible “new comers and agitators.”*

# Hard Scrabble,

## OR MISS PHILISES BOBALITON

O Dear, dear what can the de matter be,  
Dear, dear what can de matter be,  
Pomp goes as long down Philise away,  
His pomposity lay out a shank and aglow,  
A Fool and a Cragge and his Tailoring to get on,  
And a bunch of fine feathers to dress his bowen so gay  
O Dear, dear, &c.

O, O, so pecessible how we live in Hard Scrabble,  
Till round and down away by the riddle,  
Who tack as the Fatness and a High diddle diddle,  
Downside our deating, much Drunken and Cruelty,  
My Gin Jug and Spittle, my Petrar and Lullie,  
My Chandeliers, Chairs, and poor Pompey's Fiddle,  
O Dear, dear, &c.

O! O! such a time I never before see,  
De Moblin come with a flock of mad bawblee bee,  
Fly upon my head and scatter de feather!  
Aunt as will think thee, till Kiverance and Shewen,  
And close us poor wretches away from our bowen,  
To such a state of dear exposure to de weather.  
O Dear, dear, &c.

Pomp and I had just gone on a swim and out cruise,  
And just popping off and down of our classes & messieurs,  
When deet situation without a forewarning—  
Every window was smash to and, O, goodly gin!  
Pomp says from de table and cry "Fly Fiddle Fly,"  
So we both shall be nation'd in deet narrow meeting,  
O Dear, dear, &c.

O, de next morning such condition our village,  
No late descent of revolution, riot and pillage,  
O! it near looks de house of my poor aged mother!  
De situation and walls were deen making as falling,  
Pine Cone's last pres't up, and Conco's lay sprawling,  
And nater goodly gin! making left but de riddle!  
O Dear, dear, &c.

De maid Char & her's just lay so thick in Hard Scrabble,  
I was judge hold up my shirt to prevent de them trouble,  
And de girls for a while was appeal and less fricker,  
How lay my new husband and dare Pompey's garter,  
And my splatter and Coffee Cup lay'd in Mortar,  
In intricate run all lay together.  
O Dear, dear, &c.

Pomp has told me of Karpelopos Squall and Ternades  
Tremulous, Harlequin, Gains and Valerian,  
Of battle or sea and bottle or shore,  
Of Charles and of Honorate, Indians and Maori,  
Of Egypt and Cossack's Linn and Dross,  
But he never has saw such destruction before,  
O Dear, dear, &c.

Some few weeks after came were right for a trial,  
Bare wavy Peter and Moses and Fat and Abial,  
And some forty or fifty or twenty or so,  
But de damage was judge was by some shank of nature,  
Mr. Nobody did it? O what a vile creature,  
So de court had out, No Gentry and not was in go,  
O Dear what a Rogue Mr. Nobody,

Mr. Nobody, watch! some invisible do'd  
De light with black in a moment he had  
See what he did heat in a month ago,  
He smash a hiding near four million high,  
And level the whole in a twink of an eye,  
Pray who did it? Why Nobody know,  
O Dear, dear, &c.

I guess it had some de or branch till he away,  
And no longer live free, honest and lary,  
But gain honest living by even do our brow,  
Depend on de when this world's a trouble or tank us,  
But de good people of Providence will always respect us,  
As they are want to respect all good people ever,  
O Dear, dear, &c.

So Miss Boston keep house your lary black riddle,  
Nor compel them seek shelter again in Hard Scrabble,  
For every smugly should stick to de row,  
For should they cut us guess they may find it had water,  
We're plenty of Tax and de ground would and Father,  
And we're Pate to pick you all out of shoe,  
O Dear, dear, &c.

So while Pomp were a little by honest day labor,  
I'll work and make soap for some of my neighbors,  
And till by industry as soon as I can do  
Pomp know by your Fiddle & I'll smash de Gin Bottle  
And soon we'll be able to build up our house  
And more steady course we both will prove,  
O Dear, dear, and so fort.

Broadside, c. 1824, ridiculing victims of the Hardscrabble riot and promising the same to other Black people settling in the city.

After decades of petitions and proposals, the Rhode Island state legislature finally created a system of public education in 1828. But the system was racially segregated, with Blacks in Providence confined to a single, overcrowded school offering only elementary instruction. The segregated system persisted until the late 1850s, when Black citizens, inspired by successful litigation in neighboring Massachusetts, launched a campaign to integrate public schools. In 1858 and '59, as the nation tumbled toward civil war, the politics of Rhode Island were consumed by the debate, the terms of which eerily anticipated the struggle over integrating southern schools a century later. While proponents of

integration spoke of the principles of democracy and the benefits of mingling “different classes of children,” their more numerous opponents dismissed the proposal as the work of irresponsible “new comers and agitators.” Integrationists “would see our public schools quite broken up, and our means of public education quite destroyed, rather than that one little nigger boy should be compelled to go to the school that has been assigned to him,” the editors of the *Providence Journal* opined. “Nor is it proper,” they added in a subsequent editorial, “that our public education, supported at such great cost, should be made subordinate to any theories of a social equality that does not exist and never has existed . . . [S]eparation of the negro children from the white children . . . is best for both.”<sup>134</sup>

## Abolishing Southern Slavery, 1862–1865

The struggles over the meaning of Black freedom in Rhode Island and other northern states would be repeated, in different terms and on a vastly greater scale, in the American South. Southern slavery did not end through gradualist legislation but in the context of civil war. In April 1862, a year after the commencement of hostilities, the U.S. Congress passed the Compensated Emancipation Act, abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. The compensation referred to in the title went not to the newly free but to their former owners, who received, on average, \$300 from the federal government for each emancipated slave. Six months later, President Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, to take effect on January 1, 1863. As numerous historians have noted, the proclamation freed no one immediately; its provisions applied only to regions still in rebellion, leaving slavery intact in the border states and other areas under Union occupation. Even so, the proclamation radically altered the character of the war, transforming the advancing Union Army into an army of liberation. The proclamation also included provisions for enlisting Black soldiers, nearly a quarter million of whom eventually served in Union forces, further consolidating Black claims to freedom and citizenship. With the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in December 1865, slavery in the United States was formally abolished, and four million men, women, and children became free.<sup>135</sup>

## Reconstruction and the Reparations Question

The Civil War was followed by the era of Reconstruction. While much about the period is disputed, certain facts are clear. In the immediate aftermath of the war, southern legislatures, still dominated by the old planter class, sought to recreate slavery by other means, imposing curfews, vagrancy statutes, and other “Black Codes” designed to restrict the physical and economic mobility of the newly free. This period was followed, from 1866 to 1876, by Congressional, or Radical, Reconstruction, which saw an attempt to extend basic rights of citizenship to African Americans. These years were highlighted by the adoption of two more amendments to the U.S. Constitution: the Fourteenth Amendment, which barred states from discriminating on the grounds of race, color, or prior condition of servitude; and the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited states from imposing racially based restrictions on voting. Over the next few years, southern Blacks entered the political system, voting and serving in public office, including in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. The enfranchisement of African Americans generated bitter controversy. As in the post-emancipation North, the racial ideas forged in the crucible of slavery did not simply disappear with abolition; on the contrary, they became sharper, as white southerners found themselves forced to compete economically and politically with their former bondsmen. The result was a concerted campaign of violence and intimidation, culminating in the restoration of avowedly white supremacist regimes in all of the southern states. With the withdrawal of federal troops from the South in 1877, the Reconstruction experiment was essentially over.<sup>136</sup>

Though the term “reparations” was rarely, if ever, used, emancipation triggered a wide-ranging debate over how and whether to provide for the newly free, a debate that began while the war was still going on and continued even after the collapse of Reconstruction. For some, including Abraham Lincoln for a time, the solution appeared to lie in government-subsidized colonization. Convinced that white southerners would never accept their former slaves as political equals, colonizationists argued that it was in Black people’s own interests to leave America and start afresh in a country of their own. Others insisted that African Americans had a fundamental right to remain in the United States, sharing in the wealth and opportunity that their unpaid labor

had helped to create. A few argued that freedpeople were entitled to receive back wages for their years in slavery, offering various calculations of the amount due. At least one freedman sent a bill to his former owner for his years of unpaid labor. In the end, however, the reparations debate after the Civil War came to focus on land — the proverbial “forty acres and a mule.”<sup>137</sup>

## Forty Acres and a Mule

Few phrases in American history evoke such passion — or such disparate understandings — as forty acres and a mule. For many whites, at the time and still today, the idea of the federal government handing out land to freedpeople was and is a harebrained notion — “the Negroes’ forty acre delusion,” to quote one historian. For many African Americans, on the other hand, the granting of forty acres of land was a solemn promise on which the nation has yet to make good. Not surprisingly, the issue looms large in the modern slavery reparations movement. Plaintiffs in several prominent reparations suits have cited the promise of forty acres as the basis for tort action or for calculating the damages due to African Americans. (The most generous calculation, based on average southern land values in 1865 and six percent interest per annum, puts the current value of forty acres at about \$1.5 million.) The power of the idea is also apparent in the designation of H.R. 40, a bill proposed by Congressman John Conyers (D-Mich.) to convene a national commission to study slavery and its legacy and to make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies. Originally introduced as H.R. 3745, the bill was later renamed H.R. 40 to link it with the historic claim to forty acres.<sup>138</sup>

---

*Few phrases in American history evoke such passion as “forty acres and a mule.” For many whites, at the time and still today, the idea of dispensing land to freedpeople was and is a delusion. For many African Americans, on the other hand, the promise of forty acres of land was a solemn pledge on which the nation has yet to make good. Not surprisingly, the issue looms large in the modern slavery reparations movement.*

Today, as at the time, the status of the forty acre claim rests on the meaning of a series of laws and orders promulgated during and immediately after the Civil War. In 1862, shortly after the war began, Congress passed an act permitting the U.S. government to confiscate the property of those who had taken up arms against it. Most of the subsequent controversy over land redistribution centered on such property. What is often overlooked in discussions today is the fact that the bill authorized confiscation for only one generation, in deference to the U.S. Constitution's prohibition of bills of attainder; after the original owner died, title to the land was to revert to his heirs. Similar uncertainties underlay General Sherman's famous Field Order #15 of January 1865, the order from which the phrase "forty acres and a mule" comes. Finding the mobility of his army hampered by thousands of Black refugees, Sherman designated a swath of abandoned rebel lands, stretching south from Charleston and thirty miles inland from the sea, for the exclusive occupation of Blacks. The order, which conferred only possessory, or temporary, title, specified that the land be divided into homesteads not exceeding forty acres per family, with use rights to surplus army mules for plowing. Six weeks later, the U.S. Congress gave an apparent statutory basis to Sherman's order when it passed the first Freedmen's Bureau Act. The act empowered the newly created bureau to resettle former slaves (and white refugees who had remained loyal to the Union) onto homesteads not exceeding forty acres, granting them an exclusive right to occupy the land for three years, in exchange for a nominal rent. At the end of the term, occupants would have an option to purchase the land. But this bill too was ambiguous, specifying that purchasers would receive only "such title . . . as the United States can convey" — an acknowledgment of Congress' own uncertainty of its right to dispose of the land permanently.<sup>139</sup>

Even these tentative steps were too much for Andrew Johnson, who acceded to the presidency after Lincoln's assassination. A former slaveowner, Johnson had accepted emancipation during the Civil War, but he was no friend to racial equality. "This is a country for white men," he once declared, "and as long as I am President, it shall be a government for white men." True to his word, Johnson issued blanket pardons to former rebels and ordered the return of confiscated and abandoned land to its original owners. Black people occupying the land were given the option of signing labor contracts with restored white landlords or leaving. When Congress passed a second Freedmen's

Bureau bill in 1866, extending the life of the bureau, Johnson vetoed it, arguing that it conferred on Black people rights that the government had never granted to “our own people.” Johnson’s veto of the bill, as well as of the landmark 1866 Civil Rights bill, contributed to the escalating conflict between the executive and legislative branches of the government, which culminated in the President’s impeachment and near removal from office. But on the issue of land redistribution, the President carried the day. Congress eventually enacted a second Freedmen’s Bureau bill (over Johnson’s veto), but the idea of redistributing land to former slaves had disappeared. What little land Black southerners ultimately obtained from the federal government came not as reparations for slavery but through the operation of the 1866 Southern Homestead Act, which opened up a portion of public lands for private purchase, with freedmen (and loyal whites) enjoying an exclusive option for the first six months. But few former slaves had money to buy the land, most of which ended up in the hands of private timber companies.<sup>140</sup>

---

**The islands from Charleston, south, the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea, and the country bordering the St. Johns River, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the settlement of the negroes made free by acts of war and the proclamation of the President of the United States . . . each family shall have a plot of not more than (40) forty acres of tillable ground. . . . In order to carry out this system of settlement, a general officer will be detailed as Inspector of Settlements . . . who will furnish personally to each head of family, subject to the approval of the President of the United States, a possessory title in writing, giving as near as possible a description of boundaries; and who shall adjust all claims or conflicts that may arise under the same, subject to the like approval, treating such titles altogether as possessory . . .**

**Field Order 15, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman, January 16, 1865**

Whether the facts of the postwar struggle over land redistribution bolster the claims of advocates of reparations or their opponents is a matter of interpretation. Clearly there was widespread debate about the issue. Radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens, Wendell Phillips, and Charles Sumner warned that, without a thoroughgoing change in southern land titles, the old master class would retain political power and freedpeople would remain in a position of abject dependence. Others warned that redistributing land would itself breed dependency, teaching the freedpeople to rely on federal largesse rather than on their own industry. Still others opposed land redistribution precisely to ensure continued Black dependency. If Black people were given land, one Pennsylvania senator asked, “Who would black boots and curry the horses, who would do the menial offices of the world?” As for the freedpeople themselves, most assumed that the land they had been allotted under Field Order #15 and later under the first Freedmen’s Bureau Act would be theirs in perpetuity, and the federal government’s decision to restore it to white rebels was a shattering and bewildering betrayal. One hundred and forty years later, the phrase “forty acres and a mule” still carries the resonance of their feelings.<sup>141</sup>

## Black Life in the Era of Jim Crow

The single inescapable fact is that freedpeople did not receive land during Reconstruction. Nor did they receive monetary compensation, access to credit, use rights to surplus government mules, or anything else that might have provided a material foundation for their newly acquired civil and political rights. In the decades that followed, they would be dispossessed of these rights as well. By century’s end, Black southerners had been effectively disenfranchised and consigned to a rigid system of “Jim Crow” segregation, encompassing everything from schools and streetcars to the separate “white” and “colored” Bibles used to swear witnesses in southern courtrooms. The process was abetted by a conservative U.S. Supreme Court, which narrowed Fourteenth Amendment guarantees of due process and equal protection of the laws down to a nullity while giving a constitutional seal of approval to the various devices — poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, closed primaries — invented by southern states to nullify Blacks’ right to vote.

Ultimately it would take nearly a century, until the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, for African Americans to reclaim the rights they had briefly enjoyed during Reconstruction.<sup>142</sup>

---

*While Radical Republicans promoted land redistribution as the only way to guarantee the economic independence of the newly free, others opposed it precisely to ensure continued Black dependency. If Black people were given land, one Pennsylvania senator asked, “Who would black boots and curry the horses, who would do the menial offices of the world?”*

The character of the political and economic regime that emerged during the Jim Crow era was starkly revealed in convict leasing, one of the signatures of the “New South” criminal justice system. Under the system, the roots of which traced back to slavery, Black male prisoners were leased out as forced laborers. The prisoners, many of whom had been arrested for vagrancy or other petty crimes, worked not only on roads and other public works but also in private enterprises, including farms, mines, and factories. Numerous historians have documented the substantial profits that flowed to the system’s operators, as well as the brutal treatment meted out to leased Black convicts, many of whom died before completing their sentences.<sup>143</sup>

White supremacy was reinforced by other, less dramatic forms of social control, ranging from cultural practices such as “coon songs” and blackface minstrelsy to scholarly treatises in emerging disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. Social Darwinism, the signature ideology of the late nineteenth century, gave a seemingly scientific imprimatur to stereotypes of Blacks as “unfit” racial stock, incapable of bearing the responsibilities of citizenship. Drawing on what was later shown to be specious census data, many scholars predicted that African Americans would soon become extinct. Incapable of surviving as free people in a competitive economy, Black people in America were destined to die out, just like the allegedly “vanishing Indian.” White insurance companies used such beliefs to justify their refusal to insure African Americans, a practice that continued long after the underlying arguments had been discredited.<sup>144</sup>

## Lynch Law and the 2005 U.S. Senate Apology

Black southerners resisted assaults on their freedom. They struggled to acquire land and voted when they could. They armed themselves, organizing militias and Union clubs to repel nightriders. Denied service by white banks, hotels, and insurance companies, they created their own. But resistance carried its own risks. Between 1880 and 1930, at least thirty-five hundred African Americans were lynched in the United States. As Memphis editor Ida B. Wells noted at the time, lynch mobs, while typically justifying their actions in terms of protecting white women from rapacious Black men, routinely targeted those who were economically successful or simply defiant. In virtually no cases were perpetrators convicted of or even tried for their crimes. Recognizing the impossibility of securing convictions in southern courts, activists waged a half-century campaign for a federal anti-lynching statute, but their bills invariably failed to pass in the U.S. Senate. It was this history that lay behind the 2005 Senate lynching apology.<sup>145</sup>

## Education and the Meaning of Black Freedom

If the struggle over land redistribution was the most important arena for determining the meaning of Black freedom after the Civil War, then the struggle over schooling was the second most important. In the nineteenth century, even more than in our own time, education was the cornerstone of America's democratic faith, the foundation of cherished ideas about opportunity, meritocracy, and mobility. It was also an arena in which the legacy of slavery could not have been more blatant: in most southern states, it was a crime to teach a slave to read. As a member of the Virginia state legislature declared in 1832, "we have, as far as possible, closed every avenue by which light can enter. If we could extinguish the capacity to see light, our work would be completed; they would then be on a level with the beasts of the field, and we should be safe."<sup>146</sup>

With the coming of emancipation, many people, Black and white, saw education as the best means to repair the damage of slavery and prepare the newly free for the full enjoyment of their rights as citizens. Even before the war was over, northern teachers and missionaries had begun flocking

south in what W.E.B. Du Bois later dubbed “the crusade of the New England schoolm’am.” Hundreds of schools were opened across the region, some by Black people themselves, others under the auspices of the Freedmen’s Bureau or reconstructed state governments. Though typically understaffed and underfunded, these schools enabled hundreds of thousands of African Americans, adults as well as children, to learn to read.<sup>147</sup>

Not everyone approved of the idea of educating freedpeople, and Black schools were a frequent target of vandals and arsonists. With the onset of Jim Crow, education came in for renewed assault. Though the Fourteenth Amendment prevented southern legislatures from closing Black schools outright, such schools were rigidly segregated and starved of resources. In contrast to the idea of redistributing land, the idea that former slaves were entitled to an education equal to that available to whites persisted in Republican Party circles for more than a generation. Three times in the 1880s Republicans in the House of Representatives passed the Blair Bill, offering states millions of dollars in federal funds for public schools, proportionate to their illiteracy rates — in effect, offering federal resources to underwrite the education of southern freedpeople. Three times Senate Democrats refused to allow the bill to come to a vote.<sup>148</sup>

---

*In no arena was the legacy of slavery more blatant than in education: in most southern states, it was a crime to teach a slave to read. “We have, as far as possible, closed every avenue by which light can enter,” a Virginia state legislator declared in 1832. “If we could extinguish the capacity to see light, our work would be completed; they would then be on a level with the beasts of the field, and we should be safe.”*

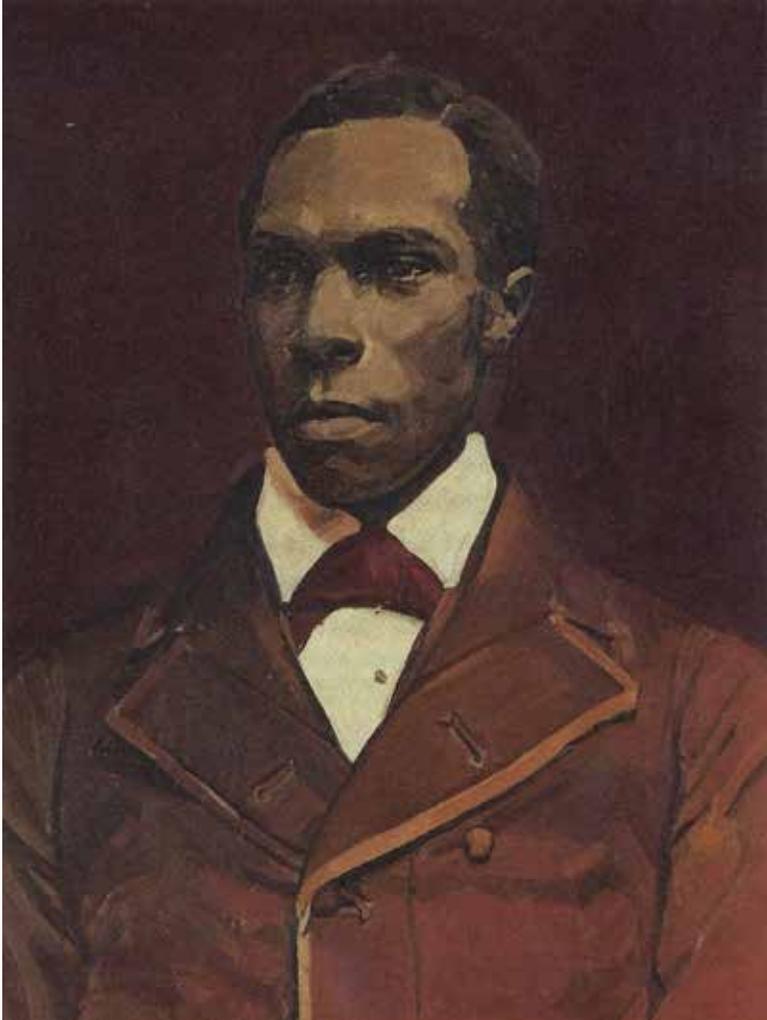
The dream of an equal education for former slaves was finally extinguished in 1896, with the Supreme Court’s embrace of the doctrine of “separate but equal” in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. Of course, separate facilities were never equal. Over the next half century, white students in southern schools routinely received five to ten times more funding per capita than their Black peers. Curricula in Black schools were canted toward “practical” subjects like agriculture and domestic science, intended to prepare Black students for the menial positions awaiting them. In many areas, instruction was limited to

the elementary grades, and even that was restricted to a few months per year to ensure that Black children's labor was available during planting and harvesting seasons. At the time of the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which finally repudiated the doctrine of "separate but equal," only about a third of African American children completed high school. In some southern states, the figure was less than ten percent. In sum, a medium that many in the 1860s had seen as the means to repair the legacy of slavery became a means of perpetuating that legacy for another century and beyond.<sup>149</sup>

## African Americans and Higher Education: The Case of Brown University

Educational inequality was even greater at the tertiary level. The Reconstruction era saw the creation of the South's first Black colleges, including Howard and Fisk, both founded in 1866. But the total number of students that these colleges could accommodate was initially very small — typically less than a hundred per year. The number of Black students in historically white universities was even smaller. One need look no further than the experience of Brown. Like many of its peer institutions, Brown did not admit Black students before the Civil War, at least not knowingly. In 1877, it produced its first two Black graduates, George Washington Milford and Inman Page. Over the next seventy years, from the end of Reconstruction through the end of World War II, Brown graduated about sixty more African Americans — a little less than one Black student per year. Many of these individuals, it should be noted, went on to lead careers of great distinction. Inman Page became a distinguished educator in the Oklahoma Territory, where his students included the novelist Ralph Ellison. John Hope, Class of 1894, became president of Atlanta University. (He also became the namesake of historian John Hope Franklin, one of the speakers hosted by the Steering Committee.) Fritz Pollard, Class of 1919, became the first African American coach in the National Football League. His classmate Rudolph Fisher was one of the great writers of the Harlem Renaissance, though at Brown he studied medicine. J. Saunders Redding, Class of 1928, became a distinguished author and scholar, a pioneer in the study of African American literature. In 1949, he spent a semester as a visiting professor at Brown, becoming the first Black

member of the University's faculty, before returning to his position at the historically Black Hampton Institute. At least half a dozen other graduates became university professors. Others became lawyers and doctors. Yet the number of Black students admitted to Brown did not increase beyond one or two a year until the 1950s.<sup>150</sup>



**In 1877, Inman Page and George Washington Milford became the first African Americans to graduate from Brown University. Portrait of Inman Page by Richard Yarde.**

---

The night school has been frequently disturbed. One evening a mob called out of the school house, the teacher, who upon presenting himself was confronted with four revolvers, and menacing expressions of shooting him, if he did not promise to quit the place, and close the school. The freedmen promptly came to his aid and the mob dispersed. About the 18th or 19th of the month . . . a formidable disturbance took place at the school. The same mob threatened to destroy the school that night, and the freedmen, learning this, assembled . . . at their place of instruction in a condition of self-defense.

**Captain C.M. Hamilton to the Office of the Adjutant General, 1866**

## Reparations Demands in the Age of Jim Crow

The dream of reparations for slavery did not end with Reconstruction: the late nineteenth century witnessed a variety of proposals. In the 1880s, Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, a Black political leader in Georgia during Reconstruction and later the chief apostle of the “back-to-Africa” movement, argued that African Americans were owed “forty billions of dollars for actual services rendered,” a figure based on two million people earning one hundred dollars per year for two hundred years. Turner offered to settle accounts for \$100 million, the amount he calculated was necessary to transport all African Americans to Liberia. Little came of the proposal, though it did receive a backhanded endorsement from two of the U.S. Senate’s most notorious white supremacists, Matthew Butler of South Carolina and John Morgan of Alabama, who in 1890 facetiously introduced a bill to transport any African Americans unhappy in the South to the Congo.<sup>151</sup>

The year 1890 also saw the submission to the U.S. Congress of an “Ex-slave Pension and Bounty Bill.” Written by a white southerner concerned with the plight of aged former slaves, the bill never came up for discussion in Congress. But it did become the unlikely foundation of the first popular reparations movement, the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Association, under the leadership of a Black seamstress named Callie House. House’s twenty-year campaign to get a slave pension bill onto the floor of Congress proved unavailing, but her efforts were sufficient to antagonize federal

officials, who prosecuted her for mail fraud. Though the government produced no evidence of misconduct, she was convicted nonetheless on grounds that her activities were *prima facie* fraudulent, since there was no realistic chance that Congress would enact the proposed legislation.<sup>152</sup>

House's efforts also laid the foundations of the first slave reparations lawsuit. In 1916, activists with ties to the ex-slave pension movement filed a suit in federal court, seeking some \$68 million from the U.S. government, a sum based on the revenues the government had collected in taxes and duties on southern cotton in the last years of slavery. Like later reparations suits against the federal government, the case, *Johnson v. McAdoo*, was dismissed on procedural grounds, including the government's sovereign immunity from suit.<sup>153</sup>

By the time *Johnson v. McAdoo* was filed, half a century had passed since emancipation, and a majority of former slaves had passed away. In decades to come, the balance would follow. One of the last recorded reparations claims by living survivors of slavery came in an appeal to President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, during the depths of the Great Depression. Was there "any way to consider the old slaves," the authors asked, some way of "giving us pensions in payment for our long days of servitude?" The answer, as on previous occasions, was no, but the timing of the question is noteworthy. Just one year later, Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act, creating the nation's first federal system of old-age pensions. The act is rightly remembered as the most important piece of social welfare legislation in American history. Less frequently noted is the fact that the system was deliberately designed to exclude domestic and agricultural workers, the two largest Black employment categories, thus ensuring that neither "the old slaves" nor millions of their descendants were eligible to receive benefits.<sup>154</sup>

## Race and the Making of the Welfare State

The exclusion of millions of African Americans from participation in the Social Security system was not mere happenstance. On the contrary, most of the signature programs of the New Deal — Social Security, industrial wage codes, agricultural subsidies — were crafted in ways that directed virtually all of the benefits to whites. Even governmental programs that were ostensibly colorblind often operated in racially discriminatory ways. Eligibility for Aid

to Dependent Children, for example, the primary component of what we today call “welfare,” was determined by local administrative bodies, which routinely denied Black people benefits to which they were entitled, a pattern that continued into the 1960s. The same would later be true of the G.I. Bill, under the auspices of which millions of returning servicemen were able to attend college. Contrary to modern stereotypes about Blacks and welfare, the American welfare state was a crucial element in perpetuating the tradition of white entitlement and Black exclusion inherited from slavery and Jim Crow.<sup>155</sup>

---

**Thus in the underground of our unwritten history, much of that which is ignored defies our inattention by continuing to grow and have consequences. . . . Perhaps if we learned more of what has happened and why it happened, we will learn more of who we really are, and perhaps if we learn more about our unwritten history, we won't be so vulnerable to the capriciousness of events as we are today. . . . Such individuals as Dr. Page . . . worked, it seems to me, to such an end. Ultimately theirs was an act of faith: faith in themselves, faith in the potentialities of their own people, and despite their social status as Negroes, faith in the potentialities of the democratic ideal. Coming so soon after the betrayal of the Reconstruction, theirs was a heroic effort. It is my good fortune that their heroism became my heritage, and thanks to Inman Page and Brown University is it also now a part of the heritage of all Americans who would become conscious of who they are.**

**Novelist Ralph Ellison, on his former teacher Inman Page, Brown Class of 1877, in *Going to the Territory*, 1986**

Nowhere was racial discrimination more blatant or of greater long-term significance than in federal housing policy. Facing a record number of home foreclosures during the Depression, the U.S. government set out to transform the way in which Americans were housed. The cornerstones of this system were the Home Owners Loan Corporation (H.O.L.C.), established in 1933, and the Federal Housing Administration (F.H.A), founded a year later. These two agencies, later joined by the Veterans Administration, essentially offered federal guarantees of private mortgages, greatly reducing the costs, complexity,

and risks of the existing system. The policy's object was to make America a nation of homeowners, and it succeeded spectacularly. In the space of four decades, some thirty-five million American families capitalized on these federal programs to add home equity to their estates. One can scarcely overstate the significance of this development. In a nation in which upward of eighty percent of wealth is accumulated through intergenerational transfers, and in which home equity represents the single largest component of such transfers, the H.O.L.C. and F.H.A. dramatically enhanced the life chances of well over one hundred million Americans.<sup>156</sup>

Virtually all of those Americans were white. The F.H.A. and H.O.L.C. circulated color-coded maps to real estate agents and lenders, with Black and mixed-race neighborhoods marked in red. Such neighborhoods were automatically classified as economically unstable, making residents ineligible to receive federal mortgage guarantees to purchase or repair homes. At the same time, the F.H.A. refused to underwrite mortgages to “incompatible groups”—that is, to African Americans trying to move into white neighborhoods—on the grounds that mixing people of different “social and racial classes” led to “instability and a reduction in values.” The explicitly racial language was later stricken from F.H.A. manuals, but the policy persisted. A study by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People found that Black people had been excluded from access to ninety-eight percent of all F.H.A.-guaranteed mortgages between 1948 and 1961, precisely the period in which the American suburban system was created. Only with the 1968 Fair Housing Act, enacted as a tribute to the slain Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., did racial discrimination in mortgage provision become illegal. By that time the racial character of America's cities and suburbs—and with it the racial character of the nation's public school system—had become firmly entrenched.<sup>157</sup>

---

*Was there “any way to consider the old slaves,” the authors of the appeal asked the President, some way of “giving us pensions in payment for our long days of servitude?” The answer, as on previous occasions, was no, but the timing is noteworthy. One year later, Roosevelt signed legislation creating the Social Security system—a system from which agricultural and domestic workers, the two largest Black employment categories, were excluded.*

## Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Revival of the Reparations Question

The 1968 Fair Housing Act, coming on the heels of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, represented the last great legislative victory of the Civil Rights era. In law, if not yet in practice, African Americans had finally achieved the full American citizenship promised a century before. Yet 1968 was also a year of bitter disillusionment, marked by the murder of Dr. King, the eruption of ghetto revolts in more than a hundred American cities, and a growing awareness of the profound economic disparities that continued to divide Black and white Americans, notwithstanding the recent legislative gains. As King himself famously put it, “What good is it to sit at a lunch counter if you can’t afford a hamburger?” The modern slave reparations movement was a product of this historical moment.

The slave reparations movement that emerged in the late 1960s was distinguished from its predecessors in at least two important respects. Most obviously, it was a movement of descendants of slaves rather than of the formerly enslaved themselves, all but a handful of whom had died. It was also a movement profoundly shaped by the contemporary Black Power movement, with its emphasis on Black autonomy and economic empowerment and its deep skepticism about the value of integration. The most visible of the new reparations organizations was the Republic of New Africa, a Black nationalist organization founded in 1968 in Detroit, site of the bloodiest of the era’s ghetto revolts. Founded by two brothers, Gaida and Imari Obadele (née Milton and Richard Henry), the Republic of New Africa demanded \$400 billion in “slavery damages” from the U.S. government, along with the cession of five southern states — Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina — as the territorial basis of a separate Black nation. (In the 1990s, Imari Obadele would reemerge as the president and founder of N’COBRA, the National Committee of Blacks for Reparations in America.)<sup>158</sup>

### The Black Manifesto

Detroit was also the birthplace of the “Black Manifesto.” Drafted at the National Black Economic Development Conference, which met in the city

in 1969, the manifesto was announced to the world a short time later when a group of civil rights movement veterans, led by James Forman, disrupted services at New York's Riverside Church to present its demands. Addressing "the White Christian Churches and the Jewish Synagogues in the United States of America and All Other Racist Institutions," the manifesto demanded \$500 million "as the beginning of the reparations due us as people who have been exploited and degraded, brutalized, killed, and persecuted." It went on to specify the uses to which the fund would be put, including the establishment of a southern land bank, the creation of Black publishing houses and television networks, a strike fund for Black workers, and the founding of a Black university. While authors of the Black Manifesto did not envision a separate Black nation, as leaders of the Republic of New Africa did, their proposals were clearly intended to enhance Black autonomy and self-determination.<sup>159</sup>

The Black Manifesto provoked a brief flurry of media comment, much of it condemning the disruptive tactics employed by Forman and his comrades. The substance of the appeal was largely ignored, or at best dismissed as hopelessly quixotic. "[T]here is neither wealth nor wisdom enough in the world to compensate in money for all the wrongs in history," the *New York Times* editorialized. The manifesto generated more sustained discussion in academic circles, including among legal scholars. Probably the most authoritative examination of the issue was *The Case for Black Reparations* by Boris Bittker, the Sterling Professor of Law at Yale. By his own account, Bittker began his research as a skeptic, and he emerged convinced that the legal obstacles to slavery reparations claims were indeed all but insurmountable, particularly when cast in terms of individual payments. But he also concluded that a compelling case for collective reparations could be made for the injuries of Jim Crow, especially for the long denial of equal education. To "concentrate on slavery," he wrote, "is to understate the case for compensation, so much so that one might almost suspect that the distant past is serving to suppress the ugly facts of the recent past and of contemporary life." For better or worse, few reparations advocates have attended to Bittker's observation.<sup>160</sup>

The slavery reparations issue continued to bubble through the 1970s and '80s, chiefly in Black nationalist circles. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the issue burst back into national prominence, attracting unprecedented interest and support. To some extent, this revival was a response to the proliferation of

retrospective justice movements and claims in the United States and around the world. But it also reflected the specific circumstances of Black America, including widespread anger and frustration at the conservative turn in American politics. With ebbing support for civil rights legislation, federal courts increasingly unreceptive to racial discrimination claims, and affirmative action under political and legal assault, some African Americans concluded that reparations were the only means left to address the persistent racial inequalities plaguing American society. “Affirmative action for Black Americans as a form of remediation for perpetuation of past injustice is almost dead,” wrote legal scholar Robert Westley in an influential article. The time had come to “revitalize the discussion of reparations.”<sup>161</sup>

---

*The slavery reparations movement that emerged in the late 1960s was distinguished from its predecessors in at least two important respects. Most obviously, it was a movement of descendants of slaves rather than of the formerly enslaved themselves, all but a handful of whom had died. It was also a movement profoundly shaped by the contemporary Black Power movement, with its emphasis on Black autonomy and economic empowerment.*

## The 1988 Civil Liberties Act

African American interest in the reparations issue also received an enormous boost from the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, which granted a formal apology and monetary reparations of \$20,000 to Japanese Americans interned during World War II. Given the salience of the Japanese American case in the reparations debate, it is worth briefly examining the act. Aside from a 1948 law providing token compensation to some internees for lost property, the internment was little discussed in the decades after the war. Former internees themselves often buried the experience, regarding it as a source of shame and embarrassment. The daughter of Fred Korematsu, an American citizen of Japanese descent who had taken a case to the Supreme Court in 1944 in a vain effort to stop the internment, learned about her father’s experience only after

stumbling across a reference to the case in her high school history textbook. Her father had never mentioned it.<sup>162</sup>

After decades of silence, a broad redress movement emerged in the 1970s and '80s. While surviving internees were well represented in the movement, much of the impetus came from younger Japanese Americans seeking acknowledgment of the injuries endured by their aging parents and grandparents. The movement drew strength from new research on the internment by scholars working in the emerging field of Asian American studies. Its influence was further enhanced by the presence in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives of individuals who had been directly touched by wartime events, including two who were interned and two who fought in the U.S. Army as members of a highly decorated Japanese American regiment. The movement achieved an early victory in 1976, when President Gerald Ford formally apologized for the government's action, but organizers pressed for more. While some pursued reparations through class-action litigation (the case, *Hohri v. United States*, was eventually dismissed on statute-of-limitations and other procedural grounds), others followed the legislative route, securing the passage of a law appointing a national commission to investigate the history of the episode and to recommend appropriate remedies. The outcome of the process was the Civil Liberties Act, signed into law by President Ronald Reagan.<sup>163</sup>

## The Japanese American Case as a Precedent for Slavery Reparations

Whether the Civil Liberties Act represents a precedent for slavery reparations is questionable. Most obviously, the act paid reparations only to surviving internees, not to their descendants. The authors of the Civil Liberties Act were also careful to present the internment not as an injury to a particular group but as a constitutional violation that had injured the entire nation. This strategy was apparent not only in the act's title, which made no mention of Japanese Americans, but also in the opening section, which described the bill as an effort to "discourage the occurrence of similar injustices and violations of civil liberties in the future; and make more credible and sincere any declaration of concern by the United States over violations of human rights committed by other nations." Finally, the bill included a rider, attached

by Senator Jesse Helms, explicitly “to preclude . . . this legislation from being used as a precedent in the courts or elsewhere to give precedent or standing to any future claims on the part of . . . any other citizen or group claiming to have been dealt an injustice by the American Government at some time in the past.” (Helms proposed another amendment, not adopted by his colleagues, withholding all payments until the government of Japan had compensated families of Americans killed at Pearl Harbor, a proposal that precisely recapitulated the racist logic of the original internment.)<sup>164</sup>

Whatever the relevance of the Civil Liberties Act to slavery redress, it was certainly embraced as a precedent by reparations advocates. If nothing else, the law showed that it was possible for the American nation to confront a historical injustice in a serious way, to apologize publicly for it, and to offer material amends. The act unleashed a torrent of articles in magazines and law reviews, reexamining slavery reparations claims in the context of the Japanese American case. Its influence was also manifest in H.R. 40, introduced by Congressman John Conyers in April 1989. Conyers’ bill called for the appointment of a nonpartisan commission “to examine the institution of slavery, subsequent *de jure* and *de facto* racial and economic discrimination against African Americans, and the impact of those forces on living African Americans,” and to recommend remedies to Congress — a formulation almost identical to the language of the bill that established the internment commission. (Although Conyers has regularly reintroduced the bill, he has yet to muster the votes to move it from committee onto the floor of the House.)<sup>165</sup>

## Seeking Reparations through Litigation

While the Civil Liberties Act and H.R. 40 exemplify the pursuit of reparations through the legislature, others pursued reparations through courts. *Berry v. United States* and *Cato v. United States*, filed in California in 1994 and 1995, respectively, both sought reparations for slavery from the federal government. The two cases based their claims on different legal theories. Berry referenced the promise of forty acres of land during Reconstruction, and sought forty acres in compensatory damages. (The acreage specified in the suit included most of downtown San Francisco.) Cato sought monetary damages for the crime of slavery itself, including “kidnapping of ancestors from Africa” and

“forced ancestral indoctrination into a foreign society.” In the end, neither theory was tested. Both cases were dismissed on procedural grounds, including the sovereign immunity of the federal government from lawsuits, the failure of plaintiffs to establish legally actionable harms, and the political questions doctrine.<sup>166</sup>

A second batch of reparations cases was filed in the early 2000s, targeting not the federal government but corporations alleged to have profited from slavery, the slave trade, and slave-related industries. The cases were clearly inspired by recent settlements in class-action suits brought by Holocaust victims and their descendants against Swiss banks and German corporations complicit in Nazi forced-labor practices; indeed, some of the lawyers who filed slavery cases had previously worked on Holocaust claims. In March 2002, Deadria Farmer-Paellman, a longtime reparations activist, and Edwin Fagan, one of the lead attorneys in the German forced-labor litigation, filed suit in federal court in Brooklyn against Fleet-Boston Bank, railroad giant CSX, Aetna Insurance, and up to one thousand “Corporate [John] Does” to be named later. Though the suit specified no damages, Farmer-Paellman and Fagan publicly mentioned the figure of \$1.4 trillion, their calculation of the current value of the forty-acre plots denied to freedpeople after the Civil War.<sup>167</sup>

---

*Senator Helms proposed another amendment to the Civil Liberties Act, withholding all reparations payments to former internees until the government of Japan had compensated families of Americans killed at Pearl Harbor. The proposal, which precisely recapitulated the racist logic of the original internment, was not adopted.*

Several other suits followed. Consolidated into a single case, “in re: African-American Slave Descendants Litigation,” the cases were argued in the Northern District of Illinois in 2004. The result was a thoroughgoing defeat for reparations advocates. The plaintiffs, the presiding judge ruled, had failed to clear the procedural hurdles necessary for the court even to consider the merits of the case. The judge identified three main deficiencies in the filing, including lack of standing (the plaintiffs’ failure to establish a direct line of descent between themselves and a specific injured party), the expiration of

statutes of limitations in all jurisdictions, and the political question doctrine. The plaintiffs were given leave to file an amended complaint, but it too was dismissed on the same grounds. In 2005, the case was resubmitted with additional arguments and materials (including DNA evidence establishing a genetic link between African Americans today and Africans transported to the Americas on slave ships) but this case too was dismissed. Although an appeal of this last dismissal is pending, the idea of securing reparations for slavery through litigation against private companies appears to have come to a dead end, at least for the time being.<sup>168</sup>

## Municipal Disclosure Ordinances

Even as these suits wound their way through the federal courts, a new front was being opened. In October 2002, the Board of Aldermen of the city of Chicago unanimously adopted the nation's first "Slave-Era Disclosure Ordinance," requiring companies with city contracts to examine their historical records, including records of predecessor companies, and to disclose profits derived from slavery. Under terms of the ordinance, companies found to have ties to slavery suffer no penalties; sanctions are reserved for companies that fail to disclose such ties. Los Angeles adopted a similar ordinance in May 2003. Detroit followed a month later. With the failure of litigation, the reparations movement appears to have redirected its energies toward this front, and there are now more than a dozen major cities with ordinances in place or in prospect.<sup>169</sup>

Thus far, the impact of the new disclosure ordinances has been borne by large American banks, which tend to have many predecessor companies, as well as many municipal contracts. In December 2004, J.P. Morgan Chase, the nation's second-largest bank, submitted an amended disclosure statement to the city of Chicago, revealing that two of its predecessor banks in Louisiana had accepted some thirteen thousand enslaved African Americans as collateral for loans. Through defaults, the banks eventually owned — and, in turn, sold — about ten percent of these people. The disclosure was accompanied by a public letter of apology from the bank's president, as well as the announcement of a \$5-million scholarship fund for African American students from Louisiana. Wachovia, the nation's fourth-largest bank, made a similar disclosure in June

2005. Thus far only one institution appears to have been disqualified from a city contract. In October 2005, Lehman Brothers of New York was removed as co-underwriter of a \$1.5-billion bond issue for Chicago's O'Hare Airport after failing to submit an amended disclosure statement, an action that reportedly cost the firm \$500,000.<sup>170</sup>

## Disclosures by Private Institutions

Recent years have also seen a series of voluntary disclosures by private institutions. Churches have played the leading role, with denominations ranging from the Southern Baptist Convention to the Church of England adopting resolutions acknowledging and expressing contrition for their historical ties to slavery and the slave trade. The most recent institution to act is the Episcopal Church, which adopted a resolution in June 2006 expressing "profound regret" for its complicity in slavery, as well as its long silence about racial discrimination in the era of Jim Crow. In addition to the apology, the church announced a three-year self-study of its relationship to slavery and the slave trade, to be accompanied by a sustained process of dialogue and reflection on possible remedies. The expressed goal of the exercise is to try to "repair the breach" that slavery carved in the life of the church and the nation.<sup>171</sup>

---

*In December 2004, J.P. Morgan Chase, the nation's second-largest bank, submitted an amended disclosure statement to the city of Chicago, revealing that two of its predecessor banks in Louisiana had accepted some thirteen thousand enslaved African Americans as collateral for loans. The disclosure was accompanied by a public letter of apology from the bank's president, as well as the announcement of a \$5-million scholarship fund for African American students from Louisiana.*

If the Episcopal Church's efforts reflect its identity as a religious institution, the action of the *Hartford Courant*, the nation's oldest continuously published newspaper, bespeaks its institutional identity. In searching the paper's archives for background on reparations claims against Aetna, a local

insurance company, *Courant* reporters uncovered an entire forgotten history of slavery and slave trading in Connecticut. This history embraced the newspaper itself, which routinely ran paid advertisements for runaway slaves and upcoming slave auctions. On July 4, 2000, the paper published a front-page editorial, “A *Courant* Complicity, an Old Wrong,” apologizing for “any involvement by our predecessors at the *Courant* in the terrible practice of buying and selling human beings.” The paper went on to produce a special edition focusing on Connecticut and slavery, entitled “Complicity.” The edition, later published in expanded form as a book, has been distributed to schools across the state.<sup>172</sup>

Universities have also been important sites of historical discovery and dialogue. While the venture at Brown has generated the most national attention, other institutions have also confronted their historical ties to slavery. In 2004, the Faculty Senate of the University of Alabama adopted a resolution apologizing for the faculty’s complicity in slavery in the years before the Civil War. The apology focused on previous faculty members’ role in whipping slaves on campus, a responsibility formally assigned to the faculty by the Board of Trustees in the 1840s to forestall students whipping their personal slaves excessively. In 2005, the University of North Carolina unveiled a public memorial, *Unsung Founders*, honoring the people of color, enslaved and free, who had helped to build the university. At the same time, Emory University announced a “Transforming Community Project,” a five-year program of activities and workshops designed to facilitate dialogue on the university’s historical relationship to slavery and Jim Crow, as well as on the current politics of race on the campus.<sup>173</sup>

## Racial Inequality in the Twenty-First Century

Time will tell whether recent initiatives by churches, newspapers, and universities represent isolated gestures or the beginning of a broad national discussion about slavery and its legacies. What is certain is that there is much still to discuss. While the nature and sources of racial inequality today are fiercely debated, there is no question that we live in a society characterized by dramatic racial disparities. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, more than one in five African Americans — and nearly one in three African American children — lives below the federal poverty line. Recorded in the midst of a booming economy, these figures are the lowest in U.S. history, yet they

are still more than three times the comparable figures for non-Hispanic whites. Median white family income is about fifty percent higher than the median Black income; the gulf in wealth, a measure of assets accumulated over generations, is vastly greater. Average Black life expectancy is six years less than for white Americans, while the Black infant mortality rate is twice as high. African Americans are far more likely than their white peers to be ill-housed and ill-educated, and to lack essential medical care. Racial disparities are perhaps most dramatic in rates of incarceration, with African Americans, and Black males in particular, about seven times more likely than whites (and three times more likely than Latinos) to be lodged in state or federal prison.<sup>174</sup>

The persistence of racial inequality in America today was thrown into sharp relief by Hurricane Katrina, one of the signal events of the Steering Committee's three-year tenure. Had the Committee wished to contrive an event to illustrate the continuing relevance of our nation's racial history it could scarcely have done better than Katrina, which devastated the Gulf Coast in September 2005. As President George W. Bush noted in a national address from the devastated city of New Orleans, the hurricane and ensuing flood exposed the reality of "deep, persistent poverty" in the United States, poverty with "roots in a history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America." Equally important, Katrina exposed a vast gulf in the way in which different Americans see their worlds. Whatever one thinks of the merits of the various arguments, the angry allegations hurled in the aftermath of the storm — accusations of government indifference and betrayal, the attempt to shift responsibility for the suffering onto victims themselves, charges and countercharges of misrepresentation and media bias — clearly bespoke a nation that remains deeply conflicted about the meaning of its past.

The problems exposed by Katrina take us back once more to the challenge of retrospective justice. How does a society "repair" such deeply rooted economic, political, and psychological divisions? Is the discourse of reparations, with its emphasis on "healing injuries" and remedying past injustice, a useful medium for thinking about our responsibilities in the present? Are exercises in retrospective justice inherently divisive and backward looking, as some critics have alleged, or can they provide a way to nurture common citizenship and awaken new visions of the future? How might such programs

work in practice? These are just some of the questions that might be taken up in a continuing national dialogue about slavery and justice. It is our hope that this Report, in providing information about the history of our University and our nation, as well as about the efforts of other institutions and societies to confront legacies of historical injustice, may enable Americans of all persuasions to discuss such questions more openly and thoughtfully.

## Slavery and Justice: Concluding Thoughts

WHEN SHE APPOINTED the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, President Simmons noted that we would confront questions “about which men and women of good will may ultimately disagree,” including those posed by the question of reparations for slavery. She did not ask the Steering Committee to try to resolve the debate, and she made clear that the Committee would not determine whether or how Brown might pay monetary reparations. Our task, rather, was to provide “factual information and critical perspectives” to enable our students and the nation to discuss the historical, legal, political, and moral dimensions of the controversy in reasoned and intellectually rigorous ways. Brown’s own history, the president observed, gave the University a special opportunity and obligation to provide intellectual leadership and foster civil discourse on this important national issue.

In the preceding pages, we have tried to fulfill this charge. Yet after years of reading and organizing public programs, we have drawn certain conclusions, which we offer as a final stimulus for reflection and debate.

American slavery and the transatlantic trade that fed it were crimes against humanity. Indeed, they were the very definition of such crimes — offenses that, in their denial of the shared humanity of certain categories of people, diminished the humanity of all people, whether victims, perpetrators, or bystanders. The familiar extenuations — that slavery and slave trading were once legal; that they ended a long time ago; that direct victims and perpetrators are long since dead; that many, even most, Americans are descendants of

immigrants who came to the United States after 1865 — are all true, but they neither expunge the crimes nor erase their enduring legacies.

In labeling slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity, we are not merely indulging hindsight or projecting our present values back onto the past. While the international legal regime for responding to crimes against humanity was codified only in the twentieth century, the concepts that undergird it, the basic intuitions about the shared nature and irreducible moral worth of all human beings, come to us directly from the eighteenth century. Indeed, they emerged in large measure out of the struggles over slavery and the slave trade recounted here. As we have seen, Brown was an important terrain in these struggles. In the late eighteenth century, the College's governing Corporation and its namesake family were rent by the campaign to end the transatlantic slave trade, with some members bringing prosecutions against other members for illegal slave trading. The battle was rejoined a generation later, with students and faculty debating the merits of abolition even as the burgeoning Rhode Island textile industry tied the fortunes of the University and the state more closely to southern slavery. Attending to this history not only challenges prevailing understandings of the "free North" and "slave South," but also casts the work of the Steering Committee in a different light. In exploring Brown's historical relationship to slavery and the slave trade, and in debating our own responsibilities in light of it, we are participating in a conversation that began on this campus more than two centuries ago.

Like other great historical crimes, slavery had profound consequences. The most fundamental was racism — the enduring stigma borne by darker-skinned people. But the institution left other legacies as well, including vast gulfs of wealth and poverty, privilege and deprivation. Americans who lived through the process of emancipation, first in northern states like Rhode Island and later in the South, recognized at least some of slavery's consequences, and they proposed a variety of programs to redress them, from land redistribution to publicly funded education. In the end, however, virtually nothing was done, in either the North or the South, to compensate the formerly enslaved for their years of unpaid toil or to welcome them into the ranks of free people. On the contrary, the post-emancipation years, in the North and the South, saw a hardening of racist attitudes, accompanied by the erection of new barriers to ensure African Americans' continued subjugation.

The system of racial discrimination that prevailed after slavery was most blatant in the American South, where 245 years of slavery were succeeded by nearly a century of state-sanctioned segregation, disenfranchisement, and violence. But the system was national in scope and underwritten by a host of public and private institutions, from federal agencies like the Social Security Administration and the Home Owners Loan Corporation, which denied Black Americans access to programs and assets available to whites, to elite universities like Brown, which between the 1870s and 1950s enrolled fewer than one African American student per year. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the centuries of formal racial discrimination finally came to an end, and African Americans assumed, in law if not always in practice, their full rights and privileges as American citizens. In the years since, the United States has seen evidence of substantial progress, including the emergence of a sizable Black middle class and a dramatic increase in the number of African Americans studying in colleges and universities. Yet the nation also continues to be marked by profound racial disparities in most measures of human welfare, including education, employment, wealth, rates of incarceration, access to housing and health care, infant mortality, and life expectancy.

But material inequalities are only part of the legacy that slavery and the subsequent regime of Jim Crow bequeathed to the nation. One of the things that Steering Committee members learned in our exploration of other cases of historical injustice around the world is that crimes against humanity weigh on societies in many different ways. In the worst circumstances, they leave legacies of rage and contempt that, left untended, virtually ensure the eruption of new atrocities in the future. In less dramatic cases, they leave a residue of ill will, fostering feelings of resentment, distrust, and defensiveness that can poison politics and impair a society's ability to face the challenges of the present and future with civility and common purpose. Surveying the state of racial politics in America today, the rancor and raw emotions that discussions of racial issues seem instantly to arouse, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the United States is such a society.

The challenge, of course, is not only to understand the sources of our current predicament but also to devise ways to make the situation better. This is the task of retrospective justice. As we have seen, the last sixty years — and the

last twenty years, in particular — have witnessed the emergence of an international consensus on the importance of confronting traumatic histories, as well as the creation of a variety of modalities and mechanisms for doing so. These approaches include not only the payment of monetary reparations (the focus of the current slavery reparations debate in the United States), but also international tribunals, formal apologies, truth commissions, the creation of public memorials and days of remembrance, educational initiatives, and a wide variety of other non-monetary reparations programs. In the preceding pages, we have tried to illuminate the possibilities and potential pitfalls of these different approaches, as well as some of the specific circumstances in which they have been or might be used. Clearly there is no magical formula for righting historical wrongs. Retrospective justice is a messy and imperfect business, and societies and institutions that undertake it should do so with humility and a clear-eyed recognition of the inadequacy of any reparative program to restore what was taken away. Yet looking at the experience of other societies that have confronted (or failed to confront) legacies of historical injustice — at the contrasting experiences of West Germany, East Germany, and Japan following World War II; at the operation of truth commissions in South Africa and elsewhere; at the bitter controversies spawned by the Turkish government’s denial of the Armenian genocide or by the Australian government’s refusal to apologize to Aboriginal children abducted from their families as part of a state-sponsored forced assimilation policy — there seems good reason to believe that communities that face their histories squarely emerge stronger than those that choose the path of denial and evasion.

In the course of its research, the Steering Committee was struck not only by the sheer variety of reparative justice initiatives around the world but also by the ambivalent response of many Americans to these efforts. On one hand, Americans have played a leading role in creating the international humanitarian regime. Judges and prosecutors from the United States laid the foundations of international humanitarian law at Nuremberg, and it was American military officials who drafted the first German restitution and reparations policies for victims of Nazi atrocities. U.S. courts and legislatures have become the premier venues for reparations claims of various sorts, and many American political leaders have been outspoken in demanding that leaders of other nations (particularly the current government of Japan) acknowledge and make amends for

the misdeeds of their predecessors. On the other hand, many Americans remain distinctly uneasy about broaching aspects of their own history, particularly in regard to slavery. While recent years have seen a proliferation of national and institutional apologies for various offenses, a proposed apology for slavery — a one-sentence Congressional resolution introduced in 1997 apologizing to “African Americans whose ancestors suffered as slaves under the Constitution and the laws of the United States until 1865” — died before it could even come up for discussion on the floor of the House of Representatives. It is difficult to say precisely where this reticence about slavery comes from, but it seems to us to be a matter worthy of further reflection.

All of which leads to one final conclusion. If this nation is ever to have a serious dialogue about slavery, Jim Crow, and the bitter legacies they have bequeathed to us, then universities must provide the leadership. For all their manifold flaws and failings, universities possess unique concentrations of knowledge and skills. They are grounded in values of truth seeking and the unfettered exchange of ideas. They are at least relatively insulated from political pressure. Perhaps most important, they are institutions that value historical continuity, that recognize and cherish the bonds that link the present to the past and the future. The fact that so many of our nation’s elite institutions have histories that are entangled with the history of slavery only enhances the opportunity and the obligation.



## Recommendations

WE CANNOT CHANGE the past. But an institution can hold itself accountable for the past, accepting its burdens and responsibilities along with its benefits and privileges. This principle applies particularly to universities, which profess values of historical continuity, truth seeking, and service. In the present instance, this means acknowledging and taking responsibility for Brown's part in grievous crimes.

In the course of its research, the Steering Committee examined dozens of examples of retrospective justice initiatives from around the world. While each case is unique, the most successful generally combine three elements: formal acknowledgment of an offense; a commitment to truth telling, to ensure that the relevant facts are uncovered, discussed, and properly memorialized; and the making of some form of amends in the present to give material substance to expressions of regret and responsibility. The University's response should partake of all three of these elements. Equally important, it should reflect Brown's specific nature as an educational institution. What universities do best is learning and teaching, and these are the areas in which Brown can most appropriately and effectively make amends.

## Acknowledgment

While members of the Steering Committee have different opinions about the propriety and value of an institutional apology, we believe that it is incumbent on the University, at a minimum, to acknowledge formally and publicly the participation of many of Brown's founders and benefactors in the institution

of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the benefits that the University derived from them.

## Tell the truth in all its complexity

Every confrontation with historical injustice begins with establishing and upholding the truth, against the inevitable tendencies to deny, extenuate, and forget. The appointment of the Steering Committee and the various public programs it sponsored have already done a great deal to create awareness of a history that had been largely erased from the collective memory of our University and state. Yet there is more to be done. We recommend that the University:

- release this Report publicly, in both print and electronic versions, and circulate it widely among students, academic and non-academic staff, and alumni, as well as among other interested parties in Rhode Island and throughout the United States;
- sponsor public forums, on campus and off, to allow anyone with an interest in the Steering Committee's work to respond to, reflect upon, and criticize the Report;
- include discussion of the University's historical relationship to slavery as a normal part of freshman orientation;
- commission a new history of the University to replace the currently available text, which makes virtually no reference to slavery or the slave trade, or to the role that they played in Brown's early history;
- lend its support and assistance to other institutions that might be considering undertaking similar investigations of their own histories.

## Memorialization

Few if any institutions in our society are as quick to erect memorials as universities. The Brown campus contains literally hundreds of statues, stones, portraits, plaques, and other markers, each placed by one generation to inform and edify generations to come. Yet there are no memorials acknowledging the University's entanglement with the transatlantic slave trade. To the best of our knowledge, there is only one such marker in the vicinity of the campus, a small

brass plaque near the entrance of the John Brown House, which mentions slave trading in a list of its one-time owner's activities. Installed by the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society and the Rhode Island Historical Society after a long and public debate, the plaque was almost immediately defaced by vandals.

As this example suggests — and as programs sponsored by the Steering Committee on the politics of slavery and Holocaust memorials confirmed — memorializing traumatic histories can be difficult and awkward. The challenge, easier to articulate than to accomplish, is to create a living site of memory, inviting reflection and fresh discovery without provoking paralysis or shame. We believe that Brown can and should answer this challenge. We recommend that the University

- undertake to create a slave trade memorial to recognize its relationship to the transatlantic trade and the importance of this traffic in the history of Rhode Island;
- sponsor a public competition to design such a memorial, keeping in mind that debate and controversy over an appropriate design are integral parts of the process of coming to terms with the past;
- designate an annual day of remembrance on the academic calendar, to be marked by a visit to the memorial by University representatives, an endowed lecture, and other activities designed to encourage continued reflection on this aspect of our history.

## Create a center for continuing research on slavery and justice

Universities express their priorities first and foremost in their selection of fields of study. We believe that Brown, by virtue of its history, has a special opportunity and obligation to foster research and teaching on the issues broached in this Report, including slavery and other forms of historical and contemporary injustice, movements to promote human rights, and struggles over the meaning of individual and institutional responsibility. We recommend the establishment of a scholarly center dedicated to these questions. The center should include

- a full-time director;

- a newly created endowed professorship, lodged jointly in the center and an appropriate academic department, to be held by a distinguished scholar whose research engages broad questions of justice and injustice;
- fellowships for postgraduate and senior scholars;
- abundant research opportunities for Brown students, both undergraduates and graduates;
- internships and service-learning opportunities for undergraduates interested in working with anti-slavery organizations and other institutions dedicated to the promotion of human rights;
- public programming aimed at both the University and the wider community;
- a significant educational outreach component, including workshops and curriculum development, to help teachers integrate topics related to slavery and justice into their classrooms;
- administrative and staff support, to ensure sustainability and effective collaboration with existing departments and centers at Brown, including the Swearer Center for Public Service, the Watson Institute for International Studies, the Cogut Humanities Center, the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Public Humanities, and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity.

## Maintain high ethical standards in regard to investments and gifts

With institutions as with individuals, taking responsibility for an offense entails more than expressing remorse for past conduct; it also requires a commitment to doing better in the future. As we have seen, Brown's early endowment benefited from contributions made by slaveowners and slave traders. Although slavery is no longer legal, it persists in many parts of the world, alongside a variety of other forms of gross injustice. Given its history, the University has a special obligation to ensure that it does not profit from such practices.

Brown has already taken important steps in this regard. The University recently introduced a new procedure for the ethical review of major gifts that is, at least on paper, one of the most rigorous in the nation. It has also

expanded the purview (though not the resources) of the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment, which makes recommendations to the Brown Corporation on proxy resolutions, as well as on ethical concerns raised by members of the Brown community. The value of this process can be seen in the University's recent decision to divest itself of all direct holdings in companies doing business in Darfur, the scene of an ongoing genocide. Yet there is also some cause for concern. Like most of its peer institutions, Brown in recent years has invested an increasing portion of its endowment in hedge funds, commingled vehicles that afford the University no influence over the companies in which it is invested, and provide no clear knowledge of what investments it holds at any given moment. While the Committee has no reason to believe that Brown is involved in any unethical practices, we find this lack of transparency troubling.

Recognizing the importance of growing the endowment, yet mindful also of Brown's distinctive history, we recommend that the University:

- uphold a strict procedure for the ethical review of gifts;
- strengthen its commitment to socially responsible investment by expanding its holdings in socially responsible funds and offering facilities to donors who wish to ensure that their gifts are invested in such funds;
- provide the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment with the logistical and staff support that it needs to do its work effectively;
- review its investment strategies with a goal of increasing transparency and ensuring accountability.

## Expand opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade

Over the last few years, hundreds of people have written to the Steering Committee offering suggestions about what Brown might do to make amends for its history. The single most common suggestion was creating special scholarships for African American students. Given Brown's failure to admit more than a handful of Black students during its first two hundred years,

it is a logical suggestion, and one whose spirit we endorse. But it is not a recommendation that we can make.

Brown is a need-blind/need-based institution. This means that the University, like most of its peer schools, admits students without regard to their ability to pay, committing itself to providing whatever financial aid an individual might require through a combination of grants, work-study employment, and loans. The obverse of this commitment is that Brown, like its peers, does not offer financial assistance on any basis other than financial need. We believe that this policy, which ensures that every qualified student can attend Brown, regardless of his or her financial circumstances, is just and equitable.

This is not to say that there is nothing the University can do. The commitment to need-blind/need-based admissions does not preclude actively recruiting students from disadvantaged backgrounds, or tailoring the financial aid packages of the neediest students to increase the proportion of grants versus loans. Indeed, the University has recently done precisely this through the creation of the Sidney Frank Scholars program, which frees Brown's most economically disadvantaged students of any future loan obligations. Nor does the current system preclude increasing financial aid to international students, who are currently excluded from the need-blind system.

Mindful of these constraints, but mindful also of Brown's history of racial exclusion, we recommend that the University:

- maintain a vigorous commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, focusing in particular on increasing the representation of African American students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels;
- strengthen such initiatives as the Sidney Frank Scholars program and Talent Quest, a joint program of the Brown Admission Office and the Brown Alumni Schools Committee, to ensure that students from even the most economically disadvantaged backgrounds have every opportunity to study and prosper at Brown;
- increase the amount of financial aid available to needy students from outside the United States, with a long-term goal of making Brown a need-blind institution for international students;

- dedicate particular attention to the recruitment of students from Africa and the West Indies, the historic points of origin and destination for most of the people carried on Rhode Island slave ships;
- maintain a vigorous commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and nonacademic staff.

## Use the resources of the University to help ensure a quality education for the children of Rhode Island

If a single theme runs through this Report, it is education. This focus reflects not only Brown's nature as an educational institution but also the nature of slavery: In large parts of our country, it was once a crime to teach a Black person to read. During the age of abolition, many Americans, Black as well as white, recognized education as essential to repairing the legacy of slavery and equipping the formerly enslaved for the full enjoyment of their rights as free people. The original Rhode Island Gradual Abolition Act, for example, required towns to provide the children of slaves with publicly funded instruction in "reading, writing, and Arithmetic," a provision that clearly reflected the influence of Moses Brown. But the towns resented the expense and the state legislature removed the requirement. A similar process of advance and retreat occurred in the South, where the promise of an equal education for the newly free was swept away by the collapse of Reconstruction and the onset of Jim Crow, with its specious doctrine of separate but equal. Rather than promoting equality and common citizenship, public schools became vehicles for perpetuating inequality and segregation.

Racial segregation in public education was finally declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, yet today, more than half a century later, American public schools continue to be characterized by *de facto* racial segregation, as well as by profound disparities in school quality and student achievement. To appreciate the dimensions of the crisis, one need look no further than Providence, where forty-eight of the city's forty-nine public schools currently fail to meet federally prescribed minimum standards for academic achievement. This situation represents a direct challenge to Brown University. One of the most obvious and meaningful ways for Brown to take responsibility for its past is by dedicating

its resources to improving the quality of education available to the children of our city and state.

The resources that the University brings to the task are formidable. Brown is home to an array of institutions and programs with interests in public education, including the Education Department (which provides teacher training for both graduate and undergraduate students), the Swearer Center for Public Service, the Education Alliance, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the Choices Program of the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown Summer High School, and the newly created Urban Education Policy Program. Even more importantly, it is blessed with extraordinarily energetic students, literally hundreds of whom work in local schools as individual tutors and mentors, as well as in such programs as the Rhode Island Urban Debate League and the Arts/Literacy Project.

As the sheer variety of programs and initiatives suggests, Brown's efforts have been highly decentralized. They have also been ill-coordinated and chronically underfunded, creating problems of sustainability and limiting their systemic impact. The recent appointment of a director of educational outreach and the funding of a University liaison position in the office of the superintendent of Providence schools hold the promise of better coordination, but they are only the beginning. If Brown is to make a meaningful impact in local schools, it will require a sustained, substantial commitment of energy and resources over many years. We recommend that the University:

- create professional development opportunities for Rhode Island public school teachers, including the opportunity to enroll in one Brown class per semester, without charge;
- expand the number of course offerings and available scholarships in Brown Summer High School, which has a long record of success in preparing local students for the challenges of college-level work;
- increase funding to Brown's Master of Arts in Teaching Program, including full tuition waivers for students who commit themselves to working for at least three years in local public schools;
- create opportunities and incentives for Brown faculty to offer enrichment courses in local schools and to use their expertise to help develop new programs and curricular materials;

- invest substantial resources, including dedicated faculty positions, in the new Urban Education Policy Program, with an eye to establishing Brown as a national leader in this vital field;
- expand internship and service-learning opportunities for undergraduate students with interests in public education;
- coordinate its efforts with those of Rhode Island College, the Rhode Island School of Design, and Johnson and Wales University, each of which currently administers educational outreach programs in Providence public schools;
- provide administrative and staff support, through agencies such as the Swearer Center and the Office of Educational Outreach, to ensure effective collaboration and the sustainability of its educational initiatives.

Appoint a committee to monitor implementation of these recommendations



## Acknowledgments

OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, the Steering Committee has drawn on the energy and insight of a multitude of people. To thank all of them properly would double the length of the Report, but let us acknowledge a few.

Our greatest debts are to our many presenters and to the hundreds of students and community members who came to hear them speak. If our Report captures even half of the wisdom displayed at our events, then we have done very well indeed. We also wish to acknowledge a small group of scholars who agreed to read and comment on an early draft of the Report, deepening our thinking and saving us from several embarrassing errors. Thank you Alfred Brophy, Roy Brooks, Ben Kiernan, David Kertzer, James Egan, Steve Lubar, James Oakes, Pablo de Greiff, Seth Rockman (who co-sponsored the Committee's Undergraduate Group Research Project), and Joanne Pope Melish (who has been an invaluable consultant to the Committee since the commencement of its work). Obviously, none of these individuals is responsible for the errors or omissions that may remain, which are solely the responsibility of the Committee.

Brown's Office of Public Affairs and University Relations has consistently supported the Committee's work, most notably in the production and dissemination of the final Report. We are pleased to thank Michael Chapman, Vice President for Public Affairs and University Relations, and members of his staff, including: Chelsea Shriver, Mark Nickel, Molly de Ramel, Tracie Sweeney, and Deborah Baum. Our greatest debts are to Art Director Kathryn de Boer, who produced an exceptionally graceful final Report under thoroughly

unreasonable deadline pressure; and to Scott Turner and Ken Zirkel of Web Communications, who built the Committee's website in similar circumstances.

The digital resources that accompany the Committee's website are the creation of the Center for Digital Initiatives and the Scholarly Technology Group, two of the jewels in Brown's crown. No words could properly acknowledge the contributions of Patrick Yott, who built the Committee's digital repository of historical documents; or of Kerri Hicks and Julia Flanders, who saw the *Sally* website through from conception to completion. Thank you also to Elli Mylonas, Clifford Wulfman, Ben Tyler, and Eric Resly; and to Alison Errico, James Ruchala, and Catrina Joos, who transcribed scores of eighteenth-century documents.

We wish also to express our deepest thanks to the staffs of the various libraries and archives that we have consulted. Special thanks to Edward Widmer, Norman Fiering, Richard Ring, Susan Danforth, and Leslie Tobias-Olsen of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University; to Holly Snyder, Raymond Butti, Gayle Lynch, and Martha Mitchell of the Brown University Archives; and to the administrators and staff of the Rhode Island Historical Society, including Bernard Fishman, Morgan Grefe, Kirsten Hammerstrom, Karen Eberhart, Dana Signe Munroe, Phoebe Simpson, J.D. Kay, Peter Griswold, Lee Teverow, Elizabeth Delmage, and Russell Franks.

A variety of other institutions provided invaluable assistance, from the Rhode Island State Department of Education (special thanks to Jennifer Wood) to a host of schools, libraries, and historical societies in the state that sponsored public programs in cooperation with the Committee. The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University graciously accepted us as collaborators on an international conference on "Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Genocide, and Caste." Thanks to director David Blight, Dana Schaffer, and Robert Forbes for welcoming us to share an intellectual feast. We also wish to acknowledge the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, especially Bela Teixeira and Richard Lobban, who have struggled for many years to unearth Rhode Island's forgotten history.

One of the great pleasures of this project was the opportunity to collaborate with student researchers, some of whose work is featured on the Committee's website. Thank you Rachael Bedard, Cassaundra Coulter, Brianna

Larkin, Annie Lewis, Sage Morgan-Hubbard, Kathleen Osborn, Basirat Ottun, Vidya Putcha, Viki Rasmussen, Erica Sagrans, Ari Savitzky, Sean Siperstein, Jacquelynn Henry, Rahim Kurji, Jeremy Chase, Susan Oba, Seth Magaziner, Quinney Harris, Erin Arcand, John Brougher, Maggie Taft, Smitha Khorana, Caroline Mailloux, Stephen Brown, Wilfred Codrington, Sara Damiano, Tiffany Donnelly, Darnell Fine, Jennifer Gold, Kimberly Hyacinthe, Sarah Modiano, Elizabeth Sperber, Colin Brown, Kalie Gold, and Marcia Walker.

Brown's Office of Media Services provided facilities for taping all of the Committee's public events; special thanks to Paul Rochford, Jamie Dunn, and Karyn LoMuscio. Preparing excerpts of the tape for screening on the website was accomplished with grace and speed by Paul Rochford and Giovanna Roz Gastaldi of Computing and Information Services.

Additional thanks to Susan Graseck and Sarah Kreckel of the Choices Program of the Watson Institute for their steadfast support, especially in the production of the Choices curriculum, "Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England"; to Roger Nozaki and Kerri Heffernan of the Swearer Center for Public Service; to Lamont Gordon, director of Brown's Office of Educational Outreach; and to Marisa Quinn in the Office of the President.

At universities, as at most institutions, much of the actual work is done by people whose names do not appear in print. Let us break with that practice by offering our most sincere thank you to Margot Saurette, Katherine Perry, Barbara Sardy, Rosemarie Antoni, Dan Gilbert, Mary Sullivan, and Cynthia Schwartz. Without you, none of the Committee's work would have been possible.

20	beaf pans	20
19	puter bayons	11
4	half p <sup>r</sup> sholacs	16
6	Small cuttashes	6
4	4' Cotton kercheves	24
3	English guns	15
1	lagg butter	8
2	Duzen Sydes	7
		<u>107</u>

1 flask Murr for 1 fad<sup>m</sup> bafts  
 100 for yams

6	lagg & 7 flask Murr	67
7	Country cloths	7
1	4' bafts	7
3	lago for cloths	6
1	French gun	6
2	Large & small grou bar	5
2	flask powd <sup>r</sup>	4
2	Large cuttashes	6
1	pan beark & bunch beads	5
2	beaches	1

107

# University Response

No  
Co



# Response of Brown University to the Report of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice

*February 2007*

## Introduction

ON APRIL 30, 2003, the University invited seventeen members of the Brown community to serve on a Steering Committee, the purpose of which was to help the campus come to an understanding of the complicated question of the extent to which Brown University benefited from the Rhode Island slave trade. That history, over time, had been clouded by a succession of accounts that gave varying degrees of weight to the founders' involvement in the trade. As a result, many alumni expressed uncertainty about whether such ties to slavery had actually existed and others asked whether Brown was deliberately concealing its relationship with eighteenth-century slave holders and slave traders. The Committee's charge, then, was to make use of time-honored methods of scholarly inquiry to clarify this history for the benefit of the wider community.

---

*By studying this question in the context of examples of varied historical injustices, the campus would be able to debate the legal questions, moral issues, and ethical choices involved in issues of retrospective justice.*

Most Americans are well aware of the prevalence of African slavery in the South, but the role of New England states (including Rhode Island) in this traffic has received more limited attention in the teaching and study of American history. We hoped that the Committee would demonstrate how we might explore and make ongoing use of important historical documents in our collections, as well as identify outside experts to help us interpret this complex history and our place in relationship to it. In addition, by studying this question in the context of examples of varied historical injustices, the campus would be able to debate the legal questions, moral issues, and ethical choices involved in issues of retrospective justice.

Anticipating a variety of opinions on how to interpret Brown's relationship to slavery, we set the goal of this effort as a broad study intended not to achieve consensus but to provide both factual information and critical perspectives. The search for this information could serve to deepen our common understanding of one of the most difficult aspects of our history. The Committee was to accomplish this by engaging in public academic events, scholarly conferences with Brown faculty and experts from across the country and around the world, lectures, and other traditional aspects of scholarship and intellectual exchange.

Finally, we hoped to form a Committee that would be recognized as broadly inclusive of conflicting perspectives and differing methods of analysis. Under the leadership of its chair, James Campbell, associate professor of American civilization, Africana studies, and history at Brown, the Committee spent the better part of three years studying this issue, hearing a range of views, examining historical documents, and ultimately producing a Report that was released in October 2006.

## The University's Response to the Committee's Report

Following the submission and publication of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* in October 2006, the University administration and community have taken several months to read, reflect on, debate, answer questions about, and respond to, the Committee's observations and recommendations. Comments on the Report have been numerous and varied, reflecting a range of perspectives, conclusions, and suggestions. For the most part, those who took the time to respond to the Report expressed appreciation for the magnitude of the project and acknowledged the diligent efforts of the Committee to present a complete and accurate account of Brown's history and its entanglement with the Rhode Island slave trade.

The Committee expressed an interest in setting the record straight. Perhaps nowhere is its impact on that goal more apparent than in the following excerpt from the letter of a fifth-grade teacher:

*"I have already begun to teach my fifth-graders about the topic. It's part of their history, and I feel it's important they be aware of the historical roots of the region."* — Email from Sandy Riojas, November 25, 2006

Some readers responded less enthusiastically to the Report, portraying it as an example of politics cloaked in academic respectability. Many of them considered it an untimely look backward that constrains forward progress. Still others suggested that the effort unduly emphasizes societal responsibility for the legacy of slavery over the personal responsibility of descendants of slaves to overcome the effects of discrimination on their own. Such reactions are an important dimension of the dialogue about the aftermath of slavery, but the Report reveals and documents well that racism, stereotyping, and discrimination continue to have significant consequences in American society. Some would urge that these ills be "forgotten," but, as the Report points out, it is the acknowledgment rather than the forgetting of these factors that can impel us to improve society.

Given the emotions that the troubling history of slavery and discrimination is bound to elicit, one can well imagine the challenge that the Slavery and Justice Committee had in framing its Report in such a positive light. The

Committee is to be commended for bringing this work to a successful conclusion. That success is marked by a number of achievements.

In commissioning the Committee's work, we asked that this process be designed to involve the campus community in a discovery of the meaning of our University's past while enabling us to incorporate that history into a common tradition. The Committee's work accomplished this in numerous ways. First, by bringing together a range of experiences and perspectives to inform the process, this work took on an intensity, breadth, and depth that reflected well upon university life. By agreeing to enter an area long acknowledged as a zone of national discomfort and disagreement, the Committee modeled for the campus the benefit of intellectual honesty and fitness in enabling civil discourse under the most difficult circumstances.

In addition, by sifting carefully through the facts and interpreting important features of Brown's history and culture, the Committee taught the community how to draw from that past a newfound sense of pride and commonality of understanding. If, as Brown's President William Herbert Perry Faunce (1899–1929) asserted, "It is not only ivy that clings to ancient walls — it is memories, echoes, inspirations,"<sup>1</sup> then the Committee's work issues a new summons to those who come after. The Committee has opened an important new chapter in the history of this University, one that compels us to embrace the full weight of its history and mission.

In considering the Committee's Report and its recommendations, the University is aware that the recommendations include many suggestions of initiatives that are already underway. These are noted in Appendix C. The University has, over its long history, engaged in many programs in an effort to address important societal needs, remedy past discrimination, and create an environment for learning and research that reflects a strong commitment to social justice.

---

*By agreeing to enter an area long acknowledged as a zone of national discomfort and disagreement, the Committee modeled for the campus the benefit of intellectual honesty and fitness in enabling civil discourse under the most difficult circumstances.*

In spite of these past efforts, however, the opportunity to improve on what the University can accomplish is welcome. Consequently, we thank the Committee for providing us with this opportunity to reflect on the University's wider social responsibility. The actions we are proposing in response to the Report incorporate a number of the Report's recommendations, but also include measures not recommended explicitly by the Committee. This response is also meant to suggest a direction for the future and acknowledge that other worthwhile ideas may yet come forward to augment these steps. The loyal alumni who support Brown have already suggested many such possibilities and we expect even more in the coming years.

Brown, a private university, depends upon the substantial philanthropy that such supporters who believe in its mission continue to bestow on it. The University is assisted in its work by thousands of committed volunteers who are devoted to the education of the students who attend the University. These donors embrace the challenge of supporting study and research that leads to the improvement of life for millions around the world. Evidence of this commitment and philanthropic generosity among alumni and friends of Brown surfaced in many guises as the Committee's work was underway. A number of individuals donated funds to support this undertaking; others made unrestricted gifts in anticipation of decisions that might be made upon conclusion of the Committee's recommendations. This vigorous interest in contributing to the funding of the implementation of the Committee's recommendations bodes well for the long-term success of any measures adopted and gives us hope that those initiatives that require fundraising will attract the needed support. This commitment of volunteers is also a part of the great work that "clings to ancient walls," and will become part of the history yet to be recorded.

## CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following internal bodies have discussed the Report, some on numerous occasions:

- the Corporation;
- the President’s Cabinet;
- the Advisory Council on Admission;
- the Brown University Community Council;
- the Brown Faculty;
- the Undergraduate Council of Students Executive Board;
- the Advancement Committee of the Corporation;
- the Advisory and Executive Committee of the Corporation;
- President’s Staff Advisory Committee;
- the Media Relations Advisory Council; and
- alumni groups, including the Brown Alumni Association and the Inman Page Black Alumni Council.

---

*The Committee, through its analysis and recommendations, has given the Brown community much to consider as we seek to enrich our educational mission.*

The Slavery and Justice Report also received substantial national and international attention. As a consequence, a significant number of people responded to the Report. Many individuals (some representing groups) sent emails to the Committee’s website, directly to Committee Chairman Campbell, to individual members of the Committee, and to the Office of the President. Alumni, students, and parents asked questions and provided comments at Brown Club events around the country. As noted previously, these comments were invariably thoughtful, reflecting a range of concerns and observations about the Committee’s process and its recommendations. Most comments, however, seemed to reflect the sentiments expressed in the *New York Times* editorial of October 23, 2006; namely, that this activity and its Report were a fine example of what universities should be: a venue for tackling the most difficult, troubling, and seemingly intractable questions (see Appendix B).

The Committee's work has now entered into the University's history, where it will be available to future centuries of students and scholars seeking to understand how the community in this era responded to the questions raised by the Report. Even if this were the only outcome of this multi-year effort, it would be a considerable accomplishment. However, the Committee, through its analysis and recommendations, has given the Brown community much to consider as we seek to enrich our educational mission.

In 1835, the president of Brown University, Francis Wayland, speaking on "practical ethics" in a course on moral science, opined about slavery in the following way:

*"The slaves were brought here without their own consent, they have been continued in their present state of degradation without their own consent, and they are not responsible for the consequences. If a man have done injustice to his neighbor, and have also placed impediments in the way of remedying that injustice, he is as much under obligation to remove the impediments in the way of justice, as he is to do justice."*<sup>2</sup>

In that context, the Committee has suggested a number of steps we might take to address present-day needs in the context of the University's history. The Committee's recommendations are outlined in Appendix A for ease of reference.

As a preamble to its recommendations, the Committee rightly stated that the University's response ". . . should reflect Brown's specific nature as an educational institution. What universities do best is learning and teaching . . ."<sup>3</sup> We agree with this observation. If we adhere to what is relevant to the unique mission of a research university, avoiding the temptation, as one commentary said, "to posture," we will be the better for it. The long life of a university affords many opportunities to continue and add to such efforts. The question of Brown's responsibilities vis-à-vis slavery and justice has endured since the founding of the University, and that question will endure still for some time to come. That we take this up in this time is a positive sign of the ongoing strength of concern at Brown with the rights and dignity of human beings.

# The University's Response: A Plan of Action

The impact of slavery and discrimination reaches into every facet of modern life, creating virulent social segregation, disparate economic conditions, crippling stereotyping and racial bias, and myriad other ills. Neither the University's resources nor its expertise is sufficient to address all these areas of concern at a meaningful level. Even recalling Wayland's admonition, we can rightly emphasize that the University should focus its response on those areas where it can, over time, have a meaningful and lasting impact.

---

*The question of Brown's responsibilities vis-à-vis slavery and justice has endured since the founding of the University, and that question will endure still for some time to come.*

Central to any program of action inspired by the Report is the acknowledgment of the history of the State of Rhode Island and the University and their connection to the institution of slavery. Neglect of any part of that history would be reprehensible for a university that argues for open discourse, fidelity to truth, and non-discrimination in its values and decisions. An action plan should, therefore, include efforts to memorialize both this process and the history on which it cast light. Moving ahead, without retracting what is already underway with regard to student recruitment, financial aid, mentoring, and community involvement, we endorse the following additional actions.

## MEMORIALS AND COMMEMORATIONS

### 1. STATEMENT ON THE HISTORY OF BROWN UNIVERSITY

The University will commission a revision of its official history so that it presents a more complete picture of the origins of Brown.

### 2. DISSEMINATION OF THE REPORT

- In order for the Report to be more widely accessible, the University will commission and distribute an executive summary of the Report.

- The Office of Public Affairs and University Relations will be directed to publish the full Report in a format that makes it more readily available and free of cost to alumni, students, and others.
- The Office of Public Affairs and University Relations will maintain the Report's website for a minimum of five years; the University will review the need for the website at that time and determine whether it should be maintained for an additional period under the present auspices. The Office will be encouraged to work with the John Carter Brown and John Hay Libraries to make available through the main University website documents of interest that bear upon this complex history.

### 3. RETENTION AND PRESENTATION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

- The Chair of the Committee, Professor James Campbell, will be asked to work with the directors of the John Carter Brown Library and the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization to develop a schedule of exhibitions to make relevant archival materials available to the public. Funds will be provided to make such exhibitions possible.
- Fellowships will be established not only to assure that these exhibitions can be appropriately curated, but also to ensure that knowledgeable individuals will be trained to staff museums, libraries, and historic sites with holdings relevant to slavery and memory. The Department of American Civilization and the John Nicholas Brown Center are invited to submit a proposal for fellowships for this purpose.

### 4. MEMORIALS

- We will ask city and state officials to join us in forming a commission to determine how this history should be memorialized in the state, city, and on College Hill.
- Upon agreement with the city and state, members will be appointed by the Mayor of Providence, the Governor of Rhode Island, and the President of Brown with the charge to develop ideas for such sites, exhibitions, and memorials that commemorate appropriately the history and role of slavery in Providence, in Rhode Island, and at the University.

## ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

### 5. CENTER FOR SLAVERY AND JUSTICE

The University will undertake a major research and teaching initiative on slavery and justice. A committee of experts will be appointed to explore how best to carry out such an initiative, the shape, cost, and scope of which is to be determined by the committee, in consultation with the Provost, the President, the Corporation, and the relevant standing committees of the faculty. Whether this results in a new center or the significant enlargement of an existing and coordinated set of programs should be determined through this process. This body should begin by examining the rich array of resources already available through the John Carter Brown Library, the John Hay Library collections, the Department of Africana Studies, the John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization, the Department of History, the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, and other departments at Brown in an effort to draw upon what is relevant to this effort.

The development of this initiative will require the same rigorous review and approval process as other academic programs. The President and Provost will guide the process in such a way that it does not fall prey to the bureaucratic hurdles that can delay implementation. The recommendations of this committee should be submitted to the Provost, the Academic Priorities Committee, and the President no later than the end of the fall semester, 2007. Anticipating completion of this work, the President should authorize fundraising to begin in order not to delay implementation, once the initiative is fully defined.

### 6. AFRICANA STUDIES

The University will commit to strengthening the Department of Africana Studies. The President and the Provost will appoint a team of outside experts to assess the existing program and to make recommendations for what the department might do to improve and expand its offerings. Attention should also be paid to improving the facilities of the department.

### 7. THE BROWN-TOUGALOO EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The University will strengthen and expand its program with Tougaloo College under the aegis of the Advisory Council on Relations with Tougaloo College.

#### 8. HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES INITIATIVE

The University will continue its program of providing technical assistance to historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Begun in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, this effort proved to be exceptionally valuable to Brown and its HBCU partners. We will expand this program to include other HBCUs and invite additional universities to assist in this effort. Assistance includes the provision of academic and administrative consultants to support strategic and financial planning, academic oversight, administrative review, governance revisions and assessments, and other needs as defined by HBCU boards of trustees and presidents.

### COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

The University neither has the resources nor the expertise to tackle the full range of social challenges that exist in Providence and Rhode Island. It can and should, however, apply its considerable influence and expertise to a coordinated effort to improve area schools. As the Committee pointed out, some of this work is already underway, in collaboration with the Providence School Department, but it may be too limited in scale to have the desired impact.

It can be argued that the differential experience of students in the schools reflects in part the lingering effects of discrimination and the persistence of economic disadvantage among certain populations. The importance of educational opportunity cannot be overstated if one wishes to address these disparities in a serious way. Brown University can and should share its expertise and professional development with the dedicated teachers of the Providence public schools as a way to help improve the quality of education and, thus, enhance the prospects for further educational and economic advancement among its students. In addition to the many programs already underway through which Brown contributes to Providence public schools, Brown will undertake two major new initiatives to improve the quality of education in urban public elementary and secondary schools.

Brown University, founded more than 240 years ago, largely through the generosity and efforts of many of Providence's citizens, has in turn greatly benefited the city and the state by educating a significant number of leaders in the area and contributing to the health of local institutions. As a private university

that is required to raise funds to support its students, teaching and research program, facilities and equipment needs, and other necessities of academic life, Brown has not been able to provide financial assistance to the city's school programs at a significant and sustainable level. In fact, a considerable portion of the private donations made to the University (and the revenue that they produce) is legally restricted as to its use and, therefore, cannot be deployed for any but the original designated purpose.

---

*One of the clearest messages of the Report is that institutions like Brown should take more responsibility for the health of their communities.*

Yet, as the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* makes clear, in its earliest years, while still substantially a local university, Brown benefited substantially from the industry of the citizens of Providence. It still does today. The University has returned educational, economic, and cultural benefits to the city and the state, but it has also continued to benefit greatly from its location in the City of Providence and the State of Rhode Island. One of the clearest messages of the Report is that institutions like Brown should take more responsibility for the health of their communities. As demonstrated by Brown's President Francis Wayland, educational reformer Horace Mann, and so many others over the decades, universities and individual citizens should commit themselves in every age not just to contemplation of the good, but also to the doing of good, particularly as it concerns the basic rights of humanity.

In a sense, then, the greatest impact of the Report could ultimately be its powerful assertion of our ongoing duty to address some of the ills of our time. The extent of those ills should not deter us from action, but the University can take care to avoid diluting its focus by helping to overcome those challenges that are most related to Brown's fundamental educational mission of teaching and research. There is little in society that correlates as closely to the University's purpose and mission as kindergarten through twelfth-grade education. Few social needs are as pervasive in, or as corrosive to, the good of civil society as the lack of access to education and the persistently disparate educational conditions and outcomes of K–12 education.

The continuum of educational access that every child deserves is wanting today to a degree that compels action on the part of every college and university in the nation. It is appropriate, therefore, that Brown, in the context of its educational values and mission, promote the strongest public school environment in Providence, and, to the extent possible, in Rhode Island. The University will do so through the following additional programs.

9. ENDOWMENT FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF PROVIDENCE

Brown University is currently engaged in its largest fund-raising campaign in history, the goals and priorities of which were set in the context of the University's own teaching and research priorities.

To help meet the urgent needs of children in the Providence school system who are seeking to improve their lives through education, Brown will raise \$10 million to establish an endowment for the city's schools. This endowment will be known as The Fund for the Education of the Children of Providence. The revenue from and the investment policy of the fund will be identical to the prevailing policy of the University with regard to endowment funds. The expenditure of these funds will be overseen solely by the Corporation of Brown University.

It may take some years to raise the full amount for this endowment, but because it is invested within Brown University's endowment, it will generate a growing source of revenue to assist the city and the Superintendent of Providence Schools in their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education in Providence's K-12 public schools. Allocations from the fund will be determined by the University with the input of the Superintendent of Providence Schools.

10. URBAN EDUCATION FELLOWS

Beginning in the 2008-2009 Academic Year, the University will offer free tuition each year to up to ten admitted students who, after receipt of a Master's Degree in Urban Education Policy or a Master of Arts in Teaching, serve urban public schools in Providence and surrounding areas for a minimum of three years. While many schools throughout the state may have need of such assistance, the purpose of this program is to improve schools that serve

especially disadvantaged populations. As the program gets under way and proves helpful, additional resources may be allocated for this purpose.

#### 11. CONTINUING PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF THE SCHOOLS

The University will continue to support Providence public schools through existing programs. These efforts, detailed more fully in Appendix D, include:

- administrative funding for the Superintendent's office;
- a dedicated Brown staff member to coordinate Providence school programs;
- CHOICES for the 21st Century;
- math/science programs;
- mentoring and tutoring programs;
- equipment funds;
- professional development for teachers; and
- diversity training.

#### 12. EVALUATION OF BROWN'S SUPPORT

Brown will commit to the ongoing evaluation of these efforts by engaging an outside consultant to advise the University as to the ongoing effectiveness of existing and new measures.

## Conclusion

We accept the summons of the *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* not to treat the small or limited scale of our involvement with the slave trade as a reason to deny any relationship to this part of our heritage. A number of Brown's leaders and trustees were important figures in the abolitionist and civil rights struggles and that, too, must find its way into our history. The opportunity to take stock of what we have become and to judge whether we have been good stewards of the moral legacy of the best of our past has been a worthwhile effort.

We affirm our commitment to the fundamental rights of mankind and to the continuing effort to speak and act on behalf of those whose rights have been denied them. This, too, we believe, is the solemn duty of a great university.

## APPENDIX A

### SUMMARY OUTLINE OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE

#### 1. *Acknowledgment*

- acknowledge publicly the participation of Brown's founders and benefactors in the institution of slavery

#### 2. *Tell the truth in all its complexity*

- release the Report in print and electronic versions and circulate widely
- sponsor public forums
- include a discussion of historical links with slavery in first-year orientation
- commission a new history of the University
- lend support to other institutions that plan to investigate their histories

#### 3. *Memorialize and acknowledge the history through a "living site of memory, inviting fresh discovery without provoking paralysis or shame"*

- create a slave trade memorial
- sponsor a competition for the memorial
- designate an annual day of remembrance on the campus

#### 4. *Create a center for continuing research on slavery and justice*

- the center should include a full-time director, an endowed professorship, fellowships, internships, public programs, educational outreach, and adequate administrative support

#### 5. *Maintain high ethical standards in investments and gifts*

- uphold strict procedures for the ethical review of gifts
- expand holdings in socially responsible funds
- support the work of the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investing with staff
- increase transparency and accountability for investment strategies

6. *Expand opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade*
  - maintain a vigorous commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body with a focus on African American undergraduate and graduate students
  - strengthen outreach and resources to the most economically disadvantaged communities
  - move to need-blind financial aid for international students
  - pay particular attention to recruitment of students from Africa and the West Indies
  - maintain a commitment to recruit and retain a diverse faculty and staff
  
7. *Use resources of the University to help ensure a “quality education” for the children of Rhode Island*
  - create professional development opportunities for Rhode Island public school teachers, including the opportunity to enroll in one class per semester, without charge
  - expand the number of course offerings and scholarships available in Brown Summer High School
  - increase funding to the Master of Arts in Teaching Program, including full tuition waivers for those who commit themselves to working for at least three years in local public schools
  - encourage Brown faculty to offer courses in the community
  - invest resources in the Urban Education Policy Program
  - coordinate efforts with other Providence colleges
  - ensure administrative support for the sustainability of these outreach efforts
  
8. *Appoint a committee to monitor the implementation of these recommendations*

## APPENDIX B

The Slavery and Justice Report received substantial national and international attention. Most comments reflected the sentiments expressed in the *New York Times* editorial of October 23, 2006.

### ***Brown University's Debt to Slavery***

*A long-awaited Report on Brown University's 18th-century links to slavery should dispel any lingering smugness among Northerners that slavery was essentially a Southern problem.*

*The Report establishes that Brown did indeed benefit in its early years from money generated by the slave trade and by industries dependent on slavery. It did so in an era when slavery permeated the social and economic life of Rhode Island. Slaves accounted for 10 percent of the state's population in the mid-18th century, when Brown was founded, and Rhode Island served as a northern hub of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, mounting at least 1,000 voyages that carried more than 100,000 Africans into slavery over the course of a century.*

*The Brown Report is the latest revelation that Northern businesses and institutions benefited from slavery. Countless other institutions might be surprised, and ashamed, if they dug deeply into their pasts as Brown has over the past three years.*

*The Committee on Slavery and Justice, composed of faculty, students and administrators, found that some 30 members of Brown's governing board owned or captained slave ships, and donors sometimes contributed slave labor to help in construction. The Brown family owned slaves and engaged in the slave trade, although one family member became a leading abolitionist and had his own brother prosecuted for illegal slave trading. The College did not own or trade slaves.*

*The hard question is what to do about it. The Committee makes sensible recommendations — creating a center for the study of slavery and injustice, rewriting Brown's history to acknowledge the role of slavery, creating a memorial to the slave trade in Rhode Island, and recruiting more minority students. Other proposals are more problematic. But the value of this*

*exercise was to illuminate a history that had been “largely erased from the collective memory of our university and state.”<sup>4</sup>*

The *Times of London Higher Education Supplement* also recently included a contribution that cites Brown’s Slavery and Justice Report as a model for the United Kingdom to use in commemorating its abolition of the slave trade in 1807.

*Britain led the way in abolishing slavery 200 years ago, but also profited vastly from the slave trade. James Walvin challenges historians to delve into this puzzling conundrum.*

*Last October, Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, published a Report, commissioned by its president, that analysed the university’s role in the slave trade and slavery. It was no real surprise to learn that the university had benefited directly and indirectly from slaving. After all, Rhode Island had been a major centre of North American slave-trading. The Report listed a string of prominent university members who had been involved in slaving, even though the university itself did not own slaves. This was only the latest of a number of US institutions (notably banks) known to have been investors in the slave system. But how could it have been otherwise in an American society so closely enmeshed in Black slavery?*

*There may be a temptation to imagine that this is a uniquely American problem, that the complex ramifications of slavery are rooted on the far side of the Atlantic. But a closer look at the British case raises equally troubling questions. Moreover, 2007 is a good year to think more critically about the links between Britain and slavery . . .<sup>5</sup>*

## APPENDIX C

### PROGRAMS ALREADY IN PLACE THAT RESPOND TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE

1. *Tell the truth in all its complexity*

- Report released in print and electronic form;
- public forums held;
- website operating;
- national and international presentations scheduled.

2. *Memorialize and acknowledge this history*

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration offers an ideal time to acknowledge the legacy of slavery and discrimination. This program can be expanded under the guidance of the Director of Institutional Diversity.

3. *Create a Center for Slavery and Justice*

Brown has an exceptionally rich collection of archives, scholars, and courses of study for the interdisciplinary study of slavery and its legacy. The design and recommendation of such a center should be the task of scholars drawn from these departments and programs, as well as from experts invited from outside the University.

4. *Maintain high ethical standards in investments and gifts*

- Brown maintains rigorous standards, implemented in 2003, for the ethical review of major gifts.
- Brown provides donors with the opportunity to allocate their gifts to endowment to a fund that is proactively managed for social/ environmental impact.
- The University will continue to support the work of the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investing.
- Brown will continue to include in the investment manager selection process a screen for high ethical standards and a full understanding of the manager's investment strategies.

5. *Expand opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade*

Brown has a vigorous recruitment program that brings to the University a strong pool of African American and other minority applicants. The Admission Office has a program of outreach launched several years ago that has resulted in record numbers of applicants and matriculants. The Class of 2010 includes the highest percentage of minority students in the history of the College (33%), and the highest number of African American students in more than seventeen years. At the same time, Brown's specific mission requires successful applicants to demonstrate exceptional academic potential and past achievement.

- The number of enrolling African American students has remained within 6.7–7.3% over the recent past.
- The Admission Office works to identify students who fall into the range of exceptional accomplishment. The University's recent implementation of a need-blind admission policy, to which the Corporation is committed, allows the Admission Office to admit students without regard for their financial circumstances, and provides financial aid to meet the full demonstrated financial need of every admitted student.
- The Sidney Frank Scholars program offers loan-free financial aid packages to the admitted students with the greatest financial need.
- The University is currently raising additional endowment support to improve the financial aid program overall, including that for international students.
- Recently, the University committed to a significant increase in financial aid for international students that will make increased resources available to students from Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world.

The University has a stated commitment to diversity in its faculty and staff:

- the number of minorities on the Brown faculty has increased 39% since 2001–2002, from a total of eighty-five to a total of 119;
- the number of Black faculty has increased just over 50% in the same period; the number of women has increased 24%, from 168 to 208;

- the creation of the position of Director of Institutional Diversity in 2002 has greatly aided the visibility and efficacy of these efforts.

6. *Help ensure a “quality education” for the children of Rhode Island*

Brown University has been working with the Superintendent of Providence Schools to accomplish this end. In the last several years, the following new programs have been instituted, and the University has:

- helped fund a full-time liaison for campus-schools initiatives in the Office of the Superintendent;
- hired a full-time employee at Brown to develop, facilitate, and monitor assistance to the schools;
- created a master’s program in Urban Education Policy and recruited a national leader for this effort;
- agreed to offer professional development courses for teachers in areas of need as designated by the Superintendent of Providence Schools;
- actively sought grant support to provide targeted enrichment efforts in the area of math and science in the public schools, including a five-year, \$3-million program under the direction of Professor Tim Herbert and a pending math initiative at Hope High School sponsored by Brown and Texas Instruments;
- advanced numerous programs through the Swearer Center for Public Service, the Watson Institute for International Studies’ CHOICES for the 21st Century program, and various academic departments.

7. *Appoint a committee to monitor the implementation of these recommendations*

The University created the Brown University Community Council as a vehicle for the monitoring and implementation of programs of wide community interest. That body has reviewed the ongoing work of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice and is a suitable body to continue monitoring progress on recommendations.

## APPENDIX D

### EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMS AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

#### **Artemis Project**

*Department of Computer Science*

The Artemis Project is a five-week summer day camp for rising 9th grade girls in the Providence area. It is run by four Brown undergraduate women, in connection with the Computer Science Department. Artemis is designed to encourage and inspire young women in science and technology. The students learn both concrete computer skills and abstract computer science concepts through a variety of projects and activities in a positive and encouraging environment.

#### **ArtsLiteracy Project**

*Department of Education*

The ArtsLiteracy Project (ArtsLit) is dedicated to developing the literacy of youth through the performing and visual arts. Based in the Education Department at Brown, ArtsLit gathers an international community of artists, teachers, youth, college students, and professors with the goal of collaboratively creating innovative approaches to literacy development through the arts.

#### **Brain Awareness Week**

*Department of Neuroscience*

Brain Awareness Week (BAW) is a series of events held around the world to increase public awareness about the brain. Brown's BAW activities are organized by Professor John Stein in the Neuroscience Department. Through BAW, Brown students conduct presentations and hands-on activities in local schools.

#### **Brown-Providence Public Schools Education Outreach Partnership**

*President's Office*

While Brown's education outreach programs serve students and teachers in several communities, the University is particularly committed to connecting its expertise and resources with the needs of the Providence public schools. To strengthen the relationship between the University and the Providence Public School Department, in 2006 President Ruth J. Simmons provided support to create the Director of Education Outreach position at Brown and the University Liaison position in the School Department.

#### **Brown Summer High School**

*Department of Education*

Brown Summer High School, founded in 1968, is a four-week program that challenges students to engage their minds in tackling big questions. Courses offer students innovative learning environments where they work in small groups, participate in discussions, conduct laboratory experiments, and engage in hands-on activities. As active participants in the learning experience, students develop essential skills in reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking. Brown Summer High School draws its faculty from Brown University students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Teaching and Undergraduate Teacher Education programs. These teachers-in-training work in teams with experienced teachers from local schools and Brown Teacher Education faculty. The program is open to students entering grades 9–12.

### **CHOICES for the 21st Century**

*Watson Institute for International Studies*

CHOICES for the 21st Century is an educational outreach program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. Through its curricular resources, professional development programs, and special projects, CHOICES engages secondary level students in current and historical international issues and contributes to a renewal of civic engagement among young people in the United States.

### **CityBrothers**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

CityBrothers, a program of Brown's Swearer Center for Public Service, pairs boys from middle schools in Providence and Pawtucket with volunteer college mentors. The program's focus is around weekly campus visits and special events and activities. In fall 2006, the Swearer Center partnered with the Providence After School Alliance, an initiative of the Mayor's office, to offer the CityBrothers program to students at the Bridgham and Gilbert Stuart middle schools in the West End of Providence. CityBrothers also serves students at Goff Junior High School in Pawtucket.

### **CityGirls**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

CityGirls, a program of Brown's Swearer Center for Public Service, pairs girls from two Providence middle schools with volunteer college mentors. The program includes weekly college campus visits and special programming to encourage academic enrichment, leadership, and community service. In fall 2006, the Swearer Center partnered with the Providence After School Alliance, an initiative of the Mayor's office, to offer the CityGirls program to students at the Bridgham and Gilbert Stuart middle schools in the West End of Providence.

### **Classroom Module Program ("BrownOut")**

*Center for Advanced Materials Research*

The Center for Advanced Materials Research coordinates the Classroom Module Program. A module is a presentation, with hands-on demonstrations, on a variety of topics in science. With the assistance of the Center's staff, who help align the modules with the Rhode Island science curriculum, Brown students create and present modules in K-12 classrooms throughout Providence and Rhode Island. The presentations are free of charge and available to public, parochial or private schools, as well as science clubs and organizations.

### **College Guidance Project**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The College Guidance Project works with the guidance offices at Hope and Central to provide increased individual attention to seniors applying to college. Volunteers work closely with guidance counselors to track the progress of college-bound students, offering workshops and individual advising to help them through the process.

### **Community Health Clerkship and Field Experience**

*The Warren Alpert Medical School*

The Community Health Clerkship is an applied learning experience designed to help develop in Brown University medical students the knowledge, skills and perspectives of community health that are necessary to become a complete, highly competent physician. It is hoped that the clerkship will help foster in students an informed sense of social responsibility and help students develop the skills needed to become strong patient advocates and community leaders in areas important to the public's health. As part of the clerkship, medical students must complete a field experience in the community that will allow them to focus on a specific public health

issue. For the past few years, The MET School in Providence has served as a field experience placement. Medical students work with MET students and staff on projects that contribute to teaching and learning at the MET and provide medical students with a deeper understanding of community health issues. Past project topics include sexual harassment in schools, HIV/AIDS prevention, and school-based preventative health.

### **Community Outreach through the Performing Arts (COPA)**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

COPA uses the arts to build community through after-school classes at Providence Housing Authority sites. Teams of Brown volunteers teach workshops in creative writing, dance, theater, and the visual arts. With the conviction that effective teaching is an art form, volunteers work as a community of teachers and learners.

### **CS92: Education Software**

*Department of Computer Science*

CS92 is a unique course in Brown's computer science department which offers Brown students the opportunity to create instructional software for local K-12 classrooms based on the requests and specifications of classroom teachers. Since 1990, students in the CS92 seminar have created software for numerous teachers from a variety of Providence schools, including Vartan Gregorian Elementary School, Nathan Bishop Middle School, and Classical High School.<sup>6</sup>

### **Diversity Professional Development for Providence Teachers**

*President's Office, Education Alliance*

At the request of the Superintendent of Providence Schools, President Ruth J. Simmons allocated funds to support the Providence School Department's efforts

to provide teachers with professional development on issues of diversity. These funds will allow staff at Brown's Education Alliance to work with School Department staff on reviewing current diversity professional development initiatives and developing new initiatives.

### **Empowering Your Future**

*Center for Advanced Materials Research, Engineering*

Empowering Your Future is a one-day conference for middle school girls and their parents and teachers. The event is co-sponsored by the Center for Advanced Materials Research and the Division of Engineering at Brown. The conference is intended for girls in Grades 8-10 and exposes them to real-life applications of math and science in a fun and educational environment. The conference also features special information sessions for parents and accompanying adults, focusing on helping girls with study skills, and on financial aid and other college-preparatory concerns. This is an excellent opportunity for girls and their parents or accompanying adults to find out more about the possibilities that science, math, and engineering offer. Additionally, teachers who attend are able to get new ideas they might use in their own classrooms.

### **Flow Radio**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

Flow Radio provides teenagers with the opportunity to learn about radio broadcasting through the production of a one-hour weekly radio show on issues important to local youth. Participants develop hands-on skills and an understanding of media.

### **GK-12 Science Education Program**

*Departments of Geology, Engineering, and Physics*

For the past few years, Professor Timothy

Herbert has worked with graduate students in Geology on conducting weekly science lessons in two classrooms in the Vartan Gregorian Elementary School. Recently, funding was secured from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the form of a GK-12 grant to help this outreach program continue and expand to several other elementary and high schools beginning in July 2007. Brown graduate students from several departments, including geology, physics, and engineering will lead classroom activities in three elementary schools as well as after-school activities in five high schools in Providence. The graduate students engage Providence students in hands-on, inquiry-based activities designed to increase students' understanding of and interest in science. The NSF funding also supports training and paid summer internships for Providence teachers and students to participate in research projects with Brown graduate students and faculty.

#### **Girls Math and Science Initiative**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The Girls Math and Science Initiative offers intensive science education for middle school girls at Sophia Academy. Brown volunteers work weekly with girls in 5th through 8th grade to introduce girls to the physical sciences through experiential and interdisciplinary activities.

#### **Go Kids!**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

Go Kids! is an obesity prevention program that works in collaboration with Head Start, utilizing the parent and children curricula of the Children's Aid Society. Through a yearlong series of lessons, the program seeks to convey the most crucial aspects of obesity prevention.

#### **Hope High School-Brown Partnership**

Brown University and Hope High School, located within blocks of each other, have a long history of collaborating on a variety of teaching and learning initiatives. To formalize this relationship, in fall 2006 Brown and Hope signed a partnership agreement that outlines several key projects, including math and science education, college access programs, and out-of-school learning opportunities for Hope students.

#### **John Hope Mentoring Program**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The John Hope Mentoring Program supports children ages six through twelve in the John Hope After School Program. The program focuses on the educational, social, and emotional needs of children through one-on-one relationships with Brown and RISD college students.

#### **Language Arts Program**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The Language Arts Program supports after-school writing clubs at Providence elementary schools. The program seeks to help children find joy in writing, recognize their individual talents, and develop tools of expression, initiative, and creativity.

#### **Let's Get Ready!**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

Let's Get Ready! provides free SAT test preparation for 11th and 12th graders at Hope and Central High Schools. Students participate in the program for one semester leading up to the SAT test.

#### **MET Family Literacy Program**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The MET Family Literacy Program, a partnership with the MET School, offers classes two evenings per week to students

and parents. Classes include ESOL, GED preparation, computer literacy, and Spanish.

### **Observational Cosmology Lab Experience**

*Department of Physics*

For the past two summers, Professor Gregory Tucker has taken local high school teachers into his Observational Cosmology Lab where they are given the opportunity to conduct research and develop lessons that can be integrated into after-school science programs. Professor Tucker also involves undergraduate and graduate students in physics in these teacher training sessions and after-school activities. Providence's Central High School and Health, Science and Technology Academy have participated in the past.

### **Outdoor Leadership and Environmental Education Project**

*Swearer Center, Department of Geological Sciences*

OLEEP, a partnership with the MET School, facilitates the development of high school student leadership by connecting experiences in the wilderness and in the city. Through one-on-one mentoring, weekly workshops in the school and community, and camping, backpacking, and ropes course trips, the program develops individual awareness and skills as well as a community in which Brown and MET students learn from each other.

### **Pre-College Enrichment Program in Science**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

PCEP offers 9th and 10th grade students at Hope and Central High Schools engaging academic enrichment. Students meet on the Brown campus and work in small mentoring groups to develop relationships throughout the year.

### **Physics 11**

*Department of Physics*

Physics 11: Inner Space Outer Space is a freshman seminar that explores topics on the frontiers of physics, particle physics, and cosmology. The course culminates with Brown students bringing hands-on, interactive lessons on a variety of topics into local high schools. In the past, students have conducted lessons in classrooms at Hope High School, School One, The MET, and Lincoln School.

### **Project ARISE: Advancing Rhode Island Science Education**

*Summer and Continuing Studies*

Project ARISE is an NIH-funded professional development program for Rhode Island high school science teachers. This program is designed to engage teachers and students in inquiry-based approaches to learning about science and improve the understanding of the relevance of science to everyday life. The goal of the program is to develop the tools and perspective that will enable high school teachers to integrate high-level concepts in molecular and genomic biology, bioinformatics, neuroscience and physiology into the high school classroom. Teachers participate in a summer professional development institute and then are provided with materials and support throughout the school year. The first cohort of high school teachers will begin in summer 2007.

### **Project Eye-To-Eye**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

Project Eye-To-Eye pairs learning disabled Brown students with learning disabled children from the Vartan Gregorian Elementary School. The pairs share experiences, offer academic support and engage in art activities.

### **Providence Science Outreach (PSO)**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

Providence Science Outreach seeks to enhance science education for Providence public school 5th graders by making science accessible and enjoyable. Teaching teams work for a full year in a classroom, facilitating weekly sessions that emphasize hands-on experiments.

### **Providence Superintendent's Research Council**

*Education Department*

Professor Ken Wong, Director of the Education Department's Urban Education Policy Program, chairs a group of local university researchers who conduct research on issues identified by the Superintendent of Providence Schools. The primary purpose of this group is to provide the Superintendent with research-based knowledge and data-analysis that can be used to inform key decisions and improve standards-based performance system-wide in the Providence school system.

### **Providence Youth Council**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The Providence Youth Council convenes youth leaders on a weekly basis to discuss policy issues and solutions for the city. Council members engage in action-research projects that address specific challenges facing Providence adolescents and their families. The PYC also seeks to develop communication and teamwork skills of the Council members, as an investment in their future as leaders. The Council is a partnership with the Office of the Mayor and the Rhode Island Foundation.

### **REACT RI**

*The Warren Alpert Medical School, R.I. Area Health Education Center*

REACT RI is a Youth Health Service Program of the R.I. Area Health Education Center. Participating students from local schools attend weekly trainings in healthcare-related issues and work fifteen hours per week at healthcare placement sites, including Rhode Island Hospital, Hasbro Children's Hospital, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, The Miriam Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital for Specialty Care, and Chad Brown Health Center. The students work at these sites in different capacities and are exposed to a myriad of health professionals. A primary goal of the program is to interest students in pursuing health careers. Specifically, the program encourages young people from underserved communities to become health professionals, and to return to work in those communities.

### **READY: Raising Expectations and Discovering Our Youth**

*The Annenberg Institute for School Reform*

The Annenberg Institute is a partner in Providence's effort to redesign its four high schools, known as Raising Expectations and Discovering Our Youth (READY). The Institute is a member of the initiative's leadership team, which meets regularly to set policy for the effort, and has contributed resources and expertise to help the district develop and carry out its redesign plans. READY is one of seven high school redesign efforts nationwide that are funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York through its Schools for a New Society initiative.

### **Research Experience for Teachers**

#### *Center for Advanced Materials Research*

The primary mission of the RET program is to build relationships with high school teachers in order to introduce modern engineering into their curricula, to engage teachers in an exciting research environment, and to develop with them teaching modules that can be used in high school and college classrooms. The program works primarily with science teachers. However, teachers in fields such as art, economics, and math are considered through a team-teaching approach.

### **Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education: Taskforce on Underrepresented Students**

#### *The Annenberg Institute for School Reform*

The Annenberg Institute partnered with the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education in co-chairing a statewide task force to address the underrepresentation of low-income and minority students in Rhode Island's public colleges. The task force identified key recommendations and associated action steps to be undertaken by the state, the three public colleges, K–12 school districts, and community partners to create stronger pathways for students to succeed. Key recommendations include: the need to significantly increase the amount of need-based financial aid funded by the state; equitable access to high school-to-college transition programs (e.g., dual enrollment); continuing to develop a data and accountability system that allows for the tracking of students through the K–12 system into postsecondary education and beyond; the provision of supports tailored to the particular needs of adult students; and the development of a statewide developmental education policy.

### **Rhode Island Debate League**

#### *Swearer Center for Public Service*

The Rhode Island Debate League sponsors both policy and parliamentary debate programs at area middle and high schools. The League is a partnership with the Open Society Institute, the Rhode Island Foundation, the Providence and Woonsocket Public Schools, and the Olneyville Community Schools. Students conduct in-depth research in preparation for competitive debate. Brown students work with high school teachers to coach students in research, public speaking, and creating effective arguments. Participants are encouraged to use their voices as instruments for public action and personal development. Teachers are offered professional development opportunities to use debate in their classrooms.

### **Rhode Island Department of Education's Progressive Support and Intervention Program**

*The Annenberg Institute for School Reform*  
Annenberg Institute staff, at the request of the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), participate in the work of action teams supporting the development of RIDE's Progressive Support and Intervention (PSI) program, a blueprint for change for schools in several low-performing districts designated by the state's assessment system as "in need of improvement." The Institute is also assisting RIDE in the design of a website for PSI to give local educators access to high-quality resources to support reform.

### **Rhode Island Department of Education's Student Identifier Initiative**

*The Annenberg Institute for School Reform*  
The Annenberg Institute is working with the Rhode Island Department of Education to develop a state-assigned student identifier that will enable schools and districts to track student progress over time.

### **Rhode Island Network**

#### *Computing and Information Services*

Brown University's Computing and Information Services Department has worked with a host of organizations to create the Rhode Island Network (RINET). RINET allows Rhode Island teachers, students, and librarians to bring information from around the world to their classroom through the internet. By working in partnership with the University of Rhode Island, the R.I. Department of Education, the Department of State Library Services, WSBE Channel 36, and NYNEX, RINET has addressed a range of technical, financial, and training issues to ensure that the network will be easily accessible in all classrooms. Brown faculty and staff created network designs, suggested techniques to run the network effectively, and prototyped the system. Brown has also provided computer accounts to teachers involved in collaborative projects, assisted with training, loaned its facilities for RINET use, and made its public computer services available to users of the network.

### **Rhode Island Space Grant Science Education Outreach Program**

#### *Department of Geological Sciences*

The Rhode Island Space Grant (RISG), a consortium of local colleges and universities based at Brown, works with local K–12 teachers and schools through a variety of science education outreach programs, including the “The Teacher Partnership Program,” “Science En Español,” and the “Hot Topic” workshop. During each of the past two years, RISG Fellows and Scholars from Brown and other local colleges and universities have given over 200 classroom presentations (reaching approximately 6,000 children each year) on a variety of science topics to K–12 grades in schools in every community throughout Rhode Island. Economically disadvantaged urban public schools frequently

have limited science resources. RISG has set up more formal “partnership” programs with several such elementary, middle, and high schools in Providence.

### **Risk Watch**

#### *The Warren Alpert Medical School, Injury Prevention Center*

Risk Watch is a school-based injury prevention curriculum developed by the National Fire Protection Association. Since 2000, the Injury Prevention Center at Rhode Island Hospital has piloted and implemented Risk Watch at elementary, middle, and high schools in five districts throughout Rhode Island, including Providence.

### **Sarah Doyle Women's Center Internships & Training**

#### *Sarah Doyle Women's Center*

The Sarah Doyle Women's Center hosts interns from the Feinstein High School during the school year. Feinstein students are required to do an internship in order to graduate. The Center is also a site for information on gender issues and conducts trainings for Brown students and community members, including teachers, through partnerships with the Swearer Center, local schools, and other community agencies.

### **SummerPrep**

#### *Department of Education*

SummerPrep is a three-week summer enrichment program for approximately 100 urban elementary students, located at the Community Preparatory School in South Providence. Students attend the morning academic enrichment program free of charge and are enrolled in classes of up to eighteen students in rising grades 2 through 6. Classes are taught by a team of two Brown Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) students who are supervised by a mentor teacher. The curriculum developed by the MATs,

with the help of Brown elementary MAT methods, instructors, and mentor teachers, includes instruction in community building and leadership, literacy, math, science, performance and visual arts, and physical education. Admission to the program is on a first-come, first-served basis, with students primarily coming from Providence and others from Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Cranston.

### **Swearer Classroom Program**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The Swearer Classroom Program is a literacy mentoring program in which a Brown volunteer works one-on-one with an elementary school child. The program's focus is dual: to build relationships through reading, acting on the belief that supportive and sustained work on literacy skills fosters an environment in which students feel confident in their abilities, both academic and social. Mentors work with a student for about an hour, usually once a week during the school day in the student's classroom. Mentors work with two schools: D'Abate Elementary in Olneyville and Asa Messer (and its annex school) in the West End of Providence.

### **Talent Quest**

*Admission Office*

Talent Quest is a Brown program designed to assist students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in the college selection and application process. Talent Quest's main goals are: 1) To enable Brown to build and maintain an ongoing relationship with a selected group of high schools and community-based organizations around the country, and 2) To reach out to talented students in grades 9–12 at selected schools and community-based organizations that provide college access support services. Talent Quest is in the process of establishing relationships with several schools and community-based agencies in Rhode Island

that work with large percentages of low-income students.

### **Teacher Training Workshop**

*Center for Advanced Materials Research*

The Teacher Training Workshop provides middle and high school teachers with professional development through a fifteen-hour training session on the area of materials science. The Brown faculty who participate hold degrees in a wide range of science and engineering fields, including materials science and engineering, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, chemical engineering, electrical engineering, physics, chemistry, and math. This diversity is reflected in the materials that are presented in the workshop, which cover a variety of different topics. Many of the materials presented have been used in K–12 classrooms, and some of the materials were developed by local middle and high school teachers, in collaboration with Brown faculty. Some of the materials presented in the workshop are also designed to give teachers an introduction to advanced materials research that is being conducted at Brown and elsewhere. Professional development credits from the Rhode Island Department of Education are awarded to participating teachers.

### **Pawtucket Teaching and Learning Review**

*The Annenberg Institute for School Reform*

The Teaching and Learning Review for the Pawtucket Public Schools is currently the Annenberg Institute's largest commitment to school reform in Rhode Island. The T&L Review convenes a local team of education and community leaders, facilitated by Annenberg staff, to identify ways in which a district can enhance the quality of supports it provides to promote high-quality teaching and learning.

### **TeachScheme**

*Department of Computer Science*

The TeachScheme project addresses the growing divide between the high school and college computer science curricula. The project reaches out to teachers who wish to understand and incorporate an innovative teaching method of introductory computer science into their high-school classrooms. The program is a five-day intensive workshop alternating between the lab and the classroom.

### **Urban Education Policy Program**

*Department of Education*

Students in the Urban Education Policy Master's Program complete summer research projects and yearlong internships in local agencies — including the Providence School Department — that work in urban education. These research projects and internships are intended to give the UEP students practical experience in the field and the opportunity to contribute to local urban education reform.

### **Vartan Gregorian Elementary School–Brown Athletics Department Partnership**

*Department of Athletics*

The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee heads up a partnership with the Vartan Gregorian Elementary School. Varsity teams are assigned to classrooms and team members provide tutoring and mentoring to students on a weekly basis. The Athletics Department honors outstanding students in each classroom at its annual All-Sports Banquet.

### **Write Project**

*Swearer Center for Public Service*

The Write Project offers girls in grades 5–8 at Sophia Academy a student-centered, expository writing experience. The program uses small groups and one-on-one interactions to improve students' skills and confidence in writing. The role of the tutor is to listen and provide a safe forum for young

writers and translate their ideas into a piece of writing appropriate to the task.

### **Youth-led Media**

*The Warren Alpert Medical School, Injury Prevention Center*

The Injury Prevention Center works with local youth to create injury prevention media components, such as newspaper inserts, billboards, movie theater ads, and bus shelter ads. All works are developed by youth, for youth with many pieces reaching thousands of individuals. The IPC has had multiple contests within Providence schools to develop injury prevention posters with the winners becoming billboards within the city. The IPC, through a grant from the Mayor's office, is currently leading a group of young artists in developing movie theater ads and bus shelter ads directed at youths on the topics of substance abuse and injury prevention.



# List of Illustrations

p. 3 President Ruth J. Simmons delivers her 2012 Commencement address. Photograph by Mike Cohea/Brown University.

p. 15 “Have Memories of Slavery and the Civil War United or Divided Americans?” event poster, 2004. Courtesy of James T. Campbell.

p. 17 “Slavery & Justice: Our other heritage,” event poster, 2004. Courtesy of James T. Campbell.

p. 24 Martin Puryear, *Slavery Memorial*, 2014. Front Green, Brown University. Photograph by Nick Dentamaro/Brown University.

p. 27 Martin Puryear, *Slavery Memorial* (detail), 2014. Front Green, Brown University. Photograph by Nick Dentamaro/Brown University.

p. 28 Martin Puryear, *Slavery Memorial* (detail), 2014. Front Green, Brown University. Photograph by Nick Dentamaro/Brown University.

p. 39 “The Texture of Slavery in Rhode Island,” event poster, 2004. Courtesy of James T. Campbell.

p. 39 “Unchained Memories. The Fight Against Slavery: The Story of the Underground Railroad,” event poster, 2004. Courtesy of James T. Campbell.

p. 46 Martin Puryear, *Slavery Memorial* (detail), 2014. Front Green, Brown University. Photograph by Nick Dentamaro/Brown University.

p. 53 Blackout at Brown and teach-in in solidarity with the University of Missouri, 2015. Photograph by Danielle Perelman/*Brown Daily Herald*.

p. 76 Census of people to be sold in 1838. Georgetown University Library.

p. 86 Ciara Sing, *Acknowledgment Garden*, 2020. Courtesy of Ciara Sing.

p. 95 Brown University President Christina H. Paxson speaks with BEAM volunteer Thomas Collins during her visit to the D’Abate Community School program at William D’Abate Elementary School, April 11, 2018. Photograph by Nick Dentamaro/Brown University.

p. 110 Samuel Rockwell, family clock of Admiral Esek Hopkins (detail), 1750s. Photograph by Ben Tyler/Brown University.

p. 113 Account book for the slave ship *Sally*, 1764–1765. The Brown Family Business Records collection at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

p. 125 Isaac Tripp, contract to purchase horses, March 11, 1765. The Brown Family Business Records collection at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

p. 127 John Philip Hagan, *Governor Stephen Hopkins*, 1999. The Brown University Portrait Collection.

p. 129 Stephen Hopkins, *The Rights of Colonies Examined*, 1765. Brown University Library.

p. 130 Nicholas Cooke, building records for the College Edifice, 1771. The Rhode Island College miscellaneous papers, Brown University Archives.

p. 135 Bill of Lading for the slave ship *Sally*, September, 1764. The Brown Family Business Records collection at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

p. 137 J.C. Buttre, *Commodore Esek Hopkins*, nineteenth century. U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Engraving.

p. 138 Articles for the slave ship *Sally*, 1764. The Brown Family Business Records collection at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

p. 141 Account book pages for the slave ship *Sally*, 1764–1765. The Brown Family Business Records collection at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

p. 143 Moses Brown, Moses Brown's letter to Clark and Nightingale, 1783. The Rhode Island Historical Society.

p. 144 Martin Johnson Heade, *Moses Brown*, no date. The Rhode Island Historical Society.

p. 153 James Tallmadge, student commencement address, 1790. Student essays and orations, Brown University Archives.

p. 157 John Greenwood, *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam*, c. 1752–1758. Saint Louis Art Museum.

p. 164 Inventory of stores loaded onto the *Sally*, September, 1764. The Brown Family Business Records collection at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

p. 195 Memorial to Brown University students, no date. Photograph by Nick Dentamaro/Brown University.

p. 201 Gravestone of Pero, no date. Photograph by Robert Emlen.

p. 212 "Bobalition," 1830. The Broadside Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University.

p. 214 Broadside ridiculing victims of the Hardscrabble Riot, 1824. The Broadside Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University.

p. 225 Richard Yarde, *Inman Page*, no date. The Brown University Portrait Collection.

*Section dividers* Inventory of stores loaded onto the slave ship *Sally*, September, 1764; account book pages for the slave ship *Sally*, 1764–1765.

# Endnotes

## CONTEXT AND IMPACT

### Slavery and Justice at Brown — A Personal Reflection

- 1 Ralph Ellison, “Speech on the Dedication of a Portrait of Inman Page” and “Going to the Territory,” both in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 1995).
- 2 Michael Dawson and Rovana Popoff, “Reparations: Justice and Greed in Black and White,” *The Du Bois Review* 1 (2004): 47–91. A *USA Today* survey produced similar numbers; see *USA Today*, Feb. 22, 2002.
- 3 Ruth J. Simmons, “President’s Opening Convocation Address” (transcript of speech, Brown University, Providence, RI, September 4, 2001), [https://www.brown.edu/Administration/News\\_Bureau/2001-02/01-014t.html](https://www.brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/2001-02/01-014t.html), archived at <https://perma.cc/E4MP-FCZ2>.
- 4 Ruth J. Simmons, “Facing Up to Our Ties to Slavery,” *Boston Globe*, April 28, 2004.
- 5 Thomas Sowell, “Slavery Reparations: Simmons’ Hypocritical Race Hustling,” *Providence Journal*, March 26, 2004.
- 6 Rachel Chernos Lin, “The Rhode Island Slave Traders: Butchers, Bakers and Candlestick Makers,” *Slavery and Abolition* 23, 3 (2002): 21–38.

### Tactility, Memory Work, and Martin Puryear’s *Slavery Memorial*

- 1 Richard J. Powell, “A Conversation with Martin Puryear,” in *Martin Puryear*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 106.
- 2 Neal Benezra, *Martin Puryear* (Chicago and London: The Art Institute of Chicago and Thames and Hudson, 1991).
- 3 Martin Puryear, “Something in the Nature of an Industrial Artifact,” *News from Brown*, October 3, 2014, <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2014/10/puryear>, archived at <https://perma.cc/K29A-JXDH>.
- 4 Lisa Blee and Jean M O’Brien, *Monumental Mobility: The Memory of Work of Massasoit* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2019), 7.
- 5 See Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013) and Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy, eds., *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2019).
- 6 Ruth J. Simmons, “President’s Charge to the Committee,” April 30, 2003, Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, <https://cssj.brown.edu/history/presidents-charge-committee>, archived at <https://perma.cc/WG9Q-Y7X8>.

- 7 See page 249 in the present volume.
- 8 *Report of Commission on Memorials* (Providence: Brown University, March 2009), 7, [https://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery\\_Justice/documents/memorials.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/memorials.pdf), archived at <https://perma.cc/JE9F-NW5F>.
- 9 “Martin Puryear to Design Slavery Memorial,” February 11, 2012, Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, <https://cssj.brown.edu/news/2012-02-11/martin-puryear-design-slavery-memorial>, archived at <https://perma.cc/FH7B-TDCM>.
- 10 Puryear, “Something in the Nature of an Industrial Artifact.”
- 11 Puryear, “Something in the Nature of an Industrial Artifact.”
- 12 *Slavery Memorial’s* position on the ground and its location on the Quiet Green reminds me of Do Ho Suh’s *Unsung Founders Memorial* on McCorkle Place at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, which is a low table and similarly attempts to offer a challenge to the historical monument form. Much to the chagrin of some, people have used the memorial as a table, diaper changing station, and study area. See Renée Ater, “The Challenge of Memorializing Slavery in North Carolina,” in *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 141–56.
- 13 Puryear, “Something in the Nature of an Industrial Artifact.”
- 14 Caroline Hauer, “Paris: Fers brisés, hommage au général Thomas Alexandre Dumas, une oeuvre signée Musée Khômbol alias Driss Sans-Arcidet – XVII<sup>ème</sup>,” June 15, 2019, *Paris la douce*, <https://www.parisladouce.com/2019/06/paris-fers-brises-hommage-au-general.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/L5UK-3A35>.
- 15 Marita Sturken, “Monuments,” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 16 Christina Paxson, “A Polite Remembrance Is Not Enough,” *News from Brown*, October 3, 2014, <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2014/10/remarks>, archived at <https://perma.cc/7YKE-FECJ>.
- 17 Malana Krongelb and Justice Gaines, “Minimizing Memory: Brown’s Slavery Memorial,” *Bluestockings Magazine*, October 10, 2014, <https://bluestockingsmag.com/2014/10/10/minimizing-memory-critiquing-browns-slavery-memorial/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/K49R-PXJX>.
- 18 Kayla Hill, “New Black Museology: Symbolic Reparations, Narrative Justice, and New Memorial Forms,” undergraduate honors thesis, Brown University, April 2018, 29.
- 19 Blee and O’Brien, *Monumental Mobility*, 29.
- 20 B. Anthony Bogues, “A Memorial Is Also About Things to Do,” *News from Brown*, October 3, 2014, <https://news.brown.edu/articles/2014/10/bogues>, archived at <https://perma.cc/6WXT-BEMX>.
- 21 Julian Bonder, “On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials,” *Places: Forum of Design for the Public Realm* 21, no. 1 (May 2009): 67.
- 22 Bonder, “On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials,” 65.
- 23 Bogues, “A Memorial Is Also About Things to Do.”

## The Dialectics of Racism and Repair

- 1 Charles M. Blow, “Escaping Slavery,” *New York Times*, January 4, 2013.
- 2 Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008).
- 3 “The 1619 Project,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 18, 2019.
- 4 Caleb E. Dawson, “What Does it Take?” *AJE Forum*, February 26, 2021, <http://www.ajeforum.com/what-does-it-take-by-caleb-e-dawson/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/LRZA-7MAQ>.

## Teaching Slavery after the Slavery and Justice Report

- 1 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
- 2 See page 248 in the present volume.

## A Collective Exploration of Our History

- 1 Ruth J. Simmons, “President’s Opening Convocation Address” (transcript of speech, Brown University, Providence, RI, September 4, 2001), [https://www.brown.edu/Administration/News\\_Bureau/2001-02/01-014t.html](https://www.brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/2001-02/01-014t.html), archived at <https://perma.cc/E4MP-FCZ2>.

- 2 Simmons, “President’s Opening Convocation Address.”

## Radical Promises

- 1 “Dealing With the Historical Injustice of Slavery on Today’s College Campuses.” *Higher Education Today* video, 1:05:50. March 15, 2018. <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2018/03/15/video-dealing-historical-injustice-slavery>

-todays-college-campuses, archived at <https://perma.cc/3JWX-86D4>.

- 2 Robert P. Moses and Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 3.
- 3 Rachael Bedard et al. “The 2004–2005 Slavery and Justice Undergraduate Group Research Project: Recommendations to the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice,” student research group report, Brown University, May 16, 2005, 2. [http://brown.edu/Research/Slavery\\_Justice/documents/SJGRPfinal.pdf](http://brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/SJGRPfinal.pdf), archived at <https://perma.cc/PJ8G-STTN>.
- 4 “The 2004–2005 Slavery and Justice Undergraduate Group Research Project,” 2.

## Lessons and Commitments

- 1 See page 249 in the present volume.

## Blueprints and Pathways

- 1 Chandra Marshall, ed., *Entangled Legacies* (Providence: Brown University, 2020), <https://cssj.brown.edu/work-center/public-humanities-projects/exhibitions/exhibition-archive/entangled-legacies>, archived at <https://perma.cc/HW66-89E9>.

## Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Georgetown

- 1 See page 109 in the present volume.
- 2 See page 112 in the present volume.
- 3 *Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation to the President of Georgetown University* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2016), xi, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3038068-Georgetown-University-Working-Group>

-on-Slavery.html, archived at <https://perma.cc/5Z8G-V4B3>.

- 4 *Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation*, 13.
- 5 See page 116 in the present volume.
- 6 *Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation*.
- 7 See page 178 in the present volume.
- 8 See pages 191–192 in the present volume.
- 9 “List of People sold by Fr. Thomas Mulledey in 1838.” Jesuit Plantation Project, Georgetown Slavery Archive, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/9>, archived at <https://perma.cc/J39N-CAKC>.
- 10 Jesús Rodríguez, “This Could Be the First Slavery Reparations Policy in America,” *Politico Magazine*, April 9, 2019.
- 11 Rachel Swarns, “Is Georgetown’s \$400,000-a-Year Plan to Aid Slave Descendants Enough?” *New York Times*, October 30, 2019.
- 12 See page 245 in the present volume.

### Confronting Historical Injustice — Past, Present, and Future

- 1 Rhode Island was an epicenter of slavery in New England, which itself was “part of a wider world of slavery and colonization in the Americas, and was important for the emergence of American industrial capitalism . . . [in] New England’s urban areas, such as Boston and Newport, Rhode Island, the percentage of slaves grows dramatically, from 12 to 25 percent” on the eve of the American Revolution. See Jared Ross Hardesty, *Black Lives, Native Lands, White Worlds:*

*A History of Slavery in New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019), xv.

- 2 “James Brown II (1698–1739) Papers (MSS 309), Rhode Island Historical Society,” Rhode Island Archival and Manuscript Collections Online, accessed May 18, 2021, <https://www.riamco.org/render?eadid=US-RHi-mss309&view=biography>, archived at <https://perma.cc/C8M6-QZWR>.
- 3 See page 249 in the present volume.
- 4 “The 1619 Project,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 18, 2019.
- 5 *The 1776 Report: The President’s Advisory 1776 Commission* (Washington, DC, January 2021), 1.

### The Evolution of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work at Brown University

- 1 See page 109 in the present volume.
- 2 See page 247 in the present volume.
- 3 See the University Response in the present volume.
- 4 *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University* (Providence: Brown University, 2016), 2.
- 5 *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion*, 2.

### REPORT OF THE BROWN UNIVERSITY STEERING COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE

- † A website for the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice that detailed its activities had to be retired in 2021 because of outdated technology. The

University's updated Slavery and Justice website ([slaveryandjustice.brown.edu](http://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu)) features Committee member bios, communications and press materials about the activities of the Committee, a curated Steering Committee event archive, access to Brown Library collections and archives of historical documents that contributed to the Committee's research, and extensive content about the lasting outcomes of the Committee's work.

- 1 See Ruth Simmons, "Facing Up to Our Ties to Slavery," *Boston Globe*, April 28, 2004. That statement as well as the president's original charge to the Committee are available at <https://www.brown.edu/initiatives/slavery-and-justice/op-ed-column-ruth-j-simmons-4-28-04>, archived at <https://perma.cc/44LY-YVFS>.
- 2 For a curated Steering Committee event archive, see [slaveryandjustice.brown.edu](http://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu).
- 3 The revised curriculum is available at <http://www.choices.edu/racial-slavery>, archived at <https://perma.cc/P7KX-BBM4>.
- 4 For a selection of communications and press materials about the activities of the Committee, see [slaveryandjustice.brown.edu](http://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu).
- 5 Faunce's sermon is reprinted in *The Sesquicentennial of Brown University, 1764–1914: A Commemoration* (Providence: Brown University, 1915).
- 6 On the history of slavery in different parts of the world, see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); M.I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998, orig. pub. 1980); William D. Phillips Jr., *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Stanley Engerman, Seymour Drescher, and Robert Paquette (eds.), *Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966); Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977); and James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990). For an overview on human trafficking today, including readings and resources, see <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/7HAY-6QF8>. The U.S. State Department issues an annual report on human trafficking and the status of national and international efforts to stop it; see <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/4F93-7ZYA>.
- 7 Recent works on slavery in the Americas include David B. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of New World Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (New York: Verso, 1997). The most thorough analysis of the scale and structure of the transatlantic trade is still Philip Curtin, *The African Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). See also David Eltis, "Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations: Some Comparisons," *American Historical Review* 88, 2 (1983), 251–280.

- 8 Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, op. cit. See also Robin Blackburn, "Defining Slavery: Its Special Features and Social Role," in Leonie J. Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labor* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1988); M.I. Finley, "Slavery," in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), vol. 14, 307–313; and James Oakes, "Slavery," in Mary K. Cayton, Elliott J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams (eds.), *Encyclopedia of American Social History* (New York: Scribners, 1993), vol. 3, 1407–1418.
- 9 See "Observations on Slave Keeping," *Providence Gazette*, December 4, 1773. Though there is no author identified for the treatise, it may have been the work of John Woolman, a prominent Quaker abolitionist. It was almost certainly placed in the *Gazette* by Moses Brown, whose conversion to the anti-slavery cause in 1773 is discussed below. On the emergence of biologically based ideas of Black inferiority, see Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); George Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963). On dehumanization as an essential component of slavery, see Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, op. cit.
- 10 A. Leon Higginbotham, *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).
- 11 Steven Deyle, "'By farr the most profitable trade': Slave Trading in British Colonial North America," *Slavery and Abolition* 10, 1 (1989), 107–125. The standard work on New England slavery is still Lorenzo J. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620–1776* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942). On the trading of Native American captives to the West Indies, see Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).
- 12 Deyle, "By farr the most profitable trade," 108–109. On the 1645 episode, involving the ship *Rainbow*, see Elizabeth Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Volume III: New England and the Middle Colonies* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1932), 6–9.
- 13 "Act of the General Court, May 19, 1652," in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 108. Recent studies of slavery and abolition in Rhode Island, including the efforts of later generations to minimize the institution's significance and severity, include Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and 'Race' in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Robert K. Fitts, *Inventing New England's Slave Paradise: Master/Slavery Relations in Eighteenth-Century Narragansett, Rhode Island* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998); and John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
- 14 See "An Act authorizing the Manumission of Negroes, Molattoes & Others, and for the gradual Abolition of Slavery. February 26, 1784," *Acts and Resolves . . . of Rhode Island*, vol. 23, c# 00210; and "Act repealing Part of the act respecting the Manumission of Slaves. October, 1785," *Acts and Resolves . . . of Rhode Island*, vol. 24, 132. The terms of Rhode Island's gradual abolition legislation are discussed in more detail below.

- 15 The classic work on the Rhode Island slave trade is Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade 1700–1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); see especially the appendix, 239–285, which lists 954 known Rhode Island slaving voyages between 1709 and 1807. See also Sarah Deutsch, “Those Elusive Guineamen: Newport Slavers, 1735–1774,” *New England Quarterly* 55, 2 (1982), 229–253; Alexander Boyd Hawes, *Off Soundings: Aspects of the Maritime History of Rhode Island* (Chevy Chase: Posterity Press, 1999), 103–207; and J. Stanley Lemons, “Rhode Island and the Slave Trade,” *Rhode Island History* 60, 4 (2002), 95–104. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Volume III: New England and the Middle Colonies* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1932), contains a wealth of primary source material about the Rhode Island trade, including records from dozens of specific voyages.
- 16 Newport’s duty on slave imports is referenced in John Russell Bartlett (ed.), *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, in New England* (Providence: A.C. Greene and Brothers, 1865), vol. 4, 191. On the rum trade, see James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968, orig. pub. 1952), 22–46; John J. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989); Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623–1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); and Hawes, *Off Soundings*, 116–120.
- 17 Filmmaker Katrina Browne, a descendant of the D’Wolf family and one of the speakers hosted by the Steering Committee, has produced a documentary film exploring her family’s history and its meaning today; see <http://www.tracesofthetrade.org>, archived at <https://perma.cc/D48H-5YK3>.
- 18 Rachel Chernos Lin, “The Rhode Island Slave Traders: Butchers, Bakers and Candlestick Makers,” *Slavery and Abolition* 23, 3 (2002), 21–38.
- 19 On the West Indian provisioning trade, see Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: The Trade Between North America and the West Indies Before the American Revolution* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956); and Robert Grieve, *The Sea Trade and its Development in Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Providence: n.p., 1902). For representative provisioning voyages, see John Carter Brown Library, Brown Family Papers (hereafter BFP), Box 469/f2, Box 469/f10-f11, and Box 681/f3. For a reference to “Jamaica fish,” see John Brown to Nicholas, Joseph, and Moses Brown, June 15, 1764, in BFP Box 356/f10. See also Robert W. Kenny, “Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam,” *Rhode Island History* 36, 4 (1977), 106–117.
- 20 “Remonstrance of the Colony of Rhode Island to the Board of Trade, 1764,” in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 203–205.
- 21 Stephen Hopkins, *The Rights of Colonies Examined* (Providence: The Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, 1974, orig. pub. 1764). Hopkins expanded the argument in two other pamphlets, *An Essay on the Trade of the Northern Colonies of Great Britain in North America* (London: T. Becket & P.A. de Hondt, 1764), and *The Grievances of the American Colonies Candidly Examined. Printed by Authority at Providence, in Rhode-Island* (London: J. Almon, 1766). See also Nicholas Brown

- and Co. to Esek Hopkins, December 30, 1764, BFP Box 643/f6.
- 22 For a roster of Rhode Island slave ship owners and captains, including many with ties to Brown University, see David Eltis et. al. (eds.), *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). On the history of the University, see Reuben Aldridge Guild, *History of Brown University, with Illustrative Documents* (Providence: Providence Press Co., 1867); Aldridge, *Early History of Brown University, Including the Life, Times, and Correspondence of President Manning, 1756–1791* (Providence: Snow & Farnham, 1897); Walter C. Bronson, *The History of Brown University, 1764–1914* (Boston: D.B. Updike, 1914); and *The Sesquicentennial of Brown University, 1764–1914*, op. cit. The currently available history of the University, Janet M. Phillips, *Brown University: A Short History* (Providence: Brown University, 2000), says virtually nothing about slavery or the slave trade.
- 23 “The College to Nicholas Brown and Co., 1770–71, Full & minute list of all supplies and moneys expended by the Building Committee for the construction of the College Edifice and the President’s house,” Brown University Archives, Miscellaneous Papers Concerning Rhode Island College, 1763–1804, MS-1E-1. On the contribution of Lopez and Rivera, see Nicholas Brown and Co. to Aaron Lopez, March 15, 1770, and Lopez to Nicholas Brown and Co., March 27, 1770, both in BFP Box 34/f2; and Jacob Rivera to Nicholas Brown and Co., March 21, 1770, BFP Box 6/f7. On Lopez and the slave trade, see Virginia Bever Platt, “And Don’t Forget the Guinea Voyage: The Slave Trade of Aaron Lopez of Newport,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 32, 4 (1975), 601–618, and Stanley F. Cheyt, *Lopez of Newport: Colonial American Merchant Prince* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).
- 24 The original subscription books from the endowment campaign are deposited in the Rhode Island History Society, Brown University Collection, MSS 317. The accounts are reprinted, along with Smith’s and Edward’s letters and diaries, in Guild, *History of Brown University, with Illustrative Documents*, 148–171, 212–226.
- 25 Guild, *History of Brown University*, 212–226. For Black life on the Manigault plantation, see William Dusenberre, *Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). On Laurens, see James A. Rawley, “Henry Laurens and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” in *London: Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 82–97. Laurens became the primary Charleston agent for Rhode Island slave traders after Manigault withdrew from the business; see Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 150–164.
- 26 Six generations of Brown family business activities, including the family’s role in the founding of the College of Rhode Island, are recounted in James B. Hedges two-volume history, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968, orig. pub. 1952) and *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Nineteenth Century* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1968). The brothers’ role in relocating the College to Providence is discussed in Mack Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 51–69.
- 27 On the conflict between the brothers, see Charles Rappleye, *Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade, and the*

- American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), and below.
- 28 Rhode Island General Assembly, *Census of the Inhabitants of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969, orig. pub. 1774), 38–39. References to slaves are scattered throughout the Brown Family Papers in the John Carter Brown Library. On James Brown's 1728 purchase, see BFP Box 1076/f1; on the use of family-owned slaves in the Brown's spermaceti candleworks, see BFP Box 338/f11.
- 29 On the *Speedwell*, see BFP Box 466/f5. On the voyage of the *Mary*, see Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 132–133, and Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years*, 6, 54–57, 70–71.
- 30 Papers relating to the *Wheel of Fortune*, including the original bill of lading for the ship, are in BFP Box 707/f2. Obadiah Brown noted the taking of the ship in his insurance book; see Rhode Island Historical Society, Obadiah Brown Papers, MSS 315, Insurance ledger, Box 2/f32, 18.
- 31 See Carter Braxton to Nicholas Brown and Co., February 1, 1763, Browns to Braxton, September 5, 1763, and Braxton to Browns, October 16, 1763, all in BFP Box 356/f8, and Braxton to Browns, June 1, 1763, BFP Box 5/f9.
- 32 Records of the *Sally's* voyage are scattered through the Brown Family Papers, including BFP Box 339/f4, Box 340/f11, Box 468/f5, Box 469/f10, Box 643/f 5-7, Box 674/f3, Box 680/f7-8, Box 681/f3, and Box 707/f6. Additional documents can be found in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 194–195, 206–207, 210–211. The voyage has been recounted most recently in Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 53–74. See also Darold D. Wax, “The Browns of Providence and the Slaving Voyage of the Brig *Sally*, 1764–1765,” *American Neptune* 32, 3 (1972), 171–179, and Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years*, 74–81.
- 33 For Hopkins' trade book, including all his transactions on the coast of Africa, see BFP Box 643/f7.
- 34 Alex Millock to Nicholas Brown and Co., November 25, 1765, BFP Box 674/f3; Nicholas Brown and Co. to Captains Whipple, Power, and Hopkins, November 15, 1765, BFP Box 536/f3.
- 35 Nicholas Brown and Co. to Esek Hopkins, November 16, 1765, BFP Box 29/f6.
- 36 On John's 1769 return to the African trade, and on his brothers' role in helping to outfit him for the venture, see Nicholas Brown and Co. to Benjamin Mason, December 12, 1769, BFP Box 234/f6. On John's subsequent involvement in the slave trade, see Eltis et al. (eds.), *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Database*, which lists him as a primary sponsor of four more slaving voyages: the *Sutton* (1769, Ref. # 36397); the *Providence* (1785, Ref. # 36520); the *Providence* (1786, Ref. # 36532); and the *Hope* (1795, Ref. # 36630). The database lists three other ships dispatched from Rhode Island in the 1790s by a group of investors including Benjamin and John Brown, but this appears to be an unrelated family with the same surname; see Refs. #36657, #36625, and #36661. None of the other brothers appears to have invested directly in transatlantic slaving voyages after the *Sally*. The database does list one slave ship, the *Fame* (Ref. #25643), as having been owned by Brown and Benson, the successor company to Nicholas Brown and Co., but this is erroneous. The *Fame*, which sailed from Boston in 1796, was not owned by George

- Benson, Nicholas Brown's partner, but by his half-brother Martin.
- 37 On the Quakers and antislavery, see Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); and Thomas E. Dixon, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). The 1760 resolution is quoted in W.D. Johnston, *Slavery in Rhode Island* (Providence: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1894), 146–147.
- 38 Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 48. The origins and character of the anti-slavery movement have been intensively debated by historians. For a survey of the debate, see Thomas Bender (ed.), *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
- 39 The 1773 pamphlet is reprinted in Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, vol. 1 (Secaucus: The Citadel Press, 1951), 7–8. On Newport's Free African Union Society, see William H. Robinson (ed.), *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island, 1780–1824* (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island, 1976). Much of the intellectual and political impetus of the growing anti-slavery movement, in England as well as the United States, was supplied by Africans and African Americans; see Vincent Carretta (ed.), *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery and Other Writings by Ottobah Cugoano* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999); Carretta (ed.), *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996); and Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).
- 40 *Providence Gazette*, October 22, 1774. For the full text, see John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1774).
- 41 On Brown's conversion to the anti-slavery cause, see James Francis Reilly, "Moses Brown and the Rhode Island Antislavery Movement," M.A. thesis in history, Brown University, 1951. (The quotation is on 22.) See also Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer*, 70–91; and Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 127–149.
- 42 Moses Brown to Clark and Nightingale, August 26, 1783, Rhode Island Historical Society, Moses Brown Papers, MSS 313 [hereafter MBP], Box 3c/f63. The letter is reprinted in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 334–335.
- 43 Moses Brown to Samuel Hopkins, March 3, 1784, MBP Box 4/f72. The texts of the 1774 and 1787 slave trade acts are reprinted in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 289–290, 343–344. For the political struggles around the bills, see Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer*, 92–106, 175–202; and Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 127–149, 223–271.
- 44 Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 294–300.
- 45 John Brown to Moses Brown, November 27, 1786, MBP Box 4c/f84. On the voyage of the *Providence*, see Eltis, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, Record #36352.

- 46 For a sampling of the debate, see *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, February 14, 1789; February 21, 1789; and March 14, 1789; and *United States Chronicle*, February 26, 1789; February 28, 1789; and March 26, 1789. For the Abolition Society's roster, as well as minutes of early meetings, see Rhode Island Historical Society, Papers of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, "Abolition Society Book, January 29, 1789 to February 16, 1827." See also James F. Reilly, "The Providence Abolition Society," *Rhode Island History* 21, 2 (1962), 33–48.
- 47 The transcript of the case, involving a ship called the *Hope*, is reprinted in Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 352–358. See also Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 206–212.
- 48 For prosecutions under the federal anti-slave trade law, including the cases against Cyprian Sterry and John Brown, see Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 212–224; and Rappleye, *Sons of Providence*, 301–312.
- 49 The brothers debated the prosecution for much of 1797. See Moses Brown to John Brown, March 15, 1797, MBP Box 7c/f146; John Brown to Moses Brown, July 29, 1797, MBP Box 7c/f149; and John Brown to Moses Brown, November 17, 1797, MBP Box 7c/f151.
- 50 Moses Brown to Dwight Foster, January 30, 1800, MBP Box 7c/160. Following the judgment, John wrote a gleeful letter to his son, James, hailing his victory over "this Wicked and Abominable Combination[,] I mean the Abolition Society." Quoted in Hawes, *Off Soundings*, 194–195. Although the trial transcript does not survive, the records of the earlier libel hearing, in which the offending ship was confiscated, are housed in the Federal Records Center, Waltham, Massachusetts, Papers of the U.S. District Court (Rhode Island), Case Books, I: 72–73.
- 51 The episode is recounted in George L. Howe, *Mount Hope: A New England Chronicle* (New York: Viking Press, 107–108, and Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 216–218). On slave ship clearances from Rhode Island after 1800, see Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 274–285; Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. III, 383–404; and James A. McMillin, *The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783–1810* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004).
- 52 See Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 218–237.
- 53 Quoted in Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 228–229. In the space of just six months, from late 1805 to early 1806, the Mount Hope Insurance Company issued policies on nearly fifty Africa-bound Rhode Island ships, the majority of them from Bristol. The company's policy book, deposited in the Bristol Historical Society, has several pages ripped from it, perhaps indicating that the company continued to issue policies even after the 1807 Congressional ban on slave trading. The apprehension of a slave ship at Bristol in 1819 is recorded in the Rhode Island Historical Society, Channing-Ellery Papers, MSS 341, September 15, 1819.
- 54 Brown University Archives, James Manning Papers, MS-1C-1, Moses Brown to James Manning, January 30, 1786. Moses Brown to James Manning, January 30, 1786. See also Moses Brown to Samuel Hopkins, January 20, 1786, MPB Box 4c/f79, and Samuel Hopkins to Moses Brown, March 7, 1787, MBP Box 4c/f85. On Thomas Clarkson and the rise of the British abolition movement, see Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005).

- 55 James Tallmadge, "An oration upon the infringement of the rights of man, to be delivered at the commencement of Rhode Island College, September 5th, 1790," Brown University Archives, Collection of Student Essays, MS-1N-1.
- 56 Tallmadge, "An oration upon the infringement of the rights of man . . ."
- 57 The correspondence between Manning and Carter is in the Brown University Archives, James Manning Papers, MS-1C-1, Series 5. See also Andrew Levy, *First Emancipator: The Forgotten Story of Robert Carter, the Founding Father Who Freed His Slaves* (New York: Random House, 2005).
- 58 Charles Hoffmann and Tess Hoffmann, *North by South: The Two Lives of Richard James Arnold* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988). On Brown-trained clergymen in the South, see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 142.
- 59 Moses Brown to Jedediah Morse, April 23, 1791, in MBP Box 5c/f112. On the rise of the U.S. textile industry, including the contribution of Moses Brown, see Caroline Ware, *The Early New England Cotton Manufacture: A Study in Industrial Beginnings* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966); Ronald Bailey, "Those Valuable People, the Africans: The Economic Impact of the Slave(ry) Trade on Textile Industrialization in New England," in David Roediger and Martin H. Blatt (eds.), *The Meaning of Slavery in the North* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998); Thompson, *Moses Brown: Reluctant Reformer*, 203-23; Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Nineteenth Century*, 159-185; and James L. Conrad, *Between Revolutions: The Early Rhode Island Cotton Textile Industry, 1788-1800*. (Thanks to Professor Conrad for sharing this unpublished manuscript.)
- 60 Quoted in Coughtry, *Notorious Triangle*, 231. John's taunt appeared in the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, February 28, 1789.
- 61 Brown and Almy initially relied on long-staple cotton produced by slaves in Surinam (some of it imported by John Brown), but the firm soon began to purchase short-staple cotton from the U.S. South. Indeed, the first cotton ginned by Eli Whitney's new device was sent to Moses Brown for test spinning. See Conrad, *Between Revolutions*, op. cit. On cotton's importance to the antebellum economy, see Stuart Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy, 1790-1860: Sources and Readings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967).
- 62 On the "Negro cloth" industry, see Susan Oba, "Mostly Made, Especially for this Purpose, in Providence, R.I.: The Rhode Island Negro Cloth Industry," B.A. honors thesis in history, Brown University, 2006. (The comment of the South Carolina grand jury is quoted on 22.) See also Myron O. Stachiw, "For the Sake of Commerce': Slavery, Antislavery, and Northern Industry," in Roediger and Blatt, *The Meaning of Slavery in the North*.
- 63 Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States. Based Upon Three Former Volumes of Journeys and Investigations by the Same Author*, edited and introduced by Arthur Schlesinger (New York: Knopf, 1953), 12. On the Hazards and the Negro cloth industry, see Oba, "Mostly Made, Especially for this Purpose, in Providence, R.I."
- 64 For a sampling of anti-abolitionist rhetoric, see John David Smith (ed.), *Anti-Abolition*

- Tracts and Anti-Black Stereotypes* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993). On mobs, see Leonard Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), and David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828–1861: Toward Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3–84. On Garrison, the rise of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and the 1835 postal campaign, see Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000); John L. Thomas, *The Liberator: William Lloyd Garrison. A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963); and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Abolitionists' Postal Campaign of 1835," *Journal of Negro History* 50, 4 (1965), 227–238.
- 65 *Newport Mercury*, September 19, 1835.
- 66 "Anti-Abolition Meeting," *Providence Daily Journal*, November 4, 1835.
- 67 Codicil to Will and Testament, June 25, 1835, MBP Box 4x/f17.
- 68 Gary J. Kornblith and Carol Lasser, "Oberlin College," in Paul Finkelman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619–1895* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). The episode at Wesleyan was reported in *The Liberator*, September, 1833.
- 69 Josiah Quincy, quoted in Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy: Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800–1870*, 76. See also Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636–1936* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 254; Kenneth S. Sacks, *Understanding Emerson: "The American Scholar" and his Struggle for Self-Reliance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 40; and Judith Ann Schiff, "Pioneers," *Yale Alumni Magazine* 69, 3 (January–February, 2006). On African Americans at Harvard Medical School, see Ronald Takaki, "Aesculapius was a White Man: Antebellum Racism and Male Chauvinism at Harvard Medical School," *Phylon* 39, 2 (1978), 129–135; and Nora M. Nercessian, *Against All Odds: The Legacy of Students of African Descent at Harvard Medical School before Affirmative Action, 1850–1968* (Cambridge: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2004).
- 70 Francis Wayland to James Hoby, December 25, 1837, quoted in Jeremy Chase, "Francis Wayland: A Uniting Force in an Era of Disunion," B.A. honors thesis in history, Brown University, 2006, 10. (Emphasis in original.) See also Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science, Fourth Edition, Revised and Stereotyped* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1837), and Francis Wayland and H.L. Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, D.D., L.L.D., Late President of the University: Including Selections from his Personal Reminiscences and Correspondence* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1868).
- 71 Francis Wayland, *The Limitations of Human Responsibility* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1838). (The quotation is on 81.) See also Francis Wayland and Richard Fuller, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution: in a correspondence between the Reverend Richard Fuller and the Reverend Francis Wayland* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1845). Wayland finally recanted his position in 1854, following the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which he interpreted as a southern attempt to nationalize slavery. In a blistering speech at a Providence rally, he declared, "The question ceases to be whether black men are forever to be slaves, but whether the sons of Puritans are to become slaves themselves." The speech was widely

- reprinted in the South, prompting several southern universities to cease using Wayland's text in their courses on moral philosophy. See Chase, "Francis Wayland," 111–127.
- 72 Robert Perkins Brown et al. (eds.), *Memories of Brown: Traditions and Recollections Gathered from Many Sources* (Providence: *Brown Alumni Magazine*, 1909), 87. On student debates and orations on slavery and abolition, see Chase, "Francis Wayland," 70–80.
- 73 On Phillips visit, see Brown et al. (eds.), *Memories of Brown*, 80–81. On Brown students in the abolition movement, see *Proceedings of the Rhode Island anti-slavery convention held in Providence, on the 2d, 3d, and 4th of February, 1836* (Providence: H.H. Brown, 1836). On Dresser, see "An Abolitionist Caught," *Newport Mercury*, August 29, 1835.
- 74 On Brown students and the Civil War, see Henry S. Burrage, *Brown University in the Civil War: A Memorial* (Providence: Providence Press Company, 1868); Martha Mitchell (ed.), *Encyclopedia Brunoniana* (Providence: Brown University Library, 1993), 142–144; and Eric Stoykovich, "Conceptions of Death During the Civil War as Seen in the Gravemarkers and Memorials of Brown University's Civil War Dead," undergraduate essay, Brown University, 2001.
- 75 See J. Harold Ellers (ed.), *The Destructive Power of Religions: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (4 vols.) (Westport: Praeger, 2004); Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark S. Schulman (eds.), *The Laws of War in the Western World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); and Peter Partner, *God of Battles: Holy Wars of Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- 76 Classic works on the subject include Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951); Jacob L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1960); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, transl. by Robert Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004, orig. pub. 1961); and Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001). For more recent work, emphasizing a variety of cases, contexts, and causes, see George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Pat Shipman, *The Evolution of Racism: Human Differences and the Use and Abuse of Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Michael Mann, *The Darker Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan (eds.), *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (eds.), *In God's Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Stephanie Courtois et. al. (eds.), *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge: Harvard

- University Press, 1999); Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1998); Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–1975*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
- 77 All of these cases are discussed in more detail below.
- 78 See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896); Paul Michael Kielstra, *The Politics of Slave Trade Suppression in Britain and France, 1814–48: Diplomacy, Morality and Economics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); W.E.F. Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Pantheon, 1969); and Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, op. cit.
- 79 On atrocities in the Congo Free State, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).
- 80 See American National Association of the Red Cross, *The Red Cross of the Geneva Convention: What It Is, Its Origins and History* (Washington: Rufus H. Darby, 1878); International Committee of the Red Cross, *Basic Rules of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1983); and Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980). On recent American debates over the status of the Geneva conventions and protocols, see Karen J. Greenberg, *The Torture Debate in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 81 See A. Pearse Higgins, *The Hague Peace Conferences and Other International Conferences Covering the Laws and Usage of War: Texts of Conventions with Commentaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909); U.S. Department of the Navy, *Hague and Geneva Conventions* (Washington: U.S. General Printing Office, 1911); and Best, *Humanity in War*, op. cit. On the Leipzig trials, see Gary Jonathan Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 58–105. See also John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). On the debate over bombing civilian targets during World War II, at the time and since, see Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Crane, "Contrary to Our National Ideals: American Strategic Bombing of Civilians in World War II," in Mark Grimsley and Clifford J. Rogers (eds.), *Civilians in the Path of War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); and Michael J. Hogan (ed.), *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 82 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944); and Lemkin, "The Crime of Genocide," *American Scholar* 15, 2 (1946), 227–230. On genocide as a world historical phenomenon, see Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: Genocidal Violence in World History* (New Haven: Yale University

- Press, 2007); Mark Cocker, *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold: Europe's Conquest of Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Grove Press, 2000); and Gellately and Kiernan, *The Specter of Genocide*, op. cit. On the Pequot War, see Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998). On the Herero genocide, see Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Jan-Bart Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia, 1890–1923* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999); Tilman Dederling, "A Certain Rigorous Treatment of All Parts of the Nation": The Annihilation of the Herero in German South West Africa, 1904," in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999); and Helmut Bley, *Namibia under German Rule* (Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 1996). On the Congo, see Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, op. cit.
- 83 On the Armenian genocide, including the effort to bring perpetrators to justice, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*, 4th ed. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003). (Hitler's remark, perhaps apocryphal, is quoted on 403.) See also Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Robert F. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Melson, "The Armenian Genocide as Precursor and Prototype of Twentieth-Century Genocide," in Alan S. Rosenbaum, *Is the Holocaust Unique: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001); Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 17–56;
- and Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance*, 106–146.
- 84 See Howard Ball, *Prosecuting War Crimes and Genocide: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Aleksander Jokic (ed.), *War Crimes and Collective Wrongdoing: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); and Bass, *Stay the Hand of Vengeance*, op. cit. On the Tokyo Tribunal, see Chihiro Hosoya et al. (eds.), *The Tokyo War Crimes Trials: An International Symposium* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1986). On Nuremberg, see Michael R. Marrus (ed.), *The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945–1946: A Documentary History* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997); Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and Telford Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992). For contemporary debates about the nature and significance of the postwar tribunals, see Hans Kelsen, "Will the Judgment in the Nuremberg Trial Constitute a Precedent in International Law?" *International Law Quarterly* 1, 2 (1947), 153–171; and Francis Biddle, "The Nuremberg Trial," *Virginia Law Review* 33, 6 (1947), 679–696.
- 85 For the text of the convention, see <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml>, archived at <https://perma.cc/Z694-2GHX>. On the comparative and conceptual relationship of the slave trade and genocide, see Seymour Drescher, "The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Holocaust: A Comparative Analysis," in Rosenbaum (ed.), *Is the Holocaust Unique?*, op. cit.
- 86 For definitions in international law of crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes, see Roy Gutman and David Rieff (eds.), *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know* (New York: Norton,

- 1999). On the relationship of the United States to the international regime, see Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
- 87 On tribunals in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, see Aryeh Neier, *War Crimes: Brutality, Genocide, Terror and the Struggle for Justice* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1998). On the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court, see <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Publications/Rome-Statute.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/K2TU-YUCG>. On U.S. opposition to the court, see Neil A. Lewis, "U.S. Rejects All Support for New Court on Atrocities," *New York Times*, May 7, 2002.
- 88 On broad patterns of complicity in the Holocaust, see Frank Bajohn, "Aryanisation" in Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of Their Property in Nazi Germany (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002); Gerald D. Feldman and Wolfgang Seibel (eds.), *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business, and the Organization of the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); and Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). On subsequent Holocaust trials, see Rebecca Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Devin O. Pendas, *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963–1965: Genocide, History, and the Limit of the Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alain Finkielkraut, *Remembering in Vain: The Klaus Barbie Trial and Crimes Against Humanity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).
- 89 For an introduction to these issues, see Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); Minow (ed.), *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Elazar Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); John Torpey (ed.), *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Ruti G. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Janna Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the Past: Reparation and Historical Injustice* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); and Nigel Biggar (ed.), *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice After Civil Conflict* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001).
- 90 United Nations High Commission on Human Rights, *Draft Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law*, 2003. On the historical sources of the recent rise of reparations demands around the world, see Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 1–41.
- 91 Robert Hughes, *The Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a defense of retrospective justice, see Roy L. Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004). For analyses of the historical circumstances giving rise to the current concern with past injustice, see Charles Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy, and Denial," *History and Memory* 5, 2 (1993), 13–51;

- and Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, op. cit.
- 92 For a reader on several recent cases, see Roy L. Brooks (ed.), *When Sorry Isn't Enough: The Controversy Over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice* (New York: New York University Press, 1999). The Japanese American internment case is discussed below.
- 93 Christian Pross, *Paying for the Past: The Struggle Over Reparations for Surviving Victims of the Nazi Terror* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). See also Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
- 94 On recent apologies, including Queen Elizabeth's apology to the Maori, see Mark Gibney and Erik Roxstrom, "The Status of State Apologies," *Human Rights Quarterly* 23 (2001), 911–939. On the recent papal apology, see Alessandra Stanley, "Pope Asks Forgiveness for Errors of the Church over 2000 Years," *New York Times*, March 12, 2000; David I. Kertzer, "A Cautious Apology, But It's a Start," *New York Times*, March 16, 2000; and Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Knopf, 2001). On the Senate lynching apology, see S. Res 39, 109th Congress, 1st Session (2005).
- 95 On the possibilities and limitations of apology, from the perspectives of political philosophy, theology, political science, sociology, comparative history, and law, see Brian Weiner, *Sins of the Parents: The Politics of National Apologies in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Donald Shriver, *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Melissa Nobles, *The Politics of Official Apologies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Nicholas Tavuchis, *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Elazar Barkan and Alexander Karn (eds.), *Taking Wrongs Seriously: Apologies and Reconciliation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); and Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness*, op. cit. For the range of popular opinions on apologies, see Walter Shapiro, "Mama Mia, That's a Mea Culpa" and Jack E. White, "Sorry Isn't Good Enough: A Simple Apology for Slavery Leaves Unpaid Debts," both in *Time*, June 30, 1997.
- 96 Ronald Wilson, *Bringing Them Home: Report of National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997), available at <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997>, archived at <https://perma.cc/AFK5-76ER>. See also A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); and Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 232–261.
- 97 See Danielle Celermajer, "The Apology in Australia: Re-Covenanting the National Imaginary," in Barkan and Karn, *Taking Wrongs Seriously*. For materials from the first National Sorry Day in 1998, including speeches and state resolutions of apology, see Margaret Reynolds, *On the Occasion of National Sorry Day, 26 May 1998: A Collection of Personal Letters and Extracts from Parliamentary Debates Presented to the Indigenous Peoples of Australia* (Canberra: Senate Printing Unit, 1998).
- 98 Alexis Dudden, "The Politics of Apology Between Japan and Korea," in Mark Philip Bradley and Patrice Petra (eds.), *Truth Claims: Representation and Human Rights*

- (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002). See also George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan's Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York: Norton, 1995).
- 99 The Lipinski resolution is reprinted in Brooks (ed.), *When Sorry Isn't Enough*, 149–150. On the bill, H. Res. 759, 109th Cong., 2nd session, see Alexis Dudden, “U.S. Congressional Resolution Calls on Japan to Accept Responsibility for Wartime Comfort Women,” available at <https://apjff.org/-Alexis-Dudden/1908/article.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/776F-PXD8>.
- 100 On presidential apologies for the Japanese American internment, see Weiner, *Sins of the Parents*, op. cit., and below. On apologies to indigenous Hawaiians, see Eric K. Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 60–80, 210–235; and Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 216–231. On the Tuskegee case, see James H. Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment* (New York: Free Press, 1993). The text of President Clinton’s apology to eight surviving victims of the experiment is available at <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/New/Remarks/Fri/19970516-898.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/SE5R-AF7Z>.
- 101 The B.I.A. apology, delivered by Kevin Gover, Assistant Secretary of Interior, is available at <http://www.tahtonka.com/apology.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/SH5L-6GPN>. See also David Stout, “Apology a Milestone at Indian Bureau,” *New York Times*, September 9, 2000, and Rebecca Tsosie, “The B.I.A.’s Apology to Native Americans: An Essay on Collective Memory and Collective Conscience,” in Barkan and Karn, *Taking Wrongs Seriously*. The text of the proposed congressional apology, S. Joint Res. 37, 108th Congress, 2nd Session (2004), is available at <https://www.congress.gov/bills/108th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/37/text>, archived at <https://perma.cc/UM3D-ULQQ>.
- 102 See H. Con. Res. 96, 105th Congress, 1st Session (1997). For recent presidential statements, see Ann Scales, “Clinton, in Senegal, Revisits Slavery’s Horrors, Emotional End to Historic Trip,” *Boston Globe*, April 3, 1998; and John Donnelly, “Bush Condemns Slavery as one of ‘Greatest Crimes,’ Speech at Source of African Trade Gives No Apology,” *Boston Globe*, July 9, 2003. For the full text of Bush’s speech, see Alfred Brophy, *Reparations: Pro and Con* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 203–206. Clinton’s reticence was particularly noteworthy, given signals from the administration in the days before the speech that an apology was forthcoming. The retreat may have been in response to domestic opponents, who were already ridiculing Clinton’s Africa visit as the “contrition tour,” but at least one administration official attributed it to fears that an explicit apology might stimulate reparations claims; see *U.S. News and World Report*, April 6, 1998.
- 103 See Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) and Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz. An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York: Random House, 2006). For the debate provoked by Gross’ work, see Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic (eds.), *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy on the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 104 For an introduction to truth commissions, see Priscilla B. Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge*

- of *Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (eds.), *Truth and Justice: The Making of Truth Commissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Tristan Anne Borer (ed.), *Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-Conflict Societies* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); and Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 52–90, 118–147. The U.S. Institute of Peace maintains a Truth Commissions Digital Collection, available at <https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/03/truth-commission-digital-collection>, archived at <https://perma.cc/NQ5L-34B8>. See also Kevin Avruch and Beatriz Vejarano, “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: A Review Essay and Annotated Bibliography,” *Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution* 4, 2 (2002), available at [http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/4\\_2recon.htm](http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/4_2recon.htm), archived at <https://perma.cc/8LY7-U6E4>.
- 105 See Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Charles Harper, *Impunity: An Ethical Perspective. Six Case Studies from Latin America* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996). On Argentina, see Carlos Santiago Nino, *Radical Evil on Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
- 106 On Chile, see *Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation*, translated by Phillip Berryman (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1993). On the Guatemalan Truth Commission, see <https://www.usip.org/publications/1997/02/truth-commission-guatemala>, archived at <https://perma.cc/33PL-J3E2>. See also Gregory Grondin, “History, Motive, Law, Intent: Combining Historical and Legal Methods in Understanding Guatemala’s 1981–1983 Genocide,” in Gellately and Kiernan, *The Specter of Genocide*.
- 107 The report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is available online at <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/GVT8-UCZ8>.
- 108 For different perspectives on the South African TRC, see Richard Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimizing the Post-Apartheid State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Deborah Posel and Graeme Simpson (eds.), *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 2003); Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (eds.), *Looking Back — Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000); and Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2000). Several members of the commission have published memoirs about their experiences; see Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), and Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, “Healing the Racial Divide? Personal Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” *South African Journal of Psychology* 27, 4 (1997), 271–272. See also Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

- 109 On the needs of survivors, see Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). For various perspectives on the psychological challenges faced by societies emerging from atrocious pasts, see Ervin Staub, "Genocide and Mass Killing: Origins, Prevention, Healing and Reconciliation," in *Political Psychology* 21, 2 (2000), 367–382; Joel E. Dimsdale (ed.), *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust* (Washington: Hemisphere Publishing, 1980); and Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 61–90.
- 110 Probably the closest that the United States came to convening a truth commission on slavery was the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, appointed by Congress in 1863. The commission collected some slave testimony, but its purpose was not to unearth the facts of the past as much as to make recommendations about future policies toward freedpeople. See Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 68–69.
- 111 On Rosewood, see Florida Board of Regents, *A Documented History of the Incident Which Occurred at Rosewood, Florida, in January 1923* (Tallahassee: Board of Regents, 1993) and Michael D'Orso, *Like Judgment Day: The Ruin and Redemption of a Town Called Rosewood* (New York: Boulevard Books, 1996). The work of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project can be reviewed at <https://greensborotrc.org/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/8UES-A43F>; on Wilmington, see <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p249901coll22/id/5842>, archived at <https://perma.cc/U9VJ-P857>. Details of other such initiatives, focusing on the 1906 Atlanta race riot and several of the South's most notorious lynchings, can be found at <https://southerntruth.net/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/MG8K-3QZH>. One legal scholar has advocated the convening of a national truth commission to examine America's history of lynching; see Sherrilyn A. Ifill, "Creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Lynching," *Law and Inequality* 21, 2 (2003), 263–312.
- 112 On the Tulsa case, see Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Brophy, "The Tulsa Race Riot Commission, Apology, and Reparation: Understanding the Fundamentals and Limitations of a Historical Truth Commission," in Barkan and Karn (eds.), *Taking Wrongs Seriously*, op. cit. Materials related to *Alexander v. Oklahoma*, including the complaint, the judgments of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, and the refusal of the U.S. Supreme Court to grant certiorari in the case, can be found at <http://www.tulsareparations.org>, archived at <https://perma.cc/F4HR-PUE6>.
- 113 All these questions are discussed in detail below. On the theory and practice of reparations in different historical contexts, see Pablo de Greiff, *The Handbook of Reparations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For an exploration of these issues in relationship to slave redress demands in the United States, see Alfred L. Brophy, *Reparations: Pro and Con*, op. cit. The problem of assessing the value of reparations claims is explored in Dalton Conley, "Calculating Slavery Reparations: Theory, Numbers, and Implications," in Torpey (ed.), *Politics and the Past*, op. cit. See also William Darity and Dania Frank, "The Economics of Reparations," *American Economic Review* 93, 2 (2003), 326–329.
- 114 On the Tuskegee bioethics center, see <https://www.tuskegee.edu/about-us>

- /centers-of-excellence/bioethics-center, archived at <https://perma.cc/24CN-93FS>.
- 115 See the special “Black Hills Issue” of *Wicazo Sa Review* 4, 1 (1988). See also Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 169–215.
- 116 For procedures and payments under the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund, see <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-107publ42/pdf/PLAW-107publ42.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/EJ9H-DS57>.
- 117 For a comparative analysis of the Japanese American and Japanese Canadian experiences, see Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 78–106. On the Canadian “First Nations” case, see Clifford Krauss, “80,000 Native Canadians to Be Compensated for School Abuse,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2006.
- 118 For the range of Holocaust restitution and reparations programs, see Pross, *Paying for the Past*, op. cit.
- 119 Pross, *Paying for the Past*, op. cit.
- 120 See Michael J. Bazylar, *Holocaust Justice: The Battle for Restitution in America’s Courts* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 1–58. See also Bazylar, “Holocaust Restitution in the United States and Other Claims for Historical Wrongs — an Update,” *International Civil Liberties Report* (2001), and subsequent annual updates.
- 121 See in re Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation, 105 F. Supp. 2d (E.D.N.Y. 2000). For the wider context, history, and outcome of the litigation, see Michael J. Bazylar and Roger P. Alford (eds.), *Holocaust Restitution: Perspectives on the Litigation and its Legacy* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Bazylar, *Holocaust Justice*, 59–109; and Bazylar, “Holocaust Restitution in the United States,” op. cit. The most recent work on Nazi forced labor practices is Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938–1944* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 122 On the disbursement of funds, see Burt Neuborne, “A Tale of Two Cities: Administering the Holocaust Settlement in Brooklyn and Berlin,” in Bazylar and Alford, *Holocaust Restitution: Perspectives on the Litigation and its Legacy*.
- 123 The most systematic critique of the “tort” model of reparations is Roy L. Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004), which proposes an alternative “atonement” model rooted in dialogue and shared discovery of the meaning of the past.
- 124 Details of the Armenian cases can be reviewed at <https://web.archive.org/web/20040611235441/http://armenianinsurancesettlement.com/home.htm>. On cases involving human remains, sacred relics, and other cultural property, see Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds.), *Claiming the Stones, Naming the Bones: Cultural Property and the Negotiation of National and Ethnic Identity* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002) and Barkan, *The Guilt of Nations*, 169–215. On recent litigation involving World War II era atrocities committed by officials and soldiers of Imperial Japan, see in re World War II Era Japanese Forced Labor Litigation, 114 F. Supp. 2d 939 (N.D. Cal. 2000); in re World War II Era Japanese Forced Labor Litigation, 164 F. Supp. 2d 1160 (N.D. Cal. 2001); and *Hwang Geum Joo v. Japan*, 172 F. Supp. 2d (D.D.C., 2001). Other cases are discussed elsewhere in the report.
- 125 Michael C. Dawson and Rovana Popoff, “Reparations: Justice and Greed in Black

- and White,” *Du Bois Review* 1 (2004), 47–91. A *USA Today* survey produced similar numbers; see *USA Today* Feb. 22, 2002. Arguments against reparations for slavery can be sampled at <https://web.archive.org/web/20060526171749/http://www.wewontpay.com/oldnews.html>. Some of the most strenuous opposition to reparations has come from African Americans. See, for example, John McWhorter, “Against Reparations: Why African Americans Can Believe in America,” *New Republic*, July 23, 2001; and Shelby Steele, “. . . or a Childish Illusion of Justice? Reparations Ensure Victimhood, Dishonoring our Ancestors,” *Newsweek*, August 27, 2001. For a critique from the left, see Adolph Reed, “The Case Against Reparations,” *Progressive*, December 2000.
- 126 David Horowitz, “Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea — and Racist Too,” *Brown Daily Herald*, March 13, 2001. On the ensuing controversy, see Norman Boucher, “The War Over Words,” *Brown Alumni Magazine* 101, 5 (2001), 34–41; and David Horowitz, *Uncivil Wars: The Controversy Over Reparations for Slavery* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002). Ruth Simmons, who assumed the presidency of Brown a few months after the episode, referred obliquely to the controversy in her speech to entering freshmen at the university’s Fall 2001 Convocation. “Knowledge is rooted in freedom of speech and inquiry,” she reminded students, adding that anyone who had come to Brown expecting to be shielded from uncomfortable ideas should leave now. See [https://web.archive.org/web/20060919105919/http://www.brown.edu/Administration/George\\_Street\\_Journal/vol26/26GSJ02a.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20060919105919/http://www.brown.edu/Administration/George_Street_Journal/vol26/26GSJ02a.html).
- 127 Charles Ogletree, “Litigating the Legacy of Slavery,” *New York Times*, March 31, 2002. See also Randall Robinson, *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks* (New York: Dutton, 2000), which singles out Brown as an example of an institution resting on profits derived from slavery and the slave trade. The FleetBoston case is discussed, along with other reparations lawsuits, below.
- 128 *Providence Journal*, August 21, 2002. For an early example of slavery reparations advocacy, citing the authority of the Old Testament, see James Swan, “A Dissuasion to Great-Britain and the Colonies, From the Slave Trade to Africa . . . 1772,” in Roger Bruns (ed.), *Am I Not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America, 1688–1788* (New York: Chelsea House, 1977).
- 129 See Roy E. Finkenbine, “Belinda’s Petition: Reparations for Slavery in Revolutionary Massachusetts,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 64, 1 (2007), 95–104. Accessed June 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4491599>.
- Belinda’s petition is reprinted in Vincent Carretta (ed.), *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 142–144. It appears that the pension ceased after a year or two, prompting Belinda to file another petition in 1787, after which she disappears from the historical record. Isaac Royall, who had made his fortune as a Caribbean planter before settling in Massachusetts, also has the distinction of endowing the first law professorship in American history, the Royall Professorship at Harvard Law School.
- 130 See “An Act authorizing the Manumission of Negroes, Molattoes & Others, and for the gradual Abolition of Slavery. February 26, 1784,” *Acts and Resolved . . . of Rhode Island*, vol. 23, c# 00210; and “Act repealing Part of the act respecting the

- Manumission of Slaves. October, 1785," *Acts and Resolves . . . of Rhode Island*, vol. 24, 132. See also Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, "Philanthropy at Bargain Prices: Notes on the Economics of Gradual Emancipation," *The Journal of Legal Studies* 3, 2 (1974), 377–401.
- 131 "An Act to prevent clandestine Marriages," *Public Laws of the State of Rhode-Island . . . January, 1798* (Providence: Carter and Wilkinson, 1798), 483; *Public Laws of the State of Rhode-Island . . . Passed since . . . 1798* (Providence: Jones and Wheeler, 1810), 31. On escalating racial discrimination in the age of gradual abolition, see Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and 'Race' in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), and John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). On disenfranchisement, see *Public Laws of the State of Rhode-Island, as Revised by a Committee . . . January, 1822* (Providence: Miller and Hutchinson, 1822); *Newport Mercury*, January 19, 1822; and James T. Adams, "Disfranchisement of Negroes in New England," *American Historical Review* 30 (1925), 543–546. Blacks in Rhode Island recovered the franchise through the new state constitution of 1842; see Stanley J. Lemons and Michael A. McKenna, "The Re-enfranchisement of Rhode Island Negroes," *Rhode Island History* 30 (1971), 3–13. For the experience of gradual abolition in other northern states, see Arthur Zilversmit, *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); David N. Gellman, *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom, 1777–1827* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); and David Menschel, "Abolition Without Deliverance: The Law of Connecticut Slavery, 1784–1848," *Yale Law Journal* 111, 1 (2001), 183–222.
- 132 On Hardscrabble and its aftermath, see Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 353–397. See also Howard Chudacoff and Theodore C. Hirt, "Social Thought and Governmental Reform in Providence, 1820–1832," *Rhode Island History* 31, 1 (1972), 23–31. For a contemporary account of the trial, including Tillinghast's oration, see *Hardscrabble Calendar: Report of the Trials of Oliver Cummins [et al.] . . . for a Riot . . . at Hard Scrabble* (Providence: n.p., 1824).
- 133 See *A Short History of the African Union Meeting and School-House, erected in Providence (R.I.) in the years 1819, '20, '21: with rules for its future government* (Providence: Rhode Island Council for the Humanities and Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, 2004, orig. pub. 1821). On Black life in Providence, including efforts to secure education, see Robert J. Cottrol, *The Afro-Yankees: Providence's Black Community in the Antebellum Era* (Westport: Greenwood, 1982); Rhode Island Black Heritage Society, *Creative Survival: The Providence Black Community in the Nineteenth Century* (Providence: RIBHS, 1985); and William J. Brown, *The Life of William J. Brown, of Providence, R.I. With personal recollections of incidents in Rhode Island* (Providence: Angell & Co., 1883).
- 134 The campaign for integrated schools can be traced through a series of published broadsides from the late 1850s, most of them penned by George T. Downing, a leader of Providence's Black community. All are held in the Hay Library at Brown University. See "Will the General Assembly Put Down Caste Schools?" (1857); "Abolition of Colored

Schools" (1857); "Dear Sir, The Interest and Anxiety We Feel in the Matter of Educating our Children . . ." (1858); "We Would Ask, Why Deny Us Our School Rights" (1859); and "To the Friends of Equal Rights in Rhode Island" (1859). The *Providence Journal* editorials appeared on March 29, 1859 and April 2, 1859. See also Laurence Grossman, "George T. Downing and the Desegregation of Rhode Island Public Schools, 1855–1866," *Rhode Island History* 36, 4 (1977), 99–102, and Rachel Van Cleve, "The Fight for Rhode Island School Integration, 1856–1866," unpublished undergraduate essay, Brown University, 2005.

135 On compensated emancipation in the District of Columbia, see Michael J. Kurtz, "Emancipation in the Federal City," *Civil War History* 24, 2 (1978), 250–267. On the Emancipation Proclamation, see Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004). On the Thirteenth Amendment, see Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

136 The best overview of Reconstruction is Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988). See also W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct American Democracy, 1860–1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935), and Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996). On the collapse of Reconstruction, see C. Vann Woodward, *Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964); William Gillette, *Retreat from*

*Reconstruction, 1869–1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); and Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). On violent conflict during Reconstruction, including the strenuous resistance of Black southerners to efforts to restore white supremacy, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

137 Michael Vorenberg, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization," in Thomas F. Schwartz (ed.), *"For a Vast Future Also": Essays from the Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999). On demands for back wages and other kinds of compensation, see Foner, *Reconstruction*, 104–108, passim.

138 The "delusion" comment, by historian George R. Benson is quoted in John David Smith, "The Enduring Myth of 'Forty Acres and a Mule,'" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 21, 2003. The calculation of the current value of the claim is by William A. Darity Jr., an economist who has written extensively on reparations issues and one of the speakers hosted by the Steering Committee. See Darity, "Reparations," in Samuel L. Myers (ed.), *Civil Rights and Race Relations in the Post-Reagan-Bush Era* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), and Darity, "Forty Acres and a Mule in the Twenty-First Century," unpublished paper, 2004. On H.R. 40, see below.

139 The text of Field Order #15 is available at <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/sfo15.htm>, archived at <https://perma.cc/8FGW-CXHG?type=image>. On the status of confiscated land, including the problem

- of uncertain title, see LaWanda Cox, "The Promise of Land for the Freedmen," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (1958), 413–440, and Daniel Wilson Hamilton, "The Limits of Sovereignty: Legislative Property Confiscation in the Union and the Confederacy," Ph.D. dissertation in history, Harvard University, 2003.
- 140 See Foner, *Reconstruction*, 124–227, 392–411, passim. See also LaWanda Cox, "Andrew Johnson and his Ghost Writers: An Analysis of the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights Veto Messages," in Donald G. Nieman (ed.), *Freedom, Racism, and Reconstruction: Collected Writings of LaWanda Cox* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997). On the Southern Homestead Act, see Michael L. Lanza, *Agrarianism and Reconstruction Politics: The Southern Homestead Act* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990). In the absence of land redistribution, what emerged in the South was a system of Black sharecropping on white land — an arrangement that, in the context of usurious credit practices, racially discriminatory lien laws, and falling cotton prices, frequently devolved into debt peonage. See Harold D. Woodman, *New South, New Law: The Legal Foundations of Credit and Labor Relations in the Postbellum South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); Donald G. Nieman, *From Slavery to Sharecropping: White Land and Black Labor in the Rural South, 1865–1900* (New York: Garland, 1994); and Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 141 In 1867, Thaddeus Stevens submitted H.R. 29, a bill for the permanent confiscation and redistribution of southern land. The bill, which did not pass, is reprinted in Raymond A. Winbush (ed.), *Should America Pay: Slavery and the Raging Debate on Reparations* (New York: Amistad, 2003), 328–330. See also Eric Foner, "Thaddeus Stevens, Confiscation, and Reconstruction," in *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Roy E. Finkenbine, "Wendell Phillips and 'The Negro's Claim': A Neglected Reparations Document," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 7 (2005), 105–119. The query of the Pennsylvania senator, Edgar Cowens, is quoted in Foner, *Reconstruction*, 237.
- 142 C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). On Black life in the Jim Crow South, see Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Litwack, "How Did Segregation Enforce Racial Subordination," in John David Smith (ed.), *When Did Segregation Begin: Readings* (Boston: Bedford Books, 2002); and Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, op. cit.
- 143 On the convict lease system, see Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso, 1996); Matthew Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866–1928* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); David Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: Free Press, 1996); and Karin Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle Against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871–1896* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

- 144 The best overview of the subject is still George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). On African Americans' allegedly imminent extinction, see Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (New York: American Economic Association, 1896). On minstrelsy, see Robert Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). For a sampling of late nineteenth-century racist tracts, see John David Smith (ed.), *Racial Determinism and the Fear of Miscegenation, Pre-1900* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).
- 145 Jacqueline Royster (ed.), *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892–1900* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997). See also Edward Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Williamson, "Hellhounds," in James Allen, et al. (eds.), *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe: Twin Palms, 2000). The images of *Without Sanctuary*, an exhibition of lynching photographs and postcards, can be viewed at <http://www.withoutsanctuary.org>, archived at <https://perma.cc/S64V-6THF>. On the 2005 U.S. Senate apology, see above.
- 146 Quoted in Fergus M. Bordewich, *Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America* (New York: Amistad, 2005), 106.
- 147 See W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Freedmen's Bureau," *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1, 1901. On Lincoln's Reconstruction Proclamation, see Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (Washington: Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission, 1959), vol. 7, 55, and Michael Vorenberg, "Slavery Reparations in Theory and Practice: Lincoln's Approach," in Brian Dirck (ed.), *Lincoln Emancipated: The President and the Politics of Race* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007). On Freedmen's Bureau schools, see Roy G. Finkenbine, "Law, Reconstruction, and African American Education in the Post-Emancipation South," in Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (eds.), *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and William S. McFeely, *Yankee Stepfather: General O.O. Howard and the Freedmen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).
- 148 On proposals for federal funding of education, see Daniel W. Crofts, "The Blair Bill and the Elections Bill: The Congressional Aftermath of Reconstruction," Ph.D. dissertation in history, Yale University, 1968.
- 149 On Black education in the Jim Crow era, see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Donald Spivey, *Schooling for the New Slavery: Black Industrial Education, 1868–1915* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978); and Brooke Thomas (ed.), *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997).
- 150 In a 1979 visit to Brown University, Ralph Ellison spoke of his debts to Inman Page, and on the broader significance of Page's life. See "Speech on the Dedication of a Portrait of Inman Page" and "Going to the Territory," both in John F. Callahan (ed.), *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison* (New York: Modern Library, 1995). Redding's brief career as a Brown professor is

- noted in Mitchell (ed.), *Encyclopedia Brunoniana*, 459.
- 151 On Henry Turner and the late nineteenth-century debate over African emigration, see Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890–1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969); Redkey, *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner* (New York: Arno, 1971); and James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787–2005* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 99–135. For a modern version of the argument, see Robert Johnson Jr., “Repatriation as Reparations for Slavery and Jim-Crowism,” in Brooks (ed.), *When Sorry Isn’t Enough*, 427–434.
- 152 For the ex-slave pension bill, see H.R. 1119, 51st Cong., 1st Sess. (1890). On House, see Mary Frances Berry, *My Face is Black is True: Callie House and the Struggle for Ex-Slave Reparations* (New York: Knopf, 2005).
- 153 *Johnson v. McAdoo*, 45 App. D.C. 440 (1917). The case eventually proceeded to the Supreme Court, which confirmed the dismissal; see *Johnson v. McAdoo*, 244 U.S. 643 (1917).
- 154 The letter to Roosevelt is cited in David Blight, “If You Don’t Tell It Like It Was, It Can Never Be As It Ought To Be,” unpublished address, September, 2002, available at <https://glc.yale.edu/events/memory>, archived at <https://perma.cc/NNP3-RMTC>.
- 155 The role of federal social welfare policy in underwriting white privilege has generated a large scholarly literature — a literature that has had little impact on American popular opinion, which continues to incline to the view that government policies differentially benefit African Americans. For a sampling, see Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle Over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Edwin D. Berkowitz, *America’s Welfare State: From Roosevelt to Reagan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Jill S. Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and, most recently, Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in American* (New York: Norton, 2005).
- 156 Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 157 See U.S. Federal Housing Administration, *Underwriting Manual: Underwriting and Validation Procedure for Title III of the National Housing Act* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936). See also David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in the Modern American Suburb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Kenneth T. Jackson, “Race, Ethnicity and Real Estate Appraisal: The Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration,” *Journal of Urban History* 6, 4 (1980), 419–452; and Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 197–217. The N.A.A.C.P. study is cited in Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long as They Don’t Move Next Door: Segregation and Racial Conflict in American Neighborhoods* (Latham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 153. For local case studies of the process, see Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Robert Self,

- American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Power in Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Raymond A. Mohl, "Trouble in Paradise: Housing in Miami During the New Deal Era," *Prologue* 19 (1987), 7–21.
- 158 *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disturbances* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968). For background and primary source materials relating to the Republic of New Africa, see <https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/PUQ6-5NNQ?type=image>. See also Raymond L. Hall, *Black Separatism in the United States* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1978). On N'COBRA, see Adjoa A. Aiyetoro, "The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA): Its Creation and Contribution to the Reparations Movement," in Winbush, *Should America Pay?*, 209–225.
- 159 The Black Manifesto is reprinted in Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright (eds.), *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969). See also James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries: A Personal Account* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 543–550.
- 160 *New York Times*, September 9, 1969. Boris I. Bittker, *The Case for Black Reparations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003, orig. pub. 1973). (This quotation is on 12.) For a recent restatement of Bittker's argument, see Boris I. Bittker and Roy L. Brooks, "The Constitutionality of Black Reparations," in Brooks (ed.), *When Sorry Isn't Enough*, op. cit. Other scholarly works inspired by the Black Manifesto include Daisy G. Collins, "The United States Owes Reparations to its Black Citizens," *Howard Law Journal* 16 (1970), 82–117; Gary Elden, "'Forty Acres and a Mule,' with Interest: The Constitutionality of Black Capitalism, Benign School Quotas, and other Statutory Racial Classifications," *Journal of Urban Law* 47, 3 (1970), 591–652; and Robert S. Browne, "The Economic Case for Reparations to Black America," *American Economic Review* 62, 1 (1972), 39–46. See also Bernard Boxhill, "The Morality of Reparations," in Barry R. Gross (ed.), *Reverse Discrimination* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1977).
- 161 See Robert Westley, "Many Billions Gone: Is it Time to Reconsider the Case for Black Reparations?" *Boston College Law Review* 40, 1 (1998), 429–476. Randall Robinson's *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks* (New York: Dutton, 2000) offers a similar argument. See also Martha Biondi, "The Rise of the Reparations Movement," *Radical History Review* 87, 1 (2003), 5–18, and Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 109–132.
- 162 Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 94–95. See also Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 78–106.
- 163 *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*, 2 vols. (Washington: U.S. General Printing Office, 1982). For the history of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, see Peter Irons, *Justice at War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H.L. Kitano (eds.), *Japanese Americans, from Relocation to Redress*, revised edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991); Leslie T. Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); and Weiner, *Sins of the Fathers*, op. cit. *Hohri v. United States* (793 F.2d 304) (D.C. Cir. 1986) is discussed in Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness*, 112–119. For

- an assortment of relevant documents, see Brooks (ed.), *When Sorry Isn't Enough*, 153–228. On the meaning of the act to former internees, see Torpey, *Making Whole What Has Been Smashed*, 78–106.
- 164 Weiner, *Sins of the Parents*, 68, 72, 82, 165–166, 190 n. 13.
- 165 For the text of H.R. 40 and related documents, see <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/40/text>, archived at <https://perma.cc/6J2T-G5MH>. There is today a substantial scholarly literature on the reparations issue, examining the historical, philosophical, and moral underpinnings of reparations demands in general and slavery reparations in particular. See, for example, Charles S. Maier, “Overcoming the Past? Narrative and Negotiation, Remembering, and Reparation: Issues at the Interface of History and the Law,” in Torpey (ed.), *Politics and the Past*; and Thomas McCarthy, “Coming to Terms with the Past, Part II: On the Morality and Politics of Reparations for Slavery,” *Political Theory* 32, 5 (2004), 750–772. Interest in slavery reparations is especially apparent in law reviews, which have published a host of articles and forums examining the legal foundations of the issue, including the possible value of the Japanese American precedent. Significant works include: Mari J. Matsuda, “Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations,” *Harvard Civil Rights — Civil Liberties Law Review* 22 (1987), 323–399; Rhonda V. Magee, “The Master’s Tools, From the Bottom Up: Responses to African American Reparations Theory in Mainstream and Outsider Remedies Discourse,” *Virginia Law Review* 79, 4 (1993), 863–916; Vincene Verdun, “If the Shoe Fits, Wear It: An Analysis of Reparations to African Americans,” *Tulane Law Review* 67, 3 (1993), 597–668; Eric K. Yamamoto, “Racial Reparations: Japanese American Redress and African American Claims,” *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 40 (1998), 477–523; Tuneen E. Chisholm, “Sweep Around Your Own Front Door: Examining the Argument for Legislative African American Reparations,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 147, 3 (1999), 677–727; Adrienne D. Davis, “The Case for United States Reparations to African Americans,” *Human Rights Briefs* 7 (2000), 3–25; “Bridging the Color Line: The Power of African American Reparations to Redirect America’s Future,” (unsigned legal note) *Harvard Law Review* 115, 6 (2002), 1689–1712; and Charles J. Ogletree, “Repairing the Past: New Efforts in the Reparations Debate,” *Harvard Civil Rights — Civil Liberties Law Review* 38, 2 (2003), 279–320. See also “A Dream Deferred: Comparative and Practical Considerations for the Black Reparations Movement,” special issue of the *New York University Annual Survey of American Law* 58, 4 (2003). While most legal scholars writing on the subject tend to be supportive of the notion of reparations, several distinguished scholars reject it utterly; see, for example, Richard Epstein, “Against Redress,” *Daedalus* 131 (2002), 39–48, and Epstein, “The Case Against Black Reparations,” *Boston University Law Review* 84, 5 (2004), 1177–1192.
- 166 See *Cato v. United States*, 70 F. 3d 1103 (9th Cir. 1995); *Berry v. United States* 1994 U.S. Dist LEXIS 9665 (N.D. Cal 1994); and Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness*, 120–123. Other cases include *Jackson v. United States*, *Lewis v. United States*, *Powell v. United States*, all filed in the Northern District of California in 1994, and *Bell v. United States*, filed in 2001 in the Northern District of Texas. All were ultimately dismissed.
- 167 *Farmer-Paellman v. FleetBoston Financial Corporation . . . and Corporate Does Nos. 1–1000*. See <https://dockets>

- .justia.com/docket/illinois/ilndce/1:2002cv07766/126269, archived at <https://perma.cc/FE85-SQTT>. See also Burt Neuborne, "Holocaust Reparations Litigation: Lessons for the Slavery Reparations Movement," *New York University Annual Survey of American Law* 58 (2003).
- 168 See *in re African-American Slave Descendants Litigation*, 2004 U.S. Dist. Lexis 872 (N.D. Ill. 2004). For the rehearing, see 375 F. Supp. 2d 721 (N.D. Ill. 2005).
- 169 See "Business, Corporate, and Slavery Era Insurance Ordinance," Municipal Code of Chicago §2-92-585 (2002). While slave-era disclosure ordinances typically operate at the municipal level, the state of California has enacted similar legislation, requiring insurance companies operating in the state to disclose any policies written on slaves, whose names are entered on a state register; see <http://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/150-other-prog/10-seir/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/LM8B-PTGW>.
- 170 For the Wachovia apology, see [https://web.archive.org/web/20060107133641/http://www.wachovia.com/inside/page/0,,134\\_307%5E1191,00.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20060107133641/http://www.wachovia.com/inside/page/0,,134_307%5E1191,00.html). See also Fran Spielman, "Lehman Takes a Hit Over Ties to Slavery; Firm Fails to Amend Disclosure Statement, Loses O'Hare Bond Job," *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 2, 2005.
- 171 See [https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2006-C011](https://episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution-complete.pl?resolution=2006-C011), archived at <https://perma.cc/8VNV-F8GA>, for an account of recent Episcopal Church resolutions.
- 172 Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank, *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (New York: Ballantine, 2005). For the original special issue, see <https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-xpm-2000-07-04-0007040049-story.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/3ZAR-D6H5>.
- 173 On the Alabama apology, see <https://faculty senate.ua.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2013/05/Resolution-Acknowledging-and-Apologizing-for-Slavery-at-UA-4-20-04.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/GW9N-FWA4>. On the University of North Carolina's *Unsung Founders* memorial, see <https://docsouth.unc.edu/commland/monument/45/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/2MZ3-WD5P>. On Emory's Transforming Community Project, see <http://emoryhistory.emory.edu/issues/discrimination/transforming-community-project.html>, archived at <https://perma.cc/W3VN-XF8C>. At least two other universities, Yale and the University of Virginia, have recently been the site of campus controversies about historical ties with slavery, but thus far neither has launched any sustained investigation. At Yale, the controversy has focused on a report, "Yale, Slavery, and Abolition," published by three doctoral students; see <http://www.yaleslavery.org/YSA.pdf>, archived at <https://perma.cc/HT6B-H49S>.
- 174 Data from the 2000 Census is available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20071017005418/http://www.prcdc.org:80/summaries/blacks/blacks.html>. See also U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics, "Prison Statistics," available online at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/prisons.htm>, archived at <https://perma.cc/8VLA-W538>. The disparities within the criminal justice system are doubly significant, given felon disenfranchisement policies prevailing in many states. In Rhode Island, which has one of the country's most stringent policies, over twenty percent of Black men currently lack the right to vote. See

Nina Keough and Marshall Clement, *Political Punishment: The Consequences of Felon Disenfranchisement for Rhode Island Communities* (Providence: Rhode Island Family Life Center, 2005). The literature on the sources of and remedies for racial disparity is voluminous and contentious, with some emphasizing the persistence of inequality and highlighting the historical and structural impediments to Black progress and others emphasizing deficiencies of character and culture, as well as the influence of ill-advised government welfare policies. Important contributions to the debate over the last two decades include: William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Michael B. Katz (ed.), *The 'Underclass' Debate: Views from History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Dalton Conley, *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999); Adolph Reed (ed.), *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality* (Boulder: Westview Press,

1999); Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000); John McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America* (New York: Free Press, 2000); David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo (eds.), *Racialized Politics: The Debate About Race in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Glenn Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Michael K. Brown, et al. (eds.), *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Thomas M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and John Hope Franklin, *Mirror to America: The Autobiography of John Hope Franklin* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

## UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

- 1 See page 115 in the present volume.
- 2 Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science* (Boston: Kendall et al., 1835), 256.
- 3 See page 247 in the present volume.
- 4 “Brown University’s Debt to Slavery,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2006, A–18.
- 5 *The Times of London Higher Education Supplement*, February 2, 2007, 16.
- 6 Past projects, downloadable software, and more information may be found at: <http://cs.brown.edu/courses/cs092/>, archived at <https://perma.cc/47BN-JUPP>.







# CONFRONTING HISTORY

In 2006, Brown released its groundbreaking *Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*, confronting and publicly documenting the University's complex history with the transatlantic slave trade. The Report, commissioned under the leadership of then-President Ruth J. Simmons, set a high standard for unflinching analysis and became a national model for responsible scholarship, sparking a national conversation. Brown was among the first institutions of higher education in the United States to publicly catalogue its ties to racial slavery. Fifteen years later, under the leadership of President Christina H. Paxson, the University now releases the second edition of the Report. This edition expands upon the original Report, offering insights into the document's persisting impact, both on Brown's campus and across the nation and the world.

## Commentary from the second edition of Brown University's Slavery and Justice Report

"While some may argue that studying an issue does not have a lasting impact, the Slavery and Justice Report demonstrates that the route through scholarship, when shepherded thoughtfully, does lead to meaningful change."

— **CHRISTINA H. PAXSON**, President, Brown University

"The Report was so superbly written, so deftly constructed with a mix of supporting documents and facts, that it could not be denied. Written in a tone that lacked recrimination, it was evidence of the best work that one can do when turning to a question of such serious violation of human rights."

— **RUTH J. SIMMONS**, former President, Brown University; President, Prairie View A&M University

"Institutions founded after the abolishment of slavery are also using Brown's Slavery and Justice Report to guide explorations on the harms done to Indigenous peoples; land theft at borders; gentrification; displacement; and medical racism."

— **MARCIA CHATELAIN**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Professor of History and African American Studies, Georgetown University

"As of this writing, nearly 100 universities in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain have trod the path that Brown blazed. . . . I think it is fair to say that we have reached an inflection point, in which the idea of a university telling the truth about its past does not seem controversial at all but rather a basic institutional obligation."

— **JAMES T. CAMPBELL**, Edgar E. Robinson Professor in U.S. History, Stanford University



BROWN

